

THE OCCUPATIONAL STATUS OF AIRLINE FLIGHT ATTENDANTS

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A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Sociology

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Master of Arts at

Concordia University

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

May, 1979

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by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is an inquiry into the changes in the occupational status of Airline Flight Attendants. It deals with two themes: the historical causes of the changes in their status and occupational identity and its effects upon their self-concepts.

I first trace through the changes in a Canadian Airline from its beginning to the present jet age. I then note the changes in technological developments of aircraft and their consequences upon the social organization of work, the status of the occupation and of its members.

In 1930, the primitive conditions of flying, the small size of operation and the qualifications required of flight attendants, meant that the occupation had a relatively high social status among occupations dominated by women. The coming of the jet airplane made flying fast, popular and uneventful. These changes affected the size of operation, job requirements and status imageries.

The inquiry into the flight attendant's role relationships reveals inconsistencies among perceptions of status and links these to the changed nature of the work role. Within the work situation, the segmentation and routinization of tasks and the impersonality of contacts with passengers, all detract from the status of the occupation. However, status is recovered by an in-group evaluation system which allocates the extrinsic rewards according to seniority. These appear to be consistent with the images held by the general public regarding flight attendants' lifestyles. In face-to-face relationships with passengers, attempts to recover status image are done by 'role-distance' behavior.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project is not only the product of my thought and effort, but of the ideas, comments and efforts of the people who guided, helped and supported me through its development to its final conclusion. For this I owe many thanks to many people.

I wish to thank particularly Professor K. Johassohn for his comments, critical interest, great patience and help throughout the work. Professor J. Smucker for his unending intellectual support and guidance. His ideas, comments and interest helped to form a bundle of raw thoughts and feeling into an orderly study. Professor H. Guindon for his cogent comments and enthusiasm in the project.

I am also most grateful to my friend A. E. Patterson, whose continuous support and assistance during this time helped me to continue in the task. A special gratitude is due to Ms. B. Winegarden for her help and services, both large and small.

My debt is also to Air Canada and especially to Mrs. E. Buckanan, Mr. D. Lantin, Mr. W. L. Reeves, Mr. Zakala, Mr. W. J. Litchauer, Mr. F. Stadelmaier, who provided me with the historical and organizational data which are basic to the study. However, my greatest debt, quite obviously, is to the score of fellow flight attendants who gave so generously of their time and made remarkable efforts in the compiling of diaries, responding to the questionnaires and spending hours in talks about themselves and their work. In particular I wish to thank Mr. R. Gregoire, Mr. C. Lord, Mrs. D. Wiser, Ms. L. Shields, Ms. J. Sutto, Mrs. A. McLaughling, Mrs. V. Fejfar, Ms. M. Asselin, Ms. M. F. Senega and many others. Without their collaboration this thesis would not have been written. This project is dedicated to them.

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## CHAPTER 1

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

#### 1. Introduction

Status, in its evaluative meaning has always been an important dimension in almost every society and culture. A claim for status is in a way a quest for acceptance and recognition. To honor such a claim means legitimization of one's image and social relevance.

In most societies, occupations or the work roles, have been associated with particular lifestyles, and with social status. However, in modern industrial society the application of rationality in work organizations, the complexity of structural differences within the larger society, the multiplicity of groups claiming superior status recognition, all contribute to a lack of consensus in the assignment and claim of status.

The growing contemporary preoccupation and concern with status reflects this situation. Terms such as 'status seekers', 'status striving', 'status anxiety', have been frequently used in the popular press as different commentators try to account for dissatisfaction and strife among segments of society.<sup>1</sup> The current concern about occupational status, both in the popular press and as a sociological variable, demands that it be given more systematic and critical attention, particularly in view of the importance of status for the individual's well being.

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<sup>1</sup>For an account of XX century concern for status, see Vance Q. Packard, The Status Seekers, (New York: Pocket Books, 1961)

This thesis is an effort in this direction. Specifically, it will explore the relationship between the application of rationality in work organizations and conflict experienced in the definition of an occupational group's social identity. Airline flight attendants of a Canadian airline provide the focus for this case-study.

Prior to dealing with the central issue, namely the occupational status and identity of airline flight attendants, the problem as related to group attributes is first stated. The approach is to analyze the structural and symbolic values and the system of social and structural relationships in which the group is involved and dependent for status.

This study will first provide an account of the beginning of civil aviation and the jet era in order to have a historical frame of reference within which to view and analyze the effects and the impact of change. Then attention will be directed toward the importance of status values for the flight attendants and how these are honored or rejected by the many other groups with which flight attendants are in contact. Conflict regarding definitions of status and self-image, as perceived and interpreted by flight attendants, are then analyzed.



2. WHO IS A FLIGHT ATTENDANT? AN INTRODUCTION TO THE EMPIRICAL PROBLEM.

'Ministering Angels of the Airline' 'Superwomen'

'Great Playmates' 'Swingers in the sky'

'Glorified waitresses' 'Unsung Heroines'

'I want to be thought of as a professional not as a swinger in the sky!'<sup>2</sup>

These article headlines and advertising ads appearing in Canadian newspapers during the period 1938-1976, present conflicting images of flight attendants as they are viewed across time and by different groups. These images give us a first insight into the problematic status and social identity of airline flight attendants. Nurse, maid, mother, glamorous girl, entertainer, professional.... who is a flight attendant? What values, qualities, functions and attributes does she assert and exemplify and how are they ultimately validated by the different groups upon which she is dependent?

Airline flight attendants have been in a paradoxical situation in North America over the past decade. Regarded as sort of superwomen in the late '30s and '40s, the introduction of large jets, of mass travelling, and big operations have created complexities and ambiguities in the role which affect the flight attendant's occupational status and image. With bigger, faster and safer airplanes, the world has become smaller, better known and a new commodity to sell to a growing variety of people. The twin prop-engined,

<sup>2</sup>W. A. Perth, "Super-women required for hostess jobs," Toronto Star, 1940; Dick Rummel, "Glamor Aloft," The Vancouver Sun, 4 May 1940; "Hotesse de l'air: un mythe qui bat des ailes," Marie Claire, September 1976, pp. 5-13; Ed Gray, "The Barbie Dolls Revolt," Airfare, April 1975.

twenty passenger plane, going at 200 m. p. h., is today replaced with four jet-engined planes carrying approximately 450 passengers at a speed of 550 m. p. h. This process of growth brought rationalization, competition and then government regulations. These, in turn, have changed the occupation. Today, the number of flight attendants has increased, work has become segmentalized, tasks simplified and requirements for entering the occupation lowered. Moreover, flight attendants have become elements in organizational promotional campaigns which have used their image to promote routes and services in order to attract customers. The flight attendant's image has become one of young, glamorous women, 'going places' and pampering male customers. All this, at the very time when the process of rationalization and standardization has shrunk the area of job responsibilities and changed the intrinsic rewards from the job on board. Passengers meanwhile, have become an unknown mass. Yet, flight attendants still symbolize in the eyes of most people, a larger world that goes beyond the role they fulfill inside the airplane. Their lifestyle is independent, uncommon and unroutine. Their activities and associations seem to be valued and desired by people in general. Consequently these two sides of reality make the flight attendant's assignment and claim of status complex and problematic. They indicate a status and an identity which is insecure and difficult. They also indicate antagonistic evaluations and expectations which require different if not contradictory modes of behaviour.

This study is focused upon two central issues: 1) the effects of discrepant definitions concerning the status of occupational groups in a complex social system such as modern industrial society;

2) how people respond when their identity and status is insecure and under constant threat.

As a flight attendant for more than ten years and in constant interaction with passengers, stewardesses and people in general, I became aware of discrepant definitions of 'self', of a definite mismatch of definition and evaluation concerning my work role as it was viewed by different social groups: e.g. friends, family, customers and people in general. Thus, it is here, from this feeling of inconsistency concerning status or image among different role-definers, and a deep interest in understanding how people respond when their status is threatened and their identity is confused and insecure, that this project begins.

### 3. PLAN OF THE STUDY

Chapter 2, introduces the conceptual framework. Two key variables, status and role are analyzed and applied to the notion of work. Some important issues concerning the dynamics of evaluation - conceptualized both objectively and subjectively - the ambiguity of occupational status scales, the changed role of work and its implications for the individuals involved, are analyzed. The theoretical implications of this discussion are presented as a guide for the empirical research.

Chapter 3, introduces the research procedure, methods of data collection, definition and operationalization of the major concepts.

Chapters 4 and 5, present the nature and the status of the occupation in two time periods: the beginning of civil aviation and the jet era. Three interrelated contexts are considered: the technological, social and the work organization. Their effects upon the people involved are then analyzed.

Chapter 6, introduces the objective index of status and the total status rank. Implications for the empirical research follow.

Chapter 7, introduces the subjective definition of status as seen by the flight attendants and how it is validated in their social milieu.

Chapter 8 describes the place of the flight attendant in the work organization, and Chapter 9 introduces the influence of the client as bestower and observer of status.

Chapter 10, concludes the study with observations and statements concerning future research.

## CHAPTER II

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

#### I. INTRODUCTION

In almost every society, status as an evaluative variable, is an important aspect of an individual's life and identity. In modern industrial society, the work role has become an index of status. Its impact goes beyond the world of work and it has consequences in all contexts important to the individuals. It is by a work role that individuals identify and appraise themselves and are identified and appraised by others.

However evaluation in modern industrial society is highly controversial. The highly differentiated occupational structure and the proliferation of more or less integrated systems in which people participate, have produced a bewildering multiplicity of normative and evaluative standards upon which behaviour is based. Status is multidimensional and problematic. These conditions make it difficult for an individual to affirm a positive status and to maintain it in more than one context.

The impact of these conditions upon individuals is controversial as well. Some social scientists open the possibility of conflict, others de-emphasize it. To understand the problem of status we have to raise certain questions concerning its importance and dynamics and its relationship to the nature of work for the individuals involved.

The aim of this chapter is: a) to develop a conceptual frame upon which status, as an evaluative variable, and role, as a behavioral variable, are viewed

and analyzed; b) to point out some of the crucial characteristics of industrial society which make status by a work role, problematic to ascertain;

c) to see the implications of these factors upon the individuals concerned.

## 2. STATUS

In most of the sociological literature, the concept of status is viewed either as a classificatory or an evaluative term. The former distinguishes a definite position, while the latter implies social evaluation. Linton, who can be taken as representing the classification approach, defines statuses as 'polar positions ... in patterns of reciprocal behaviour'.<sup>1</sup> Status represents a 'collection of rights and duties.' Role refers to the enactment of these rights and duties. This approach links status with role. Likewise, Hughes states 'a status is ..., a definite social position for whose incumbents there are definite rights, limitations of rights and duties', and, like Linton, he adds, 'a role is the dynamic aspect of status.'<sup>2</sup>

In a similar view, K. Davis equates status with position and identity, 'a person ... enters a social position with an identity already established. His identity refers to his position or status,' and he defines status as 'a person's ... rights and obligations with reference to others.'<sup>3</sup> Role is defined as the actual behaviour performed by a person in a given status. In addition he adds the notion of prestige and esteem, as evaluations. Prestige is defined as the 'invidious value ... attached solely to status.' He claims 'anybody who happens to hold the position enjoys the prestige that goes with it.'<sup>4</sup> Esteem is viewed as

<sup>1</sup>Ralph Linton, The Study of Man, (New York; Appleton Century, 1936) p. 113.

<sup>2</sup>Everett C. Hughes, Men and Their Work, (The Free Press, Glencoe, Ill. 1958), p. 57.

<sup>3</sup>Kingsley Davis, Human Society, (New York, MacMillan Co., 1949) pp. 83-189.

<sup>4</sup>ibid.

'the evaluation of ... role.' It is the 'value attached to any given role.'<sup>5</sup>

Briefly, prestige is viewed as the 'invidious' evaluation of a position compared to others, and it is carried over to its incumbents. Esteem, as it is related to role or the process of carrying out the stipulations of the position, is the evaluation of 'how well' individuals carry out their obligations.

M. Weber uses status by incorporating evaluation within the term and, like many modern theorists, he conceptualizes status as 'a unique mode of hierarchical ordering,' that based upon social honor or prestige. Claim to honor or prestige, for Weber, rests '... on one or more of the following bases: (a) mode of living, (b) a formal process of education which may consist in empirical or rational training and the acquisition of the corresponding modes of life, or (c) on the prestige of birth or an occupation.'<sup>6</sup> Claim to status-honor is manifested by 'a specific style of life ... from all those who wish to belong to the circle' and it is determined by 'a specific, positive or negative, social estimation of honor.'<sup>7</sup> In turn, this evaluation of persons, in Weber's view, leads to differential treatment of them.

Consequently, status, in Weber's terms, involves the translation of different sets of rank-assigning criteria into social honor, within a community.

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Max Weber, The Theory of Social and Economic Organization, trans. and edited by Talcott Parsons (paperback ed., New York: The Free Press of Glencoe 1964), p. 428.

<sup>7</sup>Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, ed. From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 189.



Social honor or prestige is based upon a value-system which differs from the rationality of the market system. The market system is based upon monetary or property values, whereas the status system is based upon 'style of life.' From this postulate, Weber derived a general specification of the appropriate conditions under which a status claim could best be validated: '... when the bases of the acquisition and distribution of goods are relatively stable, ... status is favored.'<sup>8</sup> Conversely, every period of significant technological, economic and social change, affects the basis of status and threatens its legitimacy. This means that status-honor is linked to a consideration of the basic values characteristics of the social system. Such values influence the nature and the basis of the status system.

Weber also suggested that occupational groups could also be status groups insofar as they are capable of (a) determining a communal style of life, and (b) successfully claiming social honor as a result of (a). Thus, 'status groups' imply that a community exists, within which there is a consensus on the criteria for evaluation and the evaluation itself.

Weber's conceptualization of status as an evaluative variable based upon the prestige of an occupation, sets the stage for its use here and becomes the conceptual basis of analysis. Occupations, in modern industrial society, have evaluative connotations. They not only relate the individual to an economic position inside the social system, they also define a work-situation which in turn has consequences on the values people use to differentiate, identify and appraise

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<sup>8</sup>Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, pp. 193-194.

themselves vis-a-vis others. These values and their manifestations in the socio-structural contexts are important to the individuals concerned and determine the patterns of social estimation among people. Consequently the use of status as an evaluated position, emphasizing the value-laden dimension implicit in all human actions, is an important concept which enables us to study the process of values and meaning people use to make their life relevant.

The next section will look at the concept of role as it is related to the concept of status.

### 3. ROLE

Like status, role has been differently defined and conceptualized. Literature on the concept abounds and indicates a striking diversity of definitions and uses.

Role will here be used in relation to status. The use and definition of status as an evaluated position based upon social esteem and honor, directs us to a definition of role which takes into consideration the process of meaning and values underlying human behaviour and which can be used empirically.

A common definition of role refers to it as a set of expectations regarding behaviour. Expectations are a set of 'standards' applied to individuals occupying particular positions in a social system. When a role-incumbent puts these expectations into effect, he is said to be performing a role. Roles are always reciprocal. For this reason, the expectations of each individual in the role relationship are important in any analysis of role.

While there is a certain agreement on this definition of role, disagreements concern the focus of expectation. Linton, and most structural theorists, in associating role with status, divests status of any social hierarchical connotation. Role is '... the sum total of the culture patterns associated with a particular status.'<sup>9</sup> These culture patterns underlying behaviour consist of '... attitudes, values and behaviour ascribed by the society to any and all persons occupying this status.'<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Ralph Linton, p. 114.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

Likewise, T. Parson,<sup>11</sup> F. Znaniecki,<sup>12</sup> A. Rose,<sup>13</sup> conceptualize role as the normative behaviour patterns associated with a position within the social structure.

This approach refers to role either as a set of norms or prescriptions -rights and obligations- defining what the behaviour of a position member should be, or, the 'actions' individuals engage 'to validate' their position. The obligations refer to actions expected of the occupant of the position; the rights refer to actions which he may expect from others occupying a reciprocal role.

An alternate approach to role is found in the socio-psychological writing of Cooley,<sup>14</sup> Mead,<sup>15</sup> Park and Burgess<sup>16</sup> and others. These theorists concentrate mostly on the role of 'self' and 'others' as important factors in guiding behaviour. Cottrell's<sup>17</sup> definition of role best expresses this approach:

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<sup>11</sup>Talcott Parsons, "Age and Sex in the Social Structure of the United States," American Sociological Review VII (October 1942), pp. 604-616.

<sup>12</sup>Florian Znaniecki, The Social Role of the Man of Knowledge, (New York, Columbia University Press 1940), p. 19.

<sup>13</sup>Arnold Rose, "The Adequacy of Women's expectations for Adult Roles," Social Forces, xxx (1951), pp. 69-77

<sup>14</sup>Charles H. Cooley, Human Nature and the Social Order, (New York: Scribner, 1902).

<sup>15</sup>George Herbert Mead, Mind, Self and Society, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934).

<sup>16</sup>Robert E. Park and E. W. Burgess, An Introduction to the Science of Sociology, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1921).

<sup>17</sup>Leonard S. Cottrell, "The adjustment of the Individual to His Age and Sex Roles," American Sociological Review VII (October 1942) : 617.

'A role (is) ... an internally consistent series of conditioned responses by one member of a social situation which represents the stimulus pattern for a similarly internally consistent series of conditioned responses of the other(s) in that situation. Dealing with human behaviour in terms of roles, therefore, requires that any item of behaviour must always be placed in some self-other context.'

This approach views behaviour as the result of a process based upon 'self' and 'others'. In this context, perception of expectations and the way roles are enacted are mediated by the 'self' and are derived from an interaction situation. Here, coordinate with the concept of role, or 'what the actor does' is the concept of self, or 'what the actor is.'

Role is here referred to as the member's orientation to the part they play in the system. The 'self-other' context of behaviour and action as interaction, is given great emphasis. Role is the inner definition of what someone in a given position perceives that he should do.

While these two approaches appear to differ, they may also be seen as complementary. The first approach defines the concept role in terms of expectations based upon prescriptions or norms; the second, supplements the first, by adding the concept of 'self' or the evaluative component of expectations. They suggest a definition of role which takes into consideration not only prescriptions and norms as determinants of behaviour but also the individual's subjective assessment of the interaction situation. Ultimately, expectations and the subjective assessment by the individuals of these expectations are revealed in behaviour.

The concept of role is incomplete without the concept consensus. Consensus as used here, refers to the degree of commonality or identicalness in role perception among a specific group of role definers.<sup>18</sup> Normative or structural theories make the assumption that consensus is necessary for social stability and that there is a degree of integration between expectations -self/others- and actions. Parson has termed this process 'the complementarity of expectations',<sup>19</sup> Znaniecki as 'social circles'.<sup>20</sup>

However it is easily demonstrated that complete consensus on role expectations for a specified position is seldom found. Modern role theorists have attacked the argument of consensus on the ground that the ever widening 'social circles' characteristic of a modern world and the tremendous differentiation of functions characteristic of modern industrial society, produce a bewildering multiplicity of normative and evaluative standards upon which human behaviour is based. Levinson<sup>21</sup> argues that the phenomena characteristic of modern society: the diversity spurred by the tremendous rate of technological change, geographical and occupational mobility and its opposite

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<sup>18</sup>Neal Gross, Ward S. Mason, and Alexander W. McEachern, Exploration in Role Analysis: Studies of the School Superintendency Role, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc. 1958) pp. 21-43.

<sup>19</sup>Talcott Parsons, The Social System, (New York: Free Press, 1951)

<sup>20</sup>Florian Znaniecki, Social Relations and Social Roles, (San Francisco: Chandler, 1965).

<sup>21</sup>Daniel J. Levinson "Role, Personality and Social Structure" Sociological Theory, ed., A. Lewis Coser and Bernard Rosenberg, (London: MacMillan 1964) pp. 284-97.

trend, the standardization of culture on a mass basis and the growth of large scale organizations, heighten the importance of status while reducing integration in the values, thus in role expectations among individuals. These two phenomena institutionalize conflict.

Consequently, for modern role theorists role is seen as a multi-variable concept in which 'self-concept,' 'other's demands' and the actual performance are treated as variables. This formulation of the concept role will be used here. Role is defined in three ways: (1) there is first the idea of the actor's orientation or view of his role. This is the actor's self-concept, his definition of the situation; (2) the second way of looking at role is that it is a set of expectations or demands made upon individuals by 'significant others' of the 'role set;' (3) the third definition of role involves the action of a person, his performance or what he actually does.

This definition of role offers the potential for visualizing the impact of self interpretation and evaluation upon prescriptive behaviour -rights and obligations- and the way self-assessment and expectations are revealed in actual overt behaviour.

#### 4. THE DYNAMIC OF STATUS EVALUATION

I hold to the view that as a status refers to a 'unique mode of evaluation' based upon social honor or prestige, so role refers to the expectations associated with the prestige of a position. In any social system, different positions or position-holders are awarded different gradations of honor. This gradation of honor or prestige indicates the standing, the significance and the social identity of the role-incumbents and determines their status expectations.<sup>22</sup>

The most visible manifestations and expressions of status are symbolic, of which, the most important source rests on the development of a peculiar style of life which becomes the symbol or the characteristic trait of the group. These characteristics become qualities individuals attach to themselves and use to define and differentiate themselves from other social groups. On the basis of these qualities they claim and expect different degrees of 'deference'; depending upon particular social contexts, 'others' confer the deference. As such, status is not only an attribute, it implies a social relationship where role incumbents' status expectations are recognized and honored.

This process of status evaluation is dependent upon (a) a network of social relationships, (b) recognition of the agreed upon criteria or values of status, and (c) the opportunity for interaction by means of which claims to

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<sup>22</sup>For a detailed analysis of the process of "status evaluation" see Edward A. Shils, "Deference", Social Stratification, ed. J.A. Jackson, (Cambridge : Univ. Press, 1972) pp. 104; S.N. Eisenstadt "Prestige Participation and Strata Formation", Social Stratification, ed. John A. Jackson, pp. 62-103. E.A. Shils, "Charisma, Order and Status," American Sociological Review, 30, February, 1965) : 199-213.



honor based upon these values can be observed and evaluated.

Evaluation can be consensual or conflictual. Consensus rests upon:

(a) the unity and integration of the values of a society used in the allocation of honor, These values become the general rules and expectations which regulate behaviour among role incumbents; (b) agreement of individuals or groups to accept and to adhere to these values; (c) cognition throughout society concerning the status characteristics and saliency of each status position.

Conflict, results in a lack of agreement in status perceptions among role definers. It rests on disagreements over the factors mentioned above which in turn, brings disruption within the status system and people's relationships.

Consequently in any analysis of status, the nature of society, the integration of values and how these are adopted by the various social groups, the social relationships and contexts in which individuals and groups interact and participate, become important elements to be considered in the process of evaluation.

The following pages introduce the basis of status in modern industrial society, its structure, elements and social processes which are responsible for consensus or conflict in the process of evaluation by status.

## 5. THE WORK ROLE AS A CRITERION OF STATUS

In modern industrial society, occupation or the work role has become a major determinant of status and a referent point for individual identification.

Studies and research in industrial sociology overwhelmingly report the importance of the work role not only as an index of social differentiation but also as a major determinant of lifestyles.<sup>23</sup>

A work role by providing a work situation, absorbs individuals into a group. This group provides the individual with a sub-culture and conventions which influence individual lifestyle and attitudes towards other individuals and groups, both within or outside the work situation. The concept of lifestyle includes the goals, the activities and the symbols which are relevant to the group, the community and/or society in general, that is the socio-cultural order into which the group is thought to participate. These characteristics, of which the nature, the quality and the social relevance may widely vary, become the status-entitling properties, the 'invidious' elements which influence status conceptions among people.

It is on the basis of the possession of these entitlements that individuals grant status to themselves and claim it from others. It is on the basis of the

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<sup>23</sup>Evidence supporting the work role as an index of social differentiation and as a determinant of lifestyle has to be found mostly in community studies. See W. Lloyd Warner, M. Meeker and K. Eells, Social Class in America, (Chicago: Harper and Row, 1949); as well as P. K. Hatt, C. C. Worth et al., Occupations and Social Status, (New York: Free Press, 1961); Holger R. Stub (ed.) Status Communities in modern society, alternative to class Analysis. (The Dryden Press Inc., Hinsdale, Ill., 1972).

perception of these entitlements by others that status is granted or denied. Consequently, as a social role played in relation to other people, a work rôle is a source of status insofar as its symbolic attributes become significant elements of personal evaluation. However as status is dependent upon other groups' validation, the many social contexts of modern society characterized by multiple evaluation systems, make evaluations difficult and open up the possibility of conflict among role-definers.

How are the criteria underlying status established? By whom?

How are they related to the various groups of society? Are the criteria used by each group the same, or is there ground for disagreement? If disagreement about status criteria occurs how do individuals cope with it?

## 6. THE DISTRIBUTION AND MEASUREMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL STATUS

The criteria underlying occupational status are related to the general characteristics and values of the social system. By definition an industrial system is characterized by a high degree of structural differentiation, aggregation and rationalization.<sup>24</sup> Given these characteristics, those roles which coordinate and which require unusual degree of expertise tend to be most highly valued.

Studies of occupational prestige report a well defined and clear ordering of occupations, if they are well known.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, an empirical study based upon cross-national comparison of occupational rating, carried out by Inkeles and Rossi<sup>26</sup> indicates a large degree of congruency between functionally important roles in different societies, independently of cultural differences. However the significance of these scales have been at times highly criticized. These scales are based upon judgments of two kinds: there is first an objective index, where the researcher defines the criteria which validate and differentiate occupations into ranks. On the basis of this ranking, respondents are asked to give a subjective judgment regarding the prestige of the

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<sup>24</sup>Theodore Caplow, The Sociology of Work, (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1954), pp. 30-31.

<sup>25</sup>For some of these studies see National Opinion Research Center, "Jobs and Occupations: A popular evaluation," Opinion News 9 (September 1947): 3-13; Robert W. Hodge, Paul M. Siegel and Peter H. Rossi, "Occupational Prestige in the USA, 1925-1963," American Journal of Sociology 70 (November 1964): 286-302.

<sup>26</sup>Alex Inkeles and Peter H. Rossi, "National Comparisons of Occupational Prestige," American Journal of Sociology LXI (January 1956): 329-339.

occupation. These subjective values 'impressionistically' assessed by the researcher, are substantiated by respondents, then ranged into a univalent distribution, the total status rank.

This distribution is based upon the assumptions that prestige, in its objective and subjective dimensions, is estimable and that individuals are able to make a 'total position judgment.'

While most researchers agree that these scales are a good and general index concerning the nature, place and attractiveness of occupations, they have important weaknesses. They fail to recognize the very nature of prestige and the many facets of industrial reality, or the issue of the extent of the general consensus involved. If status properties are substantial things, able to be objectified according to certain objective criteria - every individual has a lifestyle some of whose components are enduring and observable - the subjective factor, the 'opinion-like' character of status is not. Status as such, is the outcome of evaluative judgments regarding the distribution of relative 'invidious' properties perceived in an occupation by individuals occupying different positions inside the social system.

This issue raises some important questions concerning cognitive and evaluative consensus in status assignment. We have described modern industrial society as being composed of multiple and differentiated occupational groups, each being differently related and having different cognitive and evaluative knowledge of each other. This social diversity suggests variations in cognition and evaluative standards underlying value judgments. Consequently, while these prestige scales do portray a relative prestige of occupations in the

hierarchy, they should be looked at with caution in regard to their underlying assumptions. Moreover, both assumptions, the cognitive and evaluative consensus among groups concerning the factors conditioning status, have been seriously challenged empirically. There is evidence that the relative social honor attributed to two professions, for example, by respondents at different ends of the social hierarchy, may vary considerably. In Britain, respondents who were themselves manual workers have accorded much higher social status to a surgeon than to a stockbroker; whereas respondents, who were themselves professional men, have tended to give these two, equal status. There is also evidence that manual workers rank their own occupation higher than clerical occupations. Clerical workers rank their occupation higher than manual occupations.<sup>27</sup>

These findings suggest that in modern industrial society (a) there is no complete consensus concerning the criteria used in the allocation of status; (b) multiple groups, differently located in the structural scale, use various and different criteria; (c) cognitive knowledge concerning the total characteristics of the occupation is, at times, uneven and unclear among individuals and groups. Consequently these findings dismiss the major assumptions underlying what has been called 'evaluative consensus' concerning the structure and process of status evaluation and have important consequences upon the process of status claim and status validation among role incumbents.

The first issue concerns the ground and the extent of legitimation of

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<sup>27</sup>William H. Form, "Toward an Occupational Social Psychology," Journal of Social Psychology, (August 1946): 85-99.

status claims. If there is no consensus concerning the criteria of status among the various groups into which individuals participate and depend for status evaluation - as different groups have different knowledge and use different yardsticks for evaluation - role incumbents may find contexts or groups which legitimate their status claims and groups where their claims are not validated.

The second issue concerns the impact of these differential evaluations upon role incumbents. If there are contexts and groups which will not validate the individual's claims for status individuals in these contexts will be confronted with incongruent evaluations of themselves and their social identity, which will generate different degrees of dissonance and conflict. One of the contexts in which the rate and rapidity of change has mostly upset the attributes generally thought as prestige-giving and the social relationships which conferred honor or status to role incumbents is the work context. The next pages introduce the work context and the problematic issue of status evaluation in order to see effects and responses to conflict situations. If the work context fails to meet the individual's expectations, do individuals seek to extend favourable status recognition to the work situation or do they psychologically withdraw from such a situation which does not support their criteria and claim for status?

7. ON THE MEANING AND FUNCTION OF WORK IN THE INDUSTRIAL LABOR FORCE.

The major forces of change in the industrial system are the rate and magnitude of technological change and the application of rationality to the work context and its incumbents.

The effects of these factors upon work and men have become the concern and the object of study of many social theorists and researchers.<sup>28</sup> On a structural basis, these factors have created a diffuse and complex division of labor, an increasing involvement of individuals in formal organizations, a complex system of rules and regulations governing human behaviour, a sharp decline and deflation of skills and requirements, a centralization of authority and an increase and massification of services. They have also introduced problematic changes concerning the value and meaning of work - by imposing limits upon the freedom of workers and filling work with depersonalization and oppressive routines, for most people in the labor force.

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<sup>28</sup>How occupational roles are affected by the structural arrangements of the work environment has been a major area of inquiry by sociologists since the XIX century. Karl Marx, questioned the effects of structural changes and what happened to man when the economy and the means of production changed; Max Weber in The Theory of Social and Economic Organization, p. 251, questioned Marx's analysis and concluded that the effects of the structure are more complicated than those presented by Marx. One general effect of the structure which concerned Weber was the tendency of organizations to become more bureaucratic under industrialization regardless of political or economic system. E. Durkheim in The Position of Labor in Society (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), was also concerned with the relationship of the modes of organization and the social structure with the performance and well being of those in the work force. The problems these theorists have raised have generated a good deal of research and controversy. Refer to Malvin Seeman in "On The Meaning of Alienation", American Sociological Review 24, December 1959: 783-791; Robert Blauner, Alienation and Freedom, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1964); C. Wright Mills, White Collar, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951).



The literature on the meaning and function of work for the contemporary labor force indicates important variations as to the importance of the work context as a source of status satisfaction. Specifically, most studies indicate a relationship between work satisfaction and occupational rank. Satisfaction with one's occupation increases sharply and regularly with higher occupational status. Whereas in occupations with lower occupational status there is a tendency to call other contexts into play when appraising oneself. Morse and Weiss<sup>29</sup> found that professional and managerial people were more likely to assign importance to specific work roles for non-economic reasons than those in 'working class' jobs. Chinoy,<sup>30</sup> Hyman,<sup>31</sup> Reisman and Bloomberg<sup>32</sup> confirmed these findings. People in low status occupations, i. e. automobile workers, packing-house workers and members of the working class in general whose jobs are not distinguishable in terms of a clearly defined prestige hierarchy, do not regard the work context as a source of satisfaction. Rather they emphasize the

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<sup>29</sup>Nancy C. Morse and Robert S. Weiss, "The Function and Meaning of Work and the Job" American Sociological Review XX (April, 1955) : 191-198.

<sup>30</sup>Eli Chinoy, Automobile Workers and the American Dream, (New York: Doubleday & Co. Inc., Garden City 1955).

<sup>31</sup>Herbert H. Hyman, "The Value Systems of Different Classes: A Social Psychological Contribution to the Analysis of Stratification." Class Status and Power, ed. Reinhard Bendix and Seymour M. Lipset. (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1953) pp. 426-442.

<sup>32</sup>David Reisman and Warner Bloomberg, Jr., "Work and Leisure: Fusion or Polarity?" Research in Industrial Human Relations, ed. Conrad M. Arensberg et al. (New York, Harper & Row, Publishers Incorporated, 1957) pp. 69-85.

importance of extrinsic rewards and non-work contexts. Dubin<sup>33</sup> found that work or the work place is not a 'central life interest' for almost three-fourths of a sample of industrial workers he studied. Orzack,<sup>34</sup> using the same set of questions as Dubin, found that for four out of five of the registered nurses he studied, work and the work place were 'central life interest.' Wilensky,<sup>35</sup> in a study of 1,156 employed men in Detroit, found that more than three times as many people in a low socio-economic level were indifferent to work as an attribute of prestige and self-image, than those from a higher socio-economic level.

What are thus the effects of these structural and value-changes concerning the manifestation and expression of prestige in work situations? If work has ceased to be a significant element for personal evaluation for a significant part of the labor force, what are the human consequences of this devaluation process in the work situation? What are the individual responses to negative status assessment, 'undignified' demands and claims made by the interrelated groups in face-to-face relationships?

The evidence from the above studies has led theorists and researchers to different conclusions about how people reporting dissatisfaction with work,

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<sup>33</sup>Robert Dubin, "Industrial Workers' World: A Study of the 'Central Life Interests' of Industrial Workers," Social Problems 3 (January 1956) : 131-142.

<sup>34</sup>Louis H. Orzack, "Work as a 'Central Life Interest' of Professionals," Social Problems 7 (Fall 1959) : 125-132.

<sup>35</sup>Harold L. Wilensky, "Varieties of Work Experience," Man in a World at Work, ed. Henry Borow, (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1964) pp. 125-154.

as a consequence of the effects of change on work, respond to the work situation and its network of social relationships.

Theorists have suggested that people dissatisfied with a work-role passively adjust to the situation accepting an undesirable environment with resignation. This kind of theorizing suggests the familiar 'alienation' theme. Although there are indeed some alienative conditions in most work situations, researchers suggest that the situation is far more complex. Blauner,<sup>36</sup> after a review of the major empirical researches, suggests that there seems to be a polar ambivalence of work that any theory of alienation does not fully explain. For even the most alienated work is never totally unpleasant nor completely rejected by the worker. The need for work, social interaction, some status and identity in society at large, keep even unskilled workers on the job after they are free to retire.<sup>37</sup> Responses to work situations, even in low status occupations, are different according to different situations.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, E. C. Hughes, W. A. Faunce and R. Dubin suggest that responses may vary according to individual characteristics related to time and self-investment:

'... in general ... the longer and more rigorous the period of initiation into an occupation, the more culture and technique are associated with it, and the more deeply impressed are its attitudes upon the person...'<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Robert Blauner, "Alienation and Modern Industry," Alienation and the Social System, ed. Ada W. Finifter, (New York: John Wiley & Sons 1964).

<sup>37</sup>For a detailed discussion of this subject, see E. Friedmann and R. Havighurst, The Meaning of Work and Retirement (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954).

<sup>38</sup>Robert Blauner, Alienation and Freedom, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 58-88.

<sup>39</sup>Everett C. Hughes, Men and Their Work, p. 36.

'... changes in the function and meaning of work ... may be expected at various career stages ... new entrants into the labor force vary considerably in their level of self-investment ...'<sup>40</sup>

These findings are further confirmed by the Hoppock's study of New Hope,<sup>41</sup> where the curve of job satisfaction is heavily skewed toward satisfaction. These findings should occasion no surprise. The survival of any set of social institutions implies some degree of satisfaction. Although occupational satisfaction increases sharply and regularly with higher occupational status, workers' attitudes toward work are seldom the worker's personal reaction to an environment, but they seem to be culturally defined - nurses are expected to be better thought of than office clerks, and office clerks more than laborers - and to be heavily influenced by the occupational worlds created by those who work together or within the circumstances of their work. What is important to note is that there is no simple correlation between the objective conditions presented by an occupation and the relative satisfaction of its members.

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<sup>40</sup>William A. Faunce and Robert Dubin, "Individual Investment in Working and Living." The Quality of Working Life, Vol. 1, ed. Louis E. Davis and Albert B. Cherns (New York: The Free Press, 1975) pp. 299-316.

<sup>41</sup>Robert Hoppock, Job Satisfaction. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1935)

Blauner,<sup>42</sup> Hughes,<sup>43</sup> Goffman,<sup>44</sup> Faunce and Dubin,<sup>45</sup> seem to reject the alienation theme and put forward the theory of active adaptation. This adaptation takes the form of the development of occupational images, behavioural techniques and attitudes. These images, techniques and attitudes, by stressing certain relative valued aspects of work, its rewards on the job and off the work situation, provide status, status maintenance and status improvement inside the group and in the network of social relationships.

Research on low status occupations have confirmed this suggestion. Psychiatric attendants are likely to minimize the less glamorous features of their work and focus upon the most highly valued element in the hospital subculture: care of the patient.<sup>46</sup> Black laborers, performing the least prestigious jobs, tend to develop collective pretensions to give their work and consequently themselves value in the eyes of each other and of outsiders.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Robert Blauner, Alienation and Freedom, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964)

<sup>43</sup>Everett C. Hughes, Men and Their Work, p. 42.

<sup>44</sup>Erving Goffman, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. (New York: Anchor Books, 1959); Stigma, Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1963); Where the Action Is, (London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1959)

<sup>45</sup>William A. Faunce and Robert Dubin, "Individual Investment in Working and Living, The Quality of Working Life, Vol. 1, ed. Louis E. Davis and Albert B. Cherns, (New York: The Free Press, 1975) pp. 299-316.

<sup>46</sup>Richard L. Simpson and Ida H. Simpson, "The Psychiatric Attendant: Development of an Occupational Self-Image in a Low-Status Occupation." American Sociological Review, 24 (1959) pp. 389-393.

<sup>47</sup>Everett C. Hughes, Men and Their Work, p. 45.

Likewise, permanent telephone workers tend to develop enhanced occupational self-images which identify them with the stable and prestigious company.<sup>48</sup> Jazz musicians<sup>49</sup> and musicians in general<sup>50</sup> have intense pride in their skills and confidence in their ability and tend to protect their image against possible intruders.

Moreover, findings resulting from studies concerning the measurement of occupational prestige, further confirm this theoretical position. They indicate that evaluation tends to be influenced by a certain degree of involvement, ethnocentrism and a general tendency to increase the importance of their own occupation by the groups involved. Consequently, this tendency of individuals to emphasize other assessments of their status entitlements has important consequences on how they respond to dissonant situations in the work context and in face-to-face interaction.

This thesis will thus look at the issue of status, its manifestation, expression and change upon it as it applies to a group of flight attendants. While the issue of dissonance of status evaluation among role incumbents and their responses will also be treated, emphasis will first be given to the symbolic

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<sup>48</sup>Joel Seidman, et al. "Telephone Workers," Man, Work and Society, ed. Sigmund W. Nosow and Form, (New York: Basic Books 1962) pp. 493-504.

<sup>49</sup>Howard S. Becker, "The Professional Dance Musician and His Audience," American Journal of Sociology 57 (September 1951) : 136-144.

<sup>50</sup>Robert R. Faulkner, "Making Us Sound Bad: Performer Compliance and Interaction in the Symphony Orchestra," Varieties of Work Experience, The Social Control of Occupational Groups and Roles, ed. Phyllis L. Stewart and Muriel G. Cantor. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1974) pp. 238-248.

features, their structural characteristics and the deference patterns as they are expressed in the multiple contexts of the individual's social environment.

## 8. SUMMARY AND THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The primary assumption of this study is that work in urban industrial society has become an important referent for a person's identification and evaluation.

Status has been defined as the evaluation of role incumbents in terms of prestige or 'social honor' inherent in a work role and manifested through a specific 'valued' lifestyle. Evaluation is discerned in 'role playing' or in the expectations attached to a work role which define behaviour among people. Status is thus acquired in terms of the favourable or detrimental characteristics associated with an occupation and it is dependent upon a process of social relations which validate or fail to validate the status claim.

The starting point in the analysis of status and status evaluation is with (a) the elements of the occupation which account for the prestige of the occupation and the social identity of its occupants; (b) the audience or the network of 'significant others' included in the 'role set,' and (c) the extent these status elements or values become relevant indices of status perception for the individuals concerned and the important contexts or groups within which they participate.

While status elements according to their functional importance can be identified and evaluated by the researcher, the process of status evaluation inside groups and among individuals is far more complex. The major characteristics of industrial society - a highly differentiated occupational structure and a multiple system of social relationships which relate people in interaction at different structural levels - make status multidimensional and



problematic. These conditions make it difficult for individuals to maintain their positive evaluation in more than one context, using the same criteria. The status one occupies in one context, such as primary groups, may not be validated in other contexts, such as the work situation, where major structural differences and functional relationships may invalidate previous values and determine different status criteria, such as functional attributes, tasks and requirements.

If prestige is segmentalized among different contexts or groups, and these groups hold different evaluative criteria concerning the status of an occupational group, what is precisely the impact of these contradictory evaluations upon the group or the individuals? How do individuals respond to contradictory evaluations in contexts where their status and identity is misconceived? This is a controversial issue. Major sociological theories raise the issue of alienation as a response to a disjunction between man's self and the world around. Empirical findings report 'active adaptation' as a response to a work situation is related to two main conditions: the notion of identification with a work role in terms of time and self-investment inside an occupation. These conditions differentiate the individual's responses to conflicting work situations. However, adaptation as a response to conflicting evaluations in face-to-face relationships depends upon a process of development of 'occupational images,' attitudes and techniques, which people develop in order to offset conflict, and to protect themselves from possible implications damaging their status and identity.

These points suggest several implications for the study of occupational prestige in an empirical setting:

- (1) the occupational prestige of particular role incumbents depends on more than the place of the occupation in a rank scale. The occupational prestige of an individual is an amalgam of objective elements and subjective criteria which define most relationships and behaviour among individuals.
- (2) It is necessary to consider (a) the objective and the subjective criteria which regulate relationships and foster invidious comparisons among occupational groups; (b) how subjective status criteria are objectively met in structural contexts in which individuals participate; (c) how different audiences or groups perceive status criteria and act upon them; (d) the extent and degree of conflict inside the occupational group as a consequence of a context which fails to meet the individual's status expectations. Finally, (e) the 'occupational images' and attitudes among role incumbents which de-emphasize conflict and support the group self-concepts.

These theoretical implications constitute the frame of reference and the guidelines for the process of research and analysis.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH DESIGN

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The approach to this research is aimed at description and understanding. The aims of the inquiry are: (a) to trace historically the occupational status of airline flight attendants; (b) to analyze the effects of the rationalization of work upon their status and identity; (c) to find the means by which airline flight attendants deal with discrepant definitions of their social identity.

The guidelines for the inquiry are provided by the theoretical conceptualization which was presented in the previous chapter. This chapter deals with the problems of conceptualizing reality as a mean to arrive at a valid portrayal of the empirical world of flight attendants. It includes a description of the analytical and research procedure, the case study, methods of data collection and definition and operationalization of concepts.

## 2. ANALYTIC PROCEDURE

The analysis starts with an historical inquiry of the occupational status of airline flight attendants during the period 1938-1949 and 1950-1977. This includes the state of technological development in air transportation and the place of the flight attendant in the organizational context of the two time periods. Technology is viewed as the major variable against which social and structural conditions, influential in structuring occupational status dimensions, are analyzed.

The analysis then proceeds in finding out the elements of status associated with the occupation and the problems linked with status evaluation. The work role of flight attendants is analyzed from two points of view, objectively, from the point of view of the researcher, and subjectively, from the point of view of the flight attendants. These two perspectives, the objective and subjective, are analyzed and compared to see similarities or differences in status evaluation. The flight attendant's self-concept will then be compared among several audiences of evaluation. These audiences will include the general public, the peer groups of the attendants, and the passenger, in order to discover the extent of consensus or dissensus in the evaluation of flight attendants.

While the elements of evaluation by the general public is drawn from comparisons of prestige scores awarded to flight attendants, as indicated by a prestige scale, the other two referents of evaluation are tested solely by the perceptions of flight attendants, or the extent flight attendants believe the peer group and the passengers recognize or deny their claim of status.

### 3. RESEARCH PROCEDURE AND METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION.

This research project, as previously mentioned, originated out of a personal feeling, as a flight attendant, of discrepant definitions of 'self' and out of a desire to understand the symbolic process underlying human behaviour in conflicting face-to-face situations. Consequently, the first step in the research process was (1) to find a more substantial expression of this 'feeling,' (2) an objective insight into the problem and its causes, (3) a way to collect data that are scientifically valid, objective and capable of interpreting and representing the symbolic world of the persons involved.

The setting for the research was provided by a large Canadian airline. While the choice of airline was mostly dictated by its easy accessibility and convenience, since the author is presently employed by it, there are reasons to believe that this airline is similar to most North American airlines in terms of size, routes, employees and social heterogeneity of its passengers.

An exploratory study was first conducted among a small number of flight attendants of the above airline. This exploratory study consisted of three written diaries, kept by three flight attendants. They were asked to give a written report of their work, what they liked or disliked about flying; relations on board with passengers and other crew members; problems and situations leading to conflict and tension on board, ways of handling the situation or the problem and relations with other social groups with whom they associated. These reports covered several flights.

These first exploratory diaries gave relevance and substance to my 'feeling' of status discrepancies among role definers and became the means

by which the major variables for the study were identified and a questionnaire constructed.

Choice of methods and a research procedure for the full study was then devised. It consisted of the use of a questionnaire supplemented by some participant observation and the use of more diaries. These diaries provided a descriptive basis for further analysis and give a more substantive interpretation to the results of the questionnaire. The historical research and the collection of data concerning the structure of the organization was carried out mostly by content analysis of newspapers, magazines and organizational booklets.

Consequently, four techniques of collecting data were used in the course of the research: administration of a questionnaire to a stratified random sample, the use of written diaries, participant observation and content analysis. Each of these techniques will be described briefly.

a. Content analysis.

This technique was used in the analysis of documents and newspapers in order to collect historical and organizational data. Newspapers covering the period 1938-1977 provided one source of data. Company books and pamphlets concerning work procedure, training and qualifications were also used.

b. Questionnaire and sample

The questionnaire, constructed on the basis of information obtained from the first exploratory diaries, was later refined by several tests conducted among the group of flight attendants and by group interviews.

The major areas of inquiry concerned: (1) general characteristics of

the respondents; (2) Self-conceptions related to work performance and relationships with passengers; (3) Relationships with the public in general concerning conceptions of 'flight attendants'; (4) Perception of the uniform as a group 'symbol'; (5) Occupational rewards and relationships within the group.

Most of the questions were left open-ended in order to get more information on particular points, to leave room for the free expression of all kinds of ideas and to avoid forcing individuals to respond in an overly restricted manner. A sample is included in the appendix. (Appendix I)

A word about the administration of the questionnaire and the sampling procedure is necessary. The questionnaire was first administered to a total of 90 flight attendants representing approximately 50% of the flight attendants of one small air-base.<sup>1</sup> This air-base became the pilot study which supplied useful information concerning the degree of understanding of the questions and the response rate. The response rate was fairly good. Thirty-five questionnaires were returned, approximately 45% of the people sampled. This pilot study helped in clarifying some of the questions. With a revised questionnaire, (Appendix 2) two major air-bases<sup>2</sup> were then sampled. Here, the questionnaire was administered to 450 flight attendants, approximately 20% of the base personnel. 146 questionnaires were returned from these two bases, approximately 32% of the people sampled. The total number of questionnaires received from the three bases was 181, or 34% of the total sample. The sample was a stratified random sample selected from the air-bases seniority list.

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<sup>1</sup>This base consists of Vancouver base.

<sup>2</sup>These bases consist of Montreal and Toronto bases.

c. Diary

The use of written diaries proved to be extremely useful in the process of understanding the symbolic world of flight attendants. The choice of this technique, combined with participant observation was thought to be useful in the collection of data which would be, as much as possible, free of the most common problems inherent in each technique.

The problems most common in the use of written diaries are well documented (Gottschalk 1945:38; Danzin 1970:227; Allport 1942; Madge 1962). These problems include a reactive effect, fragmentary and incomplete reports, and dependence upon the willingness and time disposal of the people willing to participate in the research. However these problems can be partially offset by the additional use of participant observation and questionnaire.

The diaries here used, had to cover a full month's flight schedule. Twenty flight attendants were chosen at random during flights I operated and were asked to write a diary of what they thought about their work in general and their work on board. A sample of the guidelines about what to write is attached. (Appendix 3) At month's end, 11 of the 20 diaries were returned and they yielded the basic data for the analysis.

d. Participant observation

The use of this technique was a further complement to data collection. The major problems peculiar to this method are well documented (Abel 1947; Cicourel 1964; Vidich 1964; Bruyn 1966). They are: the control effect, biased viewpoint and the major issues of validity and reliability. Hopefully, however, these problems can be minimized by the use of the other two methods employed



in gathering information from respondents.

I assumed several roles. At times I adopted the role of 'participant as observer,' but most of the time I was a 'complete participant,' in the sense of being deeply involved with the study-subjects in day-to-day situations, with or without their knowledge of my research objectives.

#### 4. DEFINITION AND OPERATIONALIZATION OF CONCEPTS

In developing a conceptual framework for the analysis of occupational status and the problems associated with the process of conflicting evaluations, two levels of analysis were outlined: (a) the societal or the objective level of occupational status as applied to the group of flight attendants in the Canadian context covering the period 1937-1977; and (b) the group or the subjective level of status as perceived by the flight attendants themselves. Consequently, this research is concerned with two different sets of criteria. The choice of suitable indicators of the concepts to be used in these two levels of inquiry, is the major problem here.

##### (a) Occupational status.

Status, as previously mentioned, is here defined as a 'unique mode of evaluation,' based upon social honor or prestige. Prestige is conferred by certain 'invidious' structural and symbolic characteristics associated with an occupation and its occupants. Prestige as such is socially validated by forms of deference given to the occupational group by its audience in interactive situations.

1. The objective index of status: is defined as the place flight attendants occupy inside the social structure. This place is determined by the relative rank of the occupational group as compared to others, according to the functional requirements, education and income of the occupation. This objective index is obtained, first, by an assessment done by myself as researcher, of the functional attributes of the occupation, education or training and income, then by a classification of the occupation into one of the major

socio-economic categories. For this purpose, a standard socio-economic scale is used here.

2. The subjective index or self-concept of status is defined as the evaluation or perception of real or perceived elements which members of an occupation or 'others' attribute to the occupation as prestige-giving. The indicators used to illustrate the group self-concepts are the elements of the work role flight attendants emphasize as being of particular attraction and importance.

(b) Conflict

Conflict is here seen as a state of psychological tension coming from a lack of unity or agreement concerning definition of a role and an identity. Conflict as such arises when individuals fail to meet the expectations implicit in self-concepts or when people apply different definitions concerning the incumbent's role and status.

The indicators used to illustrate the extent of conflict in a social setting are the degree of dissatisfaction of the role incumbents in interactive situations.

(c) Responses to discrepant definition of status.

These are responses or courses of action flight attendants adopt to counteract conflict, maintain their status and still provide the service required by the work role. The indicators are behavioral or verbal tactics, flight attendants use when conflict arises in interactive situations.

## 5. SUMMARY

This chapter has dealt with the problem of conceptualizing reality as perceived by subjects and the researcher. It has first introduced the research procedure and the methods of data collection as used in the research project. Definitions and operationalization of the major concepts as they apply to the present research have been described.

## CHAPTER IV

THE HISTORICAL PAST OF COMMERCIAL AVIATION1. INTRODUCTION

In the course of recent history, the astonishing growth of air-transportation approximates a general social movement. In the space of approximately fifty years, air transportation has become a very important part of our modern way of life. In order to understand this process and its effects upon the occupational status of airline flight attendants, this chapter deals with the development of civil aviation. It concentrates upon the technical conditions, the social and structural characteristics and the relations which defined and distinguished the occupation and its occupants in the period 1928-1949. These interrelated areas, the technological, social and organizational or structural are examined as they apply to the field of air-transportation.

The technological developments are seen as the variable which influences the social and organizational conditions. These, in turn, become the predominant elements structuring the social perception of status. The role of technology as a major determinant of change has been an object of research in various branches of the social sciences. In the realm of aviation, technology or technological innovations include those dealing with aircraft space, navigation which makes year-round, all weather time tables possible, speed and physical comfort. These factors are important elements effecting social perceptions concerning 'flying' and the image of the industry. They also influence interaction patterns

that take place between passengers and flight attendants. Finally they influence the context of the occupational role and the symbols which accompany it.

## 2. FIRST COMMERCIAL AIRPLANES AND FIRST FLIGHT ATTENDANTS.

The history of civil aviation is one of struggle and achievement. It began in 1930. As 'every historical change creates its mythology,' so did commercial flying. The wonder of the first historical flights, the dazzling exploits of Lindbergh and people like him, were still well alive. At the beginning, the first commercial flights were used to handle mail. Passengers were only incidental and no special attention was provided to facilitate their journey. The task to look after these few passengers was up to the co-pilot during his free time. However as air-transportation became more popular and more extensive, the necessity for having someone give undivided attention to the comfort of passengers was realized and the occupation of air-stewardess<sup>1</sup> made its debut. By 1937, all airlines had stewardesses on board their 'shiny planes.'

Ellen Church played a dominant role in founding the occupation. The reason for its creation was practical and psychological, as Steve A. Simpson, Boeing's Manager at San Francisco, declared:

'... imagine the psychology of having young women as regular members of the crew. Imagine the tremendous effect it would have on the travelling people. Also imagine the value that they would be to us in the neater and nicer method of serving food and looking out for the passengers.'

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<sup>1</sup>The term air-stewardess, or stewardess is used here alternatively with flight attendant. In these first years the term used to designate the occupants of the position was stewardess, in the late 60's the designation of stewardess was changed to flight attendant as a consequence of the introduction of more men in the occupation and to avoid the sexual connotation implied in the name stewardess.

I am not suggesting at all the flapper type of girl. You know nurses as well as I do, and you know that they are not given to flightiness - I mean in the head. The average graduate nurse is a girl with some horse-sense and is very practical. The young women that we select would naturally be intelligent and could handle what traffic work aboard was necessary, such as keeping records, filling reports, issuing tickets ....<sup>2</sup>

Simpson and Church had created an institution for women which was to remain virtually unchanged for the next few decades.

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<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Paula Kane and Christopher Chandler, Sex Objects in the Sky. (Chicago: Follett Publishing Co., 1974) p. 98.



3. THE EARLY YEARS OF COMMERCIAL AVIATION:  
THE TECHNOLOGICAL CONTEXT.

The first commercial flights in Canada were conducted in 1937 by two twin-engine, 10-seat Lockheeds on domestic routes. The air speed was 200 m. p. h. In 1943, the first overseas flights started and were conducted by four-engine Lancaster bombers, overhauled and converted into 10-passenger planes. At this time, these overseas operations were mostly reserved for government or VIP personnel. It was not until 1947, with the introduction of pressurized aircraft (North Stars), travelling at a speed of 230 m. p. h., that transatlantic flights became available and popular to thousands of travellers.

The early flights in 1937 were done on 10 passenger planes, sitting one passenger behind the other in a single row. In 1941, the number of passengers carried on board rose to 14 and in 1947 to 21. The conditions were still at best primitive. Airplanes were still encumbered by numerous fuel stops, flying suits and oxygen masks. A normal trip from Vancouver to Montreal, a total of 2,444 miles, would take 15 hours west to east, and almost 18 hours west-bound, with six stops. A regular flight from Montreal to London, England, would normally take between 14 to 18 hours.

These early technological conditions, affecting the space, speed and physical comfort on board determined the physical conditions on board, the conditions of employment, the place of the stewardess in an organization characterized by a pioneer spirit and a great potential for expansion.

Table 1 gives us a numerical expression of this beginning of commercial flying and an insight into the rapid growth of the airline under study. In this first period, 1939-1949, the size of operations was small, the route network limited and the passengers using the airplane were a small minority. In 1939 the airline started with 28 stewardesses and the total revenue-passenger-miles<sup>3</sup> or the total distance in miles the airline carried passengers, was approximately 27,760,090 miles. These factors had a major effect on the relationship between flight attendants and passengers on board. At this time the number of revenue-passenger-miles per stewardess was 98,000 miles per year. In 1940 the employment of stewardesses rose about 30% from the previous year. In 1949, the number of stewardesses employed by the airline nearly doubled over a four year period. This growth of stewardesses resulted mainly from an approximately 500% increase in revenue-passenger-miles in the years 1939-1949. Despite this increase, in 1949 the number of revenue-passenger-miles per stewardess was still low, approximately 115,000 miles per year. This means that the stewardess of this period, due to the small size, the short range and speed of the airplanes which limited the size of operations, still could maintain a close relationship with passengers.

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<sup>3</sup>One paying passenger transported one mile.

Table 1 - Increase revenue, passenger-miles and stewardesses during the period, 1938-1949.

Year	Revenue pax-miles	Number of stewardesses	Number of pax-miles/stewardess
1938	1,122,179	-	-
1939	2,760,090	28	98,000
1940	4,770,219	40	119,000
1945	10,506,075	86	122,000
1949	16,364,733	142	115,000

#### 4. THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

From its early beginning, the occupation of stewardess became identified as a female occupation. The first stewardesses came from the nursing profession. In order to understand the special position of airline stewardesses, these pages give us an insight into the nature of women's occupations and the size of the female labor force in the labor market in the period 1941-1951. This description of the general field of work by women in the labor force in the period span 1941-1951 will give us a time perspective of female occupations and a base for comparison.

In 1941, the largest proportion of the 832,840 women employed in the Canadian labor force, (34.2%) were engaged in personal service occupations. These included domestic service occupations and varied service occupations in other than domestic and protective service. This latter field included cleaning services in buildings other than private homes and personal services such as those of waitress, cook, beautician, and practical nurse. Another 18.3% were occupied in clerical occupations. Among the occupations in which women in this group were engaged were the routine office activities of typists, file clerks, office machine operators, etc. Another 8.8% were engaged in Commercial and Financial activities, including the work in stores of saleswomen and sales clerks. Twenty-three percent were in manufacturing, mechanical work and other occupations (including personnel in the armed forces). This classification includes manual operations requiring not more than a short period of training and requiring only moderate judgment, dexterity or force.

Women in professional occupations were 15.7% of all working women.

A professional worker, according to the census definition, is one:

'... who performs advisory, administrative, or research work which is based upon the established principles of a profession or science and which requires professional, scientific or technical training equivalent to that represented by graduating from a college or university of recognized standing.'<sup>4</sup>

Teachers and nurses were included in this classification. At this time, the nursing profession had developed already its rigid standards. It required three years training for general nursing. Services were performed on the basis of specialized training, standards of competence and a high degree of responsibility toward the community and the professional association.<sup>5</sup>

According to these statistical figures, the number of women participating in the labor force was very small, opportunities for work were limited to low skilled occupations. Women who were engaged in occupations of a professional nature were the minority, 15.7% compared to 84.3% in non-professional work. Consequently, stewardesses were chosen from the nursing profession, namely from the small group of women involved in professional work. These women had an already established professional status and a higher social and economic level, as related to other occupational groups. Thus relatively high status was initially assigned to stewardesses.

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<sup>4</sup>Census of Canada: Women in the Labour Force: Facts and Figures. Labour Canada.

<sup>5</sup>For a detailed description of the history of the nursing profession, see Briant A. Smyth, A History of the Nursing Profession. (London: Heinemann Ltd., 1960)

Table 2 - Percentage distribution of working women by leading occupational groups, Canada - 1941-1951

Occupational group	1941	1951
Personal service	34.2%	21.0%
Clerical	18.3%	27.5%
Commercial & Financial *	8.8%	10.5%
Manufacturing & Mechanical	15.4%	14.6%
Professional	15.7%	14.4%
Others **	7.7%	11.9%
Total	100.1	99.9

\*Includes saleswomen

\*\*Includes armed forces

Table 3 - The Canadian Population and Labor Force - 1941-1951

Population and Labor Force	1941	1951
Total Population	11,489,713	13,984,329
Labor Force	4,195,591	5,214,913
Female Labor Force	832,840	1,163,893
Women as Percentage of Labor Force	18.5%	22.0%

Sources: 'Women in the Labour Force 1971: Facts and Figures,  
Labour Canada Women's Bureau.

## 5. THE ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

The primitive conditions of flying, the size of the first aircraft and the special nature of the job dictated the place of the stewardess inside the organization, and influenced the conditions of her employment. Further her status imagery was used by the Company in persuading the public to fly.

### a. The Position

In the early days the stewardess was an integral part of a flying crew. A crew is defined as the people trained to operate the plane. It is divided between the cockpit crew or the people responsible for the manipulation of the control systems of the aircraft, and the cabin crew or the people responsible for the care, service and comfort of passengers. From 1937 to 1963, the crew requirement for aircraft flying domestic routes included a pilot, a co-pilot and a stewardess. With the beginning of transatlantic flights, in 1947, another stewardess or steward and a navigator were added.

The stewardess was a vital and integral part of the flight crew. Her position inside the plane was clear and well defined. The system of authority was simple. She was in charge of the whole cabin, namely of the service, information, entertainment and comfort of the passengers. She reported directly to the Captain who was responsible for the whole aircraft. In this position she was a full-fledged member of the flight operations, in close contact with the pilots and the organization, with whom she identified.

The uniform identified her as well as a member of the group and of the organization. The first uniforms were navy-blue for the winter and grey or beige for the summer. Both uniforms, summer and winter, were identical in

style and consisted mostly of a suit, scarf and a Royal Canadian Armed Forces wedge hat. Army nursing bags were also carried. The level of authority on board was expressed by two bands of silver stripes on the sleeve. This uniform was generally described by various newspapers as 'trim' and 'chic.'

b. Qualifications and Normative Requirements.

As previously mentioned, in order to qualify, an applicant had to be a registered nurse. The 1939 issue of Canadian Nurse outlined the qualifications necessary for this new profession:

'... (a stewardess) must be a girl of good education and she must have a pleasing and courteous manner. These things naturally follow when she is a nurse. It follows too that she will be in excellent physical condition... (The airline) is strict about this and stewardesses report for medical examination every three months. The regulations say that a girl must not wear glasses and they add definite specifications regarding her height and weight. She must weigh as little as 95 pounds but not more than 125 pounds. She must not be under 21 nor over 26 years of age. Married women are not acceptable .... even if their husbands are dead or divorced...'

Parental consent was required. In addition, stewardesses had to be:

'... practical and poised women, cheerful and tactful and experienced in the art of helping people forget their nervousness and making them feel at ease...'<sup>6</sup>

In 1947, with the introduction of larger aircraft, the regulations regarding height and medical examination were changed. The height limit became five feet, six inches and a medical examination was due every six months.

Some of these early requirements were based upon very little

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<sup>6</sup>Quoted in "TCA's First Ladies Take to the Air," Horizons, n. 479, April 10, 1977, p. 4.



information. The only guidelines were the pilot manual and some insight derived from the experiences of other airlines.

c. Training

In 1939, the basic training a stewardess underwent before becoming a full-fledged member of a flight crew, lasted six weeks. During this period she was given some basic notions concerning the dynamics of flight and navigation, navigational aids, meteorology, manipulation of the heating, ventilation, emergency devices and other systems designed for the physical comfort of passengers inside the aircraft. She was also required to know the air-routes operations and the geographical features of these routes, the regulations concerning the Government and Company air-policies, and the medical effects of altitude upon people during the three phases of flight: climbing, level flight and descending. Other topics in which she was trained included general procedures about food and beverage service, grooming, appearance and uniform regulations, report writing and rules regarding the availability for duties. In 1944, familiarization flights were added and the training was shortened to four weeks.

d. The work role: functions and duties

In writing about this early time of civil aviation, articles, in the popular press, were mostly concerned with what a stewardess does, what lifestyle she leads. As the Magazine Chatelain reports in 1939:

'... if you think she is there for decoration and effect you don't know a thing about the busy life she leads flying through space at more than two hundred miles an hour ...'

In effect, the functions of the stewardess were multiple and diversified. On board she was in charge of the service, care and comfort of passengers. She was the link between the Captain and the passengers. On the ground, as in the air, her function was to be a gracious hostess, meeting, escorting, helping and entertaining passengers during flight departure, arrival and lengthy delays. She was the link between the organization and the passengers. Her duties were varied. Before boarding,

'... the stewardess secures a list of the passengers' names ... and together with this, any other special information concerning the passengers that will aid her in their treatment... checks for food supplies, reading material, first aid kits ...'

At boarding time:

'... she greets the passengers, assigns their seats, helps them to fasten their seat belts before take-off and landing ...'<sup>7</sup>

During flights,

'... acting as a guide, she gives the usual information about the air-route, weather condition, flight routine, expected arrival time and the like. ... she points out the various points of interest and answers numerous questions concerning the geography of the country...'

Again, '... her tact enables her to engage passengers in conversation that will distract them from their nervousness and she allays their fears during a perhaps tedious flight ...'

It is her duty to make the passengers enjoy the trip as much as possible. ... she serves complimentary food, distributes reading material and remedies any discomfort. She tends to the general well being of every passenger ...'

She is attentive to passengers who need special attention, for example, when flights are taken by persons with small babies, or when persons are very ill and are travelling to procure medical care..

'... passengers are treated according to her code, like guests in a home. ... she may make up a hand of bridge or help with a crossword puzzle ...'

<sup>7</sup>John Alexander, "On Duty in the Skies," Chatelaine, June 1939, p. 16

In brief, what it was like to be a stewardess in this first period of civil aviation, can probably best be visualized by this report made by a woman reporter playing stewardess for twenty-four hours on an intercontinental flight in 1940:

'... I hung up the overcoats of two men from Toronto, gave a newspaper to a woman from Chicago, watched the card tricks of an attorney from Akron. I served hot chocolate to the Captain pilot, handed out weather reports to passengers, checked the towel supply in the washroom. I served chicken dinner to a drugstore owner from Billings, Montana, and sat in the moonlight of the cockpit of this Northwest 21 passenger giant ... and as the pilots checked the winging lights below and made out reports, they told me that life was dull, piloting a luxurious airline. And they told me too, it was the greatest life in the world...'<sup>8</sup>

e. The role of advertising

At this time, invitations to the public to fly focused upon comfort and safety. The first forms of advertising concerning safety described it as a property of the aircraft and of the facilities installed on the ground, to make flying safe and enjoyable. Advertising slogans of most airlines, assured passengers on flying.

'... the most modern, high speed, twin-engined type of commercial aircraft currently available .. for it benefitted from the most modern developments in the science of air-transportation..'

Additional assurance of safety were made concerning the ground facilities.

They advertized about

'... airports with hard-surface runways, emergency landing fields, radio aids to air navigation and the most modern scientific weather reporting services ..'

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<sup>8</sup>Jessie MacTaggart, "In 12 tons of Luxury Jessie Serves Meals High Over 'Bad Lands'," Toronto Daily Star, Saturday, February 3, 1940.

Comfort was advertized in addition to safety. It was described as a property of the aircraft and of the service supplied on board. Advertizing assured passengers of the conveniences of the aircraft interior:

'... the luxurious full reclining and swivelling passenger seats, comfortable finished in soft-tone upholstery ...'

and of

'stewardess-service on board.'<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Don Bell, "Wings Across Time," En Route, April 1977.

## 6. THE MYSTIQUE OF FLYING OR THE CHARISMATIC YEARS

"Aloft," wrote Lindbergh, "I live only in the moment of strange, immortal space, crowded with beauty, pierced with danger."<sup>10</sup>

This was 1927. A few years later, commercial flying became a reality, the myth of the pioneers, their tenacity and courage, was carried on to civil aviation and its incumbents. In Lindbergh's words there are two essential themes which became part of the myth or the mystique of flying. These are the themes of 'superman' and of the community of souls in the air, the pioneering spirit.

These pages describe some of the particularities of these themes as they appeared in magazines, newspapers, and general literature written in the decade of the 40's. They are important in understanding the appeal and the status of flight attendants.

### a. The theme of superman/woman

This theme is based upon certain dual elements characteristic of the special work environment and of the nature of the job. The environment is seen as embracing two opposed elements: elements of beauty, purity and wonder (space, sky, moonlight, flying at 10,000 feet above earth. The plane had no technical name, but it was generally described as 'the shiny plane') and elements of danger (these elements are implied in the unforeseen weather and mechanical hazards). The descriptions of the nature of the work also have two themes: elements of work as 'unordinary' 'unroutine' characterized

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<sup>10</sup>Lance Morrow, "Lindbergh: The Heroic Curiosity," Time, May 23, 1977

by a 'fast life' are related to the idea of work as a 'call,' 'discipline' and responsibility.' Work in the sky is differentiated from ordinary work and ordinary days. Usually the flight crew's work started when the work of other people ended. Despite this idea of 'unordinary' and 'fast' life, the idea of dexterity, ability, and 'vocation' is highly emphasized.

b. The theme of 'pioneering spirit.'

This theme is linked to the early characteristics of the group and to early operations. It includes elements of a collective character illustrating the solidarity, tenacity and attachment to work, characteristic of the individuals of the time.

In brief, these themes not only challenged the customary idea of work, but invested the flight crew, stewardesses included, with charismatic and exceptional qualities. These themes may have had some grounding in the actual experiences of flying during this early period. Now, they continue, even though the experiences of flying have changed quite dramatically. The myth is still alive but its existence is being threatened.

## 7. SUMMARY

This chapter has introduced the main characteristics which distinguished and defined the occupation of flight attendant and its occupants in the period 1937-1949.

Three main interrelated contexts, the technological, social and organization, thought to be important in structuring status elements and status perceptions have been introduced and analyzed.

Technological factors influenced the social and organizational conditions during the first decade of commercial flying. While the smallness of operation, the size, speed and comfort of planes, were important in determining the place of the stewardess inside the organization of the airline, the high job qualifications, the praise and curiosity about flying, as compared to other occupations, elevated her occupational status in the larger society. Life as a flight attendant was not only a source of prestige due to the particular and uncommon lifestyle, but prestige was partly due to the special professional qualifications of the occupants.

## CHAPTER V

THE PRESENT TIME OF COMMERCIAL AVIATION

1950 - 1977

1. INTRODUCTION

The technological innovations in air-transportation, the turbo propeller and the jet, brought about a revolution of great proportions which affected the industry and society as a whole. These innovations, which included, increased aircraft speed, all-weather flying, size and comfort, became major determinants in rationalizing the occupation.

The phenomenon of flying in the early days is difficult to understand for the world of 1977. The air above the North Atlantic, so lonely half a century ago that Charles Lindbergh said he communed with ghosts and guardian spirits, is dense now with 747s. The New York - Paris odyssey that took Lindbergh thirty-three hours and thirty minutes, takes an average of seven hours nowadays. Newspapers and media do not write anymore about 'shiny planes' but technical names and complex terms abound; stewardesses are not seen as 'ministering angels of the airline' but they are identified with the image and use people make of aircraft. Moreover, we are today at the threshold of a new era in air transportation which will definitely change our vision of travelling and again bring extreme changes to the occupational groups employed in the field. The immediate landmarks are the arrival of the Supersonic jet and the 'Skytrain'.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>While supersonic travelling is today the fastest and the most luxurious way of travelling, the 'Skytrain' designates no-frills, no-reservation flights, its fares are the lowest in the industry, passengers go standby and they can buy their meals separately or bring their own.



These are just two developments which will probably create significant change equal to the jet revolution.

In the airline industry, the shift from one technique to another has been rapid and wide in its implications. These implications are of a socio-economic and organizational nature. They are a reflection of the change that any technological modern society goes through.

In this chapter I will present the specific changes in aircraft technology as it is related to speed, size and comfort. I will also assess the impact of these changes on the process of growth and rationalization. The discussion of three interrelated contexts, the technological, the socio-economic and the organizational, will again be the frame of reference within which the status of airline flight attendants will be analyzed.

## 2. THE TECHNOLOGICAL CONTEXT

In a relatively short time, the decade 1940-1950, commercial aircraft progressed from a simple structure to a highly complex machine. In the same short time, the decade of the 50's to the 60's, a new era in mass transportation was opened. Two major technological innovations in aircraft, the turbo propeller and the pure jet, initiated a revolution whose effects are hard to go unnoticed.

The introduction of turbo-propeller driven aircraft, the Superconstellation in 1954 and Vickers Viscounts in 1955, heralded the era of easy, comfortable and modern flying.

The Superconstellation, capable of flying 4000 miles range, at an airspeed of 310 m. p. h. , carrying approximately 60 passengers, eliminated the necessity of landing at various points on transatlantic routes, except in the case of heavy headwinds. It required a maximum of two stewardesses on domestic routes, three on transatlantic and two pilots.

The Vicker Viscounts, introduced on domestic routes in 1955, carried approximately 40 passengers and increased to a maximum of 48 in 1966. It required one to two stewardesses depending on the seat configuration, and two pilots.

Five years later in 1960, the pure jet was in service. It increased aircraft speed more than 60% and it tripled seat capacity; it generated an enormous growth in passenger traffic and employment in the field of air transportation.

In 1960, the first medium size jets, the DC8, flying at a speed of 550 m. p. h. , carrying a maximum of 123 Economy and 16 First Class passengers, made their appearance. In 1967 a new model, the Super DC8, was introduced, increasing the number of passengers it could carry to approximately 200. The 70's introduced bigger and faster jets, 747s and Lockheed 1011s, increasing the seating capacity to approximately 350 Economy and 30 First Class, and 230 Economy and 34 First Class respectively. At the end of the 70's, mostly due to economic reasons, a good number of these same planes were converted to increase the number of economy seats at the expense of first class passengers and the facilities required to serve them. These planes could carry a total of approximately 400 and 300 passengers respectively.<sup>2</sup> For short trips, small jet planes were introduced. In 1966, the DC9, in 1974 the B727, carrying respectively approximately 90 and 144 passengers. By 1970 all flights were done on jet driven aircraft. These technical innovations in the realm of aircraft technology expanded the airline's routes, the flight frequencies and increased the facility of flying.

When the Superconstellation was introduced with its range of 4000 miles and an airspeed of 310 m. p. h. , compared to the maximum 2000 mile range and 200 m. p. h. speed of previous aircraft, transatlantic travel and all the Caribbean islands could be served with non-stop flights. An extended network of domestic routes was also opened by the introduction of Viscounts, followed by medium-range Vanguards. The introduction of the jet, which could go with

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<sup>2</sup>The Gazette, "Air Canada Adding Seats" Montreal, Friday, March 18, 1977, p. 30.

over 100 passengers in 'at home' or 'better than home' comfort from Montreal to Vancouver and back in less than a day and be ready for an overnight trip to Europe, was a primary factor in expanding routes and increasing flight frequency. This, in turn, both stimulated and served increased passenger demands for air-transportation. With the advent of jet-driven aircraft, airliners became the most popular modern carriers of passengers travelling between cities and continents. By 1960, scheduled airlines accounted for almost as many intercity passenger-miles as buses and railroads combined.

Developments in aircraft technology also affected the number of flight crew needed per aircraft. The small and medium size aircraft required approximately 3 to 6 cabin crew and 2 or 3 pilots. Bigger planes required approximately 5 to 15 cabin crew members and 3 pilots in order to fly and service the aircraft and its load of passengers.

The effects of this transition to jet equipped aircraft, spurred tremendous change in all aspects of life: it enabled a great mass of people to fly faster and farther, it made the world accessible and smaller and it created greater competition, regulation and rationalization in the airline industry.

### 3. THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT.

Technological innovations of the type explained above produced in turn, some socio-economic change which had an impact upon the role, image and status of flight attendants.

The jet revolution made civil aviation one of the world's fastest growing and most important industries. In order to illustrate this revolution and the effects upon the industry, I will first introduce two interrelated processes, the process of growth in terms of passenger-miles flown and flight attendant employment during the period 1950-1976, and the process of governmental control imposed upon the operations of airlines. Major changes in women's participation in the labor force over the period 1950-1976 will then be introduced in order to put the general issue of the occupation of flight attendants into a broader social context.

#### a. The process of growth: passengers and flight attendants.

In 1940, the number of passengers on propeller driven aircraft was small. In the two decades that followed, 1950-1970, during which time there were major improvements in aircraft technology, the figure for passenger-miles flown by scheduled airlines showed an incredible increase.

As Table 4 indicates, during the period 1950-1955, the total number of passenger-miles flown rose approximately 113%; from 1955 to 1960, the increase was in the range of 112%; from 1961 to 1965, 60%; from 1966 to 1970, 67%.

These two decades, 1950-1970 constituted the golden age of civil aviation, with a growth rate of approximately 12 to 15% yearly. The year 1971 saw the first drop in passenger-miles flown. This rise and decline in passenger-miles

became the trend in the following years. On the whole we may say that between 1971 and 1976, the increase was on the average of 10% yearly.

This long term expansion in product and demand has been accompanied by a rapid increase in flight attendant employment. During the period 1950-1955 (passenger-miles increased 113%), the number of flight attendants increased from 150 to 304, it represents a rise of 100%. From 1955 to 1960 (passenger-miles increased 112%) the number of flight attendants increased to 730 or 150%. It remained stationary until 1965, to increase to 1,073, a 40% rise the following year. This increase was probably due to future projections in traffic increase and the introduction of a jet fleet on domestic routes which made possible a higher seating capacity. In 1971, with the introduction of the 747, the number of flight attendants was 2,260, a rise of more than 100% from 1966. From 1971 to 1976, the increase in flight attendants was about 5% yearly. This seems to correspond with the fluctuation of passenger-miles rise and decline, characteristic of the 70's.

This uneven growth in passengers and flight attendants can be explained by the rapid rate of technological innovations in the industry which increased seat-mile capacity, the range and frequency of flights and at the same time a major economic slowdown in the industry.<sup>3</sup> During the latter part of this period, the airline offered fewer in-flight services and a higher seat density. This permitted it to use proportionately fewer flight attendants but to service more passengers in a shorter time.

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<sup>3</sup>Paul Gessell, "Canadian Airlines Face Bleak Year," The Montreal Star Saturday, January 17, 1976.

Further, these two factors, high seat density and less or standardized services affected the number of revenue passenger-miles per flight attendant. This served to shorten the time of interaction or contact between flight attendants and passengers. As indicated by the Table 4, compared to the previous era when the highest number of revenue-passenger-miles per flight attendant was 122,000, these years - 1950 to 1976 - increased the number revenue passenger-miles per flight attendant to an average of approximately 3,000,000.

Table 4 - Increase in the number of revenue passenger-miles, flight attendants and revenue-passenger-miles per flight attendant, during the period 1950-1976.

Year	Revenue pax-miles	Increase Rev-pax-miles %	Flight Attendants	Number pax-miles/stews.
1950	451,748,000		150	3,011,000
1955	963,775,000	113	304	3,170,000
1960	2,040,877,000	112	730	2,795,000
1965	3,542,867,000	60	761	4,655,000
1970	6,681,710,000	69	1,959 *	3,410,000
1975	10,110,076,000	46	2,914 *	3,469,000
1976	10,705,039,000	6	2,854 *	3,750,000

\* includes temporary summer flight attendants.

b. Government control and regulations

The national and world-wide importance of air transportation, the need for stability, safety and regularity of public air services, induced the Federal Government to institute strict control over the industry. The bodies responsible for the application of these controls and adherence to the rules became the National government for national services and the IATA (International Airlines Transport Assoc. ) for international services. These two bodies make the airline industry unique in the extent to which it is organized, both at the national and international level. Nationally, the controls are in the area of (1) safety standards concerning the aircraft and the crew, (2) responsibility for fixing domestic tariffs, (3) responsibility for negotiating bilateral air services and allocating routes.

Internationally, the IATA body is responsible for (1) fixing fares for international scheduled services, (2) fixing standards of amenities on various classes of services and activities such as in-flight service and entertainment, and (3) passengers' safety standards.

These two bodies, by imposing strict controls over fares, service, in-flight amenities and safety precautions, standardize airlines and make differentiation difficult to achieve.

c. Women in the labor force: 1950-1976

While until 1955, flight attendants were recruited from a small and qualified portion of the labor force -- the professional group of nurses -- after 1955, as the requirement of being a qualified nurse was dropped, recruitment was done on the basis of a high school certificate or equal level



of education. In order to understand the new position of flight attendants inside the labor market and gain a perspective of the place of the occupation as compared to other female occupations, a review of the nature of women occupations and the size of the female labor force in the period 1951-1971 follows.

As Table 5 indicates, in 1951 the female labor force in the Canadian market was 1,163,893. Of these: 27.5% of all employed women were in clerical occupations, 21.0% in personal service, 10.5% in commercial and financial activities, 14.6% in manufacturing and commercial work and 14.4% in professional activities. Moreover, in the decades 1961 and 1971, women in the labor force increased to 1,760,450 in 1961 and 2,831,000 in 1971. The sector which absorbed most of the women was in large part the clerical sector. It absorbed 28.6% in 1961 and 32.7% of all-employed women in 1971. A decrease was registered in the commercial and financial activities as well as in the manufacturing and mechanical sector.

According to these statistics, the largest proportion of women employed in the two decades, 1951-1971, was in the clerical sector. This term, used synonymously with the term 'white collar' occupations, has been applied to mean, in its broadest sense, 'occupations of the class which is socially above manual labor,'<sup>4</sup> or, 'the class of salaried workers, especially office and mercantile workers such as clerks, salesmen, bookkeepers, etc., whose duties permit or require a well groomed appearance.'<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Horwell's Dictionary of Modern American Usage.

<sup>5</sup>Webster's New International Dictionary, second edition, Unabridged.

According to the new qualification and requirements, flight attendants are included in this category. They are part of the sector of clerical occupations or the 'white collar' mass of salaried workers which have developed and increased with the rationalization of work and the development of large scale business practices.

The reduction of requirements to enter the occupation has lowered the socio-economic status of flight attendants, compared to the period prior to 1955. The change has reduced them to a middle level of white collar occupations.

Table 5. - Percentage distribution of working women by leading occupational groups, Canada, 1951-1971

Occupational group	1951	1961	1971
Personal Service	21.0%	22.1%	22.3%
Commercial and Financial	10.5%	10.2%	8.3%
Manufacturing and Mechanical	14.6%	9.9%	11.2%
Clerical	27.5%	28.6%	32.7%
Professional	14.4%	15.5%	17.5%
Others	11.9%	13.6%	7.7%
Total	99.9	99.9	99.9

Table 6 - The Canadian Population and the Labour Force

Population and Labour Force	1951	1961	1971
Total Population	13,984,329	18,200,621	21,568,310
Labour Force	5,214,913	6,342,289	8,631,000
Female Labour Force	1,163,893	1,760,450	2,831,000
Women as percentage of Labour Force	22.0%	27.3%	33.3%

Sources: Women in the Labour Force 1971: Facts and Figures.  
Labour Canada, Womens Bureau.

#### 4. THE ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

The growth in the public's acceptance of air-transportation introduced an increased trend toward rationalization in the work environment. As in the early days, the duties and functions of the flight attendant may still be broadly defined as safety and service. As a recruitment brochure explains: it is the job of the stewardess

' to welcome passengers, check their boarding passes and help them with seating. To ensure their safety and comfort; to check that smoking and seat belt regulations are being observed ...'

Other duties include in-flight announcements, distribution of reading material and serving of meals and beverages.

'... most of all your job is to anticipate the needs of your passengers and offer these services in a friendly, courteous manner. That may mean helping an invalid to his seat, warming a baby-bottle or not disturbing a passenger who wants to be left alone ...'<sup>6</sup>

Beside these duties, according to Federal Air Aviation rule 121-391, a flight attendant is on board specifically and primarily 'to provide the most efficient egress to passengers in the event of an emergency evacuation.' However, these duties are carried out in an environment which has become extremely complex and subject to constant change.

In these pages I will look at the process of rationalization as it has been applied to the work environment and the consequences for flight attendants.

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<sup>6</sup>'The Sky's the Limit ...,' Air-Canada Brochure. Personnel Bureau Mc1313-B11(4-73)25M

a. The rationalization of work

The increase in seating capacity, the great extension of routes, the frequency and availability of flights introduced by the jet, have required precise organizational planning and restructuring of the flight attendant's work.

1. Authority

On the aircraft, authority has been segmentalized and the work load divided among the crew. The captain is always in command of the 'ship,' but the position of the flight attendant has changed. The line of authority and the homogeneity of the group has been divided. On every aircraft, there is a person in charge of the whole cabin, the 'in-charge flight attendant' or 'purser,' followed by an 'assistant purser' (depending on the size of the aircraft) and the group of the flight attendants. On bigger planes, segmentation is even more extensive, since a flight Director is added as the person in charge of supervision over the work of the cabin crew. Moreover, these persons, purser or flight Director, are the link between the pilot in charge and the cabin crew and are the only persons responsible for any type of communication between cockpit and cabin crew.

Unlike the old days, today the structure of operations for pilots is kept separate from the cabin crew. The size of operations and the introduction of multiple types of aircraft has required a division between the two groups: pilots belong to the 'flight operations,' while the cabin crew belongs to the 'in-flight service' department. This division assigns them different schedules of operation and at times, even different working conditions.

## 2. Work-tasks

Service tasks, duties, functions and emergency procedures have been clearly defined, written down and subdivided among the cabin crew members. Each individual inside the plane has become responsible for a particular formal work task and cabin area.<sup>7</sup>

The large size of the operation of mass travelling, has required standardization and simplification of tasks, service and amenities. There has been a large scale development of food service and on bigger planes, added diversions such as in-flight music and films. Depending on the length of the flight, the time of departure or arrival, different meals and beverages or both, are served. Some beverages, like wine and alcohol, in the economy section are served with a charge. For the service of meals, flight attendants are provided with carts. Hot meals are kept in the hot plate on the upper part of the cart, while the serving trays prepared beforehand are placed on the lower level. Flight attendants place the hot casserole on the tray and serve it to the passengers. In this way a quick and easy service is guaranteed.

In first class, service is more elaborate. Gastronomic specialities are, at certain times and on certain routes, offered, accompanied by vintage wines, but tasks and procedures are standardized to fit all flights and situations.

## 3. Requirements and qualifications

This routinization and simplification of work, with comfort, speed and the high level of safety developed by the introduction of the jet, have also changed

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<sup>7</sup>Air Canada, Passenger Service, Manual 601, 602, 603 and Manual 356, 378.

and reduced the stringency of the requirements and qualifications characteristic of the occupation. In the late 50's and early 60's, the qualification of being a registered nurse was dropped as part of employment. The requirements changed as well: the minimum age for entrance became 18, the educational requirement became grade 12. Still required were good physical, mental and emotional health, height and weight limits, and a pleasing appearance. Still, at this time, applicants could not be married or have children and if a stewardess married, she had to resign. In 1965, as a result of civil rights legislation and union pressure, some of these requirements were changed. Stewardesses were no longer forced to quit flying because of marriage or family obligation. At this time a 10 year contract and extra monetary rewards were introduced as part of the conditions for employment. But because of union pressure in 1971, these contract conditions were eliminated.

#### 4. Training

In the two decades, 1950-1970, training underwent several changes in accordance with the new conditions of flying and airline policies. The relaxation of the qualifications and requirements governing the hiring of stewardesses, the simplification and uniformity of tasks on board, the high safety standards made possible by the jet and the standardization characteristic of every airline introduced changes in the process of training new flight attendants.

The training course lasts between three and four weeks. During this time, the new flight attendants become acquainted with the layout of different aircraft by means of books or brief visits to the aircraft. They are taught how

to serve meals and drinks; and they are trained how to use different safety equipment which is carried on board. The applicant also has to pass or attend grooming classes held by professionals or semi-professionals 'image makers'<sup>8</sup> who make decisions about the 'look' of the would-be-stewardess according to the image of the flight attendant expected by the airline. In this course, the new stewardess learns 'posture, grace, eating habits, how to lose weight, surface beauty, make up, hair and the like.'<sup>9</sup> She is shown the kind of appearance expected by the airline.

##### 5. Lifestyle

Despite the routinization and rationalization of the work of flight attendants, the occupation in a number of ways has remained unique. Two elements make it so: the special place of work and the particular lifestyle made possible by the occupation. An important feature of the work place, being an airplane, is its variability. National and international airline services create a unique mobile work place. Not only is the work place usually in motion, often at great speed, but the distances that are travelled in a short time, may be correspondingly long. The special characteristic of the work place requires flight attendants to keep very irregular hours of work, to be away from home for a certain time and to deal with extremely varied groups of people. Flight attendants spend an average of 150 days in places other than home, either in local cities or overseas. During this time, they live in hotels and spend most

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<sup>8</sup>Wini Rider, "The Grooming of Airline Attendants - Constance Style,"  
The Gazette, May 12, 1973.

<sup>9</sup>ibid.



of their time getting acquainted with different places and habits. In a word, they become 'experts' of the world.

The increased ratio of revenue passenger-miles per flight attendant, the additional services which are offered have been made possible by routinizing the work. This, in turn, has made relationships with passengers limited and impersonal and has resulted in a relaxation of the qualifications and requirements governing the occupation. Despite all this, flight attendants still lead a lifestyle which is uncommon and different from most people in the labor force.

b. The rationalization of the flight attendant.

The principle of rationalization defined as '... the methodical attainment of a definitely given and practical end by means of an increasingly precise calculation of adequate means ...'<sup>10</sup> has not only been a pervasive element in changing the work environment but it has also been a powerful element in the process of change of the image of flight attendants.

The growth made possible by the jet developed a high degree of competition among airlines seeking to attract passengers. At the same time, the cartelization of the industry made this process very difficult and hard to achieve. With fares, service and in-flight amenities controlled and regulated there were very few unique features which a specific airline could use to persuade the public to believe that they were unique from other airlines.

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<sup>10</sup>Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, p. 293.

The only forms of competition became standards of service, advertising and sales product promotion. Consequently, the stewardess, bearing the image of the company, the employee going places, glorified and glamorized and with the most contact with the customer, became one mean by which airlines sought to distinguish themselves from their competitors. The following pages will examine the image of the stewardess as introduced by company advertising.

1. The use of imagery

Advertising and public relation agencies became the 'image makers' for the airline stewardess. The theme commonly used for all airlines centered around the promise of a lovely hostess to introduce every passenger to the subtle delights of the aircraft's comfort, hospitality and foreign places. China Airlines promised that you would be 'pampered by cheongsam-clad hostesses as you relax in an oriental atmosphere,' Air Jamaica stewardesses were referred to as 'tropical birds'; American Airlines introduced 'air-strips' on board and advertising campaigns whose famous slogans 'Fly Me - I'm Cheryl' and 'We really move our tails for you' became cheap jokes used on board to heighten the fun of flying.

All airlines did their best to use flight attendants to create a flying dream machine where passengers would be catered to by submissive geisha-type girls. Moreover, this imagery touched off an endless series of flight attendants exploitation books, starting with Coffee, Tea or Me, now in its twentieth printing to How To Make A Good Stewardess, which is purported to be a guide to the most effective means of seducing the different kinds of women found on different airlines. All these elements affected the image of flight

attendants on board. The image of flight attendant became more like glamorous, serviceable young women gladly serving, but with hardly any authority.

## 2. The symbols

While the stewardess image changed from that of an attractive wife-to-be', with all the inherent limitations that it implies, to a more glamorized 'Barbie Doll' or 'Playmate in the sky', the airlines completed this image by introducing changes in grooming regulations and uniform design. At first, in the early days, paramilitary rules concerning hairdos and the precise shade of lipstick were introduced, shifting later to a different kind of control: the introduction of new uniforms which included miniskirts or different sets of costumes to fit any mood. As Captain Ashwood<sup>11</sup> claims:

'... as much agonizing thought, research and argument goes into the selection of the stewardess's uniform as goes into purchasing a new fleet of multi-million dollar planes ...'

These images had important consequences on the public view of the stewardess and consequently of her occupational status.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Captain Thomas M. Ashwood, This is Your Captain Speaking, A Handbook for Air Travelers. (New York: Stein and Day Publishers, 1974), p. 97-107.

<sup>12</sup>In late 1977 and early 1978, most airlines began switching back to the "uniform-uniform" or the 'professional look.' This seems to be a consequence of the major changes affecting the occupation, as reported in these pages. Further the changing conditions of employment - flight attendants remaining inside the occupation longer; the irrelevance of marital status and parenthood and the increase in men being hired - meant that airlines could not possibly keep the image of flight attendants as 'glamorous young women.' The emphasis on glamour was in a way an impediment to good service and efficiency on board. Thus, there has been a return to a more formal image and a focus upon 'Professionalism.'

## 6. SUMMARY

The status of airline flight attendants is part of the history of air transportation. In the early part of the century, air travelling made headlines, operations were small and limited, stewardesses were associated with the cockpit crew and shared with them a particular mystique and prestige. The novelty of flying, the special work environment and the character of the occupation were a break from the 'ordinary' and the 'routine.' It challenged the customary role of work and invested stewardesses with 'charismatic' and exceptional qualities.

The need of having stewardesses on board was both emotional and practical. Since flying was still in its early stages and emergencies cropped up frequently, one major problem of the industry rested in overcoming the fear of flying and making passengers comfortable during their trips. Thus, the stewardess's role was to reassure passengers. In doing so she had to be a qualified nurse, and to provide high standards of service and safety. Her career was short. Most girls left the occupation for an early marriage.

During the early days most newspapers publicized and portrayed the stewardess as an exceptional person with exceptional qualities. Her image emerged as one of a competent, exemplary and extraordinary figure in a unique occupation. She was envied and praised.

This image was also reflected in the uniform style, consisting of capes or long aviation coats, hat, and a military looking costume. Consequently, the special characteristics of the occupation, the nurse qualification, the close association with the pilots and with wealthy passengers, the curiosity concerning

airplanes and flying in general, the myth of being 'charismatic' or 'superwoman', became the social basis for status.

Today, with the advent of mass transportation, travelling has become very popular and at the disposal of a wide range of people. In this process, the industry and the occupation of flying have undergone a wide process of transformation. Flying went beyond national boundaries and the world became its domain. As the pioneering age was over, the industry became increasingly organized, bureaucratized and government regulated. Organization took the shape of specialization, differentiation and routinization of work. These processes decreased the previous in-group integration among the crew. Authority on board became segmented along hierarchical lines. Work tasks were made simple and routine. Requirements and qualifications were reduced. Moreover, with price and routes being government controlled, flight attendants became part of the competitive process among airlines by promoting their images. These images, portraying flight attendants as seductive young women, lacking authority but gladly serving and pampering male customers, were further reinforced by uniforms. These became alluring costumes and flight attendants had to attain a standardized seductive look to enhance the organizational image. All this occurred at the very time when flight attendants were handling mere routinized jobs. These technological, social and organizational developments have changed the occupation and the traditional basis for status. The transition from highly trained, authority-wielding professionals to merely elements in advertising schemes, the lack of special qualification or knowledge, the mass clientele, the routinized character of the job on board, have reduced the flight attendant's status and

made it unclear. These changes are summarized in Figure 1.

While flight attendants still characterize for most people an image of access to a larger world, on board they are merely involved in routinized and mechanical tasks which challenge their status. What are the consequences of this situation upon the flight attendants? What conflict does it entail at the role level when flight attendants are confronted with discrepant definitions of their status and social identity?

The following pages will investigate more closely the status of airline flight attendants in the jet era today. The consequences of their ambiguous status, conflict and resolution at the personal level will be examined later.

Figure 1 - Summary of the occupation of airline flight attendant during two periods: the beginning of commercial aviation and the jet age.

TIME	CAREER	QUALIFICATIONS	NEEDS	LICENCE	STATUS	IMAGE
1936-1949	short	Qualified trained nurse. Interpersonal skills Strength	Psychological Reassurance	Service Safety	High Professional status. Association with pilots and small group of passengers.	Competent Superwoman. Attractive wife to be.  Uniforms: capes and military look.
1950-1976	long	No special qualifications High school certificate or equivalent education.  Nice looking and personality.	Competition Glamour	Service Safety	Low White collar occupational status.	Glamorous women, Glamorous waitresses, skybunnies.  Uniform: the "non-uniform."

## CHAPTER VI

### THE OCCUPATIONAL STATUS OF AIRLINE FLIGHT ATTENDANTS

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

Any analysis of occupational status is concerned with social judgments of two kinds: an evaluation by the researcher of the objective functions of an occupation according to those attributes which are scarce and desirable, and a subjective evaluation or the perception of elements attributed to occupations by actors in a particular society.

The first type of evaluation is concerned with the relative rank of occupations according to the given 'value orientation' of a society as determined by the researcher. The other type of evaluation is based upon a degree of consensus among actors about the desirable elements which we incorporated in a particular occupation.

Both indices, although very controversial, are important instruments in approaching the problem of status evaluation in modern society. In the discussion to follow, the status of airline flight attendants is first analyzed according to the functional aspects of the work role in the jet age. Then, the occupation is further analyzed according to the status assigned to it by actors themselves. These approaches, emphasizing different approaches to evaluating the prestige of an occupation, introduce us to the empirical issue of status evaluation, as it applies to airline flight attendants.



## 2. THE OBJECTIVE INDEX OF PRESTIGE

The idea that in all social systems occupations are differentially rated in terms of the prestige accorded to them, is a common sociological observation. This section will introduce some of the assumptions underlying this differentiation as well as the basic elements associated with prestige in modern industrial society. The evaluation of the occupation of airline flight attendant will then follow.

### a. Some assumptions concerning the objective index of prestige.

In urbanized industrial society, those holding to functionalist theoretical assumptions have ordered occupations according to a complex system of evaluation derived from the basic needs of the society, and based upon education, income and all the functional characteristics attached to an occupational role. Those roles, deemed to be more important, are assumed to offer greater rewards. The general assumption behind this approach is the belief that roles in which the incumbent exercises authority are rated higher than physical tasks which require little exercise of authority. Similarly an occupation requiring greater formal education and skills is ranked higher than other occupations. Clean work is ranked higher than dirty work. Self-employment is ranked above an employee status. Occupations are classified according to their similarity with respect to these criteria and classified into major socio-economic groupings. One example is that used by the Bureau of the Census.

In Canada, the main groupings are the following:

- (1) Professionals: includes persons such as professors, lawyers, engineers and similar occupations.
- (2) Semi-professionals: includes persons such as teachers, nurses, librarians and similar occupations.
- (3) Proprietors, Managers and Officials, large: consists of persons owning or managing large business units such as banks, factories, wholesale business and similar occupations.
- (4) Proprietors, Managers and Officials, small: represents owners and managers of small retail, service and various contractors.
- (5) Clerical and Sales: are a large heterogeneous category of clerical and technical workers whose work is primarily non manual and requires various degrees of skill.
- (6) Skilled Manual workers: includes workers whose work is primarily manual and involves a specific skill.
- (7) Semi-skilled workers: includes workers whose work is primarily manual and involves a minor degree of skill.
- (8) Unskilled workers: no skill is required.
- (9) Farmers<sup>1</sup>

Each of these categories is differentiated by the degree of education which is required and the income rewards. These are taken as indices of the relative importance of the functions provided by these occupations.

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<sup>1</sup>These categories have been as a 'sociologically common sense socio-economic status categories' based upon sociological researches instead of Census categories and are the same as used by Peter C. Pineo and John Porter, "Occupational Prestige in Canada." Social Stratification: Canada, ed. James E. Curtis and William G. Scott. (Scarborough, Ontario, Prentice Hall of Canada Ltd., 1973), pp. 55-68.

b. The components and the ranking of the occupational status of flight attendants.

The socio-economic factors determining status have been specified as occupation, education and income. The latter two are functionally related to the nature of work and its requirements.

A previous analysis of the occupation from its birth to today's jet age, outlined the functional role of flight attendant as (a) ensuring the passenger's safety, (b) promoting public relations, and (c) attending passengers' needs including the serving of food and beverages. However, with the coming of the jet era some of the elements of the occupation such as job-content, skill, responsibility, authority on board, as well as the stringency of the job requirements have been changed. The skill and knowledge required to carry out the work role are acquired by a 4 to 6 week training period followed by a short period of training on the job. Responsibility concerns the carrying out of emergency procedures, enforcement of safety rules and standardized company regulations. Authority is segmentalized. To qualify for the occupation, a high school certificate or equivalent educational level is required. Additional training supplies role incumbents with all the skills and knowledge necessary to carry out role obligations.

There are two types of progressions inside the occupation: time progression and career progression. The first is represented by seniority. It regulates positions and the assignments flight attendants are able to choose to work. Career progression, is an advancement toward positions of authority on board. 'In-charge flight attendant' and 'Flight Director', represent positions of authority vacancies.

The occupation consists of shift work. Work can be carried out on different flights and routes or at different times. Some of these elements are more favourable than others and are regulated by the seniority system. Seniority or time progression gives flight attendants increasing autonomy over working conditions, such as choice of flights, day or time of work, routes, cities or continents they wish to fly. When on duty, expenses, such as transportation to and from the airport to the city and hotel and meal allowances are fully paid by the company. Income varies according to time and position in the occupation. As of June 1976, the income ranged from a starting salary of \$785 to a maximum of \$2,000 monthly.

In addition to income, there are other rewards. The occupation offers travelling benefits, such as a certain number of free tickets inside the total routes-system of the airline, plus reductions with other airlines serving transcontinental routes. These additional benefits are also dependent upon the seniority system. Further there are auxiliary benefits related to the field of travelling, such as special rates in resort hotels. These benefits add to the economic rewards of the occupation and are highly advertised by the airline to attract potential candidates. The occupants are mostly women, although lately there has been an increase in the number of men applying for the position, and they come from low or middle class level.

These socio-economic factors are characteristic of the occupation today: a middle level of education, qualifications and skill learned in a short course and a period of training on the job. It is a "white collar" occupation incorporated within the category of 'clerical and sales.' However, the special

rewards associated with the occupation differentiate it from the occupations included in the above category and assign to it an honorific value which affects its evaluation.

### 3. THE SUBJECTIVE STATUS RANK OF FLIGHT ATTENDANTS IN CANADA.

The prestige attributed to an occupation is not only governed by socio-economic criteria but it is defined to a great extent by people's perception and by conventions, beliefs and customs associated with the occupation. What people believe about the worth and values of an occupation, is an important factor in the process of evaluation. This section introduces the accorded status of flight attendants in Canada, the elements people associate with the prestige of the occupation and some empirical data supporting this view.

#### a. A study of occupational prestige in Canada.

A study concerning the prestige of occupations in Canada, made in 1967 by Pineo and Porter,<sup>2</sup> along the lines of the NORC study conducted in 1962 in the United States, divides occupations into eight socio-economic groupings: Professionals; Semi-professionals; Proprietors, Managers and Officials, large; Proprietors, Managers and Officials, small; Clerical and Sales; Skilled workers; Semi-skilled workers; Unskilled workers, plus farmers and people not in the labor force. The rank of occupations was established by asking a sample of 793 individuals, representing the Canadian population, to give their personal opinion about the general standing of listed occupations.

Flight attendants or "Air-hostesses" are reported by the researchers under the grouping Clerical and Sales. The prestige score given to the occupation by the Canadian population is a national average of 57.0 with a standard deviation of 21.1 (with the English sample according a score of 55.7, the French, of 61.0).

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<sup>2</sup>ibid.

In the Clerical and Sales socio-economic grouping, flight attendants are grouped with occupations such as Bank Teller, Bill Collector, Bookkeeper, Clerk in an office, Insurance and Real Estate agent, Receptionist, Sales Clerk in a store, Travelling salesman and the like, that is all occupations of a low white collar nature, with some general skills and/or some forms of contact with the general public.

The rank assigned to "air-hostess," 57.0 as shown by the table attached as Appendix 4, is the highest rank assigned to occupations included in this category. Moreover, certain occupations included in the categories of "Professional," "Semi-professional," "Proprietor, Manager and Office large and small," had similar rankings with air-hostess, while others scored slightly above, as the table below illustrates:

Socio-economic grouping & occupation	Score	St. deviation
<b>1. <u>Professional</u></b>		
Accountant	63.4	19.2
Public grade school teacher	59.6	20.5
<b>2. <u>Semi-professional</u></b>		
TV star	65.6	26.8
Registered Nurse	64.7	21.4
TV Director	62.1	21.5
Journalist	60.9	20.0
Professionally trained librarian	58.1	21.7
TV announcer	57.6	21.6
Social worker	55.1	24.0
<b>3. <u>Proprietors, Managers and Officials</u></b>		
<u>Large.</u>		
Advertising Executive	56.5	21.8
Buyer for a Department store	51.1	19.3
<b>4. <u>Proprietors, Managers and Officials</u></b>		
<u>Small.</u>		
Advertising Copy-writer	48.9	20.6
Job Counsellor	58.3	20.7
Manager of a Real Estate Office	58.3	20.9
<b>5. <u>Clerical and Sales</u></b>		
Air-hostess	57.0	21.1

It seems evident from these findings, that although the occupation of air-hostess belongs today to a low grade white collar occupational grouping, Clerical and Sales, the general public accord it a higher prestige than is its due objectively. Moreover, this inflated index of prestige indicates that despite the effects of the technological changes upon the occupation, people accord to



the occupation certain qualities which make it desirable.

This section follows with data concerning the elements of desirability and attractiveness of the occupation and with some empirical data concerning the case study.

b. The subjective attributes of prestige accorded to the occupation of airline flight attendants.

A review of studies and general literature give us some insight into the elements of attraction and desirability people identify with the occupation. A study<sup>3</sup> concerning the vocational interests of men and women in a wide variety of occupations, tries to correlate various occupations with the elements associated with them by occupational incumbents. The occupation of "Air-hostess," is frequently grouped together with fashion models and nightclub-TV entertainers, and it is correlated with elements of interests and/or attractions which tend to be of the 'livelier kind' and are concerned with the 'sparkling part of life'. When these interests were compared with the interests of candidates <sup>opting</sup> for different occupations, the responses correlated with the above occupations were as follows:

'thrilling, dangerous activities'	vs.	'quieter, safer activities'
'taking a chance'	vs.	'playing safe'
'work in which you move from place to place'	vs.	'work where you stay in a place'
'great variety of work'	vs.	'similarity in work'
'entertaining others'		
'continually changing activities'		
'usually liven up the group on a dull day' <sup>4</sup>		

<sup>3</sup>David P. Campbell, "The Clash Between Beautiful Women and Science," The Professional Woman, ed. Athena Theodore. (Cambridge, Mass.: Shenkman Publ. Co. Inc., 1971), pp. 135-141.

<sup>4</sup>ibid, pp. 136-137.

At a conference in Chicago, promoted by the organization "Stewardesses for-Womens'-Rights," a psychologist associated the occupation with a 'flighty personality' and saw the reason why women join the airline as a means 'to keep things happening, to keep moving all the time.'<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, studies concerning the prestige of occupations, indicate the occupation of air-hostess to be overrated by the general public. In a study<sup>6</sup> of the occupation of telephone workers, the researcher asked the women if they aspired to more desirable occupations. Among the occupations mentioned, the occupation of air-hostess was cited by the majority as a desirable, secure, middle class position carrying prestige and glamor.

To conclude, these findings suggest that there is a special romance associated with flying by people in general. The main attributes of prestige according to the general public seem to rest with the idea of glamor, with various off-the-job activities and with the constantly changing environment.

c. Some empirical data supporting the accorded status given to the occupation.

The empirical data reported here concerns the rate of applications and the turn-over rate as it applies to the case study.

1. Rate of applications to the airline

'The sky is the limit when you take off on your career as a flight attendant - It is a busy, different life! You start as a trainee and then

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<sup>5</sup>Paula Kane and C. Chandler, Sex Object in the Sky: A Personal Account of the Stewardess Rebellion, (Chicago: Follett Publishing Co., 1974) p. 87

<sup>6</sup>Joel Seidman, et al., "Telephone Workers," pp. 493-504.

... spread your wings and fly! You can go far! ...' - says the airline brochure.<sup>7</sup> But, it continues '... come on out of the clouds and down to earth for a minute! ... the job is not right for everyone!' Despite the caution, the position is one of the most sought after in the airline industry.<sup>8</sup>

The airline in question had more than 10,000 applicants in 1977, matching the number of previous years. Most of the applicants are young women and men, aged 18 to 24. However few of them are hired. As the following table indicates, in 1973 only 8.3% of the candidates were recruited; in 1974, 6.3%; in 1975, 13.4%; in 1976, 11.7%.

Table 7 - Number of applicants recruited by year.

Year	Total No. Individuals Interviewed (*)	Total Hired	% of Individuals Hired
1973	9,786	813	8.3%
1974	8,054	506	6.3%
1975	625	84	13.4%
1976	2,765	324	11.7%

(\*) The number of individuals interviewed does not represent the total number of applicants but the number of individuals chosen and interviewed by the personnel office according to the qualifications reported by the candidates on the application form.

<sup>7</sup>Air Canada, Personnel Bureau Brochure, Mc1313-B11 (4-73)25M.

<sup>8</sup>Ken Romain, "Many Want Flight Attendant Jobs, Few Chosen," The Globe and Mail, Toronto, Saturday, April 23, 1977.

## 2. Turn-over rate of flight attendants in the airline.

This occupational attraction or desirability associated with the occupation seems to be kept among airline flight attendants themselves. As the following table indicates, as social change and union pressure have eliminated certain occupational discriminations and age limitation, flight attendants remain in the occupation longer. In the United States an occupational survey<sup>9</sup> reports that the average flight attendant today has been on the job six years, compared to a decade ago when the tenure was only 18 months. Moreover, the average age of cabin crew is now 26.5 years, compared to 22 years in 1966. At the airline in question, until 1966 the average turn-over rate was approximately 40%. After 1969, the turn-over rate dropped to 8% and then a mere 5% in 1976.

Table 8 - Turn-over rate of flight attendants during the period 1939-1976.

YEAR	TURN-OVER RATE	OBSERVATIONS
1939-1940	30% .....	Termination of flying duties mandatory at the age of 32 or upon marriage.
1945	50%	Qualification required: nurse.
1950	30%	
1955	46% .....	Nurse qualification eliminated. Still age limit of 32.
1960	30%	
1965	30% .....	In 1969, a ten year maximum employment contract was introduced.
1970	8%	For those hired before, the age limit became 50 years of age.
1975	6% .....	In 1971 the age clause was cancelled.

<sup>9</sup>These data are quoted in Harold Watkins, "No More Cheese cake in the Sky: Mature Stews demand pay, pensions." The Montreal Star, Wednesday, September 15, 1976.

All these empirical data provide further evidence of the prestige attributed to the occupation by people at large, applicants, and role-incumbents themselves.

### 3. SUMMARY AND SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The transition to the jet era has created a certain ambiguity in the status definition of airline flight attendants. Theoretically, status is not only an attribute acquired in terms of rank and favourable or detrimental characteristics attached to a work role, but it is also dependent upon the identification of individuals with their work role and how the role enables them to enjoy desirable rewards.

The above findings indicate a discrepancy between the objective status, established by socio-economic criteria, and the 'perceived' status, based upon more symbolic properties of airline flight attendants. According to the objective elements - the task oriented nature of work, skill acquired through little training and on the job, and the level of education - flight attendants are classified into the 'white collar' occupational group. They are categorized as 'Clerical and Sales.' According to a more 'subjective' index, the status accorded to flight attendants by a more general population is inflated. Moreover, a more detailed analysis of the attributes of status, shows this discrepancy to be due to the extrinsic rewards of the occupation rather than the work roles themselves.

This lack of unity and agreement concerning the elements of status provides an additional explanation for the strains experienced by flight attendants. Conflict will be greater in the work situation, where the extrinsic rewards are not visible.

The following pages will examine the elements of status as viewed by flight attendants. These elements by which flight attendants grant status to themselves will be tested in the different social contexts of the flight attendant's role set - among her/his peers, within the work setting and with the passengers - in order to determine the degree of agreement or conflict in the process of evaluation.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE STATUS OF FLIGHT ATTENDANTS AND THEIR PEER GROUP

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The kind of work people do defines their place in the social system. But less tangible elements of an occupation define the status incumbents accord to themselves. These elements thus become the symbols and the values members of an occupation identify as distinguishing and differentiating them from others. They are the standards the group members use to appraise themselves and claim status from others. This chapter explores the values and meanings flight attendants assign to certain elements of their work role which enhance their status and which serve as a basis for invidious comparisons with other groups belonging to the same socio-economic category.

## 2. THE FLIGHT ATTENDANT'S SUBJECTIVE DEFINITION OF STATUS

This section introduces the subjective definition of status as claimed by flight attendants. The indicators used to identify these elements are those of attraction and importance flight attendants assign to their work role. The elements of attraction make clear the distinctive values flight attendants employ to differentiate this occupation from others. The elements of importance identify the intrinsic meaning, the worth and the social utility group members attribute to their specific work role.

These findings and their interpretation are based upon data obtained from the responses to questionnaires sent to flight attendants of three major bases of the airline in question and from the diaries, written by a small group of flight attendants.

From a total of 540 questionnaires, representing approximately 20% of the flight attendants of the three bases, 181 questionnaires were returned. Of these, 35 represented a preliminary stage of the study. Some revisions were subsequently made. Thus, some of the data tables do not include this number. The total response rate represents one third of the group sampled or approximately 10% of the total number of flight attendants of the three bases, and they are the quantitative basis of the study.

As noted previously, of the 20 diaries distributed, 11 were returned and they have been used as a supplement and interpretation of the quantitative data.

A word of warning should be said about the small return rate which could have an effect on the representativeness and validity of the study. While this constitutes one of the major weaknesses of the study, the responses concerning



these data seem to correspond with responses found in the diaries.

a. The social basis of prestige: lifestyle:

The style of life people lead is often a function of the work they do. Moreover the influence of the work role upon people's lifestyle is related to the demands occupations make upon their members. These include the amount of time required on the job, the place of work, the social relationships and the symbols attached to the job. These elements influence people's taste, habits and activities, in a word, they influence their lifestyle.<sup>1</sup>

Flight attendants, when asked to indicate the elements attracting them to their work, indicated as the most important element of attraction the special characteristics of 'flying' as an occupation. (Table 9) This was followed by what we may term the consequences of these characteristics such as: the possibility to interact and meet different people, travelling to different places and to be in touch with different lifestyles.

The characteristics of 'flying' were identified as:

'... unconventional hours ... non-routine ... each day is different ... elements of the unknown ... variance of atmosphere, lack of monotony, ... varied hours and routes ... getting away from home ... the constant change of surrounding ... moving around on the job versus having to sit at a desk ... non-routine type of life ... the variety of flying ... not boring ... most of the time it doesn't seem like work ... variety ... able to see the world and not being restricted constantly by the same monotonous environment ...'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>For a detailed study of the relationship between work role and lifestyle, see Graeme Salaman, Community and Occupation, (Cambridge University Press, 1974)

<sup>2</sup>Excerpts from questionnaire responses.

As these descriptions indicate, flight attendants, independently of time and qualification inside the occupation, identify their occupation as 'free' from the constraints of 'routine', 'sameness' and the 'static and small environment' of an office. The occupation is identified as being mobile, free, different, varied and as being part of a larger world.

Although flight attendants were not asked to indicate a specific reference group with whom they compare themselves, the reference group of the same social aggregate they most often referred to was clerical, from whom they clearly disassociated themselves. A physically mobile environment such as an airplane, travelling at high speed and over several lands is a different system from the close work situation of an office. It places different demands on the workers and consequently it structures the lifestyle of its members in a totally different way. Compared to the close and static work situation of an office, flight attendants indicated 'flying' as being satisfying, fulfilling in a way in which most occupations are not. It seems that the life of a flight attendant is not dull or routine, although it may not be that glamorous. Only 5% indicated that glamor, excitement and challenge were major characteristics of the job.

What makes a flight attendant different from other people of the same social aggregate is the lifestyle. As a flight attendant explains:

'... the most important thing of this work is for me the possibility to escape the daily routine to which everybody is subject to. We have the possibility to conform to the life of others or not ... and overall ... the advantages of layovers ... the possibility to meet different and various people, contrary to the office life where the world is smaller and people are always the same ...'<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Excerpt from a diary.

Social success is defined in terms of 'non-routine', varied places, meeting interesting people and having interesting co-workers. Flight attendants see themselves as being more free than most people because by their work they can escape the daily humdrum, the routine to which most people are subject and which characterize most work in modern industrial society.

b. Work and non-work activities

Included in the concept of lifestyle are the activities role-incumbents carry on during their free time from work. The particular demands of the work and the type of people employed in an occupation seem to have an influence on the use people make of their free time.<sup>4</sup>

The nature of shift work, often at irregular times and intervals, was expected to have a considerable effect upon their leisure patterns. Like the American Railroader's life dominated by 'time dependency',<sup>5</sup> the unstructured, 'unroutine' life of a flight attendant was expected to have the effect of differentiating her life from that of other people of her same social milieu. When flight attendants were asked about their use of leisure, the activities they indicated they engaged in frequently were similar to activities taking place in the wider society. As Table 10 indicates, the largest number of flight attendants spend their leisure time in activities involving recreation and relaxation,

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<sup>4</sup>For a discussion on the subject, see Joel E. Gerstl "Leisure: Taste and Occupational Milieu," ed. Erwin O. Smigel; Work and Leisure, (New Haven: College and University Press, 1963) pp. 146-187.

<sup>5</sup>William F. Cottrel, The Railroader, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press 1940) pp. 76-77.

Table 9 - Percentage of respondents indicating their reasons for liking the job. (N= 181) \*

Reason	% of Respondents
The nature and the characteristics of flying	59.8% (107)
Meeting and talking to people	57.2% (103)
Travelling to different places	40.6% (73)
Working with different associates	24.4% (44)
Autonomy of working time and free time	21.7% (39)
Excitement, challenge	5.0% (9)
Others	11.1% (20)

\* Respondents could indicate more than one reason.

followed by a minority of people attending full or part-time educational courses, travelling, attending creative courses and volunteer or part-time work.

The activities included in 'recreation and relaxation' generally centered around sports, home, family and general hobbies. There seems to be a tendency for people in the first 10 years in the occupation to engage more often in activities related to relaxation and travelling than people with more time in the occupation. People in this last category seem to spend more of their time in activities related to education, creative courses or part-time work than do others.

These findings, although very vague, suggest that flight attendants' activities during non-work time are not too different from other people of similar social status.<sup>6</sup>

c. The structural basis of prestige: the work role

The importance of a work role is established by reference to the particular technique, exigencies and relationships involved in the occupation. In order to have an insight into what flight attendants value most in their work, they were asked to choose from a list of work characteristics, those elements which they thought were appropriate and most congruent with their work role.

All flight attendants, independently of seniority or positions on board, considered their work as being responsible, skilled, difficult, dangerous and glamorous. However the majority indicated that the most important

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<sup>6</sup>For further information on the subject, see Alfred C. Clarké, "The Use of Leisure and its Relation to Levels of Occupational Prestige," American Sociological Review, 21, (June 1956) pp. 301-7.

Table 10 - Flight Attendants' Activities in Leisure Time by percentage of respondents per years of service.

Activity	Years of service				Total
	1-5 years	6-10	11-15	16 more	
Relaxation & Recreation only	60.6% (20)	55.4% (31)	44.1% (15)	54.5% (12)	53.8% (78)
R&R plus extensive travelling	15.2% (5)	23.2% (13)	5.9% (2)	13.6% (3)	15.9% (23)
R&R plus creative courses	12.1% (4)	1.8% (1)	11.8% (4)	9.1% (2)	7.6% (11)
R&R plus full or part-time educational courses	12.1% (4)	14.3% (8)	23.5% (8)	22.7% (5)	17.2% (25)
R&R plus volunteer or part-time work	-	5.4% (3)	14.7% (5)	-	5.5% (8)
Total	22.8% (33)	38.6% (56)	23.4% (34)	15.2% (22)	100% (145) *

Too few cases for  $\chi^2$  analysis.

\* Missing observations: 1

Vancouver base is not included in the total.

characteristics of the work role were responsibility and skill. (Table 11)

The element of skill is universally valued by the group. Skill is associated with social skills or the ability to handle people properly and efficiently, to be able to express and communicate with different people in different languages. (Table 12)

The element of responsibility is similarly valued. Responsibility is associated with the ability to handle emergency situations on board, such as fire, emergency landings, general first aid and the care and concern for people. (Table 13). As some flight attendants report,

'... at times, the life and the health of people depend upon us ...'<sup>7</sup>

Danger and glamour are the least cited and important elements associated with the work role. Despite the myth attached to air travelling and the 'flying girls', flight attendants do not identify their work with these elements. Moreover, while some people may attribute or experience a certain amount of anxiety when flying, flying as a way of life is devoid of this element.

These quasi-professional characteristics, responsibility and social skill which flight attendants associate with their work role are the unique elements which identify both themselves and their work on board.

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<sup>7</sup>Excerpt from questionnaire responses.

Table 11 - The most important elements flight attendants associate with their work role by percentage of respondents. (N = 181) \*

Elements	% of Respondents
Responsibility	90.6% (163)
Skill	60.2% (109)
Difficulty	35.4% (64)
Danger	25.1% (45)
Glamour	18.9% (34)

\* Respondents could indicate more than one answer.

Table 12 - Activities of the work role, flight attendants associate with "SKILL". (N=98) \*

Activities	% of Respondents
Social skills: ability to handle people properly and efficiently; ability to communicate with people in their own language	60.2% (59)
Array of technical skills connected with the use and knowledge of emergency equipment and procedures	38.8% (38)
... only if one does it well	16.3% (16)
Others	8.2% (8)

Missing observations: N.11

\* Only flight attendants who cited "skill" as the most important element of their work role (see Table 11) are included in this table. In addition, respondents could indicate more than one answer.



Table 13 - Activities of the work role flight attendants associate with "RESPONSIBILITY." (N = 141) \*

Activities	% of Respondents
Being knowledgeable of emergency procedures and first aid	58.9% (83)
'Being in charge of everything': passengers, crew and service	8.5% (12)
Care and concern for people	39.0% (55)
Being in a job without much supervision	16.6% (23)
Others	2.8% (4)
N = 141 *	

Missing observations: N. 22

\* Only flight attendants who cited "Responsibility" as the most important element of their work role (see Table 11) are included in this table. In addition, respondents could indicate more than one answer.

### 3. WHO IS A FLIGHT ATTENDANT: A SELF DEFINITION AND A CLAIM FOR STATUS

The previous chapter explored two major aspects of the occupation of flight attendants: the importance flight attendants assign to their work role, irrespective of time and degree of authority on board, and its effects upon their life situation. These two aspects enable us to draw a picture of flight attendants as they see themselves and how they wish others to think of them.

Clearly, flight attendants see themselves as persons in an 'unroutine', 'varied' and 'moving' occupation which enables them to lead a life which is different from the majority of people of their same socio-economic grouping. Compared to these people, whom they see involved in a close and static work situation, they describe their life as being free from the humdrum and the constraints of most work in industrial society. While this aspect of the work situation distinguishes and differentiates them from other social groups, they view their work role on board as being skilled and professional. Responsibility rests in the area of public utility and service. Skill is associated with the social nature of work or the art of dealing with a wide variety of people and situations. The elements of glamour and danger are cited only by a small number of flight attendants and they do not seem to be important characteristics of the work role.

Consequently, the hierarchy of values flight attendants choose to enhance their 'self' and their work role are values related to their particular 'lifestyle' and the quasi-professional elements of their work on board. Their lifestyle is different from 'anyone else', 'free,' 'unrestricted', 'not boring' and escaping the routinization of most work in modern industrial society.

It is thus on the basis of their lifestyle that they claim status and social honor. It is on the basis of the professional qualities of their job that they want recognition and esteem.

#### 4. THE PEER GROUPS: AN OBSERVER AND A BESTOWER OF STATUS

Speier's contention '... for honor to rise it is essential that there be bearers, bestowers and observers of honor ...'<sup>8</sup> takes us further into the dynamic of status evaluation and into the process of legitimation of the flight attendant's claim of status. This section will be concerned with the flight attendant's peer group outside her work role.

By peer group we mean those persons or groups with whom flight attendants have most regular and meaningful contacts. These people were referred to as 'people you know very well'. The flight attendant's claim of status is related to the particular lifestyle and those attributes which they identify with 'flying'.

In order to determine if such a claim is recognized and validated within the flight attendant's peer group, flight attendants were asked to indicate what they thought were the reactions and feelings of people they knew well, toward them as flight attendants.

As Table 14 indicates the majority of flight attendants believe people of their same socio-economic environment envy and respect them. The reasons behind these feelings seem to be related to the special characteristics and/or rewards of the job, such as travelling and professional status. To a lesser extent the flight attendants believe that members of their peer group see them as having a glamorous life. These images are conveyed in Table 15.

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<sup>8</sup>Hans Speier, "Honor and Social Structure," Social Research, February, 1935) : 76.

As some flight attendants express it best:

'... most definitely, (my friends) feel we are fortunate to travel in so many different countries...'

'... in general, they think we have got it made ...'

'... when meeting people and friends during off-duty time, such as parties, jobs usually enter into the conversation. When people find out I am working as flight attendant for an airline, the conversation will usually turn to people asking me questions about my work and experiences during my travelling ... My friends find me lucky because of the places I go, the days off I get. Most of them have a 9 to 5 job. To them my job is challenging and exciting ...'

Again:

'... Most of my family and friends envy me ... they say "lucky girl, travelling all over the world".'<sup>9</sup>

These findings indicate that, irrespective of time spent inside the occupation or level of authority flight attendants command on board, flight attendant's definition of success - travelling, professionalism, being in a physically mobile occupation, to escape the routine of the 9 to 5 job, to know, meet people and experience different lifestyles - is believed to be recognized and validated by the flight attendant's peer group. We may thus conclude that flight attendants believe that their status claims or definition of success are recognized and validated by their 'significant others'.

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<sup>9</sup>Excerpts from the diaries.

Table 14 - The flight attendant's perception of the feeling their peer groups have toward them as flight attendants by percentage of respondents. (N = 180) \*

Perception of feeling	% of Respondents
Envy	76.5% (137)
Respect	43.3% (77)
Pity	13.0% (23)
They think my work is beneath my ability and education.	2.8% (5)
Others	3.4% (6)

Missing observations: N. 1

\* Respondents could indicate more than one answer.

Table 15 - The flight attendant's perception of the image they convey to their peer group by percentage of respondents. (N = 177) \*

Image	% of Respondents
A well travelled person	75.1% (133)
A professional person	40.7% (72)
A glamorous person	23.7% (42)
A glamorized waitress	13.6% (24)
Others	15.3% (29)

Missing observations: N. 4

\* Respondents could indicate more than one answer.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This chapter has introduced a definition of status as it is claimed by flight attendants and as it is validated by the flight attendant's peer group outside the work role.

The flight attendants' definition of social success is based upon the elements of attraction and importance they assign to their work role. The elements of attraction or what is termed social success are based upon the 'unroutine' and the 'freedom' they associate with the physically mobile nature of the occupation versus the static work situation of an office. The elements of importance, giving value and meaning to work are based upon the 'imputed' professional qualities flight attendants assign to their work on board. These are: a sense of responsibility and the social skills which they see as the major requisites of the job.

This definition of success is validated by the flight attendants' perceptions of the reaction of those persons with whom they interact most often. These people appear to give recognition to the flight attendants' status by 'envying' their lifestyle and by 'respecting' their professional qualities.

## CHAPTER VIII

### FLIGHT ATTENDANTS AND THE WORK ORGANIZATION

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter is concerned with the reaction of people to the work situation created by the organizational structure and technological developments within it. The last chapter showed how the flight attendant's occupation leads to expectation of freedom, responsibility and the display of social skills. This chapter is concerned to see whether the organizational structure reflects and meets the flight attendant's status expectations.

The indicators used to show whether status claims are met inside the work situation are based upon indices of job satisfaction. The issue of job satisfaction is complex and controversial, however Blauner's conceptualization and operationalization of the concept according to the elements of control is used here as basis of analysis.



## 2. THE NOTION OF JOB SATISFACTION

Evidence from empirical research indicates that there is an important positive relationship between job satisfaction and the status of an occupation. An individual's satisfaction or contentment with 'self', is also related to satisfaction with one's status and position. The rationale behind this finding is that an individual's satisfactions are strongly influenced by the status of an occupation plus the degree to which they have met their achievement aspirations. The extent to which individuals are satisfied with themselves and their work is believed to be a good index that desire for status and aspirations are met and that there is positive identification with the work role. Inversely, if expectations were not met, a negative image of 'self' and an alienated relationship with work will ensue - the extreme being the desire to leave the occupation.<sup>1</sup>

However, the concept of job satisfaction lacks an adequate definition. Most researchers agree that there are many facets to it and that job satisfaction is not a unidimensional attitude.<sup>2</sup> Blauner's<sup>3</sup> conceptualization and

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Blauner, "Work Satisfaction and Industrial Trends in Modern Society," in Walter Galenson and Seymour Martin Lipset, Labor and Trade Unionism: An Interdisciplinary Reader., (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc. 1960) pp. 339-360.

In this article, Blauner operationalizes job satisfaction by counterposing it to alienation. He refers to Bendix and Lipset's statement: 'The Marxian theory of why men under capitalism would revolt was based on an assumption of what prompts men to be satisfied or dissatisfied with their work.'

<sup>2</sup>F. Herzberg, B. Mausner, R. Peterson and D. Capwell, Job Attitudes: Review of Research and Opinion, (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1957)

<sup>3</sup>Robert Blauner, "Work Satisfaction and Industrial Trends in Modern Society." p. 339.

operationalization of the term seems to take into account this multidimension and it will be in part used in this study.

Blauner identifies four major variables in job satisfaction. These are: occupational prestige, integrated work groups, occupational communities and most important of all, control. Control is divided up into three areas: control over time, physical movement and pace of work, control over the environment, and control expressed as freedom from hierarchical authority.

We have previously described flight attendants' expectation of status.

While they identify their work with elements of freedom, social responsibility and skill, their objective status is identified as requiring few qualifications. It is similar to the occupational category 'clerical and sales'. Thus, the empirical issue is whether a work environment such as the one provided by the organizational structure makes possible a positive identification with reference to freedom, social responsibility and skill.

Of all the variables Blauner identifies as important indices of satisfaction, the notion of control proves to be the most appropriate. As Blauner points out:

'... it is possible to generalize on the basis of the evidence that the greater the degree of control that a worker has (either on a single dimension or as a total composite) the greater is job satisfaction...'<sup>4</sup>

Following Blauner, control over the environment, time, movement, pace of work and freedom from supervision, will be the major variables to measure satisfaction. Control as such means the degree to which the flight attendants determine the choice they have over their space, time and behavior. The

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<sup>4</sup>Robert Blauner, *Ibid.*, p. 346.

institutional context, with its rules and dictates in organizing work, may diminish or enlarge this system of control, thus affecting the levels of job satisfaction.

Consequently in applying this notion of control to the work situation of flight attendants, we will consider (1) the extent to which freedom, responsibility and social skills which flight attendants expect in their work are diminished or enlarged by the organizational system, and (2) the extent to which flight attendants believe that the symbolic imagery of control is validated by their uniforms.

Before dealing with these issues a brief view of the organizational structure as it effects the role of flight attendants is presented.

### 3. THE ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT: THE GOALS OF AN AIRLINE AND THE FLIGHT ATTENDANT'S CAREER PROGRESSION

This section introduces two organizational features: the goals and identity of the organization and the flight attendant's career path inside the occupation. The aim is to examine the nature, the degree and extent of control these features exercise at the role level and how they influence status inside the group.

#### a. Organizational goals.

An organization such as an airline, in order to operate efficiently and meet the needs of a modern society, has to operate in rational terms. Being in a service industry, its goals are: (1) to efficiently serve its customers, (2) to successfully compete in an industry which is extremely complex, heavily regulated by government intervention and highly competitive. At the same time, these goals have to be met in an environment governed by the need for maximum safety.

These goals are attained by what we have previously indicated as a process of standardization and rationalization of the work environment, and by the use of symbols in order to enhance their competitive image and increase sales. These processes have created a complex hierarchy of authority and division of work. Work on board has become more strictly governed by normative rules and regulations concerning service tasks, security measures and appearance. These rules apply to all flights and require adherence by the role incumbents. These regulations reflect the organization's image and goals and are in line with sales-campaigns. As a result, work on board is strictly

regulated, functionally specialized, routine and impersonal.

Although this process of rationalization and standardization is extended and applied to all flights, the types and the characteristics of the flights differentiate the flight attendant's work.

Flights are characterized as short or long; "exit oriented" or "distance oriented." 'Exit oriented' flights are of a short length within national boundaries. Flight attendants assigned to them are usually required to work a sequence of them, usually increasing a working day up to, and in excess of twelve hours. Moreover, on these flights, there is a high turn-over of passengers, service tasks become more demanding and stressful due to the short time. People are forced increasingly into impersonal and standardized communication.

'Distance oriented' flights are mostly to foreign nations. The service on board is more elaborate and flight attendants are rewarded with attractive destinations, more time to carry out the routine service, with few or no stopovers and a small turn-over of passengers. These factors allow flight attendants to do their work and at the same time to engage in social relationships with passengers in a more relaxed manner.

Consequently these factors: rationalization, standardization of work procedure, the image flight attendants are supposed to emulate and the flight characteristics, are all important factors to consider in a study of work satisfaction.

b. Career inside the occupation.

There are two types of progression inside the occupation: one is a time progression, the other is a 'career' progression. When a flight attendant joins the airline she is assigned to a reserve schedule. She works a maximum of 16 days a month and she is 'on call' and assigned to a variety of 'open' flights, that is, she may be called at any time or assigned to flights without advance warning. As time progresses, she 'bids' a monthly schedule, choosing from a variety of flights. That is, within the occupation, she progresses through a series of positions, from 'reserve' to 'blockholder'. Blocks are the total of the assignments flight attendants work in a month. They may be overseas or domestic flights, short or long flights or a mixture of the two. The bidding and the awarding of these blocks are governed by a seniority system, the most senior flight attendants are awarded the chosen flights or the block. Prestige is assumed to be attached to overseas flights. Domestic, long flights are next most preferred to short routes. Days off are also advantageous factors in the choice of blocks. Seniority in this sense, gives flight attendants autonomy over their work schedules.

The second progression is toward a career progression. According to 'opening positions' and the Company's needs, after a few years as flight attendants, individuals may progress toward positions of authority on board, either attaining first the position of 'In charge flight attendant' or 'Purser', and later to progress toward the position of 'Flight Director'. Bid for monthly blocks in both of these categories are again regulated by the seniority system.

To summarize, the processes of rationalization, routinization and image manipulation oriented toward attaining organizational goals, determine as well the conditions of work of the flight attendants. The career system inside the occupation, by assigning different amounts of 'control' over the work situation according to different seniority levels and qualifications, creates an in-group status system.

The effects of these processes upon the flight attendant's expectations of freedom, responsibility and social skill in the work situation, will be analyzed within this context.

#### 4. THE IN-GROUP STATUS SYSTEM: DIFFERENT LEVELS OF JOB SATISFACTION

##### a. Some expectations

We have previously stated that the degree of job satisfaction inside organizational settings, is related to the amount of control members of an occupational group exert over their work. Control at the organizational level means (1) control over the environment, (2) control over time, movement and pace of work, (3) control as freedom from supervision.

Control over the environment is attained by the challenge of distance, space and the sense of accomplishment inherent in having access to distant places and cultures. Although in a service industry, control over the environment is usually defined in terms of social control over customers, control over the physical environment is explained by the structure of the work organization which awards different routes to flight attendants according to their seniority levels and offers promotion to higher authority levels.

Control over time, movement and pace of work is attained by gaining access to attractive flights: 'distance-oriented' flights are thought to be more attractive than 'exit-oriented' flights since they provide flight attendants with more satisfactory routes and a more relaxing work. 'Exit oriented' flights or reserve schedules are defined as 'unattractive' by their lack of challenge, time limitations and the inhibition of interpersonal relationships on board. Control from hierarchical supervision is attained by positions of authority or greater responsibility on board, such as becoming an in-charge-flight-attendant or a flight Director.



Control as such is influenced by two variables: length of time inside the occupation and the levels of authority exercised on board. The length of time inside the occupation or seniority affects the amount of autonomy flight attendants exercise over their work and the type of flights they operate. Authority positions affect the amount of freedom from supervision over work on board. Consequently, as length of time and authority position inside the 'line' affect the amount of control exercised by the group-members over their work, they become important elements affecting status-claim inside the work organization. Accordingly we would expect the data to show that:

- (1) the extent of work satisfaction flight attendants experience in the work setting will differ. The most senior flight attendants and/or the most qualified will report a higher degree of satisfaction than flight attendants with lower seniority and qualifications.
- (2) The sources of job-dissatisfaction will rest upon the different amounts of control which flight attendants are able to exert over their work.

The empirical data supporting these assertions follows..

b. Flight Attendants and work satisfaction

Work satisfaction inside the organizational setting will be investigated according to: (1) the extent to which flight attendants' expectations are satisfied or diminished by the demands the organization places upon their work role, and (2) the factors responsible for satisfaction or lack of it in the work setting.

A preliminary index of job satisfaction was made with the idea that the way flight attendants talk about their jobs would provide evidence of the degree to which expectations are met. It was then assumed that expectations to remain with the occupations would provide evidence of job satisfaction or lack of it. However, as various findings on job satisfaction report, the relationship between length of time inside an occupation and job satisfaction is highly controversial. It may merely mean that people have adapted to their 'fate'. Consequently further evidence is provided by adding indicators of control, such as types of flights and positions on board in order to support the contention that satisfaction in the case of flight attendants, is not only a function of adjustment but also of the degree of control they exercise over their work.

1. Extent and reasons for satisfaction

It is apparent that the organization of work and the in-group status system drastically affect the attitude flight attendants have toward their work.

A preliminary index of satisfaction is reported in Tables 16 and 17.

Table 16 - Expectations to remain in the job as reported by percentage of respondents per years of service.

Expectation	1-5	6*10	11-15	16 & more	Total
I expect to spend the rest of my working life in the occupation	19.1% (9)	34.8% (24)	60.5% (23)	96.3% (26)	45.3% (82)
I do not expect to spend my working life in the occupation	40.4% (19)	37.7% (26)	18.4% (7)	-	28.7% (52)
Undecided	40.4% (19)	27.5% (19)	21.1% (8)	3.7% (1)	26.0% (47)
Total	26% (47)	38.1% (69)	21% (38)	14.9% (27)	100% (181)

$X^2 = 48.90$ ; d. f. = 6;  $p < .000$

Table 17 - Expectations to remain in the job as reported by percentage of respondents per job category.

Expectation	Flight Attendants	In charge(*)	Total
I expect to spend the rest of my working life in the occupation	40.9% (56)	63.4% (26)	45.3% (82)
I do not expect to spend my working life in the occupation	30.7% (42)	24.3% (10)	28.7% (52)
Undecided	28.5% (39)	19.5% (8)	26.0% (47)
Total	75.7% (137)	24.3% (44)	100% (181)

$X^2 = 9.45$ ; d. f. = 4;  $p < .05$

(\*) Includes 3 assistant pursers.

These tables report the responses elicited from flight attendants concerning whether they expect to remain in the occupation. The differences are related to seniority levels and positions on board. If we can assume that expectations to remain in the occupation indicate satisfaction, then according to these tables there is a constant and linear progression in the number of flight attendants indicating satisfaction with their work as they progress through time and career levels inside the occupation. This progression forms a continuum, at one extreme, flight attendants with the least seniority indicate they are dissatisfied and they intend to leave the occupation. At the other extreme, flight attendants with the most seniority indicate contentment and they expect to remain in the occupation.

Although these different attitudes toward work are visible at different time intervals or the length of service of the members, five, ten, fifteen years or more, there is a marked contrast concerning expectations to remain around ten years service. Here the group is distinctly divided into two halves. There is a higher percentage of flight attendants with less than ten years service who do not intend to remain in the occupation, while a higher percentage of flight attendants with more than ten years service expect to remain in the occupation.

As I noted before, the relation between time inside an occupation and job satisfaction is controversial. Studies of low skilled occupations<sup>5</sup> explain job satisfaction of senior workers as rationalization of their work and status.

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<sup>5</sup>See F. Herzberg, B. Mausner, R. Peterson and D. Capwell, Job Attitudes: Review of Research and Opinion.

The high degree of job satisfaction, as indicated by these workers, is explained in terms of patterns of an adjustment process which workers go through as they realize their aspirations or goals cannot be met inside the work situation.

This does not seem to be the case with flight attendants. Seniority is not only a progression through time inside the occupation but it is also a progression toward increasing control over the environment as indicated by choice of routes and pace of work. The type of routes flight attendants are able to fly are valued elements of satisfaction.

Table 18 indicates the relationship between types of flights and seniority levels inside the occupation.

Table 18 - Types of flights flight attendants work by percentage of respondents per years of service.

Type of flights	Years of service				Total
	1-5 years	6-10	11-15	16 or more	
Mostly overseas or long-range domestic flgt.	25.5% (12)	27.5% (19)	55.3% (21)	48.1% (13)	35.9% (65)
Short range domestic flight or reserve schedule	61.7% (29)	58.0% (40)	18.4% (7)	18.5% (5)	44.8% (81)
Others	12.8% (6)	14.5% (10)	26.3% (10)	33.3% (9)	19.3% (35)
Total	26.0% (47)	38.1% (69)	21.0% (38)	14.9% (27)	100% (181)

$$\chi^2 = 29.18; \text{d.f.} = 6; p < .0001$$

This table (18) indicates that flight attendants with more seniority are more likely to work on long-range or overseas flights than are those with little seniority. Subsequently they are more satisfied. This is further indicated in Table 19 in which reasons given by flight attendants for being satisfied are related to the flights they usually operate.

Table 19 - Percentage of respondents indicating their reason to remain or to leave the occupation as per flights.

Reason	Types of flight			Total
	Overseas or Long range domestic	Domestic short range or reserve	Others	
I like the job benefits	61.4% (27)	32.8% (20)	27.6% (8)	41.0% (55)
It depends on working conditions and family plans	20.5% (9)	21.3% (13)	13.8% (4)	19.4% (26)
Job is too tiresome, it lacks mental challenge and I will change it if other possibilities develop	6.8% (3)	34.4% (21)	48.3% (14)	28.4% (38)
Other	11.4% (5)	11.5% (7)	10.3% (3)	11.2% (15)
Total	32.8% (44)	45.5% (61)	21.6% (29)	100% (134) (*)

$\chi^2 = 19.32$ ; d.f. = 4;  $p < .01$  (The  $\chi^2$  test does not include the last variable.)

Missing observations: 12

(\*) Vancouver base is not included in the total.

Consequently we may say that satisfaction may be a function of adjustment inside the work situation but also of differential degrees of control workers have over their work.

With types of routes or flights, another factor responsible for job satisfaction is the type of position flight attendants have on board. As Tables 17 and 21 report there is a correlation between positions with different degrees of authority on board - freedom from direct supervision - and levels of satisfaction. Flight attendants in charge report to be more satisfied than mere flight attendants. Although the position of Assistant Purser was included in the study, data concerning this category are not reliable due to the small number. Therefore they are included in the category of "In Charge."

The reasons given by flight attendants for their attitudes differ according to seniority and position on board. These findings are reported in Tables 20 and 21.

Table 20 - Percentage of respondents indicating their reason to remain or to leave the occupation per years of service.

Reason	Years of service				Total
	1-5 years	6-10	11-15	16 or more	
I like the job benefits	20.0% (6)	28.8% (15)	53.1% (17)	85.0% (17)	41.0% (55)
It depends on working conditions and family plans	30.0% (9)	23.1% (12)	12.5% (4)	5.0% (1)	19.4% (26)
Job is too tiresome, it lacks mental challenge and I will change it if other possibilities develop	50.0% (15)	36.5% (19)	12.5% (4)	- -	28.4% (38)
Other	- -	11.5% (6)	21.9% (7)	10.0% (2)	11.2% (15)
Total	22.4% (30)	38.8% (52)	23.9% (32)	14.9% (20)	100% (134) (*)

$\chi^2 = 33.85$ ; d. f. = 6;  $p < .000$  (The  $\chi^2$  test does not include the last variable.)

Missing observations: N. 12

(\*) Vancouver base is not included in the total.



Table 21 - Percentage of respondents indicating their reason to remain or to leave the occupation per job category.

Reason	Position		Total
	Flight Att.	In charge*	
I like the job benefits	38.6% (39)	48.5% (16)	41.0% (55)
It depends on working conditions and/or family plans	22.8% (23)	9.0% (3)	19.4% (26)
Job is too tiresome, it lacks mental challenge and I will change it if other possibilities develop	29.7% (30)	24.2% (8)	28.4% (38)
Others	8.9% (9)	18.2% (6)	11.2% (15)
Total	75.4% (101)	24.6% (33)	100% 134 (**)

$\chi^2 = 3.17$ ; d.f. = 2;  $p = .13$  (The  $\chi^2$  test does not include the last variable.)

Missing observations: 12

(\*) Includes 3 Assistant Pursers

(\*\*) Vancouver base is not included in the total.

As their time in service lengthens, flight attendants are more likely to indicate that they are contented and satisfied with their work, that they like the benefits and the lifestyle and that they desire to remain in the occupation. In the words of one flight attendant:

'... I enjoy my job... the autonomy, the days off, the privileges it gives me. I can't think of any other profession I would rather be in ... I like it and I will do it until I reach 25 years of service, then retire ...'<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Excerpt from a diary.

Whereas the opposite is true for flight attendants with less time inside the occupation. These flight attendants are more likely to perceive their job as lacking challenge, as being tiresome, unrewarded careerwise, or they entertain other goals such as a family or children. Therefore they are considering leaving the occupation or they have serious doubts whether to stay or leave.

'... as much as the fringe benefits keep most of us here, there will come a time when I will no longer be willing to sacrifice time and self-satisfaction for this type of remuneration..'

'... not enough thinking or mental challenge but routine and small satisfactions...'

'... I don't see how my seniority of five years will change my chances of getting further ahead, i. e. having your choice of flights and better conditions including a normal life at home which my present position does not allow me to have...'

'... four more years maximum, then I quit to become a housewife and a mother...'<sup>7</sup>

Although the correlation between levels of authority on board and reasons for job satisfaction is weak, as indicated in Table 21, proportionately, there are more Purser and Flight Directors 'In charge' in contrast to flight attendants indicating that they are satisfied with their job, that they like its benefits and that they desire to remain in the occupation.

• These findings indicate that expectations and claims of status are not

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<sup>7</sup>Excerpts from questionnaire responses.

uniformly met inside the organizational structure. It is apparent that the type of flights attendants are assigned are a determinant in effecting job satisfaction. It is also apparent that having authority on board similarly effects the degree of job satisfaction.

The next section will look at how the structure of the work environment, the flights, meet or diminish the flight attendant's expectations of freedom, responsibility and the display of social skills.

## 2. Factors related to job satisfaction or lack of it in the work setting

So far we have explained the extent and the general evaluation flight attendants perceive and attribute to their work on board. We are now concerned with the structural elements which account for satisfaction or lack of it.

In order to find the structural characteristics of the flights which influence the attitudes of flight attendants they were asked to describe what they like or dislike about their assignments or the flights which they were most often working. Further, they were asked to give an image of their feelings or the impressions which they have of themselves while carrying out the obligations required on these flights.

The rationale behind these questions was based on the belief that 'likes' and 'dislikes' at the role level would tell us something about what flight attendants term a proper role, that is activities they consider as worthy or lacking status qualities. The amount and the type of these activities as required by a flight may cause flight attendants to develop positive or negative attitudes toward their work role and themselves on board.

Tables 22 and 23 indicate some of the sources and elements flight attendants indicated as leading to satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the work role.

Table 22 - Elements of satisfaction flight attendants attach to their conditions of work, as per percentage of respondents per years of service.

Element of satisfaction	Years of service				Total
	1-5 years	6-10	11-15	16 or more	
Everything	6.7% (2)	20.4% (11)	73.5% (25)	100% (21)	42.4% (59)
.. having a block	23.3% (7)	63.0% (34)	20.6% (7)	-	34.5% (48)
Seniority system allowing you to fly with same age people	46.7% (14)	13.0% (7)	5.9% (2)	-	16.5% (23)
Nothing	16.7% (5)	3.7% (2)	-	-	5.0% (7)
Other	6.7% (2)	-	-	-	1.4% (2)
Total	21.6% (30)	38.8% (54)	24.5% (34)	15.1% (21)	100% 139 (*)

$\chi^2 = 86.29$ ; d.f. = 6;  $p < .000$  (The  $\chi^2$  test does not include the last 2 variables.)

Missing observations: N. 7

(\*) Vancouver base is not included in the total.

Table 23 - Sources of job dissatisfaction among flight attendants by percentage of respondents per years of service.

Element of dissatisfaction	Years of service				Total
	1-5 years	6-10	11-15	16 or more	
Working conditions	25.3% (45)	34.2% (61)	11.8% (21)	6.2% (11)	77.5% (138)
Company's lack of support and communication	23.9% (11)	18.8% (13)	36.8% (14)	48% (12)	28.1% (50)
Others	6.7% (12)	15.6% (28)	11.8% (21)	6.1% (11)	40.4% (72)
Total	25.8% (46)	38.8% (69)	21.3% (38)	14.0% (25)	100% (178) *

Missing observations: N. 3

\* Respondents could indicate more than one reason.

As these tables indicate, flight attendants are divided according to length of time inside the occupation concerning the elements of satisfaction they find in their work. The major sources of satisfaction are linked with the rewards of work or the amount of control flight attendants are awarded as they gain seniority inside the occupation. The major sources of dissatisfaction or dislikes lie with the stresses placed upon the flight attendants in order to provide a service.

According to Table 22 flight attendants with more seniority tend to be more satisfied with their work than those with less seniority. For this group satisfaction means:

'... choice of flights, choice of days to work and choice of time of departure and arrival of flights...'

'... work on large aircraft, on flights I enjoy (long hauls) and still get the days off I like ...'

'... to go to London once a week ...'

'... the opportunity to visit different places and to change destination monthly if I wish ...'

'... to be able to hold what I want: overseas for a change or to shop; or long haul domestic flights with a lot of days off ...'

'... the opportunity to fly overseas in summer and south in winter ...'<sup>8</sup>

Dissatisfaction for this group is dependent upon certain structural conditions on board which limit their freedom over the 'pace-time' of work and most of all the ability to perform and carry out a job in a 'professional manner'.

Dissatisfaction as such is expressed as:

'... being understaffed ... with the result of rushed communication with passengers during service ...'

'... too much stress on the crew for proper service ...'

'... pressure flights timewise, insufficient crew, equipment and food ...'

'... aircraft which do not have a proper resting area for crew so you hardly have one moment away from the public ...'<sup>9</sup>

On the other end of the continuum, for these flight attendants with less time inside the occupation, satisfaction means little. Depending upon their service length, satisfaction is:

'... holding a working schedule ... have week-ends off ... the crew: when I was on reserve I was with different crew every flight and I really never knew anyone ...'<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Excerpts from questionnaire responses

<sup>9</sup>Excerpts from questionnaire responses

<sup>10</sup>Excerpts from questionnaire responses

Whatever the degree of satisfaction, the lack of challenge, the tiresome character of work on board which flight attendants in this time category associate with their work, is illustrated by the following quotes:

'... working days going over ten hours a day on a three day cycle. . Long never ending days, over four flights a day with no time to rest, eat or refresh yourself between flights. . '

'... the amount of service, the ups and downs. . . '

'... the great amount of service on short and full flights which keeps us away from the passenger and make us more like robots than human beings. . . '

'... 5 ups and downs in the same day. Rushed work with no time to see, to think or to rest. . . '

'... lack of working conditions acceptable to a professional person in a public oriented role. . . '

'... honestly nothing ... getting shuffled around ... inability to make plans ... ' <sup>11</sup>

Flight attendants working on short haul domestic flights, best describe their working experience:

'... I worked a four day cycle where I got up at four-thirty every morning and each day was long and hard, with often six flight legs a day. At the end of it all I no longer felt human ... If this is the direction of the Company ... then what attitude are we (the professional flight attendants) supposed to adopt ... ?' <sup>12</sup>

'... Another thirty minutes flight ... we managed to offer coffee and tea... on the next flight leg we served bar along with hot dinner in only one hour and fifteen minutes ... and we had 61 passengers. However, the following flight was a treat ... we had only 37 passengers ... but after this flight we had three hours to wait around at the airport. '

<sup>11</sup>Excerpts from questionnaire responses

<sup>12</sup>Excerpt from a letter sent by a flight attendant to the Flight Attendants' Union, (Canadian Airline Flight Attendant Association) and published in "La Lanterne," Dorval based independent newsletter (winter 1978) p. 4.

At last, the last flight of the day comes and she describes it as:

'... we had about 60 passengers, normally we would have finished bar and beverage on time. But one of the flight attendants stopped to talk to a passenger which delayed everything and we barely finished...' <sup>13</sup>

These different structural conditions which are characteristic of different flights, affect as well the feelings and the perceptions flight attendants have of themselves on board. The tiresome, the increasingly task-oriented character of work on board is more evident on a sequence of short haul flights than on long direct flights. As these flights are generally awarded to flight attendants with less time inside the occupation, these flight attendants perceive themselves more like 'robots', 'waitresses/waiters' 'barmaid/barmen'. Flight attendants on more attractive routes, with higher seniority, often perceive themselves on board as being 'hostesses'. This is in contrast to more recent arrivals into the occupation and those working on short haul routes. This latter group tend to see themselves as robots and waitresses. This is indicated in Tables 24 and 25.

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<sup>13</sup>Excerpt from a diary.



Table 24 - Images flight attendants have of themselves on board by percentage of respondents by years of service.

Image	Years of service				Total
	1-5 years	6-10	11-15	16 or more	
Hostess	10.6% (5)	26.1% (18)	44.7% (17)	33.3% (9)	27.1% (49)
Robot	21.3% (10)	20.3% (14)	5.3% (2)	11.1% (3)	16.0% (29)
Waitress.. Bartender, Robot	44.7% (21)	29.0% (20)	15.8% (6)	14.8% (4)	28.2% (51)
It depends on flights.	12.8% (6)	11.6% (8)	18.4% (7)	37.0% (10)	17.1% (31)
All of the above	8.5% (4)	5.8% (4)	7.9% (3)	- -	6.1% (11)
Total	26.0% (47)	38.1% (69)	21.0% (38)	14.9% (27)	100% (181)

$\chi^2 = 29.97$ ; d.f. = 9;  $p < .01$  (The  $\chi^2$  test does not include the last two variables of the table.)

Table 25 - Images flight attendants have of themselves on board by percentage of respondents according to types of flights.

Image	Types of flight			Total
	Overseas or Long haul Domestic	Domestic short haul or reserve	Others	
Hostess	40.0% (26)	16.0% (13)	28.6% (10)	27.1% (49)
Robot	13.8% (9)	21.0% (17)	8.6% (3)	16.0% (29)
Waitress, Bartender, Robot	16.9% (11)	35.8% (29)	31.4% (11)	28.2% (51)
It depends on flights	15.4% (10)	14.8% (12)	25.7% (9)	17.1% (31)
All of the above	6.2% (4)	7.4% (6)	2.9% (1)	6.1% (11)
Other	7.7% (5)	4.9% (4)	2.9% (1)	5.5% (10)
Total	35.9% (65)	44.8% (81)	19.3% (35)	100% (181)

$\chi^2 = 16.60$ ; d.f. = 6;  $p < .05$  (The  $\chi^2$  test does not include the last two variables of the table.)

Likewise, as Table 26 reports, flight attendants in charge such as Purser and Flight Directors, tend to have a higher image of themselves on board than mere flight attendants. They are more likely to see themselves as 'hostesses/hosts' rather than 'waitresses/waiters' or 'bartenders' or 'robots', on board.

Table 26 - Image flight attendants have of themselves on board by percentage of respondents according to job category.

Image	Position		Total
	Flight Attendant	In charge*	
Hostess	24.1% (33)	36.4% (16)	27.1% (49)
Robot	19.7% (27)	4.5% (2)	16.0% (29)
Waitress Bartender, robot	29.9% (41)	22.7% (10)	28.2% (51)
It depends on flights	17.5% (24)	15.9% (7)	17.1% (31)
All of above	4.4% (6)	11.4% (5)	6.1% (11)
Others	4.4% (6)	9.0% (4)	5.5% (10)
Total	75.7% (137)	24.3% (44)	100% (181)

$\chi^2 = 7.48$ ; d. f. = 3;  $p < .10$  (The  $\chi^2$  test does not include the last two variables of the table.)

\* Includes 3 Assistant Pursers.

c. Summary

These findings indicate that control is an important factor influencing the responses flight attendants have toward their work. Satisfaction is not so much in terms of intrinsic rewards of the job situation but rather in terms of extrinsic rewards or the valued qualities flight attendants perceive as being attached to certain flights rather than others. These qualities are thought to enhance status characteristics and thus job satisfaction. 'Distance-oriented flights' are perceived to give more status than 'exit oriented flights'. The reason is that a sequence of domestic short-haul flights are characterized by many stop-overs and turn-overs of passengers and are regulated by short time and routine service. These flights, being within national boundaries, not only are at times devoid of cultural interests, but work on them resembles very much work on an assembly line. Flight attendants on these runs have to work very rapidly to carry out the required service tasks. The time in which service has to be carried out places considerable limits and constraints over the workers. 'Distance-oriented' flights, overseas and domestic long-hauls, are not only more interesting but they provide flight attendants with more autonomy within the rules and the standards established by the organization. They are more free to pace their work and to engage in social relationships with passengers without being too confined by the restrictions placed by the time and job demands.

In addition, time inside the occupation is an important factor in structuring self-concepts. As a person enters into an occupation there is a process of transformation in self-concepts and beliefs, and a self-selection whether to

stay or to leave. As any work structure confronts its incumbents with contradictions between 'ideal' expectations and expectations as they are experienced in practice, these contradictions are felt more intensively in the first years, and it is during these years that the individual, unable to find satisfaction, may decide to leave the occupation.

Consequently, as the processes of rationalization and standardization of work procedures have decreased the occupational status, some elements of status are preserved by an in-group system which awards status-enhancing flights according to a seniority system. Status inside the occupation is thus dependent upon time progression and career orientation. This further adds to work satisfaction. Flight attendants with more time inside the occupation or in positions of authority on board indicate that they are more satisfied with their work than people with less time and authority.

Flight attendants who have spent a longer time inside the occupation define satisfaction in terms of choice of routes and days of work, which in turn, gives them control over the flight conditions. Flight attendants with a career orientation, such as Purser and Flight Director, define satisfaction in terms of their responsibility on board.

The following section will look at the flight attendant's apparel, their uniforms, as another form of organizational control upon the group.

##### 5. THE UNIFORM: A GROUP SYMBOL AND A FORM OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONTROL

The uniform as an organizational device, is a symbol which designates a group's members. Its aims are: to suppress individual differences, to identify the group as a whole and to certify its legitimacy in the work setting. To be recognized by a uniform means that people identify the person with the uniform. Consequently the attributes shown by a uniform assume great importance. They affect the identity of its wearers, the attitudes people have toward them and they influence interaction between the group members and their audience.

The same conditions exist with respect to the flight attendant's uniform. It identifies the individual as being a member of an aircrew, it legitimises her or his functions and authority on board, it symbolises her or his skills and values.

However, as I noted before, with the beginning of the jet era and the increasing rationalization of the air industry, the uniform has become more of a sex-symbol identifying flight attendants more as glamorous persons than qualified members of a crew. Designed and chosen according to the organization's marketing and advertising ideas, the uniform has created a 'Hefner-esque' image emphasizing sex-appeal, glamor and friendliness, rather than authority, competence and all those attributes which symbolized flight attendants in the first years of air transportation.

It is questionable whether a uniform portraying flight attendants as glamorized sex-objects meets the expectations and the image as quasi-

professionals which flight attendants have of themselves on board.

In order to find out if the image portrayed by the present uniform<sup>14</sup> matches the image flight attendants want, respondents were asked to check a list of attributes concerning uniforms and to indicate what they believe to be the degree of importance the airline places upon them. These attributes were the following: authority, professionalism, competence, sophistication, glamor, friendship, warmth, casualness and sex-appeal.

Table 27 indicates the comparison of mean scores among (1) the image flight attendants would like to portray, (2) the image flight attendants perceive the airline wants and (3) the image portrayed by the actual uniform. As previously mentioned, flight attendants place great importance on the attributes of professionalism, competence and authority while in uniform. Relative to the importance they place upon these attributes, they perceive the organization and particularly the actual uniform, as placing less importance upon these attributes. The organization is perceived as assigning slightly more importance than themselves to the attributes of casualness, sex, glamor, friendliness and warmth while the actual uniform is perceived as lacking in all attributes except casualness. (This is indicated by differences in mean scores.) This discrepancy between the image projected by the actual uniform to the general public and the image flight attendants wish to achieve is further indicated by Tables 28 and 29

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<sup>14</sup>Data for this study were collected in 1977 when the actual uniform consisted of 'a mix'n'match wardrobe' which allowed flight attendants to choose among several attires and colours.

which rank the order of importance of these attributes, the first according to the flight attendant's wish, the other according to the importance flight attendants perceive these attributes are projected by the uniform they wear.

Table 27 - Comparison of mean scores among the image flight attendants wish to portray, the image flight attendants believe is supported by the Company and the image they believe is projected by the actual uniform. (1977)\*

	As the flt. att. s wish		As the Co. wishes		As is projected by the uniform	
	mean	s. d.	mean	s. d.	mean	s. d.
Authority	4.21	1.24	3.71	1.52	2.26	1.20
Professionalism	4.67	.84	4.16	1.33	2.30	1.24
Competence	4.38	1.29	4.03	1.47	2.53	1.38
Sophistication	3.40	1.39	2.92	1.50	1.88	1.11
Glamor	2.50	1.39	2.61	1.50	1.69	1.10
Friendliness	3.90	1.49	3.92	1.40	3.26	1.47
Warmth	3.56	1.63	3.68	1.58	3.06	1.51
Casualness	2.00	1.36	2.77	1.66	3.21	1.70
Sex-appeal	1.42	.98	1.68	1.28	1.42	1.00

(\*) Respondents rank from 1 to 5 the degree of importance which they placed on each attribute, the degree of importance which they believed the company placed on each attribute and what they believed is projected by the present uniform.

5 - very important  
1 - not important



Table 28 - Rank order of mean scores according to the importance flight attendants place on each uniform-attribute.

Rank order	Attribute	
1	Professionalism	(4.67)
2	Competence	(4.38)
3	Authority	(4.21)
4	Friendliness	(3.89)
5	Warmth	(3.57)
6	Sophistication	(3.39)
7	Glamor	(2.48)
8	Casualness	(2.01)
9	Sex-appeal	(1.43)

Table 29 - Rank order of mean scores according to the importance of each attribute flight attendants perceive is portrayed by the actual uniform.

Rank order	Attribute	
1	Friendliness	(3.26)
2	Casualness	(3.21)
3	Warmth	(3.06)
4	Competence	(2.53)
5	Professionalism	(2.30)
6	Authority	(2.26)
7	Sophistication	(1.88)
8	Glamor	(1.69)
9	Sex-appeal	(1.42)

These data suggest that flight attendants' expectation of their quasi-professional status is not legitimated by the organization nor it is reflected in the image they portray when in uniform. The actual uniform, which the organization describes as a 'versatile mix'n'match wardrobe designed to suit your own tastes and create your own very special look'<sup>15</sup> is totally rejected by the flight attendants. As a flight attendant states:

'... when I wear a uniform I think I should give the impression of being a professional, of being competent and having authority on my job. The uniform we actually wear, not being a uniform, passengers identify them as such, and they do not judge us as professional people ... but as a casual counter seller ...'

Again:

'... I think passengers think we are all mixed up.. The very combinations are very confusing to them.. The impression I like to project in a uniform is one of professionalism and authority.'<sup>16</sup>

The present uniform, (1975-1977) does not portray the image flight attendants wish to portray. On the contrary, it creates an image which downgrades professionalism. This discrepancy between these two images, one emphasizing authority, friendliness and casualness and the other emphasizing professionalism and competence creates a handicap for the role incumbents in the work setting and it adds to conflicts of image and identity on board.

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<sup>15</sup>Air Canada Bureau Brochure Mc1313-Bil(4-78) 25M.

<sup>16</sup>Excerpts from diaries.

## 6. SUMMARY

This chapter focused upon the extent to which the work context meets the flight attendant's status expectations. The indicators used were based upon questionnaire responses to indices of job satisfaction.

It is by now obvious that the process of rationalization and standardization on board has had important consequences upon the status of flight attendants. At the work level, the segmentation, task-oriented nature of work, the routinization of tasks and the impersonality of relationships on board, have all affected the status of flight attendants. However, status is recovered somewhat by an in-group status system which awards extrinsic rewards according to the seniority system. This status system is based upon types of flights. The amount of attraction is dictated by the flight's characteristics such as destination, time, service required and the types of passengers. 'Distance oriented' flights are thought to be more attractive than 'exit oriented' flights where flight attendants have no control over their environment and the pace of their work. Career progression inside the occupation is also an important element of status satisfaction.

The process of change has affected the image flight attendants wish to portray on board. While they would wish to overcome the demeaning aspects of their work by appearing more professional, the airline has attempted to gloss over the impersonality of the routinized work by stressing casualness, friendliness and the like. This merely detracts even more from the attributes of authority, competence and professionalism which flight attendants would like to portray.

## CHAPTER IX

FLIGHT ATTENDANTS AND PASSENGERS1. INTRODUCTION

To see work in full perspective we have to take account not only of what is done and how it is done but also of the interpersonal patterns that surround the work tasks. In the last chapter, the organizational context was taken into consideration. We have seen how the changed work context, following the introduction of faster, bigger and more comfortable planes, has rationalized the flight attendant's work, and has made the occupation more dependent upon an in-group status system. We turn now to the processes of role performance and evaluation within the social system of the airplane.

The airplane is a microsocial unit where flight attendants and passengers are set into reciprocal roles, each with its corresponding claims and expectations of the behaviour of the other. However, behaviour is not an exclusive function of the structure of the role per se or of the skills or tasks codified into the role. It also includes the assessment individuals make of themselves and of their role. Further, these assessments influence the image people have of each other and they influence additional expectations and the way each role is enacted.

The position of flight attendants is plagued with contradictions. The elements flight attendants associate with their status differ substantially from the objective conditions of the work situation. Flight attendants view themselves as sharing in the prestige of an occupation which carries with it an image of freedom

and excitement. This image is one commonly held by the general public. However, inside the plane, expectations associated with these images are not always met by work requirements. Work on board is task-oriented and routine. Among flight attendants status assessments are based upon extrinsic rewards which, in turn, are determined by seniority.

The popular image of the status of flight attendants widely advertized in the 60's and early 70's as glamorized service, become additional criteria which the passengers, in their reciprocal role, may use to evaluate the flight attendant's role on board. Hence, behaviour geared to these different claims and expectations is bound to be problematic. Since flight attendants are under constant pressure to perform a service and to satisfy the demands of passengers, there is likely to be (a) conflict resulting from these discordant images, expectations and claims; and (b) attempts on the part of flight attendants to maintain their image and status by putting into action an ideology which, to some extent, protects them from those who threaten their 'self' image and their occupational autonomy.

In the sections to follow, situations on board will be analyzed according to the extent to which these differential value systems produce conflicting images and claims. Further, I shall analyze how flight attendants are able to offset conflict and difficulties caused in these face-to-face relationships by the travelling people.

## 2. THE WORK-ROLE: RIGHTS, OBLIGATIONS AND SELF-EXPECTATIONS

The official role of the flight attendant is:

'... to ensure the safety and comfort of passengers ... to anticipate the passenger's needs and offer these services in a friendly, courteous manner ...'

Moreover, according to Federal Air Aviation Rules, a flight attendant is on board specifically and primarily:

'to provide the most efficient egress to passengers in the event of an emergency evacuation...'

Thus, the flight attendant's role on board consists of providing service and comfort to passengers, to enforce rules and regulations and to be ready to face any emergency situation concerning the health and the safety of all passengers on board.

The flight attendant's rights are linked to the passenger's obligations. Passengers, as 'alters' have the right to be attended and have their demands and requests filled by flight attendants. However, these demands have limitations of which time and the special place are the most important. In addition, the degree of comfort has to be attained within the required safety margins. In this regard, passengers have the obligation to conform to the safety rules and to the flight attendant's request to follow them, even at the expense of comfort.

As reported in Tables 30 and 31, flight attendants clearly recognize that their work on board consists of tasks and functions related to the service, comfort and safety of passengers. In addition, flight attendants in charge tend to emphasize their supervisory and authority laden duties associated with their position.

Table 30 - The most important function flight attendants associate with their work on board by percentage of respondents per years of service.

Function	Years of service				Total
	1-5 years	6-10	11-15	16 or more	
Safety	27.7% (13)	20.3% (14)	21.1% (8)	23.1% (6)	22.8% (41)
Service & Comfort	23.4% (11)	18.8% (13)	15.8% (6)	23.1% (6)	20.0% (36)
Safety and service	31.9% (15)	29.0% (20)	28.9% (11)	23.1% (6)	28.9% (52)
To be in charge	2.1% (1)	7.2% (5)	21.1% (8)	15.4% (4)	10.0% (18)
Others	14.9% (7)	24.6% (17)	13.2% (5)	15.4% (4)	18.4% (33)
Total	26.1% (47)	38.3% (69)	21.1% (38)	14.4% (26)	100% (180)

$\chi^2 = 16.86$ ; d.f. = 15; p not significant  
Missing observation: N. 1

Table 31 - The most important function flight attendants associate with the work on board by percentage of respondents per job category.

Function	Position on board		Total
	Flight Attendants	In charge *	
Safety	24.1% (33)	18.6% (8)	22.8% (41)
Service & comfort	22.6% (31)	11.6% (5)	20.0% (36)
Safety and service	33.6% (46)	14.0% (6)	28.9% (52)
To be in charge	0.7% (1)	39.5% (17)	10.0% (18)
Others	19.0% (26)	16.3% (7)	18.4% (33)
Total	76.1% (137)	23.9% (93)	100% (180)

$\chi^2 = 60.01$ ; d.f. = 4;  $p < .000$

Missing observations: N. 1

(\*) It includes 3 Assistant Pursers

While these rights and obligations regulate tasks and activities associated with the work role, there is a set of self-conceptions on the part of each party regarding the image and evaluation each party has of each other in the relationship. The flight attendant's self-conception is related to the social skill required to handle problems and demands from an heterogeneous public. However, some of the obligations of the flight attendant's work on board which involve mental tasks such as handling food, picking up dirty trays, used glasses



and cups and, at times, cleaning up one's or somebody else's mess, make the flight attendant's self-conception hard to be acknowledged by the travelling public. If outside the airplane, status is a matter of symbols and even of pretensions, based mostly on 'travelling', 'leisure', 'days off' and 'life in foreign lands and grand hotels', on the airplane the most valued aspects of the work role are seldom visible. The routine, the long hours of work, the service tasks and the objects of one's work, such as dirty trays, used cups and glasses and garbage bags become an important part of the work and the side of which passengers are most aware while on board airplanes. These tasks are the 'dirty work of the trade'<sup>1</sup> and it is likely that the passengers, at some point, by either acknowledging it or adding to it, make the flight attendant's claim to desirable status inconsistent and ambiguous.

Consequently, in the relationship between flight attendants and passengers, it is the passenger who can make the flight attendant's life sweet or sour by impinging on the control and self-conception flight attendants have of themselves and their work.

The following pages examine this aspect of the flight-attendant's work.

Further they examine the extent to which flight attendants think that their self-concepts are legitimated by the travelling public.

Who is a flight attendant for the travelling public? An angel, a hostess, a robot, a glamorized waitress, a swinger or a professional?

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<sup>1</sup>Everett C. Hughes, Men and Their Work, p. 49.

3. WHO IS A FLIGHT ATTENDANT? HOW FLIGHT ATTENDANTS THINK PASSENGERS VIEW THEM.

What are those passengers thinking about the flight attendant as she is walking down the aisle handing the businessman the morning paper or the tourist another drink? These pages tell us something of how the flight attendants think that passengers view them. The source of all descriptions comes directly and solely from flight attendants.

Some kind of picture comes into our mind when an occupation is mentioned. It may be based upon a careful judgment of past experiences or it can be a stereotype, based on limited experience or personal prejudices. Real or unreal, true or false, these images are of the utmost importance to relationship on board, since they influence the symbolic processes among people and are major cues disclosing the evaluation people have of each other in the relationship. For the image is real to the person who holds it and to the perceiver, and both act as though it were real.

Flight attendants were asked to rate the image and attitude they thought passengers have of them as flight attendants, based upon their experience. Tables 32 to 36 report these findings. While the first two tables report the image, the others report the attitude and the reasons behind these perceptions.

Table 32 - How flight attendants think passengers view them by percentage of respondents per years of service.

Perceived Image	Years of service				Total
	1-5 years	6-10	11-15	16 or more	
Well travelled person	56.5% (26)	58.8% (40)	60.5% (23)	61.5% (16)	59.0% (105)
Professional	41.3% (19)	44.1% (30)	63.2% (24)	53.8% (14)	48.9% (87)
Glamorous person	28.3% (13)	22.1% (15)	15.8% (16)	-	19.1% (34)
Glamorized waitress	41.3% (19)	33.8% (23)	18.4% (7)	30.8% (8)	32.0% (57)
Other	10.8% (5)	16.2% (11)	13.1% (5)	15.3% (4)	13.0% (25)
Total	25.8% (46)	38.2% (68)	21.3% (38)	14.6% (26)	100% (*) (178)

Missing observations: N. 3

(\*) Respondents could indicate more than one perceived image.

Table 33 - How flight attendants think passengers view them by percentage of respondents per job category. (N = 178)\*

Perceived Image	Positions	
	Flight attendants	In charge
Well travelled person	60.0% (81)	53.5% (23)
Professional	43.7% (59)	60.5% (26)
Glamorous person	20.7% (28)	11.6% (5)
Glamorized waitress	36.3% (49)	16.3% (7)
Others	11.9% (16)	25.6% (11)
Total	75.8% (135)	23.0% (43)

Missing observation: N. 3

(\*) Respondents could indicate more than one perceived image.

Table 34 - What flight attendants think the passenger's attitude is toward them by percentage of respondents per years of service.

Perceived attitude	Years of service				Total
	1-5 years	6-10	11-15	16 or more	
Respect	50.0% (16)	45.5% (25)	70.6% (24)	78.3% (18)	57.6% (83)
Envy	40.6% (13)	50.9% (28)	38.2% (13)	34.8% (8)	43.1% (62)
Indifference	50.0% (16)	43.6% (24)	44.1% (15)	52.2% (12)	46.5% (67)
Pity	28.1% (9)	10.9% (6)	11.8% (4)	34.8% (8)	18.8% (27)
Lack of respect	25.0% (8)	12.7% (7)	11.8% (4)	21.7% (5)	16.7% (24)
Total	22.2% (32)	38.2% (55)	23.6% (34)	16.0% (23)	100% (144) (*)

Missing observations: N. 2

(\*) Vancouver base is not included in the total.

Respondents could indicate more than one attitude.

Table 35 - Reasons given by flight attendants for the passengers' attitudes by percentage of respondents per years of service.

	Years of service				Total
	1-5 years	6-10	11-15	16 or more	
... We serve them... we are given as parts of the airplane	20.7% (6)	15.9% (7)	3.2% (1)	11.8% (2)	13.2% (16)
The glamour and the misleading images	24.1% (7)	40.9% (18)	22.6% (7)	- -	26.4% (32)
Passengers have no interest, or time for us	3.4% (1)	2.3% (1)	3.2% (1)	11.8% (2)	4.1% (5)
It depends on the person, the flights, etc.	24.1% (7)	20.5% (9)	22.6% (7)	47.1% (8)	25.6% (31)
Good performance, hard work and tolerance	27.6% (8)	20.5% (9)	48.4% (15)	29.4% (5)	30.6% (37)
Total	24.0% (29)	36.4% (44)	25.6% (31)	14.0% (17)	100% (121)

Too few cases for  $\chi^2$  analysis.

Missing observations: N. 25

Vancouver base is not included in the total.

Table 36 - Reasons given by flight attendants for the passengers' attitudes by percentage of respondents per job category.

Reason	Positions			Total
	Flight attendants	Asst. Purser	In charge	
∴ we serve them, we are given as part of the airplane	12.8% (12)	-	14.8% (4)	13.2% (16)
The glamour and the misleading images	27.7% (26)	-	22.2% (6)	26.4% (32)
Passengers have no time or interest for us	3.2% (3)	-	7.4% (2)	4.1% (5)
It depends on the person, the flights, etc.	27.7% (26)	-	18.5% (5)	25.6% (31)
Good performance, hard work and tolerance	28.7% (27)	-	37.0% (10)	30.6% (37)
Total	77.7% (94)	-	22.3% (27)	100% (121) *

$\chi^2 = 4.35$ ; d. f. = d. f. 4; p = not significant

Missing observations: N 25

(\*) Vancouver base not included in the total.

A word of warning should be added concerning the data in this section. The relationships are somewhat weak. They do not indicate strong associations between the variables. But they suggest relationships which are consistent with the theoretical orientation and with previous findings.

As data from Tables 32, 33 and 34 report, the images which flight attendants have in their mind when viewing how passengers rate them, is of being 'well travelled', followed by being a 'professional' and a 'glamorized waitress'. While the first image is tightly linked with the nature of the occupation, the last two images, which are in a sense contradictory, are related to the length of time of flight attendants inside the occupation. Accordingly more senior flight attendants and flight attendants in charge report passengers as viewing them in very attractive images, of being seen as 'professionals', being given 'respect' by their sense of responsibility, good work and performance. In the words of a flight attendant,

'... with some exception, if you treat people with respect, they give you back respect...'<sup>2</sup>

Whereas, more flight attendants with less time inside the occupation see passengers rating them in less attractive images. They emphasize being viewed as a 'glamorized waitress' or a 'glamor person'. They link these perceptions to the nature of work on board, the feeling of being taken as part of the aircraft, included in the service supplied or in the ticket bought, and the glamour or the stereotyped images people identify most often with flight attendants, following the notorious advertizing campaigns.

<sup>2</sup>Excerpt from a diary.



Attitudes in this group are mixed and hard to explain.

These perceptions are so described by these flight attendants:

'... the majority of the passengers saw me as another service offered by the company, a surplus, a nice agreeable surplus...'

'... most of the passengers treated me like a servant... but a servant who is gratified with a smile ...'

'... another passenger did not see me like a flight attendant but a woman, a woman he liked. It was very flattering but difficult to deal with on board...'

'... passengers usually have negative images of flight attendants concerning their intellectual capacity and social behavior...'

'... I would like to be better considered by most passengers...'<sup>3</sup>

While these perceptions follow an earlier pattern linking amount of time of flight attendants in the occupation and positions on board, with satisfaction, there may be some question as to whether any such view exists among the passengers. It would seem probable that certain segments of the passengers may appraise flight attendants very differently from others. Flight attendants may report images as they experience them and, on the other hand, they may be a projection of their own attitudes. Whether the flight attendant's responses are accurate perceptions or whether they involve their own projections, is in a sense unimportant, since these perceptions will influence the flight attendant's attitudes and behavior on board toward the passengers.

Furthermore, a considerable number of flight attendants associate these discrepant images with the different working conditions found on board. As

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<sup>3</sup>Excerpt from a diary.

Table 35 indicates, flight attendants think that the different conditions in which work is carried out, such as type of flights, routes, amount of service and type of passengers, are important elements which affect perceptions. On certain flights and under certain conditions, 'dirty work' is far more apparent than other elements of the work. Consequently these conditions may affect the perceptions of both flight attendants and passengers.

The other finding, as reported in Table 34, refers to the growing indifference flight attendants report passengers showed toward them. In a sense this attitude is a consequence of the separation of the flight attendant from the passenger and the increasing rationalization of flying brought about by the jet age. The amount of service, the size of aircraft today, and the huge number of passengers on board, by reducing the relationship between flight attendants and passengers to functional, mechanical and impersonal contacts, minimize all other aspects of the flight attendant's work role. In addition, the routinized and functional use most people make of aircraft associated with the smoothness and uneventfulness of modern flying, further reduce the interest people have in flight attendants.

This state of affairs seems inevitable with the jet age, as flight attendants seem to be more caught up in the pressure of getting through the job of serving a full load of passengers rather than giving a personalized service to the passengers.

Consequently, these data suggest that different images and attitudes confront flight attendants on board. While some of these images are linked to different perceptions associated with time and position on board, they seem however conditioned by the structural conditions of work on board.

4. THE FLIGHT ATTENDANT'S VIEW OF WHAT PASSENGERS CONSIDER THE FLIGHT ATTENDANT'S ROLE ON BOARD

Professional or glorified waitress? Respect or indifference? These perceptions or assessments which flight attendants think confront them demand different types of performance and behavior on board.<sup>4</sup>

Flight attendants were asked to describe what they perceived passengers on board -- whether business travellers, using an airplane as an extension of their work, or holiday passengers, rarely using the airplane -- thought was the most important function of their work on board. Tables 37 and 38 present these findings. These data suggest that there is a fairly high degree of consensus among flight attendants as to what they think passengers regard to be their most important role on board. They all indicated that passengers, independently of their experience with flying, identify their work with the service they provide. For business travellers, more experienced and sophisticated with the mechanics of flying and behavior on board, the flight attendant's work role is 'getting a meal', a 'drink', a 'newspaper'. However, expectations concerning the manner these services are requested vary and are mostly described as 'at the snap of their fingers', 'quick', 'efficient', 'hassle free', 'pleasant and smiling'.<sup>4</sup>

For holiday passengers, flying means a new environment, a new world. Accordingly, they consider the flight attendant's role as one of getting them all, and more of what is included in their ticket, whether it is needed or not.

While the first type of passengers do not seem to have much time to spend with

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<sup>4</sup>Excerpt from questionnaire responses.

the flight attendant, except when they require her services, this last group of passengers demand a great deal of attention and a constant involvement with the flight attendant, and it is this group of passengers that may turn a flight into a boisterous happening. Flight attendants so describe and differentiate between the two groups of passengers:

'... 80% of the passengers on this flight, Ottawa-Toronto, were business passengers. In general, this type of passenger respects you as a flight attendant... the flight was full... breakfast had to be served... They all expected three cups of coffee in a 40 minute flight...'

'... the charter vacationer, sadly enough, wants and usually gets 'free for all.' Plane and crew are all rented. Most think that they can do anything they want, when they want to do it. They think that the crew members are social directors...'<sup>5</sup>

These data confirm that, whatever the type of passenger, the flight attendants' work role on board is identified with the service they provide. While this functional aspect of work is part of the flight attendants' work role, and while it occupies the most part of their time and has been the most advertized, it is not the only function, nor the one flight attendants identify with most. However the passenger, by identifying the flight attendant with this least favorable function of her/his work, de-emphasizes and de-values the flight attendant's definition of her/his occupation and self-concept. It further questions the flight attendant's authority on board. Consequently, it is mostly on board that flight attendants are faced with discrepant definitions of their status and occupational identity. The passengers, by identifying them with the service tasks they perform on board, deny them the status and identity

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<sup>5</sup>Excerpt from a diary.

they claim. They can lay claim to the more desirable attributes only outside the work organization.

The following pages focus on the consequences when the passengers seriously question the status and identity of the flight attendants. Two areas are analyzed: modes of address and problems related to the performance of work and of authority by the flight attendants.

Table 37 - The flight attendant's view of what business passengers consider to be the most important function of their role on board by percentage of respondents per years of service.

Expectations of business passengers concerning the role of flight attendants	Years of service				Total
	1-5 years	6-10	11-15	16 or more	
To give them a paper, drink and a meal	31.3% (10)	28.6% (16)	20.6% (7)	13.6% (3)	25.0% (36)
Quick, efficient service	46.9% (15)	46.4% (26)	50.0% (17)	27.3% (6)	44.4% (64)
Pleasant, smiling, efficient service	9.4% (3)	7.1% (4)	23.5% (8)	31.8% (7)	15.3% (22)
Others	12.5% (4)	17.8% (10)	5.9% (2)	27.2% (6)	15.3% (22)
Total	22.2% (32)	38.9% (56)	23.6% (34)	15.3% (22)	100% (144) (*)

$\chi^2 = 17.23$ ; d.f. = 9;  $p < .05$

Missing observations: 2

(\*) Vancouver base is not included in the total

Table 38 - The flight attendant's view of what passengers on holiday consider to be the most important function of their role on board by percentage of respondents per years of service.

Expectations	Years of service				Total
	1-5 years	6-10	11-15	16 or more	
Friendly service	37.5% (12)	53.6% (30)	35.3% (12)	45.5% (10)	44.4% (64)
Service, attention, information	46.9% (15)	37.5% (21)	61.8% (21)	36.4% (8)	45.1% (65)
Others	15.6% (5)	8.9% (5)	2.9% (1)	18.2% (4)	10.4% (15)
Total	22.0% (32)	38.9% (56)	23.6% (34)	15.3% (22)	100% (144) (*)

$\chi^2 = 11.57$ ; d.f. = 6; p. = not significant

Missing observations: 2

(\*) Vancouver base is not included in the total.

a. Modes of address

The majority of flight attendants indicated that the most common way they are addressed on board is 'Miss/Mr./Sir' or 'Stewardess/Steward'. (Table 39) However all flight attendants questioned, independently of seniority, admitted that at one time or another, they have been called or addressed by terms or means which they viewed as 'inappropriate' to their role on board. Table 40 indicates the means of address reported and disliked by flight attendants.

In the 'inappropriate' means of address, the most commonly used is 'gestures or noise'. This is followed by being called 'waitress' and only a minority admitted passengers using nasty or overly intimate ways to attract their attention.

The most common gestures or noises used are in the form of: waving hands, glasses, snapping fingers, using body contact such as 'pulling, grabbing, or tugging' the flight attendant's skirt or trousers, 'touching or poking' part of the body such as arms, 'tapping' on the back side of the body, catching the flight attendant's eyes, pss... hey you! ....whistling, keep ringing the call button, hissing and the like. Overly intimate behavior or nastiness is in the form of calling flight attendants by intimate or nasty names with sexual implications such as 'sweety, tiger, honey, baby, doll, sweetheart...'

These modes of address indicate that the flight attendant's image and expectations on board are not always legitimate. Although only a relatively small number of flight attendants admitted being addressed by inappropriate means, the existence and the use of these forms of address indicate the ambiguity of the flight attendant's role and status on board and, at times, it challenges her legitimacy and authority on board.



Table 39 - Most used form of address passengers used when addressing flight attendants as indicated by percentage of respondents per years of service.

Form of address	Years of service				Total
	1-5 years	6-10	11-15	16 or more	
Stewardess/Steward	27.7% (13)	18.8% (13)	10.5% (4)	25.9% (7)	20.4% (37)
Miss/Mr./Sir	70.2% (33)	73.9% (51)	86.8% (33)	70.4% (19)	75.1% (136)
Other forms: gestures or noise, waitress..	2.1% (1)	7.2% (5)	2.6% (1)	3.7% (1)	4.5% (8)
Total	26.0% (47)	38.1% (69)	21.0% (38)	14.9% (27)	100% (181)

Too few cases for  $\chi^2$  analysis.

Table 40 - Other means used by passengers on board to get the flight attendant's attention by percentage of respondents. (N = 170)\*

Means used	% of respondents
Call button	32.4% (55)
Wave hand or glass	31.2% (53)
Pss. : Hey you	31.2 (53)
Snap fingers	30.0% (51)
Whistle or call 'waitress'	29.4% (50)
Body contact	25.3% (43)
Being intimate or nasty	15.9% (24)
Catch the flight attendant's eyes	14.1% (27)

Missing observations: N 11

(\*) Respondents could indicate more than one mode of address.

b. Flight attendants and role performance: additional problems

Most of the problems flight attendants report having on board, are a threat against their authority, autonomy and performance. As indicated in Table 41 these problems concern: (1) constant disruption of service procedures by demands for individual services which are not provided at that particular time; (2) disregard of safety measures such as fastening of seat belts, smoking when it is not permitted, having excessive hand baggage, excessive drinking and other actions which are a threat to safety; (3) overly rude passengers.

One flight attendant on a southern flight, best describes these problems:

'... passengers were demanding... not a group that travels much but they wanted everything when they were ready and not when offered such. We offered bar, they wanted nothing, we offered wine, they wanted bar and soft drinks, we offered lunch, they wanted wine and so on. I can accept and expect few exceptions to the rule but when there is a lot of different demands I become impatient. They did not seem to understand they were not alone on board...'

Another flight attendant, on a short domestic flight, reports:

'... This flight was full -- full of complainers. Three passengers sitting at the back were upset because of the engine noise. Claimed they all needed their double martinis right away...'

'... As the lady came in, she insisted I put away her bag. I told her it would have to go underneath the seat in front of her... What made me mad was that she expected her bag to be put away for her. I later found out she had asked the other flight attendant as well as she came into the airplane. The other flight attendant told her she normally did not stow bags away...'

Again:

'... although an announcement was made to remain seated, everybody got up...' '... Bar is still being served and some passengers are starting to get a bit intoxicated. The biggest problem is smoking in the aisle. It annoys me to see people walking around with a cigarette. When they are told, they put it out, sometimes immediately, sometimes arguing or taking their time... but they have been told, why should we have to repeat it...'

'.. the flight was full. One man came in smoking. I had to tell him three times before he put it out..'

'.. no 'please', no 'thank you' when offered a beverage..'

'.. the one thing that really struck me was, I thought I would be nice and give a man his garment bag from the coatroom. But I got no thank you or recognition whatsoever..'

'.. They (the passengers) never listen.. want to do what they want.. then they cry 'help me, help me'..' <sup>6</sup>

These descriptions indicate the way flight attendants see the passenger's behaviour on board. Further they indicate a certain degree of discrepancy between the passengers and their expectations concerning the rights and obligations of their work role. While flight attendants stress and emphasize the valued elements of work on board, passengers often act as though the flight attendant's major function was only their personal comfort. Examples of this include disruption of service procedure, excessive service demands, immediate fulfillment of demands, ('.. they expect to be served at the snap of their fingers, sometimes literally..'); <sup>7</sup> challenging her/his authority by refusing or being unwilling to conform to safety measures when they are a threat to their personal comfort, and demanding services the attendant is unwilling to provide. These are a constant source of irritation and status ambiguity.

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<sup>6</sup>Excerpts from diaries

<sup>7</sup>Excerpts from diaries

Table 41 - Major problems flight attendants encounter on board with passengers by percentage of respondents. (N = 178)\*

Problems	% of respondents
Passengers disrupting service procedures	56.1% (100)
Disregard of safety measure: fasten seat belt sign	16.9% (30)
Disregard to 'No smoking'	8.4% (15)
Drunken or rude passengers	9.6% (17)
Others	9.0% (16)

Missing observations: N3

(\* ) Respondents could indicate more than one problem.

## 5. CONFLICT RESOLUTION: SOME STRATEGIES AND RESPONSES

The previous data and discussion suggest that most situations on board are characterized by conflicting expectations and ambiguity concerning the proper role and evaluation of flight attendants. From the point of view of the flight attendant this ambiguity originates only from a lack of proper knowledge concerning her/his role but also from a lack of appreciation of the occupation's status.

When flight attendants were asked to give a clear answer of what they do when they are faced with problematic situations, responses seem to correspond to the category explained as 'role distance behaviour'.<sup>8</sup> While a variety of responses are possible, including passive acceptance or withdrawal, by using role distance behaviour flight attendants attempt to gain some control over the situation while fulfilling their role obligations. However responses to all of the different situations were not always clear and definite. Flight attendants seem to be extremely cautious when making statements concerning passengers and their relationships on board. When they do, they ask not to be mentioned,<sup>9</sup> since this could mean a judgment against their role performance. Because of these limitations, the use of the questionnaire and diaries had to be supplemented by a form of direct observation on board and private interviews with some

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<sup>8</sup>Erving Goffman, Encounters, (Indianapolis, Ind., the Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1961) pp. 85-152.

<sup>9</sup>Similarly in the article entitled 'High Flying Passengers Kill Glamor Myth' Toronto Star, (Tuesday, January 3, 1978) the paper reports 'in interviews, flight attendants agreed to talk about their job on condition that their real names not be used.'

flight attendants.

In this section, I describe some of the responses flight attendants employ when passengers' modes of address and claims are judged to be inappropriate and a threat toward their status and authority.

a. The flight attendant's responses to inappropriate modes of address

As Table 42 indicates, at least six general modes of role-distance behaviour have been identified:

- (1) the passenger is ignored or a 'look' is given as a sign of disapproval and then he is totally ignored.
- (2) the passenger is told his mode of address is disliked and he is told of a proper mode of address.
- (3) the passenger's call is answered with irritation, formality, coldness or unfriendliness. The service may or may not be delayed.
- (4) the passenger is answered with a joke or sarcasm, some fun is made of him concerning his mode of address.
- (5) the passenger's call is answered with extreme kindness to make up for his impolite behaviour.
- (6) the passenger's call is answered with indifference.

The most popular tactic is 'to ignore' the passenger. This ignoring of the passenger is usually accompanied by certain facial expressions, a look, a frown by which the passenger is made aware of the dislike and of the flight attendant's attitude toward such behaviour.

While these modes of conflict resolution are different, they are not peculiar to particular individuals or differences in length of service into the occupation. They seem to be used at one time or other, depending on the type of passengers and mode of address.

Table 42 - Modes of responses flight attendants use to face inappropriate modes of address on board by percentage of respondents. (N = 181)

Mode of response	% of respondents
The passenger is ignored a look is given and consequently totally ignored	33.7% (61)
The passenger is told his manner is disliked and he is told the proper mode of address	28.7% (52)
The passenger is answered with irritation, formality, coldness. The service may eventually be delayed	14.9% (27)
The passenger is answered with a joke or sarcasm	6.6% (12)
The passenger's call is answered with indifference	6.1% (11)
The passenger's call is answered with extreme kindness	3.9% (7)
Others	6.1% (11)
Total	100%



b. The flight attendant's responses to the passenger's controls over role performance.

The major problems flight attendants most often have to face on board are problems concerning the disruption of service procedures by passengers' requests for individual and extra services, and non-compliance of safety measures or unwillingness to comply. Both of these problems will be dealt with specifically, since different role-distance behaviours tend to be used.

(1) Disruption of service procedures

Table 43 indicates modes of response flight attendants use when they are faced with disruptive and rude passengers. As long as the requests are recognized as appropriate, the most used tactic is to answer the passenger's request only if time allows. The appropriateness of the request is judged by the time the request is made, by the number of passengers on board, and by the way and manner the request is made. These elements determine the flight attendant's response. As few flight attendants stated, responses could be as follows:

'.. not so efficient in bringing that fourth triple...'

'.. if it is important I will do my best to accommodate the passenger, otherwise I will delay till I can..'<sup>10</sup>

In other cases, flight attendants comply with the request or explain the reason for not complying. However compliance or explanations are accompanied by facial expressions by which the passenger is made aware of the appropriateness of his demand or manner. Responses and explanations could be as follows:

'.. I comply with an annoyed manner .. explanations at times may become arguments..'

<sup>10</sup>Excerpts from questionnaire responses

'.. unless the passenger doesn't desire to understand, I ignore him. I don't waste my time listening to complainers, so I ignore them.'

'.. I bite my teeth and sometimes I let out steam when there is exaggeration. . you can't please everybody. .'<sup>11</sup>

These responses indicate that as far as requests are thought to be appropriate, they are answered with politeness and/or the passenger is told politely to wait or is made aware of the impossibility to fill his request at that time. However, if the passenger is labelled as obnoxious or is unwilling to understand the position of the flight attendant and the fact that he is on an airplane and not in a cocktail lounge or a restaurant, flight attendants either ignore him or, if the passenger is extremely aggressive, in order to avoid further arguments, his demands are fulfilled with irritation - by verbal behaviour or facial expressions - or without the usual courtesy, "smile", thought important in the relationship with customers.

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<sup>11</sup>Excerpts from questionnaire responses

Table 43 - Responses to the passenger's excessive service requests or disruptive passengers by percentage of respondents. (= 100) \*

Flight attendant's response	% of respondents
I comply	22.0% (22)
I comply when convenient	48.0% (48)
I explain the reason for not being able to comply and I keep doing my work	21.0% (21)
Others	9.0% (9)
Total	100%

(\* ) Vancouver base is not included in the total. Only respondents who cited "passengers disrupting service procedures" as a major problem encountered on board with passengers, (See Table 41) are included in the total.

(2) Non-compliance to safety rules.

Table 44 indicates modes of behaviour flight attendants most often engage in when they are met with passengers who are unwilling to comply with safety regulations, such as fastening their seat belts, not smoking or bringing on board excessive or oversize baggage.

Passengers' non-compliance or lack of concern about safety on board is always met by amazement by flight attendants. At times, this lack of concern is helplessly disregarded by the flight attendant,<sup>12</sup> at other times, attendants use authority or authoritarian attitudes, such as repeatedly asking the passenger to obey the rule, explaining the reason for the rule, or by standing by until the rule is enforced and making clear that extreme measures could be taken if the passenger refuses to conform. Every flight attendant has been involved or knows of certain instances when these extreme measures have been adopted.

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<sup>12</sup>The following conversation between two flight attendants was overheard during a period of turbulence. Passengers were asked several times to remain seated, but some did not. The two flight attendants were seated near a wash-room where passengers were lined up to enter. One asked the passengers to return to their seats since there was the possibility of heavy turbulence in the area. Passengers looked at her, some left, but the majority remained. The flight attendants looked at each other and one said: 'Did you see the looks, people are incredible, you show concern for their safety and this is what you get, a dirty look.'

This has even included putting a passenger off the flight.<sup>13</sup>

The findings indicate that independently of time inside the occupation or position on board, flight attendants, when faced with these types of problematic situations concerning the disruption of service procedures or non-compliance of safety rules by rude passengers, resort to forms of 'role-distance behaviour' in order to emphasize their authority on board and at the same time to provide a service.

<sup>13</sup>This lack of concern for safety and the flight attendant's responses to situations involving passengers unwilling to comply to these rules, were the topic of a discussion on CJAD radio station in Montreal, August 16, 1977. The participants were several flight attendants and representatives of the Flight attendants' union. The topic concerned the way flight attendants rate passengers and the many problems they encounter on board. In this discussion, one flight attendant cited an instance where extreme measures were put into effect: '... this is not a flight I operated personally, but of which I was told. It was a flight after a game. This particular team had won and they were very boastful on the aircraft to the point where the flight attendants were unable to make them sit down and fasten their seat belts. The 'in charge' went to the Captain and informed him of the situation -- you do this if you run into a problem and you can't solve it yourself. The Captain came out and told the manager of the team that if the team did not behave properly, then it would be dealt with accordingly. This 'to be dealt with accordingly' meant the whole team would be dropped off at the nearest airport not necessarily at their destination... This was done, the entire team was left at some airport, in the middle of nowhere. Really, we do not have responsibility to carry people who are going to interfere with our duty and endanger each other's safety. In this particular situation, it was a group travelling together, they obviously had a lot of influence on each other, so there are very drastic measures. There are several other ways of dealing with situations, but of course every time you show yourself as a figure of authority or get the support from other crew members, usually the captain, I would say 90% of the time, things are solved properly....'

Table 44 - Responses of flight attendants to passengers who are unwilling to conform to safety measures by percentage of respondents. (N = 53)\*

Responses	% of respondents
I ask to comply and I wait till the passenger has complied	28.3% (15)
I simply ask to comply and I explain the reason	52.8% (28)
Nothing	7.5% (4)
Others	11.3% (6)
Total	99.9%

Missing observations: 9

(\*) Only respondents who cited "Passengers' disregard to safety measures" as a major problem encountered on board with passengers (see Table 11) are included in this table.

Vancouver base is not included in the total.

c. Group responses to status dilemma.

There is still another way flight attendants respond to behaviour which contradicts their status expectations on board. These responses are expressed among flight attendants themselves. They protect the whole group from those who threaten their status on board. The following responses are based upon observations and informal interviews.

The first response is to give verbal expression to the conflict experienced. Whatever the conflict or the problem, whether an inappropriate mode of address, behaviour or rudeness, if time allows, the news of the incident is communicated among the crew members. The passenger is pointed out and comments are made in private areas of the airplane, such as 'galleys'.<sup>14</sup> Here all crew members, or some of them, convey their sentiments, the passenger is either laughed at or criticized. More importantly other crew members are expected to exhibit the same role distance behaviour toward the offending passenger. Another way for coping with these dilemmas is to adopt a cynical attitude toward passengers. The foregoing quotations indicate this attitude:

'... it was a better class of people years ago.. now everybody flies and they are not so nice..'

'...most people go through life with a thin coat of polish.. when they lose it, the real person appears. That is what happens on board most of the time.'<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>In aircraft where galley areas are part of the public space instead of private space, flight attendants are deprived of this mode of conflict resolution since communication with other flight attendants concerning passengers is seriously hampered. As a flight attendant reports: '...passengers stare at us blankly, as though scrutinizing an animal in the zoo - noticeably on the LH1011, where there is no privacy on the flight attendant seat or in the galley, the opportunity to relax or 'chat' are impossible.

<sup>15</sup>Excerpt from questionnaire responses.

Still another way to compensate for these dilemmas of status in the work situation, is for flight attendants to form a sort of mutual admiration society. They often engage in conversations which emphasize their special status and status symbols, in order to improve morale.

Conversations such as those quoted below, abound on board:

'...tan? Oh, while I was in Rio.' 'Uh-huh, do you know Palm Springs?'  
...'Yes, that's it - it was in Spain. I rented a car, I forgot which place. One of those dreamy little ports.'  
'I bought it in Budapest.'  
'Yah, a super man.'  
'Harrod's? - just walk right through the park then turn left.'<sup>16</sup>

All these means for coping with dilemmas of status are periodically adopted by flight attendants. These findings not only attest to the ambiguity of the role and status of flight attendants but they also reveal the different ways flight attendants cope with distressing situations and identities. By using these tactics in conflict situations, flight attendants are able to perform their less desirable work roles while still maintaining their status claims.

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<sup>16</sup>Desmond M. Chorley, "Flight Attendants: Now everyone flies - and they are not so nice," in Canadian Aviation, (November 1976) p. 33.



## 6. SUMMARY

If, in this section, I appear to have overemphasized conflicts and dilemmas, it is not because it is so predominant, but rather because it is an indication of the problems related to the flight attendant's self-conception. In this context, the heterogeneous mass clientele, the emphasis upon service, comfort and glamor, the increase in the 'dirty work' of the job and its visibility on board, have introduced discrepant definitions of what a flight attendant is. Flight attendants agree that passengers associate them with the services they provide on board and tend to evaluate them accordingly. Extreme emphasis on these criteria contradict the flight attendant's desired self-conception and are responsible for status discrepancies on board where flight attendants and passengers meet.

When the passenger's behavior and actions conflict with the flight attendant's expectations and become a threat to their occupational image and role performance, flight attendants respond by 'role distance behavior.' Role distance behavior consists of tactics and attitudes flight attendants use in an attempt to distance themselves from identities implicit in certain activities and demands which lower their status and with which they do not wish to identify. By adopting these behavioral tactics, including facial expressions or more explicit verbal behavior, flight attendants attempt to exert some control over the passenger and to perform a service while at the same time attempting to maintain a more desirable status and identity.

## CHAPTER 10

### CONCLUSIONS

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

This dissertation has dealt with two major themes: the historical causes of the transformation of the status and occupational identity of airline flight attendants and the effects of these changes upon the flight attendant's self concepts. The effects of these changes have been traced by noting the flight attendant's perceptions of reactions by the general public, the flight attendant's peer group and by the passengers. The group of flight attendants of a Canadian airline has served as a case study upon which historical data and data from the empirical research have been drawn.

In this last chapter I summarize the study, state the limitations of it and point out the need for further research. This is followed by a discussion of the general implications of the study.

## 2. SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The findings of this study link the transformation of the status and identity of airline flight attendants to a major technological innovation, the introduction of the large jet airplane in the early 60's. This innovation is seen as an important variable in structuring the social context within which the flight attendant carries out her/his work role. The changes have been largely responsible for the flight attendant's present status dilemma.

Different processes have been linked with the transformation of the flight attendant's occupational identity and status. In the early part of the century, air travelling made headlines, even though operations were small and limited. Flying was filled with unforeseen emergencies and flight attendants, qualified as nurses, enjoyed and shared a close association with wealthy passengers and a certain mystique with the pilots. The large jet airplanes changed all this. It made flying fast, smooth, safe, uneventful. It increased speed, routes and flight frequencies. It spurred demands for air-transportation which increased the size of operations and brought extreme changes in all the occupations of the field.

Organizationally, rationalization has been linked with changes in the flight attendant's occupation. This process has brought about differentiation and routinization. These, in turn, have lowered the flight attendant's qualifications, job requirements and job content. Further, it has divorced the identity of flight attendants from that of the pilots. The process has further been expressed in advertising campaigns in which flight attendants have been viewed as merely glamorized sex objects. At the same time tasks on board

have become menial and mechanical. A new mass clientele has replaced the small number of customers. This has further eroded earlier status images of flight attendants.

The inquiry into the flight attendant's role relationships links the flight attendant's status dilemma with the work demands and the passengers. This dilemma is linked with the differential elements in the assignment and attribution of status between these two groups. The flight attendants' claim of status is with the most valued elements of their work role, namely the larger world of travel, the lack of binding routine and the responsibility and social skills which they associate with their work role while on the airplane. The general public and the flight attendant's peer group outside the work context, recognize and legitimate the flight attendant's claim of status. In the work environment, the restricted standardization of services, the high number of passengers, their anonymity, all introduce differential elements of status. These elements are linked with the conflict and status dilemma flight attendants find in the work environment.

In the work environment conflict resolution is associated with an in-group status system which awards differential status elements, (e. g. preferential routes, days off) to flight attendants, according to the seniority system. In face-to-face relationships with passengers, conflict resolution is associated with the development of behavioral techniques and tactics which, by allowing flight attendants to maintain a social distance aids them in their attempts to maintain their status and an unspoiled identity.

Consequently, the flight attendant's conflict and status dilemma is a conflict characteristic of a mass society, where individuals and groups aspire

and struggle for recognition. While the unusual lifestyle of the flight attendants' work role differentiates and assigns them with a higher status and recognition than other occupational groups of the same social aggregate, changes in the socio-structural environment have transformed the work role they are required to perform on board. Such that very little has remained of the glamour and recognition which they are awarded outside the work context.

### 3. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND NEEDS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The current study has focused upon a particular group and is exploratory in nature. The major limitations concern certain methodological problems, such as the issues of more general application and validity, and the particular limitations placed by the time, focus of interest and the particular approach and method of analysis.

The issue of generalizability is raised by any study of a single system. The case study used here, while it does not permit generalizations to other groups without further specifications of the conditions and context of the group, does provide insight, questions and ideas concerning the effects of major changes upon occupational groups and the problem of status evaluation.

The issue of validity in this study, has been approached by the use of different techniques for gathering and analysis of data. The major part of this study is based on the use of questionnaires and diaries. The questionnaires have provided the quantitative data while the diaries have been an addition to these data and have proven to be useful in the difficult process of interpretation and explanation of the data. However, one may question the relatively small sample and the problems related to the use of self-administered questionnaires. The continuous cross-checking of the quantitative analysis from the information gathered from the diaries, not only added a more substantial understanding of the symbolic world of flight attendants but added validity as well to the interpretation of the findings.

In addition to these methodological limitations, there are the limitations which are related to the particular subject and the way the problem of the status

of airline flight attendants has been approached and analyzed. While in this study, status or the perception of status has been dealt solely from the point of view of the role incumbents, it would seem important to further these data by analyzing the status of flight attendants as it is perceived by the different groups upon which flight attendants are dependent for status evaluation.

Further, this study stops at a point in time. We are now at the threshold of extreme changes in the field of transportation brought about by the arrival of Supersonic planes and its opposite, the cheap fare "Skytrain." It would be interesting to see the impact of these developments upon the socio-organizational context upon the status and role of flight attendants.

#### 4. GENERAL IMPLICATIONS

The inquiry into the transformation of the status and identity of airline flight attendants has stressed the impact and the effects of technological innovations, an integral part of a modern industrial order, upon the socio-organizational structures and, in turn, upon occupations and occupational groups.

Most occupations have undergone the same process as organizations have been transformed into massive rationalized aggregates, characterized by differentiation and stratification of work, the application of rules, the standardization and routinization of work procedures and impersonalization. The effects of these processes have touched the world of work and whole areas of life important to the individuals.

In this situation, to differentiate oneself, to gain honor and social recognition has become an important issue for many people. Inside the work situation the changing conditions of work, the growing rationalization with the accompanying differentiation and routinization of roles in face-to-face contacts with the consumers of one's work has meant that older definitions of status have become ambiguous and problematic. Outside the work context, among different groups and in daily contacts with the general public and within peer groups, status has become a matter of symbols, of pretension.

This study has recognized this particular problem. Within the work situation, status has been linked to minimal gradations of work and the assignment of differential rewards according to the seniority system, while in relationships with customers, the stress on mechanical tasks and the interference which these people introduce into the work situation, are a source of conflict for the role incumbents.



Responses to this situation are varied and they are linked to the importance of the technical or physical attribute of the job, as well as to the type of interpersonal relationship, degree of identification with one's work and the normative rules of society. In many other occupations such as nurses and school teachers such strains result in a drive toward professionalization or toward increasing militancy via union organizations to increase their status inside the work organization. The particular responses of flight attendants incorporates these features, but these are mediated by the unusual extrinsic rewards of the work and the manipulative tactics which they can employ on a highly transitory group of consumers - the passengers.

In addition, the implications which the current study may have for the group of flight attendants should not be overlooked. While the major emphasis of this study, status evaluation, has precluded other aspects of the work situation of flight attendants, the insight into the problems flight attendants find in the work situation should be taken into consideration and be given further research. Issues such as the structural conditions of work, work group adjustment and relations with the public, appear to be the most important areas. In addition, the lack of militancy and passivity with which flight attendants have so far responded to the work situation, seems to be changing. Lately flight attendants are extremely concerned with their status on board and are asking for a 'licence' to carry out their work which could give them further control and authority inside the airline. Symbolically, this concern for greater authority can be seen in a return to wearing a severe, military-type uniform.

The importance and implications of this study rest with the parallels which can be drawn with other occupational groups whose status and identity

have been changing following certain socio-structural changes introduced by technological innovation, or with groups who are faced with the same dilemma of status recognition in the relationship with their clients. Of course, the findings of this study can be used to understand and improve the many problems flight attendants find in doing their work on board.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

First of all I would like to ask you some questions about yourself and your job.

1. How long have you been flying? Please cross the appropriate circle.

- ( ) 1 to 5 years  
 ( ) 6 to 10 years  
 ( ) 11 to 15 years  
 ( ) 16 plus

2. Sex: ( ) Female ( ) Male

3. What is your position inside the plane?

- ( ) Flight attendant  
 ( ) Assistant Purser  
 ( ) Purser  
 ( ) Flight Director

4. What are the things about flying which you most like?

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5. What are the things about flying which you most dislike?

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6. Do you regard your job as:

Difficult? Yes ( ) No ( ). If YES, why? \_\_\_\_\_

Dangerous? Yes ( ) No ( ). If YES, why? \_\_\_\_\_

Skilled? Yes ( ) No ( ). If YES, why? \_\_\_\_\_

Responsible? Yes ( ) No ( ). If YES, why? \_\_\_\_\_

Glamorous? Yes ( ) No ( ). If YES, why? \_\_\_\_\_

Other? Explain \_\_\_\_\_

7. Do you expect to spend the rest of your working life flying?

- ( ) Yes  
 ( ) No  
 ( ) I don't know

8. What would you say are the major rewards and satisfactions of this job?

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We all wear a uniform which is not chosen by us; it is designed by the company because it wants us to make a certain impression on the public. I am interested in studying the effects that the uniform has on the passengers' attitude to us, and his impression of us.

9. What impression would you like to project when wearing your uniform?

Cross only the appropriate answer.

- Severe                               Sexy  
 Professional                           Other. Explain \_\_\_\_\_  
 Glamorous                              \_\_\_\_\_

10. Do you think the present uniform presents the same impression of your position to other people, as you have of yourself?

Yes

11.  No            If NOT, how should it be changed? \_\_\_\_\_

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I am also interested to know about the problems that you may find in carrying out your duties.

12. What flights are you normally working?

- Overseas                                   Domestic long range  
 Transborder USA                                   Domestic short range  
 Transborder South

13. What do you think is the most important part of your job on board?

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14. On the flights you are normally working, what do you think the passengers consider the most important part of your job?

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15. How do passengers normally address you?

- Stewardess                                   Bartender  
 Miss     Other \_\_\_\_\_  
 Waitress    \_\_\_\_\_

16. What other forms of address have passengers used?

- ( ) Stewardess ( ) Bartender  
 ( ) Miss ( ) Other \_\_\_\_\_  
 ( ) Waitress \_\_\_\_\_

17. If a passenger called you 'waitress' or 'bartender' or any other unusual form of address, what did you do?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

18. According to the demands of the flights you normally work, which of the following best describe how you felt?

- ( ) Professional ( ) Waitress  
 ( ) Stewardess ( ) Bartender  
 ( ) Robot ( ) Other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

19. How do your co-workers think of you as a flight-personnel?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

20. How do your co-workers call you?

\_\_\_\_\_

21. On the flights you normally work, which of the following problems did you encounter most often?

- ( ) 'Fasten seat belt' sign was not respected  
 ( ) 'No smoking' sign on restricted areas was not respected  
 ( ) Drunken passengers  
 ( ) Passengers trying to disrupt your work routine by asking for types of service at the wrong time  
 ( ) Other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

22. What actions did you take concerning that problem?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

23. Do problems in general usually effect the relationship you have with the passengers involved? Explain:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix No. 1

24. Does the rest of the cabin crew usually support your actions?  
 Yes  
 No
25. If the rest of the cabin crew is not aware of the problem do you explain it to them or some of them?  
 Yes  
 No
26. What kind of problems do you encounter most often with your co-workers?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
27. Did you know any of the cockpit crew on these flights?  
 Yes  
 No
28. What do people you meet think of your or flight personnel in general?  
 They think I am:  
 a well travelled person  
 a professional  
 a glamorous person  
 a superficial person with a smile and an empty head.  
 a glamorized waitress  
 other \_\_\_\_\_
29. People you know well and are not working with an airline, what do they think of you? They think I am:  
 a well travelled person  
 a professional  
 a glamorous person  
 a superficial person with a smile and an empty head  
 a glamorized waitress  
 other \_\_\_\_\_
30. How do people you know very well, express their feeling towards you as a flight personnel?  
 they respect me  
 they envy me  
 they pity me  
 other \_\_\_\_\_

thank you

QUESTIONNAIRE

First of all I would like to ask you some questions about yourself and your job. Please cross the appropriate circle.

1. How long have you been flying?

- 1 to 5 years \_\_\_\_\_ ( )
- 6 to 10 years \_\_\_\_\_ ( )
- 11 to 15 years \_\_\_\_\_ ( )
- More than 16 years \_\_\_\_\_ ( )

2. What is your sex?

- Female \_\_\_\_\_ ( )
- Male \_\_\_\_\_ ( )

3. What is your position inside the plane?

- Flight attendant \_\_\_\_\_ ( )
- Assistant Purser \_\_\_\_\_ ( )
- Purser \_\_\_\_\_ ( )
- Flight Director \_\_\_\_\_ ( )

4. What are the things about flying you most like?

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5. What are the things about flying you most dislike?

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6. Do you regard your job as;

Difficult? Yes ( ) No ( ) If Yes, Why?

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Dangerous? Yes ( ) No ( ) If Yes, Why?

---

Skilled? Yes ( ) No ( ) If Yes, Why?

---

Responsible? Yes ( ) No ( ) If Yes, Why?

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Glamorous? Yes ( ) No ( ) If Yes, Why?

\_\_\_\_\_

Other? Explain

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Do you expect to spend the rest of your working life flying?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ ( )

No \_\_\_\_\_ ( )

I don't know \_\_\_\_\_ ( )

Please explain your answer \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. What would you say are the major rewards and satisfactions of this job?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9. What do you normally do during your free time off the job?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

10. We all wear a uniform. This uniform is designed to convey certain impressions upon the public. Below are listed a number of impressions which our current uniform may project to passengers. For each of them, please indicate what you believe to be its degree of importance for the impression which you think (a) Air Canada wishes to convey; (b) you think the impression actually is; (c) what you think the impression should be.

5 - Very important

4 - Fairly important

3 - Uncertain

2 - Somewhat unimportant

1 - Totally unimportant

(Example: if you believe Air Canada thinks 'Authority' is a 'very important' impression, indicate '5' on 'Authority' line, under 'Air Canada's wish'; if the actual uniform presents a 'totally unimportant' impression of 'authority', indicate '1' on 'Authority' line and under 'Actual image'; if you think 'Authority' is 'Fairly important', indicate '4' on 'Authority' line and under 'What image should be.' Follow the same process for all impressions listed below.)

Impression	(a) Air Canada's wish	(b) Actual Image	(c) What Image should be
Authority	_____	_____	_____
Professional	_____	_____	_____
Competent	_____	_____	_____
Sophisticated	_____	_____	_____
Glamorous	_____	_____	_____
Friendly	_____	_____	_____
Warm	_____	_____	_____
Casual	_____	_____	_____
Sexy	_____	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____	_____

I am also interested to know about the problems that you may find in carrying out your duties.

11. What flights are you normally working ?

- Overseas \_\_\_\_\_ ( )
- Transborder USA \_\_\_\_\_ ( )
- Transborder South \_\_\_\_\_ ( )
- Domestic Long Range \_\_\_\_\_ ( )
- Domestic Short Range \_\_\_\_\_ ( )

12. What do you think is the most important part of your job on board ?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

13. Most passengers are either flying for business reasons or because they are having their holidays. What do you think they consider to be the most important part of your job on board ?

- (a) Passengers on business \_\_\_\_\_
- (b) Passengers on holidays \_\_\_\_\_

14. How do passengers most often address you ?

- Stewardess/Steward \_\_\_\_\_ ( )
- Miss/Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ ( )
- Waitress/Waiter \_\_\_\_\_ ( )
- Bartender \_\_\_\_\_ ( )
- By gesture or noise \_\_\_\_\_ ( )
- Other \_\_\_\_\_ ( )

15. What other means of getting your attention do passengers use ?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

16. How do you react usually to passengers who get your attention by using means which you dislike ?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

17. According to the demands of the flights you normally work, which of the following best describe how you feel ?

- Hostess/Host \_\_\_\_\_ ( )
- Robot \_\_\_\_\_ ( )
- Waitress/Waiter \_\_\_\_\_ ( )
- Bartender \_\_\_\_\_ ( )

Other \_\_\_\_\_ ( )

18. What impressions do you think your co-workers have of you as a member of the cabin crew ?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

19. On the flights you normally work, which one of the following problems with passengers do you encounter most often ?

- 'Fasten seat belt' sign is not respected \_\_\_\_\_ ( )
- 'No smoking' sign on restricted area is not respected \_\_\_\_\_ ( )
- Drunken passengers \_\_\_\_\_ ( )
- Passengers trying to disrupt your work routine by asking for types of service at the wrong time \_\_\_\_\_ ( )
- Other \_\_\_\_\_ ( )

20. What action do you take concerning that problem ?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

21. Does the rest of the cabin crew usually support your actions ?

- Yes, always \_\_\_\_\_ ( )
- Yes, sometimes \_\_\_\_\_ ( )
- No \_\_\_\_\_ ( )

22. What problems are especially detrimental to your relationships with passengers ?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

23. When you have problems with the passengers do you usually talk about them with other members of the cabin crew ?

Yes, always \_\_\_\_\_ ( )  
Yes, sometimes \_\_\_\_\_ ( )  
No \_\_\_\_\_ ( )

24. What kind of problems do you encounter most often with your co-worker ?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

25. On your flights do you usually identify with the cockpit crew ?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ ( )  
No \_\_\_\_\_ ( )

26. As a flight attendant or member of a flight crew, what impression do you think you convey to the passengers ? They think I am:

a well travelled person \_\_\_\_\_ ( )  
a professional person \_\_\_\_\_ ( )  
a glamorous person \_\_\_\_\_ ( )  
a superficial person \_\_\_\_\_ ( )  
a glamorized waitress/waiter \_\_\_\_\_ ( )  
other \_\_\_\_\_ ( )

27. As a flight attendant or member of a flight crew, what impression do you think you convey to people who do not work for an airline, but who know you well.

a well travelled person \_\_\_\_\_ ( )  
a professional person \_\_\_\_\_ ( )  
a glamorous person \_\_\_\_\_ ( )  
a superficial person \_\_\_\_\_ ( )  
a glamorized waitress/waiter \_\_\_\_\_ ( )  
other \_\_\_\_\_ ( )

28. How do people you know well, express their feelings toward you in your job as a flight attendant ?

they respect me \_\_\_\_\_ ( )  
they envy me \_\_\_\_\_ ( )  
they pity me \_\_\_\_\_ ( )  
other \_\_\_\_\_ ( )

29. In general, what feelings do you think passengers have towards you in your job as a flight attendant?

- they respect me \_\_\_\_\_ ( )
- they envy me \_\_\_\_\_ ( )
- they pity me \_\_\_\_\_ ( )
- they are indifferent \_\_\_\_\_ ( )
- they show no respect \_\_\_\_\_ ( )
- other \_\_\_\_\_ ( )

Could you explain why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

30. All of us have different levels of seniority which give us access to different flights and different working conditions. These conditions often produce different feelings of satisfaction and dissatisfaction among the group.

At your level of seniority what do you like most about your flight-assignments (block)?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What do you dislike most?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

31. If these conditions produce a high degree of dissatisfaction to you, taking your entire job into consideration, how important is this problem to you?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Could you explain why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

thank you.

DIARY SCHEDULE

Here are some indications on what to write about.

1. Indicate the general characteristics of the flight:

Overseas, Transborder USA, Southern, long or short range domestic; duration of flight; number of passengers; service provided; types of passengers on board (i. e. business people; mostly people on vacation, etc. )

2. Job Performance and relationships with passengers.

I am interested to know about your experiences and your feelings on board and while dealing with passengers:

- i. Describe what you did on board, the things that happened and what you were thinking and feeling.
- ii. Write about the passengers' expectations concerning your duties. Did they differ? If so, in what way?
- iii. Write about problems you have had to face in exercising your authority (i. e. did you enforce any regulations 'fasten seat belt' sign, smoking, drinking, excessive demands at the wrong time, etc. ; if so were you supported by the rest of the crew?)  
Do you think passengers react differently when you provide service and when you represent authority?
- iv. How do your co-workers think of you? How do they call you?  
What problems do you usually encounter with your co-workers?
- v. Did you have any time to talk to passengers? What do you feel is the impression passengers have of you?

3. Relationships with the public in general.

Now think about your experiences with the general public or friends not working for an airline, during layover and at home.

- i. What do your friends or family think about you being an air personnel?
- ii. When people hear you are a flight attendant or hold any other position inside an aircraft, what do you think this means to them?

4. You as a uniform-wearer.

We all wear a uniform which is not chosen by us; it is designed by the company because it wants us to make a certain impression on the public.

- i. What is the public's attitude to you when you wear this uniform?  
Do people treat you as a person, or do they treat you as a uniformed representative of the company? How do you feel about wearing your uniform?
- ii. How would you describe the passengers' impression of you in the present uniform? i. e. severe, professional, glamorous, sexy ... ?  
What about previous uniforms you have worn?
- iii. What is the impression you would like to project with a uniform?

5. Occupational rewards.

- i. What do you like most about being a flight attendant?
- ii. We all have preferences about flights and blocks. What are your preferences and why?
- iii. Do you think that the things you like and dislike about your work change as the length of service increases?

## Appendix No. 4

## Occupational Prestige Scores By Occupational Classes

Occupational Title	National N = 793		National English N = 607		National French N = 186	
	Score	S.D.	Score	S.D.	Score	S.D.
<b>Professional</b>						
Accountant	63.4	19.2	62.9	19.4	65.4	18.4
Architect	78.1	18.3	77.6	18.4	79.6	17.9
Biologist	72.6	20.9	73.4	20.2	69.7	23.0
Catholic Priest	72.8	25.5	71.5	25.0	77.2	26.6
Chemist	73.5	19.3	73.3	18.8	73.9	21.1
Civil Engineer	73.1	19.0	72.6	18.8	75.1	19.3
County Court Judge	82.5	18.6	81.0	18.6	87.4	17.7
Druggist	69.3	20.0	68.5	19.8	72.0	20.5
Economist	62.2	22.3	63.0	21.6	59.5	24.2
High School Teacher	66.1	20.7	67.8	20.0	60.4	22.2
Lawyer	82.3	16.7	81.6	17.0	84.4	15.5
Mathematician	72.7	20.1	73.7	20.1	69.5	19.9
Mine Safety Analyst	57.1	20.5	57.2	20.5	56.6	20.8
Mining Engineer	68.8	20.5	68.6	20.1	69.3	21.6
Physician	87.2	15.9	87.5	16.1	86.1	15.2
Physicist	77.6	21.4	79.9	20.0	69.3	24.1
Protestant Minister	67.8	26.3	71.7	23.0	53.7	32.1
Psychologist	74.9	20.3	76.0	19.6	71.3	22.2
Public Grade School Teacher	59.6	20.5	59.8	20.8	58.8	19.2
University Professor	84.6	17.3	86.1	16.9	79.9	17.7
Veterinarian	66.7	21.3	66.7	20.9	66.6	22.5
<b>Semi Professional</b>						
Airline Pilot	66.1	20.5	67.4	19.9	61.6	21.8
Author	64.8	21.7	65.8	21.7	61.4	21.6
Ballet Dancer	49.1	26.2	51.6	25.2	40.7	27.6
Chiropractor	68.4	22.0	67.2	21.6	72.2	22.9
Commercial Artist	57.2	20.5	58.1	20.4	54.1	20.6
Computer Programmer	53.8	21.6	53.6	21.2	54.8	22.9
Disc Jockey	38.0	23.1	38.2	23.0	37.3	23.6
Draughtsman	60.0	20.6	59.9	20.4	60.0	21.1
Funeral Director	54.9	23.7	55.2	22.8	53.7	26.5
Jazz Musician	40.9	24.5	40.9	24.3	41.2	25.2
Journalist	60.9	20.0	62.3	19.5	56.4	21.0
Medical or Dental Technician	67.5	21.7	66.7	21.8	70.0	21.4
Musician	52.1	22.9	53.7	22.5	46.6	23.2
Musician in a Symphony Orchestra	56.0	23.0	58.0	22.1	49.3	25.0

Occupational Title	National N = 793		National English N = 607		National French N = 186	
	Score	S.D.	Score	S.D.	Score	S.D.
<b>Semi Professional (cont.)</b>						
Physiotherapist	72.1	19.4	72.3	19.0	71.3	20.6
Playground Director	42.8	22.3	43.1	21.7	41.8	24.1
Professional Athlete	54.1	24.2	54.5	24.3	52.9	23.9
Professionally Trained Forester	60.0	20.6	60.4	19.9	58.9	22.8
Professionally Trained Librarian	58.1	21.7	58.5	21.2	56.7	23.1
Registered Nurse	64.7	21.4	66.1	20.8	59.9	22.5
Research Technician	66.9	19.1	67.1	19.1	66.1	19.2
Sculptor	56.9	23.6	58.0	23.5	53.5	23.0
Social Worker	55.1	24.0	57.4	23.2	47.4	25.2
Surveyor	62.0	20.4	60.6	20.1	66.9	20.1
T.V. Announcer	57.6	21.6	57.9	21.4	56.5	22.1
T.V. Cameraman	48.3	21.4	47.8	21.0	49.9	22.0
T.V. Director	62.1	21.5	63.1	21.4	58.9	21.7
T.V. Star	65.6	26.8	67.7	25.9	58.7	26.0
YMCA Director	58.2	21.8	59.2	21.0	54.5	21.7
<b>Proprietors, Managers and Officials, Large</b>						
<b>Administrative Officer in</b>						
Federal Civil Service	68.8	20.1	69.9	19.6	64.9	21.6
Advertising Executive	56.5	21.8	59.4	21.2	46.5	20.9
Bank Manager	70.9	19.3	72.1	19.4	67.1	18.5
Building Contractor	56.5	19.3	56.4	18.9	56.7	20.7
Colonel in the Army	70.8	22.0	71.6	21.3	68.4	24.2
Department Head in City Government	71.3	21.3	74.5	19.5	60.4	23.7
General Manager of a Manufacturing Plant	69.1	19.2	70.4	18.5	64.9	20.8
Mayor of a Large City	79.9	20.4	80.6	20.2	77.5	20.7
Member of Canadian Cabinet	83.3	19.9	84.2	18.8	80.4	22.9
Member of Canadian House of Commons	84.8	18.8	84.9	18.4	84.5	20.2
Member of Canadian Senate	86.1	21.1	86.0	20.8	86.1	22.3
Merchandise Buyer for a Department Store	51.1	19.3	52.7	19.0	45.5	19.3
Owner of a Manufacturing Plant	69.4	21.3	69.8	20.6	67.9	23.4
Provincial Premier	89.9	18.1	88.7	19.1	93.6	13.3
Wholesale Distributor	47.9	20.5	49.1	19.9	43.6	22.0
<b>Proprietors, Managers and Officials, Small</b>						
Advertising Copy Writer	48.9	20.6	48.3	19.8	50.9	22.8
Beauty Operator	35.2	20.9	34.4	20.3	37.9	22.6
Construction Foreman	51.1	20.0	50.4	19.7	53.3	20.8
Driving Instructor	41.6	21.6	40.0	20.9	46.9	23.2
Foreman in a Factory	50.9	19.3	49.2	18.6	56.8	20.4
Government Purchasing Agent	56.8	21.6	56.9	21.0	56.2	23.4
Insurance Claims Investigator	51.1	20.1	50.8	20.1	52.0	20.2
Job Counsellor	58.3	20.7	58.7	20.0	56.8	23.0
Livestock Buyer	39.6	21.5	40.6	20.6	36.1	24.2
Lunchroom Operator	31.6	21.4	29.2	20.3	39.9	23.2
Manager of a Real Estate Office	58.3	20.9	58.8	20.7	56.8	21.8
Manager of a Supermarket	52.5	20.2	52.7	20.0	51.9	20.6



<i>Occupational Title</i>	<i>National N = 793</i>		<i>National English N = 607</i>		<i>National French N = 186</i>	
	<i>Score</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>S.D.</i>
<b>Proprietors, Managers and Officials, Small (cont)</b>						
Member of a City Council	62.9	21.4	64.7	20.3	57.1	24.0
Motel Owner	51.6	23.5	50.9	21.7	53.8	28.0
Owner of a Food Store	47.8	21.3	49.7	20.8	41.7	21.9
Public Relations Man	60.5	19.4	60.3	19.2	61.4	20.2
Railroad Ticket Agent	35.7	21.1	36.5	20.6	33.0	22.5
Sawmill Operator	37.0	21.7	36.4	21.4	38.9	22.5
Service Station Manager	41.5	20.4	42.5	18.9	38.1	24.5
Ship's Pilot	59.6	22.7	59.6	22.4	59.7	23.5
Superintendent of a Construction Job	53.9	20.4	55.3	20.4	49.0	19.5
Trade Union Business Agent	49.2	21.0	48.6	20.9	51.1	21.3
Travel Agent	46.6	20.7	45.0	19.5	52.0	23.5
<b>Clerical and Sales</b>						
Air Hostess	57.0	21.1	55.7	21.0	61.0	20.7
Bank Teller	42.3	21.0	42.4	20.1	41.9	24.0
Bill Collector	29.4	21.5	26.8	21.1	38.4	20.4
Bookkeeper	49.4	20.2	50.0	20.1	47.3	20.7
Cashier in a Supermarket	31.1	21.4	30.5	21.1	33.0	22.1
Clerk in an Office	35.6	20.3	35.0	19.8	37.8	22.1
File Clerk	32.7	21.2	31.5	20.4	36.7	23.1
IBM Key punch Operator	47.7	21.5	46.5	21.0	51.9	22.8
Insurance Agent	47.3	19.7	46.6	19.1	49.7	21.5
Manufacturer's Representative	52.1	19.1	51.7	19.0	53.5	19.1
Post Office Clerk	37.2	21.9	37.2	21.6	36.9	22.8
Real Estate Agent	47.1	21.1	46.2	20.1	49.8	23.9
Receptionist	38.7	20.9	39.7	20.4	35.5	22.1
Sales Clerk in a Store	26.5	19.7	26.6	19.4	25.9	20.7
Shipping Clerk	30.9	20.1	30.7	19.3	31.7	22.7
Stenographer	46.0	20.2	44.6	19.6	50.6	21.5
Stockroom Attendant	25.8	19.2	24.9	18.8	29.0	20.1
Telephone Operator	38.1	22.0	37.6	21.7	39.9	23.0
Telephone Solicitor	26.7	23.0	28.3	23.2	21.7	21.6
Travelling Salesman	40.2	21.1	38.8	21.0	45.1	20.6
Truck Dispatcher	32.2	20.4	32.1	20.1	32.7	21.2
Typist	41.9	20.7	41.1	20.1	44.7	22.4
Used Car Salesman	31.2	21.0	30.4	20.0	34.0	24.0
<b>Skilled</b>						
Airplane Mechanic	50.3	22.4	49.3	22.1	53.4	23.1
Baker	38.9	20.5	38.8	20.1	39.4	22.1
Bricklayer	36.2	21.6	36.0	21.3	36.9	22.6
Butcher in a Store	34.8	20.2	34.7	19.7	35.0	21.6
Coal Miner	27.6	22.1	26.2	21.9	32.3	22.4
Cook in a Restaurant	29.7	21.0	28.9	21.3	32.3	19.8
Custom Seamstress	33.4	20.3	33.7	19.3	32.5	23.3
Diamond Driller	44.5	21.7	44.8	21.4	43.2	22.5
Electrician	50.2	20.5	49.5	20.5	52.3	20.4
House Carpenter	38.9	20.7	38.7	20.3	39.4	22.1
House Painter	29.9	19.4	29.0	19.0	33.0	20.4
Locomotive Engineer	48.9	22.2	50.9	21.7	42.2	22.7
Machinist	44.2	21.9	44.0	21.9	45.0	22.0

<i>Occupational Title</i>	<i>National N = 793</i>		<i>National English N = 607</i>		<i>National French N = 186</i>	
	<i>Score</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>S.D.</i>
<b>Unskilled</b>						
Carpenter's Helper	23.1	20.0	22.5	20.0	24.9	19.8
Construction Labourer	26.5	22.7	24.4	22.1	33.8	23.1
Elevator Operator in a Building	20.1	20.7	21.8	20.9	14.4	18.8
Filling Station Attendant	23.3	20.3	22.2	19.7	27.7	22.1
Garbage Collector	14.8	20.0	15.0	20.3	13.8	18.9
Hospital Attendant	34.9	24.9	34.2	24.2	37.6	26.8
Housekeeper in a Private Home	28.8	23.5	28.5	24.1	30.0	21.2
Janitor	17.3	19.1	16.3	18.5	20.8	21.0
Laundress	19.3	20.1	19.3	19.8	19.6	21.3
Mailman	36.1	23.0	36.2	23.0	35.8	23.3
Museum Attendant	30.4	21.8	31.5	21.2	26.9	23.1
Newspaper Peddler	14.8	19.0	14.3	18.7	16.5	20.1
Railroad Sectionhand	27.3	21.8	25.7	21.7	32.6	21.5
Taxicab Driver	25.1	20.3	24.3	19.8	27.8	21.7
Waitress in a Restaurant	19.9	19.4	19.1	19.0	22.6	20.3
Warehouse Hand	21.3	18.3	20.2	18.1	25.1	18.7
Whistle Punk	18.4	21.2	14.3	18.7	29.4	23.4
Worker in a Dry Cleaning or Laundry Plant	20.8	19.6	20.3	19.4	22.4	19.9
<b>Farmer</b>						
Commercial Farmer	42.0	22.3	41.7	22.0	42.9	23.3
Diary Farmer	44.2	22.9	43.3	22.4	47.3	24.5
Farm Labourer	21.5	22.0	19.6	21.7	27.9	22.0
Farm Owner and Operator	44.1	23.7	44.8	23.2	41.7	25.5
Hog Farmer	33.0	23.6	31.3	23.5	38.8	23.1
Part Time Farmer	25.1	22.4	26.6	22.3	20.1	21.9
<b>Not in Labour Force</b>						
Archaeopotrist	63.7	23.9	64.7	22.5	59.7	28.4
Biologer	64.2	24.1	66.0	22.8	57.8	27.4
Occupation of my family's main wage earner	50.9	25.1	50.3	24.5	53.0	27.0
Occupation of my father when I was 16	42.5	25.6	42.6	25.2	42.2	26.8
Someone who lives off inherited wealth	45.8	31.5	45.8	31.9	46.0	30.2
Someone who lives off property holdings	48.7	25.9	46.9	25.4	54.4	26.7
Someone who lives off stocks and bonds	56.9	27.9	56.7	28.0	57.5	27.8
Someone who lives on relief	7.3	15.9	7.2	15.5	7.8	17.4

Source: Peter C. Pineo and John Porter, Occupational Prestige in Canada.