Personality Traits and Married Women's Career Choices

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The goal of the research was to establish whether personality traits affect the normative and non-normative career choice of women. Police work was considered a non-normative career choice while nursing was considered a normative career choice. Findings suggest significant differences between the personalities of policewomen and nurses.

Women's careers have changed dramatically in the last century. From the traditional role of homemaker, women today have come a long way in terms of career options. However, there has been an obvious neglect of the career psychology of women (Paludi, 1992). Such neglect was born out of two pervasive assumptions:

The first of these assumptions is the "motherhood mandate" (Russo, 1976) or the belief that the primary career roles of women center around domestic and child-care responsibilities (Paludi, p. 233). Recent studies (Betz, 1993; Frankel 1992; Weitzman & Fitzgerald, 1993) argue that:

> *women still remain primarily responsible for homemaking and child-rearing responsibilities, despite whatever level of career commitment and success they may have achieved – a situation that can create serious stress in the form of role overload and role conflict (Osipow & Fitzgerald 1996, p.250).*

Hallett and Gilbert conducted a study in this line. Results indicate that "rather than seeing their choice as one between career and family, many women assume both are possible. Thus the way in which they think about careers is intimately tied to their beliefs and desires about how home and family role can be included" (Hallett & Gilbert, 1998 APA/PsychINFO – *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Vol. 50 (2), April 1997).

The second assumption is what we may refer to as the *"masculine bias"* of some career development theories particularly some of the pioneers of the developmental approach to career development. "Masculine bias" can be defined as "the belief that the theories developed to describe men's career development would automatically apply to the description of women's career development" (Paludi, p. 234).

Among the prominent proponents of a developmental view of career development theories who were guilty of this "masculine bias" were Ginzberg et al. and Donald Super (Seligman, 1994). In their effort of proposing theories meant to understand people's career development, empirically grounded works on males' experiences were performed. However, empirical work on women's experiences is lacking.

Hence this study seeks to address such dearth. Specifically it examines the sociopsychological factors affect the normative and non-normative career choice of women.

Reasons that Make Women's Career Experiences Unique

There are many ways that women's careers are different than men's. First, quite different from and much more often than men, "women's work consists of paid jobs and unpaid work/household" (Madoc-Jones et al., p. 85). In fact, Witz (1993) "argued that most unpaid work is done by women (Madoc-Jones, p. 86). These findings demonstrate that women's career experiences cannot be clustered as the same as that of men's career experiences. Second is the issue of job/occupational segregation affecting women's career opportunities. "Occupational segregation means that some jobs are regarded as men's jobs and other as women's. Women's jobs are most often those which are low paid, low in status and categorized as low-skilled" (Madoc-Jones & Coates, p. 93).

Specifically, this is referred to as "horizontal segregation." To complicate matters more, occupational segregation has another dimension – the "vertical segregation":

> *This means that the higher we look up the ladder of pay and status, the fewer women we see. Top jobs usually go to men with women clustered at the lower end of the job hierarchies. This holds true even for those occupations in which the majority of employees are women such as in nursing or teaching (Madoc-Jones & Coates, p. 94).*

In support of this, Kaufman maintains that "men assume the more respected positions of authority and power in female dominated professions" (Freeman, p. 290).

Social factors like stereotypes and discrimination and lack of child-care facilities must also be addressed in understanding the career path of women for such social factors "hinder women's opportunities to make most of their aspirations" (Madoc-Jones, pp. 97, 102).

Another evidence that demonstrates the difference between the career development of men and women can be gleaned from the work of DiBenedetto and Tittle (1990):

> A study of college students indicated that women anticipate balancing work and family life, with greater involvement in one area being offset by lesser involvement in the area. Young men, on the other hand, see the two dimensions as independent and do not view themselves as having to prioritize work and family commitments (Seligman, p. 314).

An earlier work by Karpicke (1980) maintains the same findings revealing that "young women seem to go through a different process of career planning and development than do young men, with young women experiencing more home-career conflict and success avoidance" (Seligman, p. 315).

Osipow's Career Pattern of Women: The Framework

Given its uniqueness, women's careers need to be looked at in a different way. Osipow (1975) presents a possible way in understanding women's career development that will be employed as framework for this study.

According to Osipow, there are three major patterns of female career development. These are the "homemaker", the "traditional career pattern" and the "pioneer career pattern."

Osipow concisely describes the three patterns in this manner:

> The homemaker was the woman who had no significant paid work experience. The woman with a traditional career pattern may or may not be married but engaged in significant out-of-home employment in a conventionally female field, such as teaching, nursing, secretarial work, or social service. The woman with a pioneer career pattern also may or may not be married but engaged in significant out-of-home employment on a regular basis throughout most of her life, often in a male-dominated field and competition with men (Seligman, pp. 314–315).

Hence, this research aims to discern the distinct experiences of women with regard to their career development. Specifically, it looks at the various factors that affect career choices among women.

Factors Affecting Career Choice and Development

Advancing further in our framework for analysis, it is essential to provide the menu of the factors that may contribute to people's career development. O'Neil and company (1980) enumerated several factors that may enhance or hinder a particular career direction. These are "familial factors, societal factors, socio-economic factors, individual factors, and psychosocial and emotional factors" (Seligman, p. 38, 57).

This endeavor will particularly put emphasis on personality variables as these relate to the career choices of women. This is what Paludi refers to as sociopsychological factors.

The Personality Factor in Career Choice and Development

A relevant theory that demonstrates the relationship between personality traits and career choice is John Holland's empirically-based Hexagonal Model (1991):

> *Holland placed greatest emphasis on the role of personality and views himself as taking a person-environment perspective. He defined six modal types, organized in a hexagonal configuration, that could be used to describe both personal orientation and occupational environments (Seligman, p. 16).*

The theory of Holland maintains that individuals belonging to similar careers tend to have similar personality traits. This motivates individuals to find careers that allow for a "fit" between an individual's personality traits and career direction resulting to more satisfying careers (Seligman, p.16).

Studies that provide support on the relevance of personality traits to career choices have been conducted. In the study conducted by Chusmir (1983) it was revealed that "women who pursue careers in non-traditional fields tend to emphasize individualism and personal satisfaction, are achievement oriented, and expect to make a life for themselves through their own efforts. They tend to be active, androgynous, autonomous, dominant, expressive, intellectual, responsible, risk taking, self-actualized, self-confident, and sociable" (Seligman, p. 317-318). Similarly, according to the studies of Lemkau (1979), Parsons et al. (1978) and Ruble et al. (1984) "women in non-traditional careers tend to be independent, self-confident, assertive, emotionally stable, and satisfied with their lives... these non-traditional women have characteristics that would be considered stereotypically masculine" (Matlin, p. 153). These studies affirm the possible relationship between career and personality traits.

Objective of the Study

The core objective of this research was to look into the factors that affect the career development of women in traditional and non-traditional occupations. A traditional occupation for women is one which is dominated by women, while a non-traditional occupation is one that is dominated by men.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The study was limited to married women engaged in white-collar jobs. Specifically for this research, married women employed as nurses and as police/law enforcers were chosen as illustrative cases of women in normative and non-normative careers, respectively.

The process of selection was done in this manner: First, a list of currently employed nurses and police officers was obtained from the Baguio General Hospital and Medical Center and Baguio City Police Office, respectively.

From the total list of 149 nurses, 20 (13.42%) are males and 129 (86.58%) are females. From the list of 549 police officers on the other hand, 512 (93.26%) are males and 37 (6.74%) are females. These figures show that nursing is indeed a female-dominated occupation while the field of police work is male-dominated. Hence, nursing is an illustrative case that will represent a normative career choice while police work is an illustrative case of a non-normative career choice.

From this list, married women with ages 25 to 35 years old were selected. The final list of respondents consisted of nineteen (19) of these women who are employed as policewomen/law enforcers in the Baguio City Police Office and the remaining thirty-one (31) are nurses working at the Baguio General Hospital & Medical Center, Baguio City.

Measures

The independent variables in the study were personality traits as measured by the Edwards Personal Preference Scale (EPPS): Achievement, Deference, Order, Exhibition, Autonomy, Affiliation, Intraception, Succorance, Dominance, Abasement, Nurturance, Change, Endurance, Heterosexuality, Aggression and Consistency. Career choice, which will be classified in terms of the normative/traditional or non-normative/pioneer career pattern, was the dependent variable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Personality Traits and Work of Married Women

Mean scores for each of the 16 personality dimensions measured by the EPPS were obtained for: 1) all the 50 subjects in this study, 2) the 31 nurses, and 3) the 19 policewomen.

The mean scores of the respondents (N=50) for each of the personality variables appear in Table 1. Compared to Filipino norms, the respondents scored relatively high on *order, succorance, heterosexuality, and nurturance*. The respondents in the study also scored higher, but to a lesser degree on *deference, autonomy, change, abasement, aggression and affiliation*. Lastly, our subjects relatively low on six personality variables: *achievement, exhibition, endurance, intraception, consistency and dominance*.

Table 1: Mean Scores of the 16 Personality Traits

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Heterosexuality	50	0	19	7.64	5.00
Exhibition	50	4	17	10.64	2.79
Consistency	50	5	15	11.04	2.00
Autonomy	50	4	20	11.72	3.83
Aggression	50	3	22	12.10	4.51
Dominance	50	5	23	12.70	4.27
Succorance	50	4	23	12.90	3.74
Affiliation	50	6	22	13.38	4.07
Deference	50	10	25	15.02	3.54
Changeability	50	6	23	15.20	4.52
Intraception	50	10	23	15.66	3.29
Achievement	50	8	23	16.00	3.39
Nurturance	50	9	25	16.40	4.01
Abasement	50	5	24	16.42	4.20
Endurance	50	8	24	16.48	3.85
Order	50	8	26	17.74	3.72

Next, mean scores were computed separately for the 31 nurses and the 19 policewomen. These are presented in Table 2. Comparing these personality profiles to Filipino norms, we find that nurses scored relatively high on *order, succorance, heterosexuality, and nurturance*. Next they scored also higher, but to a lesser degree on *deference, autonomy, change, abasement, aggression and affiliation*. Lastly, they scored lower on *achievement, exhibition, endurance, intraception, consistency and dominance*.

Table 2: Group Mean Scores of the 16 Personality Traits

	Work of respondent	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Achievement	Nurse	31	16.39	3.42	.61
	Police	19	15.37	3.34	.77
Deference	Nurse	31	14.10	2.74	.49
	Police	19	16.53	4.21	.97
Order	Nurse	31	16.71	3.68	.66
	Police	19	19.42	3.22	.74
Exhibition	Nurse	31	11.23	2.40	.43
	Police	19	9.68	3.16	.73
Autonomy	Nurse	31	11.97	3.72	.67
	Police	19	11.32	4.07	.93
Affiliation	Nurse	31	14.42	3.87	.70
	Police	19	11.68	3.89	.89
Intraception	Nurse	31	15.19	3.62	.65
	Police	19	16.42	2.59	.59
Succorance	Nurse	31	13.61	3.34	.60
	Police	19	11.74	4.13	.95
Dominance	Nurse	31	12.94	4.30	.77
	Police	19	12.32	4.31	.99
Abasement	Nurse	31	15.84	4.50	.81
	Police	19	17.37	3.56	.82
Nurturance	Nurse	31	16.52	3.80	.68
	Police	19	16.21	4.42	1.01
Changeability	Nurse	31	15.39	4.81	.86
	Police	19	14.89	4.11	.94
Endurance	Nurse	31	16.48	3.93	.71
	Police	19	16.47	3.82	.88
Heterosexuality	Nurse	31	7.97	4.98	.89
	Police	19	7.11	5.12	1.17
Aggression	Nurse	31	11.26	4.34	.78
	Police	19	13.47	4.56	1.05
Consistency	Nurse	31	10.61	2.22	.40
	Police	19	11.74	1.37	.31

On the other hand, policewomen scored high in *deference, order, abasement, nurturance and heterosexuality.* They also scored less high on *autonomy, intraception, change, succorance and aggression.* Lastly, they scored low on *achievement, exhibition, affiliation, dominance, endurance and consistency.*

The findings above reveal that the nurses and the policewomen both scored relatively high on heterosexuality and nurturance; average on autonomy and change; and relatively low on achievement, dominance, endurance and consistency.

What is interesting at this juncture are some initial findings that disconfirm the findings in previous studies that women in non-normative career, as represented by policewomen in this study exhibit personalities highly characterized by achievement, dominance and autonomy (Tangri 1969; Parsons et al. 1978; Lemkau 1979; Chusmir 1983; Ruble et al. 1984). Rather the present study reveals that women regardless of their occupation score relatively high in heterosexuality and nurturance and do not essentially differ in personality variables that have been associated with women in non-traditional occupations, particularly in autonomy, dominance and achievement.

Looking at differences, we find that nurses scored higher than policewomen on *succorance.* On the other hand, police women scored higher than nurses on *deference, order and abasement.*

Finally, the EPPS scores of the nurses and policewomen respectively were compared to the norms of the sample group of 50. The numbers in Table 3 provide the basis for these comparisons. Upon comparison, it was found out that the group of policewomen obtained mean scores that are *below* the mean score of the group (N=50) for the following personality variables: *achievement, exhibition, autonomy, affiliation, succorance, dominance,*

Table 3: Percentile Rank of the Respondents for the 16 Personality Traits

Personality Traits	Percentile Rank of Respondents (N=50)	Percentile Rank of NURSES	Percentile Rank of POLICEWOMEN
Achievement	38	38	28
Deference	50	40	61
Order	67	57	81
Exhibition	35	43	25
Autonomy	55	55	55
Affiliation	48	53	39
Intraception	34	34	43
Succorance	65	74	56
Dominance	17	17	17
Abasement	52	44	60
Nurturance	59	59	59
Change	50	50	40
Endurance	34	34	34
Heterosexuality	61	61	61
Aggression	47	47	57
Consistency	27	12	27

nurturance, change, endurance and heterosexuality. It is with these same personality traits where the group of nurses obtained mean scores that are *above* the mean scores of the population except for the personality trait *endurance* where the obtained mean score for the nurses is equal to the mean score of the population in the study.

On the other hand, the policewomen obtained mean scores that are *above* the mean score of the group (N=50) for the following personality traits: *deference, order, intraception, abasement, aggression and consistency.* Interestingly, these are the same set of personality traits where the nurses obtained mean scores *below* the mean of the population.

Comparing Mean Scores

The mean scores obtained from the policewomen and nurses for each of the sixteen (16) personality traits were also compared. The independent samples t-test was utilized to discover whether the mean scores of the nurses and policewomen for each of the traits are significantly different from each other and not just due to chance.

Similarities in Personality Traits

It is important to recall that in previous studies, women in non-normative careers differ from women who get into normative careers. For instance, in the work of Chusmir (1983) results showed that "women who pursue careers in non-traditional fields tend to emphasize individualism and personal satisfaction, are achievement oriented, and expect to make a life for themselves through their own efforts. They tend to be active, androgynous, autonomous, dominant, expressive, intellectual, responsible, risk taking, self-actualized, self-confident, and sociable" (Seligman, p. 317-318).

Supporting the contention that women in non-traditional employment have different personalities relative to women in traditional careers, the work of Tangri (1969) revealed that "as compared to the women going into feminine professions, Innovators are more autonomous, individualistic and motivated by internally imposed demands to perform to capacity."

However, it is interesting to note that the results of the present research do not confirm the results of these previous studies. Among the sixteen personality traits, results reveal that the normative (nurses) and the non-normative group are similar in thirteen personality traits. These are: achievement, exhibition, autonomy, intraception, succorance, dominance, abasement, nurturance, change, endurance, heterosexuality, aggression and consistency.

This study shows that women in nontraditional occupations as represented by the policewomen are *not* distinctively more achievement-oriented, more autonomous and more dominant relative to the group of nurses representing the traditional occupation. Hence, certain personality traits are similar regardless of the respondents' work.

Differences in Personality Traits

The present study reveals that the normative and non-normative groups have significant differences in three of their personality traits: *deference, order, and affiliation.*

The group of policewomen, representing the non-normative career group, obtained higher mean scores relative to the nurses on *deference (t=2.48, p<.05) and order (t=2.65, p<.05).*

A higher mean score for *deference* may mean that the policewomen in the study have a higher tendency to get suggestions from others, to follow instructions and do what is expected, to accept leadership of others and to conform to custom and avoid the unconventional. Meanwhile, the higher level of *order* may indicate that policewomen have greater leaning towards being neat and organized, making plans before starting on a difficult task, organizing details of work and keeping letters and files according to some system.

On the other hand, the nurses scored higher than policewomen on *affiliation* (t=2.421, p<.05), could indicate a greater propensity for nurses to be loyal to friends, to participate in friendly groups, to do things with friends rather than alone, and to form strong attachments.

Personality Traits and the Work of Respondents

For each of the 16 personality traits, the subjects were divided into high and low scores. For each trait then, 2x2 tables were derived: nurses vs. policewoman, high vs. low on the trait. Chi-squares were then performed on each of these traits.

The results showed that a typical female nurse's personality can be characterized by AFFILIATION, EXHIBITION and SUCCORANCE while a typical policewoman's personality make-up can be characterized by DEFERENCE, ORDER, INTRACEPTION, AGGRESSION and CONSISTENCY.

The Personality of a Typical Nurse

Based on the results of this research, a typical nurse is characterized by *affiliation, exhibition and succorance*. Table 4 provides us a brief description of these traits that characterize the female nurses in this study.

Table 4: Description of the Personality Traits of a Typical Female Nurse

I. Affiliation	To be loyal to friends, to participate in friendly groups, to do things for friends, to form new friendships, to make as many friends as possible, to share things with friends, to do things with friends rather than alone, to form strong attachments, to write letters to friends.
II. Exhibition	To say witty and clever things, to tell amusing jokes and stories, to talk about personal adventures and experiences, to have others notice and comment upon one's appearance, to say things just to see what effect it will have on others, to talk about personal achievements, to be the center of attention, to use words that others do not know the meaning of, to ask questions others cannot answer.
III. Succorance	To have others provide help when in trouble, to seek encouragement from others, to have others be kindly, to have others be sympathetic and understanding about personal problems, to receive a great deal of affection from others, to have others do favors cheerfully, to be helped by others when depressed, to have others feel sorry when one is sick, to have a fuss made over one when hurt.

SOURCE: EPPS Manual

The Personality of a Typical Policewoman

Based on the results of this research, a typical policewoman is characterized by *deference, order, intraception, aggression and consistency*. Table 5 gives us a description of these traits that are distinct to policewomen.

Hence, we can say that these women chose their present work because they saw the "potential for the satisfaction of their personality traits/needs" (Osipow & Fitzgerald, 1996, p. 10). Essentially, these findings support Holland's theory that maintains that:

> *People in similar occupations have similar developmental histories and personalities, resulting from people's tendency to seek occupational environments that are consistent with their personalities (Seligman, p. 16).*

Table 5: Description of the Personality Traits of a Typical Policewoman

I. Deference	To get suggestions from others, to find out what others think, to follow instructions and do what is expected, to praise others, to tell others that they have done a good job, to accept leadership of others, to read about great men, to conform to custom and avoid the unconventional, to let others make decisions.
II. Order	To have written work neat and organized, to make plans before starting on a difficult task, to have things organized, to keep things neat and orderly, to make advance plans when taking a trip, to organize details of work, to keep letters and files according to some system, to have meals organized and a definite time for eating, to have things arranged so that they run smoothly without change.
III. Intraception	To analyze one's motives and feelings, to observe others, to understand how others feel about problems, to put one's self in another's place, to judge people by why they do things rather than by what they do, to analyze the behavior of others, to analyze the motives of others, to predict how others will act.
IV. Aggression	To attack contrary points of view, to tell others what one thinks about them, to criticize others publicly, to make fun of others, to tell others when disagreeing with them, to get revenge for insults, to become angry, to blame others when things go wrong, to read newspaper accounts of violence.

SOURCE: EPPS Manual

Which came first?

There is the possibility that these traits may have been present in the respondents' psychological make-up prior to their actual entry to their occupation. As a way of addressing these individual needs and traits, the respondents chose their present occupation.

However, we should be cautioned against generalizing since an upshot. hypothesis says that "exposure to a job gradually modifies the personality characteristics of the worker" (Osipow & Fitzgerald, 1996, p. 10).

Thus, another way of looking at these findings is that these descriptions, being the distinct traits of policewomen (deference, order, intraception, aggression and consistency) and of nurses (affiliation, exhibition and succorance) tend to be the characteristics required and reinforced, among others, in these two professions. Hence, it is highly possible that their exposure to their current profession as nurses or policewomen mold them into personalities that essentially allow them to adapt in their occupations.

Hence, results of this study may not be generalized to other normative and non-normative occupations, but may only be conclusive for the nursing and police profession.

In summary, despite contrary results to that of previous studies, this study suggests that psychological factors such as individual personality make-up may influence the career directions of women. Although findings may be preliminary at this point, these trends must be considered in the pursuit of promoting a career development theory for women.

This study therefore remains to be a "work in progress" for the possibility of future work on the same topic is plenty and promising.

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