"Summary of article by Randy Hodson: Dignity in the Workplace under Participative Management: Alienation and Freedom Revisited"

Studies of work tend to focus either on technological, organizational, and environmental factors or on the struggle between workers and managers for control of the labor process. Drawing on the work of Robert Blauner and Richard Edwards, this article combines elements of both perspectives (along with recent developments in labor-management relations) into a new schematic, then reviews several dozen studies for evidence of meaning and autonomy in relation to workplace organization.

ALIENATION AND FREEDOM

Blauner described four models of work organization which emerged historically in concert with the progression of production technologies, and which persist in the modern economy. Using survey data and case studies of typical industries, he analyzed the quality of work under each regime. He found that measures of job satisfaction traced a U-shaped pattern across these four types of work, indicating that skill and autonomy fell from high levels and then rose again.

Craft work, exemplified by the printing industry, is the earliest model. Workers enjoyed stable employment, control over the labor process, a strong organizational culture, interesting work, and opportunities to learn and use skills. Work was an end in itself and an important part of personal identity. As *machine powered* production developed, such as in the textile industry, craft workers were replaced and oppressive supervision was put in place to monitor large numbers of unskilled workers and female laborers. Workers looked outside the workplace – to family, religion and community – to reduce alienation. When *assembly-line* work emerged, typical of automobile production, the work process became highly rationalized. The handling and transportation of materials throughout the factory could be done by unskilled operators who remained disenfranchised and alienated. *Continuous process* production in the chemical industry, however, moved products through various processing stages without human handling. Workers monitored equipment, stepping in only to solve problems. This work required knowledge, good judgement, and alert crisis response skills, and marked an upward turn in quality-of-work indicators.

Richard Edwards, in his 1979 book, *Contested Terrain,* associated trends in workplace organization with systems used to control the workforce. Edwards' historical model of workplace control has five components: direct personal control, foreman's control, technical control, scientific management, and bureaucracy. As with Blauner's chronological sequence,

each form coexists with others as it emerges. The model developed here synthesizes these two frameworks into a five part typology while also accommodating recent trends in technology and industrial relations:

Workplace Organization	Characteristics
Craft	High training and worker control over daily decisions
Direct supervision	Day-to-day decisions made by supervisor
Assembly line	Flow of work controlled by conveyors
Bureaucratic	Decision-making based on rules
Worker participation	Regular solicitation of worker input

This schematic forms the basis for analyzing several aspects of job quality. Evidence for the analysis was developed from an exhaustive search of workplace ethnographies, selection of facilities that captured relevant concepts, and careful coding to produce comparable data. Eighty-six ethnographies reporting on 108 separate cases met the criteria for inclusion in this analysis.

WORKING WITH DIGNITY

Workers develop strategies to maintain dignity, protect themselves from abuse, and establish individual identity.   These strategies, which can range from sabotage to withdrawal of cooperation, "are autonomous behavioral agendas that arise in response to the demands of the workplace....Thus, worker strategies are attempts to defend or regain dignity in the face of work organizations that violate workers' interests, limit their prerogatives, or otherwise undermine their autonomy."[722]

Two realms of work experience and activity were analyzed in relation to the five types of work organization described above: task-related and co-worker-related work. Four task-related aspects have been identified as important in literature on the workplace: *job satisfaction* and *pride* indicate attitudes toward work; *insider knowledge* comes from on-the-job learning and can be a source of bargaining power; and the *effort bargain* reflects workers' enjoyment, their perception of the fairness of rewards, and their power relative to management. Three co-worker-related experiences are also important in the literature: *solidarity*, or the willingness of workers to defend each other from management, other workers or customers; *peer training* as an indicator of knowledge not possessed by management; and "the prevalence of *social friendships* [which] is one of the most significant indicators of a positive work experience."[724]

DATA ANALYSIS

The task-related and co-worker-related variables found in the selected ethnographies were noted as present or absent, or scaled according to intensity or prevalence. The values were entered into ordinary least squares regressions as dependent variables, with the five types of work organization as independent variables. The results are similar to Blauner's U-shaped pattern with indicators of job quality falling from high levels in craft-like jobs to lower levels in more controlled work settings, then rising again in situations that encourage worker participation in decision-making processes. However, there are variations in the pattern for different outcome

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variables, and, although they rise from the lowest points, most do not achieve the high levels initially established under craft-based work. The resulting pattern is more like a backwards "J."

Job satisfaction, pride, and effort are lowest under direct supervision, then reach new highs under worker participation regimes, with effort slightly higher under participation than under craft organization. Insider knowledge is lowest in assembly line work, where job content is rigidly prescribed; it reaches its second peak under bureaucracy, where it can be useful to skirt or manipulate the rules, and then drops slightly again.

The co-worker-related variables also drop sharply once craft-based work is replaced by more regimented forms; however, each of these three variables reaches its lowest point under a different organizational regime. Solidarity is lowest under bureaucracy where workers are stratified and competitive; peer training is lowest under direct supervision, and social friendships is lowest under assembly-line work that tends to enforce isolation. Skill and autonomy, introduced as mediating variables, have positive effects on both task and co-worker variables, but they can only reduce, not eliminate, the effects of the work organization variables.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Continuous process technology never became as prominent a part of workplace organization as Blauner expected, though the work experience recovered some of its meaning and autonomy as participatory forms of production became more prominent. For most of the indicators studied, craft-based organization retained the highest values. References to worker or observer statements in the ethnographic material indicate ambivalence about the consequences for workers of participatory regimes. Some observers or analysts see positive effects from team-based management, while others see it as a form of "self-subordination" or "estranged participation" which puts workers' insights at the service of work intensification. One worker described it as the best and worst kind of situation.

Participatory forms of work organization are still in early stages of development. As with management objectives, the evolution of future structures of labor-management relationships will reflect the efforts of workers to defend their dignity and increase their well-being. To analyze and understand these new patterns, students of industrial relations "will need to incorporate not only the existing concepts of management exploitation and worker resistance, but will also need to include a renewed role for concepts like worker pride, insider knowledge, friendship, and peer support."[735]