

The Work Values of New Zealand Male Manual Workers: A Research Note

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This paper briefly presents evidence gathered by the author, relevant to his previous contention (Inkson, 1977) that New Zealand manual workers may have higher concern for social interaction and autonomy in their work, and lower concern for security, than have their counterparts overseas.

In a previous paper (Inkson, 1977) it was suggested that New Zealand workers' values might reflect a relatively low concern for security, but a high concern for social interaction and on-the-job autonomy. This note summarises evidence related to those questions based on an analysis of interview material gathered by Inkson (1977). A complete account of the present analysis may be obtained from the author (Inkson, 1978).

Method

For a sample of 383 male manual New Zealand workers described in more detail by Inkson (1977), 156 were chosen who met a criterion of being married and aged between 20 and 46; these were compared with a sample of 229 men meeting the same criteria who were studied by Goldthorpe, Lockwood, Bechhofer, and Platt (1968) in Luton, England. The interview is described by Inkson (1977).

Results

Security. In answer to a question designed to determine reasons for adherence to present employment ("What is it... that keeps you here?" i.e. in this job), only 6% of New Zealand workers mentioned security, compared to 38% of the Luton Sample (chi square = 52.2, $p < .001$). Thus the hypothesis that New Zealand workers are less concerned for security was supported.

Social Interaction. In answer to the above question, 13% of the New Zealand workers, compared with 6% at Luton, mentioned their workmates as a reason for job adherence (chi square = 5.1, $p < .05$). The New Zealand workers also reported more frequent social interaction with their co-workers (chi square = 14.7, $p < .001$) and were more likely to perceive co-workers as "close friends" (chi square = 10.8, $p < .01$). Those who reported co-workers to be friends were also more likely to exchange after-work "home" visits with them (chi square = 24.6, $p < .001$). Hence the hypothesis that New Zealand workers have higher concern for on-the-job interaction was supported.

Autonomy. In answer to a question on attitudes to promotion, only 33% of New Zealand workers said they would like promotion to the job of

foreman, compared with 49% at Luton (chi square = 9.3, $p < .01$). On the other hand, 44% of New Zealand workers sought, or had sought, to own their own businesses, compared with 37% at Luton (chi square = 1.9, $p < .05$). Furthermore, 61% of New Zealand men seeking an entrepreneurial role gave the supposed independence or autonomy of the entrepreneurial role as a reason for its attractiveness compared to only 25% who mentioned additional cash rewards, whereas in the Luton study, though precise figures are not given, independence and cash were considered of roughly equal importance. The tendency of the New Zealand men to aspire to independence and progress through their own efforts was consistent with the hypothesis that they seek higher autonomy.

Conclusions

The main limitations of the results reported in this paper relate to the possible non-representativeness of the two samples in relation to the total "national" populations of manual workers. The Luton study, in particular, took place in a community characterized by modernity, social heterogeneity, and economic expansion, and harmonious industrial relations, to an extent where the Luton workers can scarcely be regarded as prototypical. Nevertheless the results are difficult to explain completely on the basis of special characteristics of the Luton sample. Therefore, some support is suggested that the stereotype of the New Zealand worker as a relatively secure, sociable individual with a desire to be his own boss rather than to climb someone else's pyramid, while clearly an oversimplification, may not be entirely wide of the mark.

References

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