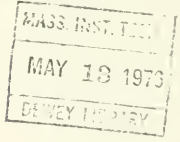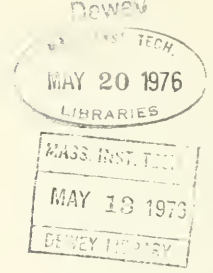# WORKING PAPER
ALFRED P. SLOAN SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

CAREER IMPLICATIONS FOR JOB SATISFACTION
AND JOB ENRICHMENT

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WP 842-76   April 1976

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationships between overall job satisfaction and the five task dimensions of skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback-from-job. These relationships were also investigated for workers at different stages of their careers as measured by the length of employment on their current job as well as in their current organization. Basically, it was found that the relationships between job satisfaction and each of the task dimensions fluctuate significantly according to the career stage of the sample individuals. For employees who are new to the organization, for example, only task significance is positively related to job satisfaction while autonomy has a strong negative correlation. Other significant correlational changes are also presented. The implications of these findings for job enrichment programs as well as for the management of employees are subsequently discussed.

Career Implications for Job Satisfaction and Job Enrichment

Ever since the popularization of the theories of Maslow (1954), Herzberg (1966), and Argyris (1957), there has been increasing interest in what has come to be called, "the quality of working life." As part of this concept, one finds that the manner in which contemporary jobs are designed has a significant impact on employee motivation, satisfaction, and performance. More specifically, it is the assignment of boring, meaningless, and routine jobs that are viewed as being responsible for poor motivation, satisfaction, and performance. Job enrichment or the design of more challenging jobs for employees is by and large the most visible reform methodology.

Work satisfaction represents an important yardstick by which researchers have tried to assess and gauge the effects of job conditions upon individuals. Perhaps the most disturbing data, albeit controversial, have been summarized in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare's task force report Work in America (1973) and in Jenkin's Job Power (1974).

These reviews emphasize that ample remuneration, secure employment, and pleasent working conditions cannot by themselves dissipate the ailments known as blue-collar "blues" and white-collar "woes," for satisfaction is directly influenced by the amount of autonomy, variety, and responsibility in addition to the chances for personal growth, achievement, and contribution. Furthermore, increases in alcoholism, drug usage, sabotage, crime, and absenteeism as well as decreases in production quality, family stability, and mental health are all purportedly linked with widespread work dissatisfaction.

However, empirical studies documenting distressing levels of worker dissatis-faction, together with warnings of further erosion, are probably not sufficient in and of themselves to have aroused the attention presently commanded by the quality of work life issues. What has been most impressive of late are the dramatic recounts of gains achieved through programs of job enrichment--programs developed explicitly to counteract worker alienation and enhance intrinsic motiva-tion by redesigning the various tasks workers perform in their everyday activities (Glaser, 1975; Walton, 1972; Ford, 1969). Thus, it is the possibility that some concrete actions can be taken to improve work environments and rejuvenate workers that has provoked intense interest and excitement. Yet, despite the apparent fruitful yields from these experimental programs, relatively few of the nation's large corporations have tried to implement comparable job enrichment programs (Luthans, 1974).

One of the biggest roadblocks to the implementation of job enrichment—even after knowledge of its experimental successes has been diffused—is tied to the knotty problem of transposing the results from specific case studies to other locales. In addition, those surveys which have tried to link specific job characteristics with employee satisfaction and motivation have not always been successful, see Turner and Lawrence (1965) and Hulin and Blood (1968). In order to achieve this "knowledge," therefore, a broader, more inclusive theoretical and methodological framework is needed from which cross-organizational generalities can be made concerning the reactions of employees to specific task dimensions over time and under varied work conditions. An important step towards this methodological direction has been made by J. Richard Hackman and his colleagues at Yale University. They have designed a diagnostic survey instrument to measure the degree to which certain conceptually independent task characteristics are present on particular jobs (Hackman and Oldham, 1975). This instrument quantifies the distinct job attributes of a) skill variety; b) task identity; c) task significance; d) autonomy; and e) feedback-from-job. These dimensions presumably coincide with certain psychological states—meaningfulness, responsibility, and knowledge of results—experienced by individuals which, according to the developing theory, are critical for attaining and sustaining high employee motivation, satisfaction, and commitment. Skill variety, task identity, and task significance span the state of experienced meaningfulness; autonomy covers experienced responsibility; while feedback-from-job taps the state called knowledge of results.

Preliminary survey results confirm that these job characteristics, especially autonomy and skill variety, are correlated strongly with general work satisfaction and are related moderately (but significantly) to absenteeism, overall performance effectiveness, and the quality of performance (Hackman and Lawler, 1971; Van Maanen and Katz, 1974). Such findings are encouraging but we still know little about the behavior of these relationships from a long-range, temporal standpoint. The few longitudinal studies available typically provide only pre- and post- measures (within a very restricted time-frame) as a means of tracking the effectiveness of a particular organizational change program. As such, they are not concerned with how employees react to the various task dimensions over a career span. Thus, it is our purpose to explore the linkages between work satisfaction and particular job attributes over a broad temporal horizon. That is, how do employees react to certain commonly examined task dimensions throughout their careers—are the relationships stable and invariant, or is there some vacillating pattern that demands further elaboration and explanation.

Social scientists interested in socialization processes have long been aware of such temporal considerations. In particular, the work of Parsons (1951) and Brim (1966) draws explicit attention to the changing nature of an individual's relationship to the workplace over the course of one's career. More specifically, it has been demonstrated in a variety of work settings that employee needs change in relative importance during their early career years (Van Maanen, 1975; Hall and Nougaim, 1968; Berlew and Hall, 1966). These writers argue that an employee's dominant need upon entering an organization is one of job safety and security. In a similar vein, Schein (1961) suggests that to be accepted by others in the organization as a contributing member ("to prove oneself") represents the major problem faced by a newcomer. It would seem therefore that only after grappling with the problem of establishing a somewhat stable situational identity can the newcomer turn to other matters such as achievement, challenge, and innovation. In other words, people must determine what it is they are to do before they can decide how well to do it.   Focusing on the other end of careers, Porter (1961) showed that the importance of managers' physiological and social needs increased with age while the opposite trend occurred for the need importance of self-actualization. Hall and Mansfield (1975) also found that the importance of security needs in their R & D samples increased with age.

The critical implication is that employees may be amenable to job redesign efforts only during particular phases of their organizational careers—a fact of obvious significance for both theorists and practitioners of job enrichment. Furthermore, there is little reason to believe that the influence of various task features operate with equal strength during particular career stages. Different task dimensions may be more powerful at different career points.

II. Research Design

In order to test some of the notions discussed above, data collected from a large attitude survey (administered between October, 1973 and February, 1974) were analyzed for temporal implications. The guiding purpose behind the analysis was simply to investigate the patterns of relationship between overall work satisfaction and each of the task design features across separate groups of employees distinguished by different lengths of job longevity—job longevity was defined as the length of time an individual had been working on the same job.

The survey was undertaken in four distinct governmental organizations as part of a project designed to examine job satisfaction in the public sector. Each of the governments represents a rather loose confederation of various service departments operating within clearly defined geographical regions (e.g., police and fire departments, public utilities, hospitals, social work agencies, sanitation departments, planning departments, and so on). Within each organization, a stratified random sample was drawn from among the full range of jobs and employees.

4

The stratification was based on the EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) occupational categories: administrative, technical, professional, protective service, paraprofessional, clerical, skilled craft, and maintenance. Of the total sample of 3,500 employees, 88% completed the survey instrument. For a more complete discussion of the sampling, see Van Maanen and Katz (1974).

For the present analysis, only three portions of the survey instrument are pertinent: 1) task design features; 2) overall work satisfaction; and 3) longevity measures. The Yale Job Inventory, discussed in detail by Hackman and Oldham (1975), was used to determine the "objective" task characteristics of the respondents' jobs. According to Hackman and Lawler (1971), this instrument provides a reasonably accurate--insofar as self, peer, supervisor, and outside observer ratings of a job converge--description of the following task dimensions.

1. Skill Variety: The degree to which the job requires different activities calling for the use of different skills.

2. Task Identity: The degree to which the job requires the completion of a "whole" and identifiable piece of work--i.e., doing a job from beginning to end with a clear outcome.

3. Task Significance: The degree to which the job has a perceivable impact on other people or their jobs, whether in the immediate organization or the community at large.

4. Autonomy: The degree to which the job provides an employee with freedom, independence, and discretion in scheduling and carrying out work assignments.

5. Feedback-from-Job: The degree to which an employee receives information from the job itself as to the effectiveness of his or her efforts.

All of the above dimensions were measured by use of 7-point, Likert-type items. Overall work satisfaction was measured by an 8-point, Likert-type scale ranging from completely dissatisfied to completely satisfied.

Finally, respondents were asked to answer a number of demographic questions including age, sex, current job longevity, and time spent in the organization.[1]

III. Data Analysis and Results

Table 1 demonstrates that each of the task design features was indeed associated with overall work satisfaction. The five task dimensions are all correlated positively and significantly with global satisfaction.[2]

From these correlations, overall satisfaction appears equally sensitive to each of the five task characteristics, and one might conclude that the satisfaction level of a group of individuals can be enhanced if proper improvements are made in any of the task design features.

As shown in Table 2, however, the real world is considerably more complex. By calculating separate correlations for employees with different job longevities, it becomes clear that none of the task features are uniformly related to overall satisfaction. Specifically, the correlational results suggest that the satisfaction of employees who are just beginning work on a particular job (less than three months) is not associated with the amount of skill variety, task identity, or autonomy on the job. If anything, high autonomy may be distressing for the employee as shown by the negative correlation. At the same time, the other two task characteristics--task significance and feedback-from-job--are related positively to overall satisfaction.

Following this initial adjustment period, however, the correlations for the task design features increase in significance, peak in strength somewhere around two years, and subsequently decline in importance.[3] Correlations for those employees who have been assigned the same job for at least fifteen years do not reveal any relationship between overall satisfaction and the various task characteristics. Thus, the consequences of simply having the same job for a long period of time apparently counteract the constructive effects of having high skill variety, high task identity, high task significance, high feedback-from-job, and high autonomy. Figure 1 displays in graphic form the over time correlations between overall satisfaction and both skill variety and autonomy--the two task characteristics considered by most theorists to be the essence of job enrichment.

Employees hold new jobs either because they are new to the organization (newcomers) or because they have recently been promoted or transferred (veterans). For my purposes here, the term socialization will refer to the former condition,

while the latter situation is labelled resocialization. Importantly, it has been suggested that the experiences associated with these two processes are not identical; thus, they need to be examined separately (Wheeler, 1966). In socialization situations, the newcomer must learn about and adjust to the organization from scratch. Such a process requires that he sift and digest large amounts of sometimes vague and ambigious information in order to discover where he fits in the overall scheme of the organization--finding a "niche." Consequently, the newcomer must build social as well as task relationships in order to sustain and nourish his new existence.

The transferred or promoted employee also undergoes an initial learning phase to restore the temporary loss of the familiar. But, in contrast to the newcomer, employees in a resocialization situation have already acquired a sizeable knowledge base about the organization, established contacts within the organization, and developed some sort of personal reputation. Hence, it is reasonable to assume that newcomers will be more responsive to the social issues ("getting on board"), while the veterans will be more sensitive to the task performance issues ("doing a good job"). Table 3 presents a comparative analysis of the socialization and resocialization processes where newcomers are those employees new to the organization and, or course, new to their job, and veterans are those employees new to their jobs, but who have been with the organization for at least one year.

<u>Insert Table 3 about here</u>

Table 3 shows three major differences (in terms of job properties) when individual correlations are calculated to distinguish between socialization and resocialization. 1) Only task significance and overall satisfaction are significantly correlated for newcomers in the early months of their organizational careers. This finding supports the contention that it is more essential for newcomers than for veterans changing jobs to feel that they are becoming integrated within and accepted by the organization. 2) In contrast, the task dimension, feedback-from-job, seems most germane during the first year of a resocialization situation. It appears that veterans might be more anxious than newcomers to ascertain quickly how well they are performing or can perform on their new jobs. 3) Employees undergoing a resocialization transition are not necessarily stimulated by a high degree of autonomy on a new job. It seems that they must reestablish a sense of security

in the workplace. On the other hand, neither are veterans as "turned off" by high autonomy as are the organizational newcomers.

IV. Discussion

These findings suggest that there may be some serious weaknesses associated with job enrichment programs--with respect to both theory and practice. Current ideologies contend that, in general, employees will respond positively (in terms of satisfaction, motivation, commitment, etc.) to appropriate increases in the various task dimensions. The survey results presented here also noted the correlational linkage between satisfaction and task characteristics, but, at the same time demonstrated the dependency of such relationships upon one's career stage. Jobs featuring more autonomy, variety, identity, significance, and/or feedback do not necessarily evoke greater overall satisfaction--especially for employees who are either new to their jobs or have had the same job for a substantial period of time. Consequently, to trust correlations that represent aggregations over eventful and important time or career periods is misleading and no longer justifiable.

The inescapable implication of these results is that job enrichment programs are potentially limited and of short-lived effectiveness. Jobs, no doubt, can be richly reconstructed along appropriate task dimensions and, hopefully, after a short period, employees will perhaps demonstrate the anticipated positive outcomes. However, there is little reason to believe that even the most enriched jobs will not eventually become routinized and boring as employees become more proficient and accustomed to their redesigned tasks. Hence, longitudinal considerations must be included when advocating a tactic of improving work satisfaction through job redesign.

Further complications arise even if one assumes, as many do, that proper job enrichment programs are not "one-shot" occurrences--the routinization issue addressed through the periodic reenrichment of jobs. Yet as the data suggest, greater amounts of skill variety or autonomy or identity may not have the same positive impact the second time around, particularly if the employees have the same job titles and positions. In fact, it may not have any overall constructive effects--recall that the relationships between task dimensions and overall satis-faction diminish with increasing job longevity. Hence, the enduring effectiveness of continuous job enrichment efforts may be severely restricted.

To be successful, therefore, we must broaden the theories, strategies, and concepts related to work motivation and satisfaction. Often, it is more than just the immediate task that is important. It is the individual's job position, organizational role, and career path (actual, as well as potential) which must be included in the overall framework. Managers must be better trained to "manage" their newcomers--helping them get integrated and socialized into their environments.[4] The managing skills of a newcomer's supervisor are often cited as the most crucial factor in the initial "joining-up" process (Kotter, 1973). And as shown by Berlew and Hall (1966), these early experiences and job assignments can have an important effect on one's future career.

Certainly, neither the data nor the discussion is intended to dismiss the importance of or need for the design of jobs which include challenging and responsible tasks. The crux of the argument is simple that just having such jobs is not enough, for attention must be paid to job and career movements. Indeed, it is possible that these considerations will become even more crucial in the near future. Although empirical support is scanty, employees at all organizational levels seem to be shifting from an emphasis on the short-term, immediate rewards for their participation, to an emphasis on the long-term, career-related rewards (Lawler, 1975). Employees are thinking and planning further into the future. Increased life expectancies, society's emphasis on planning, early retirement, declining birth rates, and increased leisure time activities have all combined to enlarge the temporal perspective of today's labor force. Merely focusing on immediate tasks, therefore, does not take into account such a broadened horizon.

It is important to note also that the success of any job enrichment program depends not only on the validity of its theoretical foundation, but also on the worth of its particular implementation strategy as well. Hackman et al. (1974) specified recently seven types of procedural errors that ostensibly invite failure. One such problem area occurs in the "assessment of readiness for change." The correlational results from the foregoing analysis support his concern. The readiness of employees to accept a high degree of autonomy (or additional amounts of autonomy) is perhaps the most crucial feature. Whenever job enrichment involves the placement of individuals in new jobs, the amount of autonomy should be injected gradually, carefully, and with considerable support. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is not a "one-way" street and employees, regardless of their organizational tenure, probably emphasize their safety and security needs when undertaking a new job.

Theoretical advocates of job enrichment, such as Herzberg (1966), readily
acknowledge and forewarn potential users to expect an initial, although
temporary, setback resulting from early confusion and learning. Such introductory
declines are also likely to be aggravated by the entrance of too much change,
too much autonomy, or too much variety. There is nothing to suggest, however,
that a job must be enriched simultaneously along each of its deficient task
dimensions. On the contrary, the results here indicate that it might be more
effective initially to increase task significance in the case of socialization
and to increase feedback-from-job in the case of resocialization. This suggestion
is consistent with the contention that when undertaking a new job, organizational
veterans are more concerned with establishing and demonstrating their competency
while newcomers are more concerned with becoming a helpful and needed part of the
overall operation. In either case, the enrichment of a job along the autonomy
and skill variety dimensions is not an immediate necessity and perhaps will be
far more successful if introduced slowly during the first year of experience.

In situations where task dimensions are to be improved, but the job positions
are to remain the same with the same personnel, employees must be assessed for
receptiveness--especially with regard to job longevity. Remember that the cor-
relations for the task design features of Table 2 diminish with increased
longevity. Therefore, if the majority of affected employees have considerable
job tenure, it is unlikely that a job enrichment program per se will have any
predictable positive influence on overall work satisfaction. Furthermore, the
amount of turnover in an enriched group of jobs can cause a reverse effect.
Because the redesigned jobs are supposedly characterized by high autonomy,
individuals suddenly "breaking-in" on these new jobs are likely to undergo a
very stressful experience. In order to avoid this result, mitigating initiation
methods would have to be developed and incorporated into the organization to
help the individual during the early socialization or resocialization period.

Naturally, the greater the turnover, the more difficult and disrupting will
be this continuous process of initial adjustment. Herein lies a potential
contradiction, for as one strives to limit turnover for a redesigned job, one
is increasing job longevity. And, as discussed, increased longevity eventually
limits or inhibits the success of the program. Certainly low turnover is
desirable and reducing turnover is a legitimate managerial objective, but too
much stability can also be self-defeating. A job enrichment program should not
discourage employees from wanting to shift jobs, nor should it be declared a

failure if employees on jobs that have been enriched seek job changes. One must avoid the use of turnover as a uniform criterion of success.

V. Summary and Conclusions

The analysis reported in this paper represents only a peek into the dynamic world of work. A great number of questions still remain unanswered and even unexplored. In connection with this study, some of the more important problems are as follows:

a) The findings reported here were based on cross-sectional and not panel data. Consequently, we cannot really be sure about what happens to a designated group of individuals over time. What we do know from this study is that the relationships between the assorted task dimensions and general work satisfaction become progressively weaker as we examine different respondents with more job longevity. From these results, we can only infer that the relationships between the task dimensions and overall satisfaction will dissolve as job tenure increases. Carefully planned longitudinal studies are needed to clarify the situation.

b) The present analysis had focused exclusively on the modifying impact of job longevity. The demographic characteristic usually defined as either age, life stage, or career stage (i.e., early years, mid-years, and late years) is an additional variable that might moderate the relationships between overall satisfaction and the various design features. Investigators such as Porter (1961) and Hall and Mansfield (1975) have tried to show that the needs and interests of employees change as one ages. Job security seems, for example, to become more prominent as one gets older. The implication is that the relevance of job enrichment would also vary with age or life stage. Since job tenure and age are connected, it is possible that age is the "true" moderator, or that age and job longevity, in some combination, both influence the investigated relationships. Preliminary inquiries into this issue reveal that the same pattern of results as shown in Table 2 reemerge when separately computed for respondents under 35 years of age and for respondents over 35. Hence, it presently appears that job longevity is a more powerful moderator than age, although considerably more research is needed on the possible added influence of age or life stage.

c) Since the notion of a "new" job was a focal concept in the analysis, it is imperative that we determine exactly what constitutes a new job. In the current study, we relied on the respondents' own interpretations. However, we need to explicate what the elements, dimensions, or rules are that determine

whether one job is the same or different from another. Such knowledge is essential if we hope to improve the quality of working life in organizations through a combination of role redesign, job shifts, and career movements. We need to know more about how to create a work environment with sufficient change for its employees and how to manage such an environment.

d) In exploring the initial job longevity periods, the processes of socialization and resocialization were differentiated. This is only one of several important distinctions. Under resocialization, the transferred and promoted employees were all lumped together. They should be examined and treated separately. Similarly, newcomers with previous work experience may react differently from newcomers without prior employment. These issues have to be investigated and understood in order to design and implement a more suitable work environment.

e) Finally, we must rely more on research studies that deal with the actual reactions and behaviors of employees in particular contexts and rely less on studies that simply investigate what employees say they are looking for in their jobs. We need to know more about the process of motivation--how employees respond to the particular content features of their work over time. Herzberg's theory, for example, is concerned with content. His data does not specifically address whether the employee was motivated before, during, or after the critical incidents.

These are only a few of the problematic issues that have to be resolved if the quality of working life is to be significantly improved. Enriched roles, together with appropriate career paths (both horizontal and vertical), are more likely to achieve and sustain the desired level of work satisfaction. Finally, these conclusions are, as in most empirical studies, guilty of being deduced from the averaged responses of large numbers of respondents. Each individual employee has his own abilities, needs, and experiences. Some employees, for example, may be ready and may expect substantial autonomy and variety from the outset. The ultimate challenge is the successful matching of these individuals to the organizational world. And, it is the dual responsibility of both the individual and the organization to try to achieve such an accomodating result.

Footnotes

1. On the supposition that there may be sex-linked differences, especially
    for older women returning to work, only the male respondents are used
    in the forthcoming analysis. (N = 2,084)

2. With a sample size as large as the one utilized in this table, statistical
    significance has very little meaning (i.e., virtually all correlations
    even slightly above or below the zero level are significant). The arguments
    reported throughout this paper, therefore, rest upon the patterns in which
    the data fall as well as upon the logic underpinning the research questions
    asked.

3. The argument here does not rest on statistically significant differences
    between correlations from every adjacent job longevity period but rather
    on the existence of a clear and unambigious pattern of correlational results.

4. Not all organizations may want to go through this "managing" phase for
    its newcomers. Schein (1961), for example, points out that the socialization
    process for assistant professors often consists of complete autonomy. Such
    a strategy may be an effective filtering mechanism for screening out those
    professors who cannot tolerate high degrees of autonomy. This strategy may
    be utilized either because the department does not want to, is not prepared
    to, or is not organized to perform a "professional development" function.
    As a result, many professors who are initially ineffective at one university
    go on to become very productive at another. The same is true for many students,
    employees, and managers.

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14

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TABLE 1: Correlations of Design Features
With Overall Work Satisfaction

Design Feature	Correlation With Work Satisfaction
Skill Variety	.19*
Task Identity	.18*
Task Significance	.21*
Autonomy	.23*
Feedback from Job	.20*

N = 2084

* p < .01

TABLE 2: Correlations with Overall Work Satisfaction
for Different Job Longevity Periods

Correlations With Work Satisfaction

| Design Feature	<3 Mos.	4-6 Mos.	7-12 Mos.	13-18 Mos.	19-24 Mos.	2-3 Yrs.	3-5 Yrs.	5-10 Yrs.	10-15 Yrs.	15-20 Yrs.	>20 Yrs.
Skill Variety	.03	.22	.12	.22*	.29*	.29*	.14*	.17*	.15	-.01	-.11
Task Identity	.13	.33*	.17	.21*	.29*	.14	.16*	.29*	.12	-.08	.11
Task Significance	.39*	.29*	.21*	.38*	.33*	.16	.23*	.20*	.23*	.07	-.04
Autonomy	-.21	.26*	.29*	.35*	.37*	.30*	.20*	.26*	.17*	.06	.00
Feedback from Job	.32*	.27*	.33*	.21*	.29*	.27*	.24*	.23*	.25*	.08	.11
Job Longevity Period N =	55	90	172	174	112	184	366	455	187	129	160

* p < .01
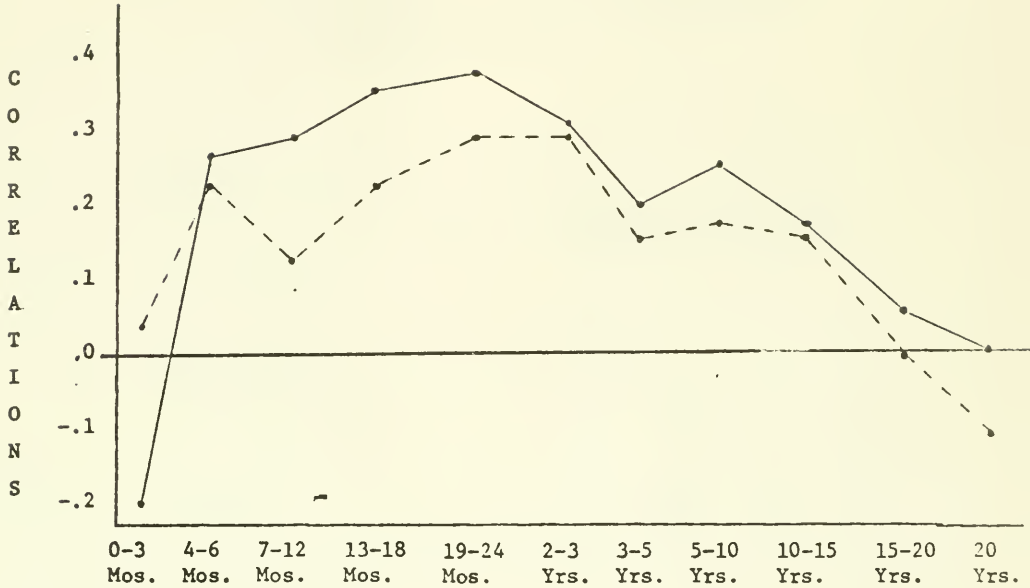
FIGURE 1: Correlations Between Overall Work Satisfaction and Skill Variety
and Autonomy for Different Job Longevity Periods.

Note: ---- = Correlations for Skill Variety

        ——— = Correlations for Autonomy

TABLE 3: Correlations With Overall Work Satisfaction
          For Respondents In Either A Socialization or
          Re-Socialization Setting

Design Feature	Newcomers	Veterans
Skill Variety	-.15	.13
Task Identity	-.21	.23
Task Significance	.35*	.27
Autonomy	-.49*	.04
Feedback from Job	.03	.56*
Current Job Longevity =	(0-3 months)	
N =	20	35

* P < .05

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