

DIRTY WORK: WHO DECIDES WHO DOES IT?

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## Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	4
<b>Abstract</b> .....	5
<b>Introduction</b> .....	6
Overview.....	6
Dirty Work.....	7
Dangerous Work.....	9
Illegitimate Work.....	9
The Psychological Contract.....	11
Realistic Job Preview.....	12
Employee Orientation.....	13
Occupational Reality Shock.....	14
Group Norms.....	15
Task Assignment.....	16
Workplace Incidents.....	17
Rationale for the Research.....	18
<b>Method</b> .....	19
Participants.....	19
Materials.....	20
Introduction.....	20
Personal details.....	20
Perceived hazard risk.....	21
Accident/Injury frequency.....	21
Task assignment.....	21
Procedure.....	22
Online.....	22
Flyers.....	22
In-person.....	23
<b>Results</b> .....	23
Sample.....	23
General Task Assignment.....	26

Parties responsible for task assignment.....	26
Does the party assigning tasks influence perceptions of the task? .....	26
New Employee Task Assignment and Safety.....	27
Overall safety.....	27
Dirty tasks.....	28
<b>Discussion</b> .....	<b>28</b>
General Findings.....	29
Unexplained Hypotheses.....	29
Theoretical and Practical Implications.....	30
Limitations of the Present Research.....	31
Common method variance.....	31
Response rate and sample size.....	31
Socially desirable responding.....	32
Suggestions for Future Research.....	32
Conclusion.....	33
<b>References</b> .....	<b>34</b>
<b>Appendix A – Survey</b> .....	<b>41</b>
<b>Appendix B – Information Sheet for Participants</b> .....	<b>47</b>
<b>Appendix C – Consent Form for Participants</b> .....	<b>49</b>

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### **Abstract**

The assignment of unexpected tasks to employees has negative consequences for both employee and organization, in the way of employee well-being and successful organizational entry respectively. If such tasks were to possess an additional aspect of being “dirty”, and if it is newer employees who are the victim of such inappropriate assignment, such outcomes may not only be compounded, but these factors may also explain new employee high accident rates. The present research investigated whether co-workers or supervisors tended to be responsible for task assignment, whether the party responsible for task assignment was associated with employees’ perceptions of how “dirty” and risky the task was, and whether new employees tended to be assigned “dirty” tasks. 71 participants from New Zealand and around the world provided information on the nature of the tasks they were assigned when they first began work at their current job, and at the present point in time. One-way ANOVAs were used to compare means between these two instances. Results revealed that co-workers are involved in task assignment roughly half the time, and that, when co-workers are involved, participants were less expecting to have to undertake the assigned task(s) compared to when only supervisors were responsible for assignment. Organizations may wish to determine whether such a trend exists in their workforce, and encourage employees to make known any improper task assignment taking place.

## **Dirty Work: Who Decides Who Does It?**

### *Overview*

The phrase *dirty work* was coined in 1951 by Hughes, who used it to describe tasks and occupations that society perceives to be disgusting or degrading. The assignment of dirty tasks to an employee may have an impact on organizational entry – the psychological contract, realistic job previews, employee orientation, occupational reality shock, group norms, task assignment, and safety. In turn, this would affect the overall success of the organization's recruitment and retention efforts. Dirty work may also be linked to illegitimate tasks and workplace accidents, and thus have overall implications for employee health and safety. Given that an important goal of any organization is the recruitment and retention of skilled labour (Earnest, Allen, & Landis, 2011), a goal which remains a struggle to achieve (Allen, Bryant, & Vardaman, 2010), dirty work is an important area to investigate.

The present study seeks to determine: (1) The party or parties responsible for the assignment of dirty task(s), (2) whether tasks assigned by co-workers are rated as significantly more 'dirty', and significantly 'riskier', compared to tasks assigned by supervisors/managers, and (3) whether the newest employee to join a team tends to be assigned the dirty task(s) to complete. Whether assignment, and subsequent undertaking, of dirty tasks is associated with illegitimate tasks, a lack of safe task assignment, and the prevalence of workplace incidents amongst new employees is also considered. The introduction first defines dirty work, dangerous work, and illegitimate work, before reviewing aspects of organizational entry and workplace health and safety. The rationale for the present study, as well as its hypotheses, are explained.

The next sections examine dirty work, dangerous work and illegitimate work.

## **Dirty Work**

Despite continued research on the subject (Hughes, 1951, 1958, 1962), Hughes never clearly defined dirty work, merely elaborating that tasks could be tainted physically, socially, or morally (Hughes, 1958). Each dimension of taint was eventually explicitly defined by Ashforth and Kreiner (1999, p. 415). Specifically, physical taint is present when the work is “either directly associated with garbage, death, effluent, and so on or is thought to be performed under particularly noxious or dangerous conditions”. Social taint is present when the work “involves regular contact with people or groups that are themselves regarded as stigmatized or where the worker appears to have a servile relationship to others”. Moral taint is present when the work “is generally regarded as somewhat sinful or of dubious virtue or where the worker is thought to employ methods that are deceptive, intrusive, confrontational, or that otherwise defy norms of civility”. The boundaries between the three dimensions are not clear-cut, and a job or task may be tainted by any combination of them (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). McMurray and Ward (2014) suggest emotional taint to be an additional element of “dirtiness”, stemming from a sociological perspective, which revolves around “workers who deal with isolated, upset, abusive or suicidal individuals as organizational agents who contain society’s emotional dirt” (p. 1044).

Occupations defined by dirty work include butchery (Meara, 1974), nursing (Chiapetta-Swanson, 2005), elderly care (Stannard, 1973), construction work, street vendor, and prison guard (Ashforth & Kreiner, 2014). Research on dirty work has examined two main areas: The sense-making processes and coping strategies employed by the dirty worker (e.g. Bosmans et al., 2016; Löfstrand, Loftus, & Loader, 2016; Simpson, Hughes, Slutskaya, & Balta, 2014; Rivera, 2015), and the various mechanisms by which the dirty worker deals with the stigma that accompanies working in their occupation (e.g. Mavin & Grandy, 2013; Ostaszkiwicz, O’Connell, & Dunning, 2016; Thiel, 2007; Vines & Linders, 2016).

McMurray and Ward (2014) explored the subjective experiences, and the interpretations of these experiences, of Samaritans working in a charitable organization in the United Kingdom. The authors observed these Samaritans, who worked in call centres in which they engaged with anonymous callers, listening to such concerns and fears of the caller as feelings of loneliness, suicide, and socially unacceptable sexual desires (McMurray & Ward, 2014). Such work elicited a visceral response from outsiders that the worker is tainted, with the Samaritans perceiving that only other “emotional” dirty workers fully comprehended why they did the work they did. (McMurray & Ward, 2014). The Samaritans realized satisfaction in delivering empathetic care and from a feeling of privilege to be doing the work they were doing, and coped on a psychological level via debriefings and access to counselling services (McMurray & Ward, 2014). In another study in the United Kingdom, Simpson, Hughes, Slutskaya and Balta (2014) examined the butcher trade, which they argue to be a form of dirty work given the routine involvement of blood, meat, cutters and grinders. These butchers found pride in the traditional, masculine working-class concepts of sacrifice, endurance and fortitude, perceiving their efforts and work to be conducted for the welfare of families - so much so that they mourned the loss of a significant portion of the “heavy” and dirty work, a change resulting from new regulations to the meat trade that meant much of the handling of the meat now took place before the meat was delivered to the butchery (Simpson, Hughes, Slutskaya, & Balta, 2014). Butchers also created meaning from a sense of authentic belonging and positive distinctiveness, additionally infusing their skill with meaning from “contemporary, media-endorsed discourses of (newly masculinized) cuisine” (Simpson, Hughes, Slutskaya, & Balta, 2014, p. 767).

From interviews with 18 care-workers, and field observations in two Australian aged care facilities where care-workers dealt with residents’ incontinence, Ostaszkiewicz, O’Connell, and Dunning (2016) found the general social perceptions regarding incontinence,

dirtiness, and cleanliness to contribute to care-workers' low occupational status, and that the stigmatizing nature of such work significantly negatively impacted on care-workers' self-identity. Vines and Linders (2016) contend that, because professional poker players can potentially be perceived as problem gamblers, and with gambling itself considered a pathological condition and associated with various cons and sins (e.g. drugs, alcohol, sex), these players are thus dirty workers. Faced with a need to convince both themselves, and family and friends, that there is nothing wrong with them, the players' best defense is "their winning record and their ability to sustain a regular life outside the poker room" (Vines & Linders, 2016, p. 1074). Yet other "dirty" occupations looked into by researchers include the U. S. Border Patrol (Rivera, 2015) and private security officers (Löfstrand, Loftus, & Loader, 2016).

### **Dangerous Work**

There exists a variety of tasks that pose a significant injury risk, such as those involving hot liquids or surfaces, heavy objects, chemicals, and tools (e.g. box cutters) (Vladutiu, Rauscher, Runyan, Schulman, & Villaveces, 2010), which employees may undertake due to the power imbalance that exists between them and their superior (Breslin, Polzer, MacEachen, Morrongiello, & Shannon, 2007), or simply because they do not realize that the task is dangerous (Zakocs, Runyan, Schulman, Dunn, & Evensen, 1998). Moreover, this undertaking of such tasks occurs in spite of the existence of laws and regulations intended to shield workers from harm (Vladutiu, Rauscher, Runyan, Schulman, & Villaveces, 2010). Among those aged 10-19 in the U. S., occupational injury places fourth on the list of unintentional injuries (Laraque, Barlow, & Durkin, 1999).

### **Illegitimate Work**

Semmer, Jacobshagen, Meier, and Elfering (2007) drew on role theory, identity theory, and justice theory to conceive the notion of illegitimate tasks. Because expectations are a

natural accompaniment to any role (Burke & Stets, 2009; Katz & Kahn, 1978), it may be assumed that there also exist tasks related to the role that the individual would not be expected to carry out, a line of reasoning that is the cornerstone for the idea underlying illegitimate tasks (Pereira, Semmer, & Elfering, 2014). Specifically, illegitimate tasks are tasks that contradict norms regarding what the employee is expected to do, and that constitute a prospective threat to the employee's sense of self (Semmer et al., 2015). A core aspect of illegitimate tasks is the perception by the employee that they should not have to be completing the task (Björk, Bejerot, Jacobshagen, & Härenstam, 2013). Based on these definitions, it can thus be seen that the domain of dirty work overlaps with that of illegitimate work and dangerous work, all of which are unfair and detrimental to the employee and, ultimately, the organization.

Illegitimate tasks may be classified as either unreasonable or unnecessary (Semmer, Tschan, Meier, Facchin, & Jacobshagen, 2010). Unreasonable tasks refer to tasks which lie outside the job scope of the employee, while unnecessary tasks refer to tasks which may be perceived by the employee as a waste of time (Sonnentag & Lischetske, 2017). Illegitimate tasks are linked with an overall negative impact on an employee's well-being (Sonnentag & Lischetske, 2017), are associated with such aspects as low self-esteem, feelings of resentment and irritability, counterproductive work behaviours (Semmer et al., 2010, 2015), and quality of sleep (Pereira, Semmer, & Elfering, 2014).

In summary, there exists a range of tasks and work that an employee may be assigned to complete. These tasks may be unwanted, unpleasant, unsafe, or downright lie outside of the employee's job scope. As discussed, the individuals who attend to these tasks may subsequently be subject to an array of negative outcomes to their self-identity and/or wellbeing. However, employees are not the only ones who end up suffering as a result of such task assignment. The next sections explore the possible impact to the organization that accompanies employees being made to do dirty tasks.

## **The Psychological Contract**

Contracts are ubiquitous in an organizational setting, serving to facilitate the achievement of goals by bringing a degree of order to the behaviour of the employee and the organization (Robinson, Kraatz, & Rousseau, 1994). One way a contract may be broken is if an employee is asked to complete a task (which may or may not be dirty) that they were not expecting to have to complete. This section examines the potential circumstances and consequences of such a contractual breach.

The employee-employer relationship develops via a series of mutual rewards and benefits (Kakarika, González-Gómez, & Dimitriades, 2017), which, when at balance, sees favourable employee attitudes accompanying the establishment of trust (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). However, this relationship is under constant evaluation by the employee (Coyle-Shapiro & Shore, 2007), who may undergo a negative shift in attitudes and behaviours upon perceiving that the exchange has become unfavourable to them (Robinson, 2008). An employee's psychological contract consists of the work that they understand to owe their employer, and the rewards that they perceive are owed to them in return (Robinson, Kraatz, & Rousseau, 1994). These beliefs are often implicit and informal, different to legal employment contracts, and based on subjective interpretations of the employer's actions (Parzefall & Salin, 2010). A violation of the psychological contract occurs when either party fails to fulfil their obligation(s) to the other (Robinson, Kraatz, & Rousseau, 1994). Violations by the employer are linked with a host of negative employee outcomes such as experiencing feelings of betrayal (Bies, 1987; Rousseau, 1989), lowered trust, organizational citizenship behaviours, increased cynicism (Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003; Lo and Aryee, 2003; Zhao, Wayne, Glibkowsky & Bravo, 2007), decreased work motivation (De Lange, Bal, Van Der Heijden, De Jong, & Schaufeli, 2011), turnover intentions, and lowered job satisfaction and in-role performance (Zhao, Wayne, Glibkowski, & Bravo, 2007).

The undesirable consequences of a breach to the psychological contract thus calls for a closer look at the assignment of tasks in the workplace – specifically, whether or not employees are being called upon to undertake tasks that they were not initially expecting to have to do, an occurrence which may prompt the perception of a contractual breach. The next section examines realistic job previews (RJPs), which is one means of helping the employee maintain the perception that the organization has kept to its side of the psychological contract, by having the information about the job, presented during recruitment, match the actual experience on the job (Breugh & Starke, 2000; Rousseau, 1995).

### **Realistic Job Preview**

“No recruitment issue has generated more attention than realistic job previews, the presentation by an organization of both favourable and unfavourable job-related information to job candidates” (Phillips, 1998, p. 673). Employees can be said to have received an RJP if they have been provided with realistic information (i.e. both the positive and negative aspects) about their job (Barber, 1998; Breugh & Starke, 2000). An RJP’s effectiveness stems from the ability of the job applicant to engage in self-selection, which refers to the applicant deciding against taking the job if they perceive the job to be undesirable, assuming that alternatives are available (Breugh & Starke, 2000). Self-selection is thought to result in greater job satisfaction, lower turnover, and higher levels of job performance (Breugh & Starke, 2000). RJPs also incline the employee to feel as though the organization has been honest with them, and influence role clarity, which affects job performance (Breugh & Starke, 2000).

In order for an organization to be certain that they have presented the employee with a realistic job preview, one criteria is surely that the employee has not been assigned tasks that they did not expect, prior to their arrival in the organization.. Conversely, if an employee has already been assigned such tasks, it is safe to say that they were not given a realistic job

preview. One of the aims of this study is thus to determine whether participants tend to be assigned tasks that they were not expecting to be assigned, which could ultimately bring about undesirable consequences to the organization.

Related to the psychological contract and realistic job previews, employee orientation is another aspect of organizational entry that either positively or negatively affects the employee, depending on whether or not the process was appropriately carried out. The next section examines employee orientation.

### **Employee Orientation**

Employee orientation refers to the process by which new employees become familiarized with their job, team, and organization, as well as the terms and conditions of their employment (Bowles, 2012; Caruth, Caruth, & Pane Haden, 2010). Employee orientation serves to (Caruth, Caruth, & Pane Haden, 2010): (1) Inform the employee of the organization's culture, (2) Convince or reassure the employee that it is desirable to work for the organization, (3) Ease the employee into their new role, (4) Inform the employee of what is expected of them in their role, and; (5) Inform the employee of the various policies, rules, and benefits in existence. Employee orientation can occur formally or informally, in a group-based or one-on-one setting (Bowles, 2012); the process itself can either be focused on winning over the employee (Bowles, 2012) or simply ensuring that the necessary information about the employee's position is conveyed (Holton, 2001).

Employee orientation is important because an employee's initial period in an organization determines their subsequent success in their position (Caruth, Caruth, & Pane Haden, 2010; Hacker, 2004; Kim, Chai, Kim, & Park, 2015; Mestre, Stainer, & Stainer, 1997; Sanders & Kleiner, 2002); this initial period is associated with such positive work behaviours as work motivation, organizational commitment, and innovation and cooperation (Van

Maanen, 1976; Feldman, 1981). Moreover, these work attitudes persist for months after their development (Bauer & Green, 1994; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). Apart from job performance, employee orientation may also impact on intention to leave (Klein & Weaver, 2000), turnover rate and, subsequently, recruitment costs (Dunn & Jasinski, 2009).

Despite being an ongoing process, more attention has been given to the socialization of new employees in particular, because of the salience of adjustment issues (Simosi, 2010). The undesirable consequences of employee orientation gone wrong provide much justification for investigating the manner in which task assignment is carried out, particularly for new employees, as being given unpleasant or unexpected tasks to do will certainly be hurtful to the employee orientation process. Associated with realistic job previews and the orientation process is occupational reality shock, which the next section examines.

### **Occupational Reality Shock**

Occupational reality shock (ORS) refers to “the discrepancy between an individual’s work expectations established prior to joining an organization and the individual’s perceptions after becoming a member of that organization” (Dean, Ferris, & Konstans, 1988, p. 235). By providing the employee with information, employee orientation lowers the uncertainty and conflict that accompanies the reality shock which new employees tend to experience (King, Xia, Quick, & Sethi, 2005; Larson & Bell, 2013). New employees tend to be especially impressionable within the first few weeks of joining an organization, meaning that they will be particularly influenced by the behaviours, attitudes, emotions, and values encountered at their workplace (Schein, 1971; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Organizations that successfully manage the impact of ORS on their employees may enjoy increased employee retention rates, and higher levels of employee performance (Dean, Ferris, & Konstans, 1988, p. 235). Conversely, failing to appropriately address employees’ ORS will have a negative effect on

their levels of organizational commitment (Dean, 1983; Dean & Wanous, 1983), job dissatisfaction, and turnover intentions (Sorensen & Sorensen, 1972, 1974).

It is thus expected that an employee experience ORS upon being assigned unexpected (and possibly dirty) tasks, which would result in a host of unwanted outcomes to the organization, while lowering the likelihood of positive ones manifesting. The importance of correctly handling ORS warrants a detailed look at task assignment in the workplace.

The proceeding sections have discussed how negative consequences can result from organizational processes which fail to clearly state the nature of tasks which employees will be asked to do. Another factor which can complicate the situation is co-workers assigning tasks outside of the formal structure. An organization may think that they have successfully overcome the hurdle of clarifying job tasks to new employees, only to find that co-workers are assigning tasks – and indeed assigning dirty tasks, perhaps in part to avoid having to complete them themselves. Thus, another factor that may be associated with dirty work is the formation of group norms concerning task assignment: ‘the new employee gets the dirty tasks’. The next section examines how this might happen.

### **Group Norms**

Group norms refer to informal standards regarding appropriate and inappropriate behaviour in a group (Birenbaum & Sagarin, 1976; Cialdini & Trost, 1998). These standards may be either actively (e.g. explicitly stated) or passively (e.g. non-verbal behaviours, imitation) conveyed, with punishments for failing to adhere to them administered by social networks, rather than by a formal body (Ehrhart & Naumann, 2004). Members of a group may also conform to norms in an attempt to gain approval from the rest of that group (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955).

In a work setting, group norms develop in teams to encourage appropriate behaviours and discourage inappropriate behaviours (Stewart, Courtright, & Barrick, 2012). A team may have a group norm of assigning the dirty or risky tasks (e.g. because these tasks are unwanted) to the newcomer. A team may also have a group norm of having task assignment carried out primarily by co-workers, as opposed to by supervisors/managers, which, in itself, may have implications for the appropriateness of task assigned. Recipients of the task assigned by co-workers may not possess the necessary knowledge, skills, abilities, and any other characteristics required for the safe completion of the tasks. Neither may they have been expecting to be assigned the task in the first place.

Group norms may thus play a role in (improper) task assignment at work, and be worth investigating in the form of who tends to be responsible for task assignment, and the characteristics of the tasks they assign. The literature on task assignment is examined in the next section.

### **Task Assignment**

The numerous and severe downsides to improper task assignment, along with the broad range of work types (dirty, risky, illegitimate), speak to the importance of getting task assignment right. This section elucidates how task assignment can contribute to workplace safety.

Task assignment is a significant predictor of establishment-level safety performance (Yorio & Wachter, 2014). Specifically, an organization can be said to have practiced safe task assignment when they have taken into account how prepared or suited an employee is for a task, such that there is a minimal chance of failure or of a health and safety incident occurring (Yorio & Wachter, 2014). Factors that should be taken into consideration include task related

abilities and familiarity, the employee's physical and mental condition at the time, and the demands of the task itself (Yorio & Wachter, 2014).

Unfortunately, workplace incidents themselves are still rife, particularly amongst certain populations. This is examined in the next section.

### **Workplace Incidents**

The range and severity of the consequences associated with improper task assignment and subsequently, poor organizational entry, are evident. A final reason to take a closer look at task assignment concerning new employees in particular is the strong negative relationship observed between job tenure and the occurrence of workplace accidents (Burt, 2015). Specifically, there exists a large body of research indicating that new employees have high accident rates. A factor which may be associated with this is inappropriate task assignment, including tasks being assigned to new employees by co-workers.

Several examples of research on safety in the new employee population serve to illustrate the issues. In 688 coal mine fatalities, the employee had had less than a year of job tenure in 31% of the cases, and less than a month of job tenure in 7.8% of the cases (Theodore Barry and Associates, 1971). At logging skid sites, 32% of injuries occurred within the first six months of employment (Bentley, Parker, Ashby, Moore, & Tappin, 2002). In 95.6% of 120,417 non-fatal injuries and 92.5% of 2803 deaths examined in the South Korean construction sector, employees possessed less than a year of job tenure (Jeong, 1998).

Workplace accidents are also more likely to occur amongst younger workers (Burt, 2015, p. 9). Australian youth workers, aged between 15-17 years, were found to be twice as likely to sustain a work-related injury as other workers (Scott, Hockey, Barker, Sprinks, & Pitt, 2004). In 56% of 63 studies examining the rates of occupational injuries among young workers, young workers were found to have a higher rate of injury than older workers (Salminen, 2004).

In 977 accidents examined, involving males 24 years of age and younger, 61.5% had happened to employees with less than a year of job tenure (Lin, Chen, & Luo, 2008).

### **Rationale for the Research**

The present study examines the assignment of dirty tasks in a newer employee sample. Extant literature indicates a link between dirty tasks and threats to the self-identity and general well-being of employees, while the introduction has described the crucial nature of ensuring that the processes of organizational entry are carried out well, with task assignment surely forming a part of this process. Furthermore, if being assigned unexpected tasks is already destructive to employee on-boarding and beyond, such detriment can be expected to be even more severe should these tasks be ones that the employee perceives to be any combination of physically, socially, morally, or emotionally degrading.

The observed relationship between job tenure and workplace accidents provides an additional compelling reason to take a closer look into the area of dirty task assignment – the nature of dirty tasks in general (i.e. being physically noxious or dangerous), coupled with the employee's lack of experience, may be one reason as to why new employees are found to be overrepresented in workplace incidents.

Firstly, this research will ascertain which party tends to be responsible for the assignment of tasks to employees: Co-workers versus supervisors/managers. Next, in the context of employee perceptions of these tasks, it is plausible that a task assigned to the employee by a co-worker is more likely to be perceived by the employee as “dirty” and risky, as compared to when assignment stems from a supervisor or manager. If this is indeed the case, such a finding may have implications for the manner in which organizations wish to allow task assignment to occur.

Hypothesis 1: *Tasks assigned by co-workers are perceived to be significantly “dirtier” and riskier than tasks assigned by supervisors/managers.*

The focus will then turn to determining whether dirty tasks tend to be assigned to new employees in particular. Given that new employees frequently experience having unmet expectations (Rousseau, 1995; Wanous, 1992), and that a negative relationship has been found between tenure and workplace accidents (Burt, 2015), it is plausible that new employees are being assigned tasks, which may or may not be dirty, that they do not perceive to be a part of their duties to the organization, and which they may not be equipped to handle.

Hypothesis 2: *New employees tend to be assigned dirty task(s) to complete.*

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The sample was obtained from individuals from around the world (online) and in New Zealand. While the survey was open to any individual with a part-time or full-time job, employees in Christchurch from the occupations of elderly care, animal shelter, meatpacking, construction, factory work, and hairdressing specifically were approached: in-person, via a phone call, or via email. Participation was voluntary.

The sample comprised 32 males, 38 females, and 1 other, between the ages of 18-64 years, for a total of 71 participants with a mean age of 27.2 years ( $SD = 10.68$ ). The descriptive statistics for the work demographics of participants are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

*Descriptive statistics for work demographics of participants.*

	<i>N</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	Minimum	Maximum
Months worked in current job	70	35.44 (52.40)	1	385
Number of co-workers in current job	71	10.76 (9.36)	2	45
Total number of jobs held	71	4.01 (2.69)	1	12
Total number of months worked	71	107.21 (117.64)	1	540
Number of different organizations worked for	70	3.93 (2.66)	1	12

## Materials

The survey comprised the sections of: Introduction, Personal Details, Perceived Hazard Risk, Accident/Injury Frequency, and Task Assignment (see Appendix A for the complete survey).

**Introduction.** Participants were informed that the survey would ask questions about them, their job, and their behaviour at work. They were told to complete the survey by reading each question carefully and answering with their first reaction, and, if completing the survey in hard copy, to mail the completed survey back using the provided envelope.

**Personal details.** Participants were asked to indicate their gender (male, female, other), and state their age. They were then asked how long they had worked in their current job for, how many co-workers they had each day, how many jobs they had had in total, how long they had worked for in total, and how many organizations they had worked for in total. Next, participants were asked to indicate the category that best described them when they began their current job: 1. School or University leaver with little or no workplace experience; 2. Career Transition: Previous experience, but in a different industry and job type; 3. Occupational Focused: Previous experience in the same job, but in a different industry; 4. Career Focused: Previous experience in the same job and industry, but for a different organisation/company; 5.

Other, please specify. Finally, participants were asked to state the occupation they currently worked in.

**Perceived hazard risk.** Participants were asked to place a mark on a 100-point scale to indicate the general level of safety risk associated with their current job, with 0 being “Not at all risky” and 100 being “Extremely risky”.

Hayes, Perander, Smecko and Trask’s (1998) 10-item Work Safety Scale was used to assess job risk perceptions at the participant’s current time in their job. Example items from this scale are “hazardous”, “dangerous”, “risky”, and “chance of death”. Participants circled a number for each item, based on a 5-point Likert-scale with 1 being “Strongly disagree” and 5 being “Strongly agree”. The scale was found to have a coefficient alpha of .82 by Burt, Banks & Williams (2013). A further five items of “Dirty”, “Unpleasant”, “Smelly”, “Disgusting”, and “Nerve-wracking” were added to the scale, to provide an indication as to how “dirty” the participant perceived their current job to be.

**Accident/Injury frequency.** Participants were asked to state, throughout the course of having worked in their current job, the amount of time they had taken off work due to work-related stress, and the number of: Near-miss incidents, minor injuries requiring medical attention, and injuries that had required them to take time off work.

**Task assignment.** In this section, participants were instructed to answer with reference to the tasks they were assigned when they first began their current job. Participants were first asked about the party responsible for assigning tasks to them, with the options being “Only supervisors or managers”, “Only co-workers”, and “Both co-workers and supervisors/managers”. Participants then responded to four questions using a 7-point Likert scale with 1 being “Not at all” and 7 being “Absolutely”. The questions were “Were you expecting to complete these tasks?”, “Do you think you had the necessary knowledge, skills

and abilities to complete these tasks?”, “Do you think there were safety risks associated with these tasks?”, and “Only a person with a lot of experience could complete these tasks in a safe way”. Lastly, participants were asked to fill out Hayes, Perander, Smecko and Trask’s (1998) 10-item Work Safety Scale, along with the five additional items, again, but this time based on the tasks they were assigned when they began their current job.

## **Procedure**

A pilot was first conducted with six individuals, who went through the survey and provided the researcher with feedback.

The survey was hosted on Qualtrics and printed out on paper. The incentive for completing the survey was entering a draw for a chance to win one of four Countdown (supermarket) vouchers to the value of NZD\$150. The survey included an information sheet (see Appendix B) which informed the reader about: the survey, the anonymous nature of the survey, plans for the usage and storage of the data, and that the study had been approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee. The survey also included a consent form (see Appendix C) via which participants gave their consent to doing the survey by signing it.

Advertisement for the survey occurred online, through flyers, and in-person.

**Online.** The survey was advertised on the website [www.reddit.com/r/samplesize](http://www.reddit.com/r/samplesize), with an accompanying hyperlink to the survey on Qualtrics.

**Flyers.** Flyers were put up around the University of Canterbury and at six nearby halls of residences. Flyers described the survey as anonymous, requiring five minutes to complete, and looking at who (supervisors/managers vs. co-workers) assigns participants tasks in their workplace, as well as how participants felt about undertaking these tasks. Flyers also stated the incentive for completing the survey, included the researcher’s email address, and had tear-off tabs containing a hyperlink to the survey on Qualtrics.

**In-person.** The researcher went around Christchurch and approached managers from the occupations as stated above, introducing himself, the research, and the details of the survey (incentives and anonymity factor). If the manager expressed agreement in letting their employees have a chance to complete the survey, they were given paper copies of the survey along with postage reply envelopes, to be left in a location for their employees to collect if they so wished. The completed survey was then mailed back to the University of Canterbury in the provided envelopes. In total, 150 paper copies of the survey were given out, and 30 were returned, making for a response rate of 20%.

Managers from the above-mentioned occupations were also contacted via phone call and email, with an introduction given by the researcher which contained the same information as that provided in-person. If the manager expressed agreement in letting their employees have a chance to complete the survey, they were presented with the options of being given the hyperlink to the survey, having the researcher deliver hard copies of the survey along with incoming postage envelopes, or both.

## **Results**

The data were first inspected for outliers and missing responses at the participant, scale, and item levels. Eight participants had omitted more than 5% of total responses; as such, their entire survey was discounted. All statistical analyses were conducted with IBM SPSS Statistics Software. Relevant items were reverse coded.

## **Sample**

Who are the sample? Table 2 shows the number of participants that were at each career stage when they began their current job.

Table 2

*Number of participants at each career stage.*

Category	<i>N</i>
School or university leaver with little or no workplace experience	32
Career transition: Previous experience, but in a different industry and job type	16
Occupational focused: Previous experience in the same job, but in a different industry	5
Career focused: Previous experience in the same job and industry, but for a different organization/company	12
Other	6

General descriptive statistics are presented in Table 3. The first item is the general level of safety risk associated with participants' jobs. The next six items each have two values: One for when participants first began their job, and one for the current point in time when the survey was filled out. The six items are the job risk perceptions based on the Hayes et al. (1998) Work Safety Scale, followed by the extent to which participants felt their job was dirty, unpleasant, smelly, disgusting, and nerve-wracking. The Accident/Injury Frequency section reports the descriptive statistics for near-miss incidents and minor injuries experienced by participants while in their current job, injuries that required participants to take time off work, and amount of time (in months) that participants took off work due to work-related stress. Lastly, the Task Assignment section reports the descriptive statistics for the tasks assigned to participants when they began their current job: Whether participants had been expecting to complete these tasks, whether participants felt that they had the necessary KSAOs to complete these tasks, whether participants perceived a safety risk associated with the tasks, and whether participants felt that a lot of experience was needed to complete these tasks safely.

Table 3

*Means, standard deviations, and ranges for all measures.*

	<i>N</i>	Mean ( <i>SD</i> )	Minimum	Maximum
General Job Safety Risk	70	32.64 (22.29)	.00	90.00
Hayes et al. Work Safety Scale				
At Beginning of Job	71	1.87 (1.10)	1.00	4.00
At Current Time	71	2.01 (.68)	1.00	4.10
Tasks Assigned - Dirty				
At Beginning of Job	71	2.06 (1.25)	1.00	5.00
At Current Time	71	2.42 (1.32)	1.00	5.00
Tasks Assigned - Unpleasant				
At Beginning of Job	71	1.94 (1.16)	1.00	5.00
At Current Time	71	2.18 (1.19)	1.00	5.00
Tasks Assigned - Smelly				
At Beginning of Job	71	1.83 (1.10)	1.00	5.00
At Current Time	71	1.99 (1.19)	1.00	5.00
Tasks Assigned - Disgusting				
At Beginning of Job	71	1.70 (.96)	1.00	4.00
At Current Time	71	1.65 (.94)	1.00	5.00
Tasks Assigned – Nerve-wracking				
At Beginning of Job	71	2.41 (1.42)	1.00	5.00
At Current Time	71	2.04 (1.16)	1.00	5.00
Accident/Injury Frequency				
Near-miss Incidents	68	3.22 (8.87)	.00	50.00
Minor Injuries	70	2.27 (6.58)	.00	50.00
Lost-time Injuries	70	.30 (.87)	.00	5.00
Stress Months Taken Off Work	68	.56 (1.77)	.00	12
Task Assignment				
Expecting to Complete Assigned Tasks	71	6.13 (1.03)	4.00	7.00
Possessed Necessary KSAOs for Tasks	71	5.32 (1.28)	2.00	7.00
Safety Risks Associated with Tasks	71	2.77 (1.78)	1.00	7.00
Experience Needed for Safe Completion	71	2.86 (1.77)	1.00	7.00

## **General Task Assignment**

### *Parties responsible for task assignment*

Who tended to be responsible for the assignment of tasks? Participants were asked who assigned them tasks when they first started their current job. Responses indicate that 30 participants had only supervisors or managers responsible for task assignment, while 39 had both co-workers and supervisors/managers responsible for task assignment, and 2 had only co-workers responsible for task assignment. Due to the relatively small number in the third category, responses in this category were not included in the following One-way ANOVA. Additionally, data screening identified nine participants who had a job tenure of three months or less. Because initial tasks and current tasks may have been the same for these participants due to their short job tenure, their responses were excluded from subsequent analyses.

### *Does the party assigning tasks influence perceptions of the task?*

In order to determine whether employee perceptions of tasks differed based on the party responsible for task assignment, several ANOVAs were conducted using the party responsible for task assignment as the independent variable. These analyses revealed a significant effect between the party responsible for task assignment (supervisors/managers versus both co-workers and supervisors/managers) on the measure of whether participants were expecting to complete those tasks. No other results were significant. Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 4. Unfortunately, the lack of ability to form a group who were only assigned tasks by co-workers does not allow for the testing of Hypothesis 1. However, the results shown in Table 4 are suggestive of a negative influence when co-workers are involved in task assignment.

Table 4

*Results for One-way ANOVA examining relation of party assigning on employee perception of tasks.*

	Only supervisors/managers ( <i>N</i> = 27) Mean ( <i>SD</i> )	Both co-workers and supervisors/managers ( <i>N</i> = 35) Mean ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Were you expecting to complete these tasks?	6.59 (.64)	5.80 (1.16)	10.24	.002*
Do you think you had the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to complete these tasks?	5.44 (1.22)	5.14 (1.40)	.79	.377
Do you think there were safety risks associated with these tasks?	2.67 (1.73)	2.91 (1.90)	.28	.599
Only a person with a lot of experience could complete these tasks in a safe way.	2.85 (1.66)	3.03 (1.98)	.14	.710
Sum of accidents, near-misses, and lost-time incidents, for current job.	7.23 (16.82)	5.86 (11.63)	.14	.707
Months taken off work due to work-related stress, for current job.	.85 (2.54)	.47 (1.16)	.59	.447

\*  $p < .01$

### **New Employee Task Assignment and Safety**

To examine safety in a meaningful way, there must exist an aspect of safety to the job. Thus, in the following analyses, only participants that had declared an overall safety risk level of greater than 30 were included. Jobs with a risk level of 30 and below were deemed not to be risky or dirty enough to begin with.

#### *Overall Safety*

Scores for the 10 items of the Hayes et al. (1998) Work Safety Scale were summed and divided by 10 in order to arrive at a value for job risk perception for each participant. In order to determine whether new employees tended to be assigned risky tasks, a Repeated Measures

One-way ANOVA was used to compare the work safety scale scores given for tasks assigned upon entry to the organization, and tasks assigned at present. No significant results were found. Mean results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

*Results of Repeated Measures One-way ANOVA examining job risk perceptions at initial and present time.*

	Upon Entry ( $N = 17$ ) Mean ( $SD$ )	At Present ( $N = 17$ ) Mean ( $SD$ )	$F$	$p$
Job Risk Perception	2.25 (.80)	2.38 (.76)	1.67	.215

### *Dirty tasks*

In order to determine whether new employees tended to be assigned dirty tasks, repeated measures one-way ANOVAs were conducted for each item of “Dirty”, “Unpleasant”, “Smelly”, “Disgusting”, and “Nerve-wracking”. No significant results were found. Mean results are presented in Table 6. These results address Hypothesis 2 and do not support it.

Table 6

*Results of Repeated Measures One-way ANOVA examining dirtiness of job at initial and present time.*

	At Beginning of Job ( $N = 17$ ) Mean ( $SD$ )	At Current Time ( $N = 17$ ) Mean ( $SD$ )	$F$	$p$
Tasks Assigned - Dirty	2.29 (1.45)	2.65 (1.54)	2.13	.163
Tasks Assigned - Unpleasant	2.24 (1.35)	2.12 (1.22)	1.00	.332
Tasks Assigned - Smelly	2.18 (1.38)	2.24 (1.52)	.19	.668
Tasks Assigned - Disgusting	2.18 (1.19)	2.24 (1.20)	.19	.668
Tasks Assigned - Nerve-wracking	3.00 (1.37)	2.47 (1.28)	1.81	.198

## **Discussion**

The aims of this study were to examine the prevalence of assignment of dirty tasks to new employees. This included examining which parties (supervisors/managers versus co-

workers) tended to be responsible for the assignment of tasks, and whether the party responsible for task assignment had an effect on how dirty and risky the task(s) were perceived by employees to be.

### **General Findings**

Overall, the results do not indicate that there is a link between tenure and being assigned dirty tasks. However, the insufficient number of responses to the “Only co-workers” option, for the item “Who assigned you tasks to complete?”, also meant that the study could not be examined whether tasks assigned by co-workers are perceived to be significantly “dirtier” and riskier than tasks assigned by supervisors/managers.

The only significant finding was that participants were not expecting to have to undertake the tasks they were assigned when co-workers were involved to some extent. It is worth noting here that participants were almost “Absolutely” expecting to have to complete tasks assigned when assignment stemmed from only supervisors/managers (mean of 6.59, out of a maximum possible of 7.00), while this rating was almost a whole point lower (mean of 5.80) when assignment stemmed from both supervisors/managers and co-workers. This finding suggests that, when co-workers come to be involved in task assignment, tasks other than the ones employees are fully expecting to complete are being delegated.

### **Unexplained Hypotheses**

No association was found between the parties responsible for task assignment and how dirty and risky participants perceived the tasks to be. There was also no association found between being a new employee and being assigned dirty tasks.

The lack of associations found may be due to the following factors:

(1) The survey required participants to think back to when they began their current job. Memory distortion and memory loss may have affected the answers provided.

(2) The various descriptors (e.g. “necessary KSAOs”, “safety risk”, “dirty”) may have been interpreted differently by different participants. Participants did not have the opportunity to clarify these terms with the researcher due to the way the survey was conducted. For instance, in a study conducted by Vladutiu, Rauscher, Runyan, Schulman, & Villaveces (2010), there were several dangerous tasks for which not a single respondent reported recognition that the task was dangerous.

(3) Individuals possess internal standards for triggering normative behaviours (Cialdini & Trost, 1998). For instance, an individual who firmly believes in the importance of helping others would exhibit behaviour reflecting the personal norm of altruism (Ehrhart & Naumann, 2004). For participants with such values, the line between being assigned tasks and actively volunteering for tasks (even, or perhaps especially, if these tasks lie outside their job scope), may be somewhat blurred.

Finally, the relationships of interest might be significant if a larger sample is used.

### **Theoretical and Practical Implications**

The present study contributes to existing research on safety climate and accident occurrence (e.g. Clarke, 2006), albeit indirectly. It is possible that organizations that are lax enough to permit a portion of task assignment to be done by co-workers either possess to begin with, or create as a result, a poor safety climate. Such an avenue can be further explored. Models of accident causation for the workplace should also be sure to account for who task assignment is conducted by.

While it remains inconclusive as to whether new employees, and employees in general, are being given dirty tasks to do, ratings of expecting to complete tasks assigned fell when co-

workers were partially responsible for assignment (although these ratings were still well within the desired end of the scale). Given the numerous downsides to poor organizational entry and breaches to the psychological contract, as well as concerns for workplace health and safety, organizations may wish to inspect their own workforce to see if such a trend exists amongst their employees. Organizations, and their employees, may also benefit from encouraging employees to speak out if they are experiencing improper task assignment.

The findings also indicate that task assignment in general is not being carried out as it should, as more than half of participants were being assigned tasks by co-workers. Even more disheartening is the fact that a certain number of respondents are likely from outside of New Zealand, as the survey was advertised online (in addition to in-person advertisement by the researcher), meaning that proper, responsible task assignment is not being conducted worldwide.

### **Limitations of the Present Research**

The generalizability of the present research is limited due to the following factors.

**Common method variance (CMV).** CMV refers to “variance that is attributable to the measurement method rather than to the constructs the measures represent” (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003, p. 879). CMV is thought to artificially inflate the correlation between variables in mono-method research designs (Cote & Buckley, 1987; Crampton & Wagner, 1994; Doty & Glick, 1998; Lance & Vandenberg, 2009), with cross-sectional designs (such as this study) particularly susceptible to CMV (Lindell & Whitney, 2001).

**Response rate and sample size.** The study had a low in-person response rate of 20%, which reduces the degree to which inferences can be drawn between how the sample, versus the population, might have responded (Armstrong & Overton, 1977; Dillman, 1999); a small

sample is not necessarily representative of the population (Kish, 1965). Additionally, the lack of data on the demographics of non-responders removes the possibility of ascertaining whether there is a difference between those who responded and those who did not.

**Socially desirable responding (SDR).** SDR refers to individuals' inclination to respond in accordance with social norms and standards, so as to present themselves favourably (Zerbe & Paulhus, 1987). In organizational literature, SDR is thought to contaminate the accuracy of self-reports (Zerbe & Paulhus, 1987). In this study, respondents may have engaged in SDR, not wishing to declare that they had been assigned tasks that they were not expecting to complete.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

Future research should re-test the hypotheses with a larger sample size and a longitudinal design. Ployhart and Vanderberg (2010) note that, in general, theories are not meant to explain a phenomenon at a single point in time. A longitudinal design is especially suited to this research, given that the research is interested in two different points in time (the participant's initial entry period, and a point in time further down the line). A longitudinal design would also bypass the issues of memory loss and memory distortion.

The assignment of unwanted or dirty tasks may also be associated with workplace bullying and/or gender. Hyde (1984) found that, when conflict arises, women (compared to men) tend to inflict psychological rather than physical harm onto their targets. In general, women tend to adopt more indirectly aggressive approaches than men (Björkqvist, 1994). Workplace bullying is prevalent and impacts negatively on both the victim and the organization (Ma, Wang, & Chien, 2017). Bullying can take the form of physical advances and direct harassment, or occur indirectly such as through social manipulation (Strandmark & Hallberg, 2007). The delegation of such unwanted or unpleasant tasks may be one such manifestation of

the aforementioned indirect approaches. Future research may wish to investigate whether the association between expecting to complete tasks and co-worker involvement in task assignment is influenced by gender and/or occupation. For instance, the nursing profession is known to have a higher rate of bullying than other jobs (e.g. Giorgi, Arenas, & Leon-Perez, 2011; Nam, Kim, Kim, Koo, & Park, 2010; Purpora, Blegen, & Stotts, 2012).

### **Conclusion**

In summary, while the party responsible for task assignment was not associated with participants' perceptions of the degree of "dirtiness" or riskiness of tasks assigned to them, it was found to be associated with the degree to which participants were expecting to have to complete the task in the first place. This finding suggests that researchers and organizations alike may wish to take a closer look at what exactly goes on when co-workers engage in task assignment to one another employee. Additional research is required to uncover the relationship between tenure and dirty task assignment, if any exists.

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## **Appendix A - Survey**

### **Introduction**

This survey asks questions about you, your job and your behaviour at work.

How to complete the survey:

- Read each question carefully, and then answer, giving your first reaction.
- Once completed, please place the survey in the envelope provided, seal it, and return it to the pre-printed address.

### Personal Details

1. Please indicate your gender:  Male  Female  Other
2. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How long have you worked in your **current job** for? \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months
4. How many co-workers (people you work with each day) do you have? \_\_\_\_\_
5. In total, how many different jobs have you had? \_\_\_\_\_
6. In total, how long have you worked for? \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months
7. How many different organisations have you worked for? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Please tick the category that best describes **you** when you started your **current job**:
  - School or University leaver with little or no workplace experience.
  - Career Transition: Previous experience, but in a different industry and job type.
  - Occupational Focused: Previous experience in the same job, but in a different industry.
  - Career Focused: Previous experience in the same job and industry, but for a different organisation/company.
  - Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

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9. Please tick the relevant box to indicate which occupation you work in:
  - Elderly care  Animal shelter  Meatpacking  Construction
  - Factory work  Hairdressing  Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

### Perceived Hazard Risk

Please indicate the general level of safety risk associated with your **current job** by placing a mark on this 100-point scale.

0 ----- 10 ----- 20 ----- 30 ----- 40 ----- 50 ----- 60 ----- 70 ----- 80 ----- 90 ----- 100  
 Not at  
 all risky Extremely  
 risky

Listed below are words and phrases which could be used to describe your **current job**. For each word / phrase, please circle the number which indicates the extent to which you disagree or agree in relation to your **current job**.

My current job is...	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree/disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Dangerous	1	2	3	4	5
Safe	1	2	3	4	5
Hazardous	1	2	3	4	5
Risky	1	2	3	4	5
Unhealthy	1	2	3	4	5
Could get hurt easily	1	2	3	4	5
Unsafe	1	2	3	4	5
Fear for health	1	2	3	4	5
Chance of death	1	2	3	4	5
Scary	1	2	3	4	5
Dirty	1	2	3	4	5
Unpleasant	1	2	3	4	5
Smelly	1	2	3	4	5
Disgusting	1	2	3	4	5
Nerve-wracking	1	2	3	4	5

### Accident/Injury Frequency

Please indicate how many incidents/accidents/health events you experienced while working in your **current job**? Please enter zero (0) for each category if appropriate.

- Near-miss incidents, which had it turned out differently, could have resulted in injury or damage: \_\_\_\_\_
- Minor injuries requiring medical attention (e.g. first aid treatment or doctor's visit):  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Lost Time Injury that has required you to take time off work: \_\_\_\_\_
- Time off work due to work related stress: \_\_\_\_\_

### Task Assignment

Please think about **when you began your current job**. At that time, you were assigned tasks to complete:

1. Who assigned you tasks to complete?

- Only supervisors or managers
- Only co-workers
- Both co-workers and supervisors/managers

2. Were you expecting to complete these tasks?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7

Not at all

Absolutely

3. Do you think you had the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities to complete these tasks?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7

Not at all

Absolutely

4. Do you think there were safety risks associated with these tasks?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7

Not at all

Absolutely

5. Only a person with a lot of experience could complete these tasks in a safe way.

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7

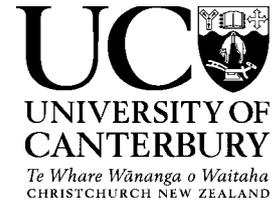
Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

Listed below are words and phrases which could be used to describe the tasks you were assigned **when you began your current job**. For each word / phrase, please circle the number which indicates the extent to which you disagree or agree.

The tasks I were assigned when I started my job were:	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree/disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Dangerous	1	2	3	4	5
Safe	1	2	3	4	5
Hazardous	1	2	3	4	5
Risky	1	2	3	4	5
Unhealthy	1	2	3	4	5
Could get hurt easily	1	2	3	4	5
Unsafe	1	2	3	4	5
Fear for health	1	2	3	4	5
Chance of death	1	2	3	4	5
Scary	1	2	3	4	5
Dirty	1	2	3	4	5
Unpleasant	1	2	3	4	5
Smelly	1	2	3	4	5
Disgusting	1	2	3	4	5
Nerve-wracking	1	2	3	4	5

## Appendix B – Information Sheet for Participants



Darrell Quek  
Department of Psychology  
Email: dtq10@uclive.ac.nz  
30/10/2017

### Work Task Assignment: Who Decides? Information Sheet for Participants

I am Darrell Quek, a Masters student in the Department of Psychology at the University of Canterbury.

Should you choose to take part in this study, your participation will involve completing the attached survey, which should take about 5 minutes of your time. **The survey asks questions about work tasks that you have been assigned, who assigned them to you, and aspects of your work history.** You have the option to go into a draw for a chance to win one of four \$150 Countdown vouchers. If you wish to enter the draw, please indicate to the researcher on the Consent Form, and fill in your email address in the space provided. The draw will involve randomly selecting four Consent Forms and participants selected will be notified via the email address provided.

Completion of the survey is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. However, once the survey has been completed and returned to me, I will not be able to identify and/or remove your data, as the survey is anonymous. Anonymity is assured as I will immediately separate the Consent Form from the rest of the survey, upon reception of the survey.

Some of the questions in the survey may concern sensitive issues, such as your work experiences. If you do not feel comfortable responding to any questions, you do have the option of leaving these questions unanswered. You also have the option of withdrawing from the survey at any point. Should the questions or the topics raised cause you distress, we do suggest that you seek assistance. We have provided a list of services at the bottom of this information sheet, which may be helpful.

Your employer will not receive any of the data that you have provided in this survey, and your participation in this study will not be made known to your employer. I will not mention to your employer that you have participated in this study.

The results of the project may be published, but please be assured that any data gathered will remain completely anonymous and confidential. All physical data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in a locked room, while all electronic data will be stored on a password protected computer in a locked room, and no person outside of the research

team will have access to the data. All data will be destroyed after five years, unless a publication outlet requires extended archiving of the data.

The findings will be written up as a thesis, which is a public document that will be available through the Library at the University of Canterbury after the study has finished.

Please indicate to the researcher on the consent form if you would like to receive a copy of the summary of results of the project.

This project is being carried out in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Applied Psychology at the University of Canterbury by Darrell Quek, under the supervision of Associate Professor Christopher Burt, who can be contacted at [christopher.burt@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:christopher.burt@canterbury.ac.nz). He will be pleased to discuss any concerns you may have about participation in the project.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee, and participants should address any complaints to The Chair, Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch ([human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz)).

If you agree to participate in this study, you are asked to complete the consent form on the next page. Please place the completed survey in the envelope provided, seal it, and return it to the pre-printed address.

- **Lifeline New Zealand** offers free phone-based counselling and support. Lifeline can be contacted at 0800 543 354
- **The New Zealand Association of Counsellors** provides a counsellor search tool which enables you to find counselling services and is accessible at <http://www.nzac.org.nz>

If you require urgent assistance, please contact your GP as soon as possible.

## Appendix C – Consent Form for Participants



Darrell Quek  
 Department of Psychology  
 Email: dtq10@uclive.ac.nz  
 30/10/2017

### Work Task Assignment: Who Decides? Consent Form for Participants

- I have been given a full explanation of this project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- I understand what is required of me if I agree to take part in the research.
- I understand that participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without penalty. Withdrawal of participation will also include the withdrawal of any information I have provided should this remain practically achievable. However, withdrawal will not be possible once the questionnaire is submitted to the researcher.
- I understand that any information or opinions I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and supervisor of the research and that any published or reported results will not identify the participants or organization. I understand that a thesis is a public document and will be available through the UC Library.
- I understand that all data collected for the study will be kept in locked and secure facilities and/or in password protected electronic form and will be destroyed after five years, unless a publication outlet requires extended archiving of the data.
- I understand that there are no risks associated with taking part in this study
- I understand that I can contact the researcher, Darrell Quek (dtq10@uclive.ac.nz) or supervisor Christopher Burt (christopher.burt@canterbury.ac.nz) for further information. If I have any complaints, I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch ([human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz))
- I would like a summary of the results of the project.
- By signing below, I agree to participate in this research project.
- I would like to enter the draw for a chance to win one of four \$150 Countdown vouchers.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please carefully read the consent form, and fill in your name, signature, and the date.*