Personnel directors (N=34) responded to a mailed adjective checklist describing the ideal secretary. This list contained eight adjectives corresponding to each of Holland's six vocationally-related personality traits (Realistic, Social, Investigative, Enterprising, Conventional, and Artistic) and eight feminine and eight masculine adjectives from the Bem Sex Role Inventory. The results revealed that the personnel directors preferred a Holland profile high in the Conventional and Social areas and low in the Artistic area (p .001), but had also selected more masculine than feminine items (p .01). The most frequently checked adjectives were practical, tactful, friendly, confident, self-controlled, efficient, stable, orderly, detailed, helpful, responsible, energetic, self-reliant, conscientious, cheerful, cooperative, precise, and honest. The least frequently checked adjectives were shy, introverted, impractical, complicated, popular, compassionate, risk-taker, emotional, non-conforming, pleasure-seeking, sympathetic, humble, materialistic, cautious, domineering, obedient, gentle, adventurous, convincing, and disorderly. (Author/NB)
SECRETARIAL PERSONALITY: THE IDEAL ACCORDING TO
HOLLAND AND BEM PROFILES

T.L. Brink, Ph.D., M.B.A., Director
Graduate Program in Public Administration
College of Notre Dame
Belmont, CA 94002

ABSTRACT:
Personnel directors (N = 34) responded to a mailed adjective checklist describing the ideal secretary. The list contained eight adjectives corresponding to each of John Holland's six vocationally-related personality traits (R,I,A,S,E,C), and eight "feminine" and eight "masculine" adjectives from Bem. Results indicated that the personnel directors preferred a high C, high S, low A Holland profile (p < .001), but had also selected more masculine than feminine items (p < .01). An analysis of the individual items helped to explain the latter finding.

INTRODUCTION:
Holland's (1965) hexagonal model of vocationally related personality traits contends that office positions, be high on the C factor. For the past half century, the position of secretary has been associated with women, and the term "pink collar workers" has come to describe dead-end clerical jobs with no upward mobility. Therefore, the two hypotheses guiding this research were that

1) The ideal secretary would be described in terms associated with a high C Holland code.

2) The ideal secretary would be described in terms associated with feminity.

METHOD:
In the spring of 1987, a hundred personnel directors of electronics firms headquartered in Silicon Valley received a mail survey, comprised of a 56 item adjective checklist: eight adjectives related to each of Holland's six factors, and six were "masculine," six were "feminine" items from the BSRI (Bem, 1974). (Two masculine and two feminine items were counted doubly, as representing both a given Holland trait as well as masculinity-femininity.
RESULTS:

Thirty-four returns were received within the next three months. The average personnel director had circled 43% of the available adjectives. The most frequently checked adjectives were practical, tactful, friendly, confident, self-controlled, efficient, stable, orderly, detailed, helpful, responsible, energetic, self-reliant, conscientious, cheerful, cooperative, precise, and honest. The least frequently checked adjectives were shy, introverted, impractical, complicated, popular, compassionate, risk-taker, emotional, non-conforming, pleasure-seeking, sympathetic, humble, materialistic, cautious, domineering, obedient, gentle, adventurous, convincing, and disorderly.

The mean number of adjectives circled for each Holland code:

- R = 3.15
- S = 5.15
- I = 2.91
- E = 2.56
- A = 0.97
- C = 5.71

These data were statistically significant, according to Friedman's rank test for repeated measures (chi square = 108.60, df = 5, p < .001), thus confirming Holland's claim that secretarial work requires a high C, high S personality.

Surprisingly, the average number of "feminine" adjectives checked was only 1.79, while the average number of "masculine" items checked was 2.94. (Friedman's rank test for repeated measures yielded a chi square of 7.53, df = 1, p < .01). This unexpected finding becomes comprehensible upon an item analysis. While almost all the personnel directors did circle the "feminine" trait cheerful, only half circled the "feminine" trait of understanding, and virtually no one circled gentle, sympathetic, compassionate, or shy. Regarding the "masculine" traits: the majority of the respondents circled self-reliant, about half circled ambitious, independent, assertive, and analytical, and virtually no one circled risk-taker.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION:

It must be kept in mind that the personnel directors responded to a hypothetical or theoretical situation, in which they were called to describe the "ideal" secretary, and this approach may not yield the same results as a concurrent or predictive validation using real secretaries as the subjects, or an experiment about whether or not personnel directors really do tend to hire obedient job applicants for secretaries. Let us hope that the advance of office technology and humanistic theories of management bring about a trend in industry to want a more self-reliant, autonomous employee in secretarial positions, so that the plight of the pink collars may become history.
In order to understand Holland's theory, imagine a six-sided box. In each of the six corners there is a given personality trait that is vocationally linked. In each person, some of these traits will be more pronounced than others, predisposing that individual to be more compatible with certain occupations instead of others.

CONVENTIONAL (C) people like to carry out details and follow through on instructions. These folk enjoy order, certainty, security. They make good accountants, office workers, civil servants, and military. They can put up with an assembly line. Most large organizations have a hard time assimilating people who do not have at least a moderate C trait.

ARTISTIC (A) people can be found in the corner 180 degrees away from the C people described above. A great source of confusion comes when we confuse the ARTISTIC personality with artistic ability or even artistic interests. A person with artistic ability can paint, sculpt, sing, tapdance, or write. A person with artistic interest may enjoy tapdancing, or going to an art gallery, or listening to music on the radio. A person who is high on the ARTISTIC personality factor is someone who would be best working in the loose, unstructured atmosphere in which creativity thrives. Now notice, not every tapdancing, stained glass enthusiast who likes to play Bach on the stereo necessarily has this A personality factor. Not all high A jobs involve the fine or performing arts. Writers, broadcasters, philosophers, advertisers, and professors necessarily work in high A environments. So do commercial artists, musicians, actors, directors, photographers, architects, fashion models, and designers.
REALISTIC (R) is another term which may connote something that it should not. These people are not necessarily more levelheaded or less likely to experience schizophrenic hallucinations. Just think of high R people as people who like to work with things. High R jobs are those which are mechanical, athletic, outdoors, or protective; anything hands-on, including most forms of engineering.

SOCIAL (S) types would be found in the corner 180 degrees from the R types, and right next to the A types. High S people like to work with people in a helping relationship. High S jobs would include teaching, childcare, health care, and personal service. There would be high S components in sales, management and most office work. High S people become extremely unhappy in environments in which there are few opportunities for mutually fulfilling interpersonal contact.

INVESTIGATIVE (I) types can be found between the R and A types. These people like working with data and ideas: observing, analyzing, evaluating. Anything that involves the sciences, natural or social, pure or applied has a high I component: e.g., medicine, computer programming.

ENTERPRISING (E) types are found in the corner 180 degrees from the I types, and next to the C's and S's. Unlike the I's, the E's would rather do something about a problem than study it. Like the C's, the E's are interested in organizations and rules, but the E's are the ones who establish the organization's rules while the C's obey. Like the S's, the E's are people-oriented, but the E's goal is not so much to help people as to manipulate them in the service of organizational goals. These shakers and movers do well as entrepreneurs, managers, lawyers, politicians, and in sales.

Getting your Holland Code is one of the best ways to figure out in which types of employment your kind of personality will find fulfillment. The test manual for the SDS suggests that you look at your three highest traits, and then find the corresponding occupations which fit that code. I don't think that the SDS (or even the adjective checklist which you have just taken) is so precise as to determine exactly the one job best for you. Remember, just as scissors need two blades in order to cut paper, so a wise employment decision requires two opposite factors: personality and abilities, and the Holland Code refers to personality. The best way to use the Holland Code (or knowledge of one's abilities by themselves) is as an exclusion factor. Look at where you scored low, not where you scored high. If you had a low C forget accounting, office work, or the military. Rule out teaching and social work if your S was low, going into business for yourself if your E was low, medical doctor if your I was low.
INSTRUCTIONS: Below are listed 5f adjectives. CIRCLE the words which you feel describe the way that you are, most of the time. You may circle as many or as few words that apply.

FRANK  HUMBLE  PERSISTENT  SHY
HONEST  MATERIALISTIC  STABLE  PRACTICAL
ANALYTICAL  CAUTIOUS  CURIOUS  INTELLECTUAL
PRECISÉ  RATIONAL  METHODICAL  INTROVERTED
DISORDERLY  EXPRESSIVE  EMOTIONAL  IMPRACTICAL
INTUITIVE  ORIGINAL  NONCONFORMING  COMPLICATED
CONVINCING  HELPFUL  KIND  TACTFUL
COOPERATIVE  RESPONSIBLE  UNDERSTANDING  FRIENDLY
ADVENTUROUS  DOMINEERING  OPTIMISTIC  POPULAR
AMBITIOUS  ENERGETIC  PLEASURE-SEEKING  CONFIDENT
CONSCIENTIOUS  DEPENDABLE  ORDERLY  SELF-CONTROLLED
CAREFUL  OBEYDIENT  DETAILED  EFFICIENT
CHEERFUL  GENTLE  SYMPATHETIC  COMPASSIONATE
ASSERTIVE  SELF-RELIANT  INDEPENDENT  RISK-TAKER
This test is scored 0-100 (with 100 being the best). Notice that some items are scored positively (points given if the word is circled) while other items are scored negatively (points given if the word is not circled). All one point items are significant to at least the .05 level; all two pointers to at least the .01 level; all three pointers to at least the .001 level. Notice that many items are not scored.

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