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ABSTRACT

Past research has detailed conflicting results in investigations of sex differences and job satisfaction. To explain sex differences and job satisfaction within the framework of subtle treatment discrimination (a situation variable) and beliefs about roles for women (a person variable), 1578 employees of a large corporation completed demographic questionnaires and scales measuring job satisfaction, beliefs about roles for women, and perceptions of female isolation from power acquisition situations. Results indicated that the most satisfied group was the traditionally-oriented females who did not perceive isolation, while the least satisfied group was the nontraditionally-oriented females who did perceive isolation. The findings indicate that sex differences in job satisfaction exist; however, orientation (a person-centered variable) does not seem to have as much impact on satisfaction as gender and isolation. (NRB)

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THE IMPACT OF GENDER, PERCEIVED FEMALE ISOLATION  
AND BELIEFS IN TRADITIONAL ROLES FOR WOMEN  
ON JOB SATISFACTION

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The Impact of Gender, Perceived Female Isolation  
And Beliefs in Traditional Roles for Women  
On Job Satisfaction

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Person- and situation-centered variables were investigated to determine their impact on job satisfaction for males and females. The findings indicate that both sets of variables are important in moderating sex differences in job satisfaction. These results provide insights into the integration of females into the work environment.

Past research has detailed conflicting results in the area of sex differences in job satisfaction. The attempts to explain these differences have focused either on person-centered variables or on situation-centered variables. This study attempts to explain these differences through the interaction of both person and situation centered variables in order to address some of the issues recently raised by Riger and Galligan (1980).

Early studies of sex differences in job satisfaction (see Harrell, 1958) indicated that females were more satisfied with their jobs than were males. More recent studies have indicated that perhaps females are not as satisfied with their jobs as are males. It may be that expectations concerning possible outcomes have changed for females in the last several decades. Recent studies of job satisfaction are of interest in that they have controlled the effects of variables related to sex in addition to examining the effects of sex.

Weaver (1977) examined the relationships of pay, sex, occupational prestige, supervisory status, work autonomy and job satisfaction. His findings indicated that sex is not associated with job satisfaction, while pay,

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race, occupational prestige, supervisory status and work autonomy were. However, these independent variables account for less than six percent of the variation of job satisfaction. Weaver (1980), in a later study, noted race differences in job satisfaction; however, once again, no sex differences were found.

Andrisani and Shapiro (1978) examined female workers' attitudes toward their jobs over a period of five years. Their data suggest that minority females were less satisfied with their jobs than were non-minority females.

While Andrisani and Shapiro (1978) examined only female job satisfaction, Sauser and York (1978) designed a study to determine whether "observed differences in job satisfaction" were due not to the influence of sex, but to the effects of several variables which covaried with sex such as age, education, tenure in the organization and tenure in the person's current position. Their hypothesis received only partial support as they found that a significant difference in overall job satisfaction remained after partially out the effects of the covariates.

These past studies have attempted to determine the causes of differences in job-related attitudes of males and females. However, discussions of "underutilization" and so forth do not provide organizations with concrete means to meet the demands of their environments. The current study will attempt to examine both person- and situation-centered variables to provide so insights into the integration of females into the work environment.

Conceptual articles on females in non-traditional occupations (Schein, 1978; Terborg & Ilgen, 1975) offer potential as a means to investigate sex differences in job satisfaction with regard to situations. Terborg and Ilgen (1975) and Schein (1978) have detailed differences

between access and treatment discrimination with regard to women. Access discrimination occurs when "nonjob-related limitations are placed on an identifiable subgroup at the time a position is filled (Terborg & Ilgen, p. 353)." We currently have laws and rulings for dealing with access discrimination. Because of these laws, the retention of female employees has become an important concern for corporations.

Treatment discrimination refers to "invalid differential treatment of subgroup members once they have gained access to the organization (Terborg & Ilgen, p. 353)." This type of discrimination can be blatant or subtle. Treatment discrimination can result in differential pay rates and assignment of tasks (blatant forms), besides isolation from informal sources of information (subtle form). Schein (1978) states that subtle differential access (i.e., isolation) can affect the development of power acquisition skills for females. She suggests that women may be assigned to tasks which do not develop their need for organizational operating tactics.

If such treatment discrimination exists within organizations (whether intentional or not), female employees may perceive that they are isolated from the acquisition of required skills for advancement and successful completion of assigned tasks. This perceived isolation, it is hypothesized will impact on the job satisfaction attitudes of the employees.

In addition to treatment discrimination, the orientation of the respondent must also be addressed in order to evaluate the person-centered approach. Traditional ways of viewing sex-roles and traditional sex-role patterns have been challenged because of the stereotypic expectations that have evolved. If sex role stereotypes are functioning, traditionally oriented females may have goal setting expectancies which

are different from nontraditionally oriented females. These different expectancies should impact on job satisfaction.

This is an exploratory study which attempts to explain sex differences in job satisfaction within the framework of subtle treatment discrimination (a situation variable) and beliefs in roles for women (a person variable).

#### PROCEDURE

The subjects of the investigation were 1578 employees who had responded to a survey at a large corporation. The sample was comprised of 652 females and 926 males from all levels of the corporation.

In addition to demographic information, respondents were asked to complete a number of scales. These scales measured job satisfaction, beliefs in roles for women and perceived female isolation from power acquisition situations. A brief description of the scales follows.

Job Descriptive Index (JDI). Job satisfaction, the dependent variable, was measured by the Job Descriptive Index (Smith, Kendall and Hulin, 1969; copyright 1975, Bowling Green State University). The JDI, which is a cumulative point 72-item adjective checklist, consists of five subscales which measure satisfaction with: work, supervision, co-workers, pay and promotion. An overall job satisfaction score can also be obtained by totaling the subscale scores.

Perceived Female Isolation from Power Acquisition Situations (FEMISOL). This scale consists of ten items which attempt to measure the occurrence of subtle discrimination within the workplace. Items were constructed in relation to examples of such behaviors taken from articles postulating the occurrence of such isolation (Bernard, 1976; Schein, 1978).

No existing scale was known to be available. Coefficient alpha for the entire sample of the study was computed at .74. The scale included such items as: "Female employees are often prevented from getting important job-related information because they are excluded from inner cliques;" "Females get assigned "typically female tasks" which are outside actual job responsibilities;" and "There are duties in the job description which females are not allowed to do because they are females."

Sex Stereotype Scale. This scale consists of ten items selected from a scale used to measure attitudes toward non-traditional roles for women in an earlier study (Hopkins, 1976). The items provide an assessment of attitudes toward current sex roles. Coefficient alpha for the current study was computed at .74. The scale included items such as: "Women are generally too nervous and highstrung to make good professionals;" "Men are more aggressive and achievement oriented than women;" and "Husbands and wives should share in all household tasks if both are employed an equal number of hours outside the home."

Median splits were utilized to classify individuals into traditional and non-traditional, as well as, isolated and non-isolated groups on the independent variables. The data were analyzed using a 2 x 2 x 2 (Gender x Orientation x isolation) Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA).

## RESULTS

Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations for the groups.

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Insert Table 1 here

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Satisfaction of males and females overlaps upon division by orientation

and isolation. For example, the most satisfied group (overall satisfaction=199.01) were the traditionally oriented females who did not perceive isolation, while the least satisfied group (overall satisfaction=168.01) were the non-traditionally oriented females who did perceive isolation. The MANOVA analyses are presented in Table 2.

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Insert Table 2 here

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The Gender x Isolation and Gender x Orientation interactions were significant. The Gender and Isolation main effects were significant.

There were several significant univariate F's for Gender. These were for: Work (F=17.384, p lt .001), Co-workers (F=4.931, p lt .03), Pay (F=35.529, p lt .001) and Promotion (F=8.421, p lt .004). All of the univariate F's for Isolation were significant at the .001 level. There was one significant univariate F for the Gender x Orientation interaction (Pay: F=4.953, p lt .03). Several of the univariate F's were significant for the Gender x Isolation interaction. These were: Work (F=14.432, p lt .001), Pay (F=8.162, p lt .004), Promotion (F=4.483, p lt .034) and Overall (F=12.444, p lt .001).

#### CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study indicate that sex differences in job satisfaction exist. However Orientation (a person-centered variable) did not seem to have as much impact on satisfaction as did Gender and Isolation. However, this does not necessarily mean that person-centered variables should be dismissed in further investigations. This is similar to the position taken by Bankart and Wittenbraker (1980) on a related topic. They



have stated that cultural acceptance of the value of androgyny is discrepant from its acceptance by researchers. They believe this is because the orientation of the perceiver needs to be examined. While Bankart and Wittenbraker are dealing with person perception, an analogous case can be made for job satisfaction analysis. In this study, traditionally oriented males and females seem to have higher job satisfaction within isolation categories than those who are non-traditionally oriented (refer to Table 1). Such an approach can help to clarify the previously inconsistent literature.

Kreps and Clark (1975) and Riger and Galligan (1980) have indicated that the labor force participation rate of females has expanded dramatically. However, Riger and Galligan report that females are concentrated in lower status job categories. This study indicates that males and females who perceived isolation were less satisfied than those who did not.<sup>2</sup> It may be that the perceivers of isolation are in low status jobs which offer little in the way of career or skill development. This area must be further investigated.

If research is to help determine ways of integrating females into the work place, it will have to examine the orientations job incumbents bring to the organization, in addition to the structure of the organization itself (see Kanter, 1977). It may be that some organizational members are satisfied with "low status" jobs because they are not job-centered. On the other hand, females who possess skills and ambitions for high status (i.e., non-traditional jobs) should not be ignored. The structure of the organization

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<sup>2</sup>Although the FEMISOL Scale was supposed to measure female isolation, it was highly correlated with a minority isolation scale ( $r=.70$ ). This seems to indicate that it actually measured general isolation from power acquisition situations. Barclay, Fields & Halpert (1981) discuss the minority scale in more detail.

may be such that females are isolated in low status jobs and have difficulty "crossing over" to what they perceive to be better jobs. Additional research detailing the specific duties of job incumbents should be conducted in order to investigate the impact of the Isolation variable.

The current study indicates that by merely examining job satisfaction vis-a-vis males or females is not sufficient. Additional research which more clearly defines the impact of person- and situation-centered variables on job attitudes and behaviors needs to be conducted. Additionally, future research should continue to consider the statements made by Riger and Galligan (1980) concerning these approaches and their implications.

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TABLE 1  
GROUP MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR JOB SATISFACTION SCALES

Group (n)				Work	Supervision	Co-workers	Pay	Promotion	Total
Factor <sup>1</sup>									
A	B	C	M						
1	1	1 (153)	SD	36.35 9.26	42.23 11.79	44.36 8.80	21.83 12.43	31.36 16.90	176.22 39.30
1	1	2 (205)	M	38.64	44.18	46.86	22.13	37.80	189.60
			SD	8.48	9.54	8.28	11.10	16.61	33.98
1	2	1 (309)	M	37.37	42.39	43.91	21.20	36.07	180.88
			SD	8.31	10.02	9.44	11.77	15.86	36.46
1	2	2 (259)	M	38.17	44.27	46.85	21.90	39.75	191.12
			SD	8.16	9.57	7.35	11.49	15.86	33.70
2	1	1 (235)	M	33.69	40.86	41.80	22.26	29.51	168.01
			SD	10.14	10.92	10.98	11.90	16.06	38.96
2	1	2 (239)	M	38.19	44.01	46.38	26.61	38.37	193.52
			SD	7.86	10.52	7.38	11.76	15.95	36.66
2	2	1 (100)	M	33.22	41.21	43.70	25.64	32.32	176.79
			SD	9.60	9.93	9.06	12.46	16.66	39.02
2	2	2 (78)	M	37.65	45.13	47.62	28.69	38.90	199.01
			SD	7.11	9.08	6.62	12.18	15.48	32.20

<sup>1</sup>Factors: A=Gender (1=Male, 2=Female); B=Beliefs in Roles for Women (1=Non-traditional, 2=Traditional); C=Perceived Isolation of Females from Power Acquisition Situations (1=Isolated, 2=non-isolated)

TABLE 2  
SUMMARY OF MANOVA RESULTS

Source	Test of Roots	F	DFHYP	DFERR	p less than
Gender	1 through 1	13.510	6.00	1565.00	.001
Orientation	1 through 1	1.910	6.00	1565.00	.076
Isolation	1 through 1	17.147	6.00	1565.00	.001
Gender x Orientation	1 through 1	2.978	6.00	1565.00	.007
Gender x Isolation	1 through 1	3.345	6.00	1565.00	.003
Orientation x Isolation	1 through 1	.517	6.00	1565.00	.796
Gender x Orientation x Isolation	1 through 1	1.774	6.00	1565.00	.101