BLUE-COLLAR BLUES: FACT OR FICTION??

1. Early Studies


A summary of the famous Hawthorne experiments and assessment of the criticisms leveled against Roethlisberger and Dickson’s *Management and the Worker* and the works of Elton Mayo. The author’s re-evaluation of *Management and the Worker* confirms its place as a classic, pioneer study of empirical research within industry.


One of the first studies of the automobile assembly plant. The workers expressed dissatisfaction with the repetitiveness, mechanical pacing and drudgery of the assembly line.

2. The Measurement of Job Satisfaction


The author contends that research in job satisfaction has been too concerned with examining the worker’s environment and working conditions. Research should examine the structure and content of the job itself and changing social values and goals.


A pioneering work in the theory of job satisfaction which used the “critical incident technique” to define the components of job satisfaction.

The authors found two distinct sets of factors: 1) those which lead to

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satisfaction are usually related to the work itself; and 2) those which cause dissatisfaction are related to company policy and working conditions.


This study reviews previous research on the relationship between job satisfaction and functional specialization and degree of alienation from middle-class work norms. Using urban versus rural socialization the author finds that alienation from middle-class work norms does not modify the negative relationship between job specialization and job satisfaction.

Turner, Arthur N. and Paul R. Lawrence. *Industrial jobs and the worker*. Boston, Mass. 02165. Harvard University, Division of Research, Graduate School of Business Administration. 1965. 177 pp. $4.00.

Forty-seven different jobs in eleven industries were studied and measured in terms of such attributes as variety, autonomy, responsibility, knowledge and skill to determine which characteristics of the intrinsic job influence workers' response. A positive relationship was found between job level and job satisfaction for rural workers; a negative relationship appeared for urban workers.

3. Current Surveys


Nineteen social scientists, including economists, political scientists, sociologists and public officials, discuss the problems and complaints of blue-collar workers. The articles range from analysis of the changing economic position of the worker to attitudes and aspirations, political behavior and the impact of governmental programs. Despite some contradictory evidence and conclusions, the majority of the contributors discount widespread alienation among industrial workers.


The average production line worker is younger, better educated and has greater expectations than his blue-collar father. His dislike for his job is reflected in high absenteeism, turnover and shoddy work.


While the latest Gallup Poll indicates that 77% of the people were satisfied with their jobs, there was a 10 point drop in job satisfaction between April 1969 and January 1973. The most dissatisfaction was found among blacks and young persons.

The purpose of the study, which was prepared under contract for the Employment Standards Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor, was to provide data on the relative importance to workers of 19 labor standards areas. On the basis of the data obtained from personal interviews with national survey of employed workers, the authors found that most workers wanted, first, protection from work-related injuries and illness, and second, adequate income protection against occupational disabilities. Other frequently mentioned labor standards problems were inadequate fringe benefits and work-related discrimination. A summary of the findings appears in the *Monthly Labor Review,* April, 1971, pp. 15-24.


The authors constructed an index of blue-collar blues to test the proposition that dissatisfaction is associated with certain demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the worker. They conclude that specific features of the job and work setting are responsible for dissatisfaction which is common to workers of disparate personal backgrounds, occupations and incomes.


The author compares the impact of mechanization and automation on worker alienation of office workers and blue-collar workers and finds that office employees are less alienated than semi-skilled factory workers.


The authors use data from interviews with white, male blue-collar union members and from the national survey of employed workers conducted by the University of Michigan to analyze worker dissatisfaction and its linkages with social and political behavior. Unhappiness about the lack of variety, autonomy and responsibility in the job are more important than the wage level and the degree of job security.