

REACTIONS TO JOB CHARACTERISTICS AMONG SAMOAN, MAORI AND PAKEHA EMPLOYEES

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A study applying a conceptual framework developed by Hackman and Lawler was carried out in a car-assembly plant and involved the participation of 127 Maori, Samoan and Pakeha employees of both sexes, working in nine different jobs. Subjects reported similar levels of autonomy, feedback, task identity and variety in their jobs to those reported in North American studies. Maori employees were absent on more occasions than Pakeha employees, but on the remaining 23 measures examined in the study, cultural groups did not differ significantly. Samoan workers reported higher levels of general satisfaction and of several levels of specific satisfaction, as well as higher levels of feedback in their jobs, than either of the other two groups.

Employee Reactions to Job Characteristics

Hackman and Lawler (1971) presented a framework which permits an examination of whether re-structured jobs influence motivation, and permits an examination of the situational (both job and employee) constraints upon the generality of any effects. This framework, which is consistent with Expectancy Theory (Lewin, 1935; Tolman, 1932; Vroom, 1964) was developed for a study of 200 telephone company employees who were working in 13 different jobs. The study was designed to investigate the relationships between job characteristics and employee work attitudes and behaviour, and whether the reaction of an employee to his work depends on the kinds of outcomes which he values. The jobs were considered on four dimensions of job design (Hackman and Lawler, 1971):

Variety The degree to which a job requires employees to perform a wide range of operations in their work and/or use a variety of equipment and procedures.

Autonomy The extent to which employees have a major say in scheduling their work, selecting the equipment they will use and deciding on procedures to be followed.

Task Identity The extent to which employees do an entire or whole piece of work and can clearly identify the results of their efforts.

Feedback The degree to which employees receive information which reveals how well they are performing on the job, as they are working.

They found that when jobs are rated as possessing a high degree of the four core dimensions, employees who preferred high-order need satisfactions (e.g. social, esteem and self-actualization needs) reported

higher levels of internal motivation and satisfaction, had lower absenteeism rates, and had higher ratings of their work quality made by supervisors. Similar results were reported by Brief and Aldag (1975). The results of these studies help in understanding the effects of standardized, short-cycle and repetitive jobs as well as in attempts to re-structure work. Jobs which are designed to be consistent with traditional scientific management principles are low on the four core dimensions, with potential for employees to satisfy high-order needs. Managers' attempts to improve worker motivation within such jobs traditionally have been restricted to the manipulation of extrinsic rewards. Work restructuring involving job enlargement and job enrichment should result in an increase in the content of the four core dimensions. Thus, as Lawler (1973) suggested, it is not surprising that jobs restructured in this fashion tend to produce lower labour turnover and absenteeism and higher satisfaction and quality of performance, but only for employees with strong desires for high-order need satisfaction. The framework thus goes some way towards accounting for differences among subjects in responses to work restructuring, found in earlier studies (e.g. Hulin and Blood, 1968).

Maori and Samoan Work Behaviours in New Zealand

No psychological research on work-restructuring that involves vertical or horizontal expansion of jobs in a New Zealand setting has been published, and the few attempts to employ the approach to work organizations within this country have been based on trial-and-error methods, or are derivative of the results of studies in other countries. Hines (1976b) has drawn attention to the influence of the literature of organization development in helping to create an awareness that well-accepted theories of work motivation may not have universal application. In particular he has outlined cultural factors which are present in New Zealand society and which must be acknowledged in any attempt to link work behaviours with motivational variables.

The particular multi-racial nature of the New Zealand work-force is one such factor which suggests the need for caution in generalizing, without qualification, from the results of research solely of European and North American origins. Lee (1974), in her review of the very few research studies concerned with Maori and South Pacific Island employment, recognized the problem and in addition pointed to the large gaps in the research which had been carried out to that date. There is little doubt that many New Zealanders, of European origin, possess a very fixed stereotype of 'the Maori worker'. Yet in her review Lee stated that there is no research evidence to support such stereotypic views that Maoris prefer gang work or manual work to other jobs (Baldock, 1971; Tuck, 1967); that Maoris are 'good with their hands' or 'good at mechanical jobs' (Pierce, 1969); or that Maoris exhibit less employment stability in the form of lateness, absenteeism and

labour turnover, than Pakehas (Forster, 1969; Churton, 1955; Pierce, 1967, 1969). Lee also rejected the view that Maori workers are reluctant to accept responsibility, and suggested that the leadership style which certain kinds of supervisory positions require, is at variance with that preferred by Maori workers. A suitable leadership style for this group would be more informal, and the leader would lead by example rather than by direction (Pierce, 1969). The importance of kinship factors in this context has been stressed by Kawharu (1969).

Evidence relevant to achievement motivation levels of Pakehas and Maoris is conflicting. Lee (1974) stated that while some researchers have found differences between the two groups, Williams (1960) and Harker (1971) have demonstrated within-group differences for Maori subjects of varying educational levels. Hines (1973) found no significant differences in achievement motivation levels of Maoris and Pakehas. The results suggest that when the backgrounds of the two cultural groups are the same, differences in achievement motivation are not significant. Again there is a need for caution in interpreting between-group differences when they occur in such studies, as 'achievement' and 'success' are typically defined in traditional European and North American terms.

The lack of research with respect to Maori workers is bad enough; for Pacific Island workers it is even worse. One unfortunate result of this lack of research has been that myths about the employment of Pacific Island immigrants remain unchallenged. There are exceptions. For example, while there are many employers who hold firmly to the opinion that South Pacific Island (and Maori) workers are not good promotion risks, there is recent evidence that this view may be changing. Hines (1976a) reported that New Zealand managers showed a significant increase from 1972 to 1975 in their optimism about the performance and prospects for promotion of non-European supervisors. Similarly, the evidence from research argues against unreliability in attendance being a feature of the behaviour of Pacific Island workers. Indeed they have been found to display good job stability (McCreary, 1965; Pitt and Macpherson, 1971 and 1974) and to compare more than favourably with Pakehas and Maoris with respect to length of tenure and induction period turnover (Pierce, 1969).

The major research on Samoan immigrants to New Zealand was carried out by Pitt and Macpherson (1971 and 1974). They found that although economic motives were still very influential in the decision to emigrate from Samoa, other factors in New Zealand such as educational opportunities for children, the presence of members of the migrants āiga, or extended kin group, and the prestige or status attached to migration, were of considerable importance. Pitt and Macpherson found that Samoans' employment in New Zealand was characterised by working in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs mainly in urban secondary industries, often among relatives and friends who had

assisted in obtaining work guarantees for the new arrivals. There was some evidence of downward job mobility, in spite of a migrant's qualifications and knowledge of English.

Pitt and Macpherson also found that Samoan migrants' attitudes to work were affected primarily by the total possible earnings rather than by the hours of work, satisfaction with the job, or its status. This emphasis on earnings, Pitt and Macpherson suggest, is partly due to the migrant's financial commitments, not only to the support of his nuclear family, but also contributions to the kin group in Samoa. It was also found that Samoans prefer jobs in industries where there was high labour turnover, i.e. where there were opportunities for obtaining work guarantees for later migrants, and jobs where they could work with fellow Samoans.

In addition to the general problems of communication and adaptation to the characteristics of an industrial society, Samoan workers reported problems arising from the inflexibility of working hours, the requirement for Sunday work in some jobs with shift-work, insensitivities concerning attitudes of supervision. Pitt and Macpherson noted that the forms of supervision in Samoa are often kin-based and decisions are communicated to all levels. The supervision which the migrant experiences in New Zealand is more likely to be characterised by direction without explanation, and exercised by a person who has no relationship with the worker outside of the job. Training Samoans as supervisors has in turn led to problems. Pitt and Macpherson found that some Samoans have refused promotion for fear of causing jealousy among fellow Samoans, because of a dislike of supervising Europeans, or because of the difficulties they would face in supervising older Samoans, particularly if they were kinsmen.

Samoans appear to have a strong desire for success, seeing education as a means to achievement (Pierce, 1969) and being prepared to make many sacrifices to keep children at school (Pitt and Macpherson, 1971, 1974). Yet Hines (1973) in a study using the Lynn Questionnaire, found that achievement motivation levels of Samoans were significantly lower than those of Cook Islanders, Maoris and Pakehas, a result he interpreted within a cultural assimilation framework.

The research reported in this paper was carried out as part of a larger study designed to test the Hackman and Lawler (1971) framework in a New Zealand setting, within a plant experiencing a labour turnover rate of more than 150 percent p.a., an absenteeism rate of 9-10 percent, and falling levels of quality in output. Because of the nature of the work force, the research provided an opportunity to examine differences among Maori, Samoan and Pakeha employees.

METHOD

Population and Samples

The research was carried out in a car assembly factory, employing in excess of 800 workers. At the time, the racial composition of non-supervisory staff in the plant was approximately: Maori 28 percent, Pakeha 30 percent, Pacific Island 40 percent, and miscellaneous 2 percent. Although the annual labour turnover figure was 161 percent in the twelve months prior to the study, 41 percent of the work force had been with the company for more than one year, 24 percent for more than two years, and 15 percent for more than three.

The research sample, consisting of 127 employees taken from 388 people employed in 9 jobs on two assembly lines in the plant, was predominantly male (84 percent) and young (average age 28.6 years with 66 percent under the age of 28 years). The sample was made up of 30 (24 percent) Pakeha, 38 (30 percent) Maori, 55 (43 percent) Samoan, and 4 (3 percent) of other origins. All employees in the sample could read either English or Samoan and had worked in the plant for at least 10 weeks. In addition data were also obtained from the 20 foremen who supervised members of the sample groups.

Instruments

Each subject completed a questionnaire adapted from the measures developed by Hackman and Lawler (1971). The questionnaires contained items which requested biographical information, and a number of 7-point rating scales. First, the respondents were asked to rate the levels of the four core dimensions (variety, task identity, autonomy, and feedback) which were present in their jobs. They were also asked to rate the levels of intrinsic motivation in their jobs, the degrees of involvement they felt with their jobs, and their levels of general satisfaction. In addition they were asked to rate their levels of satisfaction with specific facts of their jobs (e.g. prestige, security, pay, supervision, participation, promotion, and fairness of treatment). Finally the respondents were asked to rate the degrees to which higher-order needs were important to them.

Each supervisor, who was responsible for one or more of the subjects in the study, completed a questionnaire in which he was required to rate on 7-point scales the degrees to which he felt that the four core dimensions were present in each subject's job. In addition, the supervisor completed 7-point performance ratings of the quality of work and the overall effectiveness of each subject.

Absenteeism data were collected from company records. The measure used was an annual estimate based on the number of occasions absent during a six-month period. In the case of subjects who had been employed for less than six months, the estimate of annual absenteeism was based on the person's absenteeism record to that date.

Procedure

The subjects were dealt with either individually or in pairs as work in the plant permitted. Each subject completed a questionnaire printed either in English or Samoan (translated by three Samoans on the company's administrative staff). Instructions were both printed and read aloud to the subject, as were sample items. At the end of each session the questionnaires were checked for completeness, and the subjects thanked and assured of the confidentiality of the individual results. Only three employees declined to assist with the research.

RESULTS

Although the subjects were drawn randomly from within each job area, analyses of the biographical data revealed that the cultural groups differed significantly in terms of age and sex, and non-significantly in marital status and length of service with the company (Table 1). Pakeha and Maori employees showed similar patterns of residence within the greater Wellington-Hutt region, while Samoan workers were more heavily concentrated in Porirua, a satellite city west of Petone and north of Wellington City.

The total sample of subjects was divided into three groups in terms of reported strengths of desires for the satisfaction of higher-order needs in their jobs (Hackman and Lawler, 1971). A chi-square analysis (Table 1) revealed no significant differences between Pakeha, Maori and Samoan groups in the proportions of subjects expressing high, medium or low levels of expressed desire for the satisfaction of high-order needs (Chi square=5.17, $C=.201$, $U.L.=.816$).

TABLE 1
Number of Workers Showing Various Characteristics.

		Samoan (n=55)	Pakeha (n=30)	Maori (n=38)	Chi square
<i>Sex</i>	Male	39	29	24	10.78
	Female	16	1	14	($p < .01$)
<i>Age</i>	< 28 years	40	12	30	31.6
	28-42 years	15	6	4	($p < .001$)
	> 42 years	—	12	4	
<i>Length of service</i>	< 1 year	33	17	22	6.98
	1-5 years	20	7	13	(N.S.)
	> 5 years	2	6	3	
<i>Marital-Status</i>	Married	21	19	15	5.57
	Single	34	11	23	(N.S.)
<i>Strength of High-Order Needs</i>	High	21	11	11	5.17
	Medium	12	12	10	(N.S.)
	Low	22	7	17	

The data obtained from company records, and from the supervisors', and the subjects' responses to the ratings in their questionnaires, were analyzed in terms of 24 measures (Table 2. With three exceptions, these data were derived from mean ratings by subjects on 7-point scales (1 low to 7 high). Two rated performance measures, quality and overall effectiveness, were obtained from supervisors' 7-point ratings, and the absenteeism measure was derived from company records.

The results summarized in Table 2 yielded ten significant *F*-ratios ($p < .05$): feedback, general job satisfaction, level of job involvement, absenteeism, and six of the eleven specific satisfaction items. This table also summarizes the results of tests between each pairing of the three groups for each of these ten measures.

Samoan workers rated the degree of feedback in their jobs, their levels of job involvement and general job satisfaction, and five specific satisfaction items more highly than both Pakeha and Maori employees. In addition they rated their satisfaction with feelings of worthwhile accomplishment more highly than Maori workers. On the estimate of absenteeism, Pakeha workers were significantly lower than Maori workers, but not significantly different from Samoan employees.

DISCUSSION

The major findings from comparisons among the three cultural groups (Table 2) are first the similarity of Pakeha and Maori worker, and, second, the number of specific satisfaction items where Samoan workers expressed higher satisfaction levels than either of the two other groups. The consistency of this latter finding, together with the Samoan workers' higher levels of general satisfaction and reported levels of job involvement, are interesting. Pitt and Macpherson (1974) noted the importance to Samoans of direct financial reward, and their lesser concern with hours of work, job satisfaction, and status. Such workers, who have what Goldthorpe, Lockwood, Bechhofer and Platt (1968) term an instrumental orientation to work, might be expected to be more easily satisfied with the prevailing levels of job content factors than with the level of pay. The results in Table 2 show that Samoans rated their satisfaction with pay lower than their satisfaction with each of the other specific satisfaction factors. In addition, although the differences were not significant, Samoans rated their satisfaction with pay lower than either of the other groups. However, such satisfaction judgements are seldom made in isolation, and these responses may reflect comparisons with work experiences prior to arrival in New Zealand. It may be that Samoan workers' responses to job involvement and satisfaction items would more closely approximate those of Maori and Pakeha workers as their lengths of residence and varieties of job experiences in this country increased.

TABLE 2
Mean average ratings for three cultural groups.

Variables	Samoan Group (n=55)		Pakeha Group (n=30)		Maori Group (n=38)		Between Group Comparisons ¹
	F. Ratio	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	
Perceived core dimensions in job:							
1 Variety	1.813	5.13	1.66	4.45	1.61	4.64	1.74
2 Task Identity	2.695	4.76	1.79	4.32	2.06	5.37	1.84
3 Feedback	4.722**	5.55	1.36	4.53	1.74	4.89	1.58
4 Autonomy	.096	4.70	1.71	4.67	1.72	4.54	1.80
5 Psychological need level	.855	5.79	0.96	5.88	0.96	5.57	1.09
6 Level of intrinsic motivation	2.874	5.87	1.42	5.58	1.46	5.16	1.14
Focus of motivation:							
7 Importance of responsibility	.265	5.76	1.98	5.67	1.69	5.47	1.86
8 Importance of quality work	.053	6.00	1.61	5.90	1.92	6.03	1.44
Rated performance:							
9 Quality	.319	4.95	1.16	4.77	1.10	4.79	1.19
10 Overall effectiveness	.158	4.49	1.02	4.44	1.06	4.58	.99
11 General job satisfaction	3.202*	5.90	3.10	4.78	1.68	4.84	1.39
12 Level of job involvement	23.105**	5.08	1.64	3.22	1.58	3.18	1.22
Specific satisfaction items:							
13 Self-esteem	.241	4.98	2.27	4.77	1.78	5.11	1.71
14 Personal growth and development	7.775**	5.70	1.60	4.37	2.17	4.55	1.83
15 Prestige of the job	4.540**	5.89	1.63	4.83	2.19	5.00	1.56
16 Amount of close supervision received	.134	5.60	1.89	5.47	1.94	5.40	2.02
17 Independent thought and action							
18 Security	4.617**	5.75	1.87	4.60	1.99	4.79	1.77
19 Pay	.434	5.29	2.27	4.90	1.85	4.97	1.95
20 Feeling of worthwhile accomplishment	1.213	4.04	2.29	4.13	2.29	4.76	2.16
21 Participation in decisions	3.577*	6.22	1.53	5.80	1.50	5.45	1.90
22 Promotion	8.492**	5.80	1.64	4.80	1.83	4.29	1.59
23 Respect and fairness from boss	6.430**	5.67	1.93	4.50	2.24	4.18	2.17
24 Absenteeism (Estimated number of absences p.a.)	.303	5.62	2.01	5.57	1.76	5.89	1.81
	3.07*	3.47	2.49	2.70	1.88	4.11	2.33

p < .01 2M—Maori, S—Samoan, P—Pakeha. *p < .001

*p < .05 1p values from two-tailed t tests

Clearly there is little in the results reported in Table 2 to support the view that Maori workers are different from Pakeha workers on performance and satisfaction measures. Only on the absenteeism estimate did Maori workers show a significant difference from Pakeha workers. One should note however that this estimate was based on data taken from company records of the number of occasions absent, and is not corrected for length of individual absence on each occasion. Furthermore, as indicated in Table 1, the two Polynesian groups had much higher proportions of younger and single employees than did the Pakeha group. The relationships between marital status and absenteeism, and cultural group and absenteeism were quite similar, $C=.180$, $C=.226$ and $C=.242$ respectively. However, there was a trend for younger Maori workers to be absent on more occasions than younger Samoan or Pakeha workers. Considering the 81 employees who were less than 28 years of age, 45 percent of the Pakehas, 27 percent of the Maoris, and 41 percent of the Samoans were absent at a rate equivalent to less than three times per annum. For the same age group, 9 percent of the Pakehas, 30 percent of the Maoris, and 20 percent of the Samoans had absence rates equivalent to more than six per annum. Obviously a more thorough investigation of absenteeism would require larger samples together with the inclusion of very short-tenure workers. Systematic attention would also need to be given to the effects of age, marital status (Nield, 1971), prior job stability, personal maturity and the nature of the job itself. Bull and Flay (1975) found that factors such as these predicted turnover while racial factors failed to do so. It is not unreasonable to expect that they may also predict absenteeism, which might be considered a lesser withdrawal behaviour than turnover. Also it would be desirable to consider absenteeism within the context of a reward system rather than in isolation. Kawharu (196) noted that a basic difference between two foundry groups was that an all-Maori group felt that excellence of performance should be assumed and that attendance should be the subject of reward, whereas the reverse applied to a mixed Maori-Pakeha (and Pakeha-ethos) group.

We are not yet convinced of the general validity of the Hackman and Lawler framework, particularly when applied to cultural groups increasingly removed from a Western European and American occupational-value system. As with many non-European countries, there is a need for industrial-organizational research in New Zealand, particularly among Maori and South Pacific Island employees, to begin from basic principles, i.e. with an attempt to discover the conceptual structures various ethnic, cultural and racial groups themselves apply to work, rather than to assume that explanatory concepts such as variety, task identity, autonomy, feedback, higher or low-order needs, intrinsic motivation etc. are necessarily trans-cultural. It is possible such concepts are cross-culturally valid, when work criteria are determined by a majority group, e.g. when work is organized in the traditional Euro-

pean and North American mode. However action research which aims to increase the compatibility of work experiences with the values of different cultural groups in a society, as a first step, may well have to seek alternative conceptual structures of work—ones which are not derived directly from European and North American models nor even from the approaches to industrial democracy evolving in some countries.

Finally, there is a definite need for research upon worker behaviour to go beyond unqualified cultural groupings and to examine antecedent conditions which influence the worker's current responses in his or her job. A Samoan who comes to New Zealand following some time as an employee in Samoan industry, might well be expected to have different perspectives of a factory job and to have different motives from a fellow immigrant who lacks that experience. As Pitt and Macpherson (1974) showed, while a number of Samoans have had industrial or commercial employment in Samoa, many often have to work on jobs which are quite new to them, once they arrive in New Zealand. Equally one might expect to find differences among people within a given group of Maoris or Pakehas, e.g. between workers who have long been resident in large urban centres and those who are recent arrivals from rural areas (Kawharu, 1969). While cross-sectional studies, such as this present research, may help to supply some useful data, we are of the opinion that a combination of longitudinal studies and within-organization action-research offers the best available strategy for examining work behaviours in this country, and of leading ultimately to work organizations which are more compatible with indigenous needs.

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