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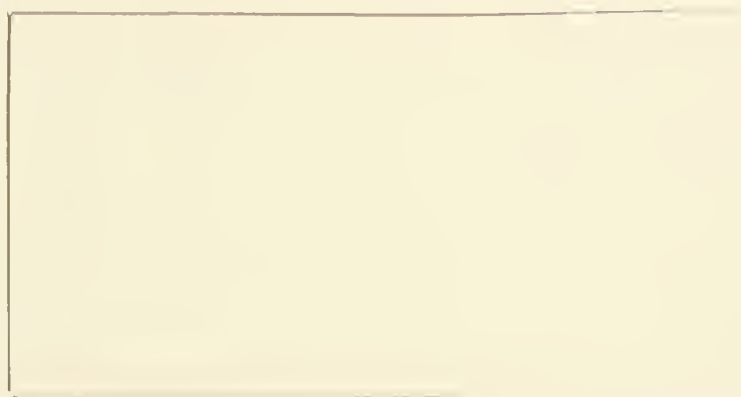
Satisfaction and Behavioral Reactions of Employees
To Task Characteristics as a Function
Of Job Longevity, Age, and High-Order Needs

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WP 932-77

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigated the moderating influence of job longevity, age, and high-order needs on the relationships between five separate task dimensions and overall job satisfaction. Basically, it was found that the strength of the task dimension-job satisfaction relationships are significantly affected by job longevity regardless of age and high-order needs. More specifically, three separate stages of job longevity are deduced, i.e., a learning, responsive, and an unresponsive stage. Only during the responsive stage were the satisfaction reactions of employees significantly correlated with all of the task characteristics. Furthermore, satisfaction was related most significantly to the outcomes of performance and turnover during the responsive stage. Individual differences, as measured by high-order need strength, were also investigated within the job longevity framework. Survey data from 3085 public sector employees belonging to four different governmental organizations were used to investigate the hypothesized relationships.



Satisfaction and Behavioral Reactions of Employees
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Over the past years, an impressive number of studies have documented the deleterious effects of assigning employees to boring, meaningless, and routine jobs (e.g., Walker and Guest, 1952; Blauner, 1964; Shepard and Herrick, 1972). As summarized by Work in America (1973), it is the simplification and standardization of job assignments that purportedly results in low motivation and satisfaction, high absenteeism and turnover, poor production quality, as well as a number of other undesirable consequences. In addition, the contemporary theories of Maslow (1954), Argyris (1957), Herzberg (1966), Porter and Lawler (1968), and Trist (1970) all emphasize that the manner in which jobs are designed has a significant impact on employee attitudes, feelings, and behaviors. Performance and satisfaction might be enhanced if jobs were designed to be more challenging.

In response to these ideas, a number of job enrichment experiments have been undertaken to improve a variety of problematic conditions, see Glaser (1975). Despite these interventions, little cumulative knowledge has been achieved regarding the applicability, effectiveness, or process of job redesign (Hulin and Blood, 1968; Hackman and Lawler, 1971). Furthermore, Hackman (1975) reports that at least half of the attempts at job enrichment have failed while Fein (1974) and Gomberg (1971) question the validity of the self-reported job design successes in general. Consequently, if we are to learn more about when and how to design enriched job environments effectively, then we need to understand thoroughly how different kinds of employees react to different task dimensions over time and under varied conditions.

Research on Task Dimensions

Towards this end, Hackman and Lawler (1971) and Hackman and Oldham (1975) have developed the Job Diagnostic Survey Instrument to measure the degree to which certain conceptually independent task characteristics are present on employees'



jobs. This instrument quantifies the distinct job attributes of (a) skill variety, (b) task identity, (c) task significance, (d) autonomy, and (e) job feedback which presumably are critical for achieving high employee motivation, satisfaction, and commitment. Their survey results confirm that, in general, these job dimensions are strongly correlated with overall job satisfaction but are only slightly related to various performance, turnover, and absenteeism measures.

In trying to identify specific conditions under which employees might be particularly responsive (or particularly unresponsive) to the various task characteristics, a large number of studies, e.g., Hackman and Oldham (1975), Wanous (1974), and Brief and Aldag (1975), have consistently demonstrated that job satisfaction is directly related to the various task dimensions more significantly for employees with high growth need strength than for workers with low growth needs. In addition, Katz (1977) has shown that employees, categorized according to their stages of job longevity, i.e., the length of time that an individual has been working on the same job, had significantly different satisfaction reactions to the task characteristics even though their high-order need strengths did not significantly differ.

Since the effects of high-order need strength and job longevity have only been examined independently, a major purpose of this study is to examine both the separate and simultaneous influence of these two moderating factors on the satisfaction responses of employees to the task dimensions.² However, since age is strongly connected with job longevity and perhaps associated with high-order needs (e.g., Porter, 1961), it is initially important to clarify and isolate the influence of both of these moderating variables from any potential age effects. Finally, the possible influence of job longevity and high-order needs on the relationships between job satisfaction and the outcome measures of performance and turnover are subsequently discussed and investigated.



The Effects of Job Longevity

Recognizing the important influence of career and job stages, Katz (1977) demonstrated that the amount of job longevity significantly moderated the satisfaction reactions of employees to the task characteristics of their jobs even though there were no corresponding differences among the employees' indicated growth need strength. With socialization and resocialization (Schein, 1971; Wheeler 1966) as the explanatory framework, Katz showed that the satisfaction scores of individuals were related most positively to the dimensions of task significance and job feedback during the first few months of a new job. Contrastingly, the satisfaction reactions of employees in this initial job period were unrelated to the task features of skill variety, task identity, and autonomy. Perhaps, employees are too distracted during these months by the building of interpersonal relationships and the learning of new technical requirements to react positively to all of the challenging task characteristics of their new jobs.

On the whole, the satisfaction scores of employees who had passed through this initial job stage were positively associated with the various task features of their jobs. However, those individuals whose job longevity ranged between 1 and 3 years appeared to be the most responsive group while the satisfaction responses of workers with considerable job longevity (around 10+ years) were completely unrelated to the various task characteristics. As suggested by Argyris (1957), it is possible that various psychological defenses have enabled employees to adapt to substantial job tenure by becoming unresponsive to the task features of their jobs.

The Influence of Age

In studying the impact of age, Porter (1961) found that the importance of physiological and social needs of managers in his sample varied positively with age while the need importance of self-actualization varied inversely with age. Similar results were also reported by Hall and Mansfield (1975) from their research and



and development samples. As a result, one might expect younger employees to be more responsive to task characteristics than older employees. Since job longevity and age are empirically interrelated, such a connection might help explain why job satisfaction was not related to the task dimensions of those employees who had substantial job tenure. It is important, therefore, to demonstrate that the satisfaction reactions of employees to the task characteristics of their assigned jobs is indeed significantly influenced by job longevity irrespective of age! Hence, the task dimension-job satisfaction relationships are hypothesized to be the same for older employees as they are for younger employees when controlling for the effects of job longevity. Moreover, if, in fact, growth need strength significantly varies with age, then one must also check the moderating effects of high-order need strength within age groups.

Personality and Situational Interaction

Ever since Lewin's (1966) original formulation, it has been generally agreed that behaviors and attitudes tend to be a function of the interaction between the person and his environment (e.g., Crozier, 1964; Katz and Van Maanen, 1977; Hulin, et al., 1976; Mowday, Stone, and Porter, 1976). As a result, if both the individuals' high-order need strength and job longevity significantly affect the task dimension-job satisfaction relationships, then it is essential to determine how they interact to influence employee responsiveness to the various task dimensions. Thus, this research will investigate the combined effects of personality, in the form of high-order need strength, and the situational setting, in the form of job longevity, on the satisfaction reactions of employees to the different task features of their jobs. Does growth need strength, for example, significantly moderate the task dimension-job satisfaction relationships for all employees regardless of job longevity, or is it influential only during particular job stages?



Behavioral Outcomes and Job Satisfaction

With only a few exceptions, a vast number of studies have consistently found job satisfaction to be significantly associated with turnover (Vroom, 1964; Porter and Steers, 1973). In comparison, however, investigations of the performance-job satisfaction relationship have not yielded either clear or consistent results as concluded by the classic reviews of Brayfield and Crockett (1955), Vroom (1964), and Schwab and Cummings (1970). Despite this lack of association, it has been suggested by a number of researchers (e.g., Argyris, 1964; Porter and Lawler, 1968; Hackman and Lawler, 1971) that performance would be linked with job satisfaction for those situations where the tasks provided employees with the opportunity to perform meaningful and responsible work with clear feedback. However, empirical investigations of this possibility have not resulted in consistently positive performance-job satisfaction relationships (e.g., Hackman and Lawler, 1971; Locke, Sirota and Wolfson, 1976; Baird, 1976; and Umstot, Bell, and Mitchell, 1976).

One possible explanation for such ambiguity stems from Argyris' (1957, 1964) assertion that the adjustment of individuals to their organizational work environments can significantly influence the determinants of employee satisfaction. More specifically, the amount of influence that the assignment of demanding or enriched tasks might have had at one time in the formation of high satisfaction attitudes could shift to any number of other non-task sources such as friendly co-workers, flexible or short working hours, job security, supervisory practices, etc. Having challenging tasks per se, therefore, may not be enough, for employees must also be responsive to the richness of their jobs, i.e., the various task dimensions.

Following this lead, Hackman and Lawler (1971) suggested that individuals with higher growth needs might possess a stronger relationship between performance and satisfaction on relatively challenging tasks than individuals with weaker levels of high-order



need strength. Using this line of reasoning, Steers (1975 demonstrated that performance and satisfaction were significantly correlated only for those employees with a high need for achievement and were unrelated for those employees whose indicated achievement needs were low.

In a similar vein, if, in fact, job longevity significantly moderates the satisfaction responsiveness of employees to their task characteristics, then one might also expect employee performance to be associated more strongly with job satisfaction during those job stages in which employees are most responsive. The underlying assumption being that during these particular job periods, the more satisfied employees would be more willing to inject greater effort and involvement into their tasks. Accordingly, it is hypothesized that the relationship between performance and job satisfaction is significantly moderated by job longevity such that they are interrelated most positively when employees are most responsive to their task characteristics. Similarly, it is hypothesized that, in general, job satisfaction will vary inversely with turnover but will be related most negatively with turnover during the same responsive job longevity periods.

Method

The respondent sample consisted of 3,085 public sector employees distributed across four distinct governmental organizations (including two municipalities, one county, and one state government) from different geographical regions of the U.S. These participating governments represent a rather loose confederation of various service departments such as police, fire, sanitation, and data-processing departments, public works, social work agencies, hospital and health care systems, etc. Participants were randomly selected within each governmental organization using a stratification design based on the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's (EEOC) job classification system, believed to be representative of the mix of



available occupations and jobs. The final sample represents approximately 40% of all governmental employees across the four sites. With the governments' cooperation, questionnaires were administered in available meeting rooms during regular working hours by external researchers and staff. For a cross-sectional study of this sort, it is important to keep the compared subsamples as homogeneous as possible. As a result, only the male portion of the sample will be included in this study's analysis (N=2094), since it is quite possible that there may be sex-linked differences regarding the satisfaction reactions of employees at particular job and career stages (Hulin and Smith, 1965; Marsh and Mannari, 1977). The distribution of the male sample across the eight EEOC job categories is as follows: administrative (13.9%); professionals (13.5%); technical (16.4%); protective service (16.5%); para-professional (2.7%); clerical (4.7%); skilled craft (13.3%); and maintenance (18.9%).

Task Characteristics: Respondent perceptions of their supposed "objective" task characteristics were measured using the Job Diagnostic Survey Instrument reported by Hackman and Oldham (1975). According to the psychometric properties reported by the authors, this instrument provides fairly accurate measures of jobs along five important 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 or process; (3) Task Significance, the degree to which the job has a perceivable impact on other people or their jobs; (4) Autonomy, the degree to which the job provides an employee with freedom, independence, and discretion in scheduling and carrying out work assignments; and (5) Job Feedback, the degree to which an employee receives information from the job itself regarding the effectiveness of his work. Each task dimension was measured by averaging the responses to at least



three different seven-point, Likert-type items. The split-half reliabilities for the five task dimensions in the present study range from .71 to .83 while the inter-correlations among the dimensions range from .19 to .44 and are very similar to those reported by Hackman and Oldham (1975).

Job Satisfaction: Based on the instrument developed by Hackman and Lawler (1971) and used by many other studies such as Steers (1975) and Brief and Aldag (1975), overall job satisfaction was measured by averaging the responses of employees to several Likert-type items ranging from completely satisfied to completely dissatisfied, e.g., "All in all, how satisfied are you with your employment in this organization?" and "Considering all things, how satisfied are you with your job?" (split-half reliability = .75).

Outcomes: Job performance scores were obtained for 35% of the respondents, randomly selected from the sample of one of the government organizations.³ To obtain these scores (N=89 with 61 males), immediate supervisors were identified and asked to rate the overall performance and effort of the subordinates on two separate 5-point, Likert-type items with alternative value headings stating that performance (or effort) is: (1) poor; (2) does not meet expectations; (3) meets expectations; (4) exceeds expectations; and (5) outstanding. By having supervisors rate behavior relative to expectations, it was expected that a more even and less biased distribution of performance and effort scores would be obtained. In addition, the averaged performance measures (split-half reliability = .83) were not significantly related to job type or job level as measured by the EEOC occupational codes.

Turnover data for this subsample was obtained for a period of 3 years following the collection of the questionnaire and performance data. Based on the findings of Marsh and Mannari (1977), it was felt that such a long interval was necessary to allow sufficient time for "opportunities to leave" to present themselves. The correlation between job performance and eventual turnover was $-.37$ ($p < .01$; $N=54$ after excluding 7 retirees).



High-Order Needs: The strength of high-order or growth needs was measured by averaging each respondent's answers to a number of 5-point, Likert-type items similar to those developed by Porter (1961), Hackman and Oldham (1975), and Wanous (1974). Employees indicated how much they would like to receive recognition, to do interesting and challenging work, to develop one's potential, to feel competent and capable, to utilize one's skills and ability, to feel useful and purposeful, and to feel respected (split-half reliability = .90). Since high-order need strength is a potential moderator variable, it is important to note that in this study it is unrelated to all of the task characteristic, satisfaction, and outcome measures. The overall sample mean was used to split respondents into either high or low high-order need groups.

Age and Job Longevity: As part of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to specify their age. Based on Hall and Mansfield's (1975) conclusions regarding important age distinctions, respondents were split into 3 age groupings (<35; 35-50; >50) for testing the possible effects of age on the satisfaction reactions of employees to their task characteristics. In addition, job longevity was obtained by asking respondents to indicate how long (to the nearest month) they had been working at their current jobs. The moderating influence of job longevity on the satisfaction responsiveness of employees for the present data was previously established and discussed in Katz (1977). Based on the similarity of correlational findings between adjacent job longevity categories, respondents were divided into a more parsimonious number of job tenure groupings, i.e., 0-3 months; 4-12 months; 1-3 years; 3-10 years; and 10+ years. Although age and job longevity are significantly connected ($r = .45$; $p < .001$), age was not related to growth need strength in this study. Furthermore, none of the task dimension, satisfaction, performance, and high-order need measures significantly varied with job longevity; while of these variables, only satisfaction was slightly correlated with age



($r = -.14$; $p < .001$). With respect to turnover, however, both job longevity and age were somewhat associated with eventual organizational departures ($r = -.26$ and $-.41$, respectively; $p < .05$; $N=54$).

RESULTS

Influence of Job Longevity

The correlational results of Table 1 reveal that, in general, overall job satisfaction is significantly associated with each of the task dimensions to approximately the same extent. As previously discussed, however, job longevity significantly moderates the satisfaction reactions of employees to their task

 Insert Table 1 About Here

characteristics. It seems that the satisfaction scores of employees who are in the earlier stages of a new job (i.e., the 4-12 month and 1-3 year periods) are most correlated to the various job dimensions; whereas, the satisfaction responses of employees who have considerable job tenure (10+ years) are unassociated with the assorted task features. In addition, respondents in the initial entry or "learning" stage of a new job (the 0-3 month period) seem to be significantly reactive, in terms of satisfaction, only to the task characteristics of significance and job feedback while the other task dimension-job satisfaction relationships are either insignificant or slightly negative as in the case of autonomy.

Influence of Age

In parallel with the findings for job longevity, the related, yet distinguishable, variable of age also significantly moderates the task dimension-job satisfaction relationships as shown by the correlational analysis of Table 2. As previously

 Insert Table 2 About Here

speculated, workers from the youngest group (i.e., less than 35 years of age) are significantly more reactive, in terms of satisfaction, to the various task features of their jobs than the oldest group. Furthermore, the strength of the correlations between job satisfaction and each task dimension for respondents in the middle-age category (35-50 year olds) fall between the magnitudes of the corresponding correlations of the younger and older employee groups. It would appear, therefore, that the satisfaction responsiveness of employees to their task characteristics varies inversely with age, especially since high-order need importance did not significantly vary across the three age groups.

Influence of Age and Longevity

Since the satisfaction reactions of employees to the five task design features appear to diminish with either age or job longevity, variables which are themselves strongly interconnected, it is important to unravel and clarify their joint moderating influence. Accordingly, Table 3 compares the task dimension-job satisfaction relationships between the youngest and oldest employee groups within the different stages of job longevity. As shown by this table, the satisfaction

 Insert Table 3 About Here

reactions of both the <35 and 50+ age groups to each of the task characteristics are extremely similar within each job longevity stage. Moreover, they follow the same correlational pattern established by Table 1. Both employee age groups, for

example, are most reactive, in terms of satisfaction, to the task dimensions in the earlier job stages; and both have unrelated task dimension-job satisfaction relationships during the 10+ year period of longevity, although the sample size for the <35 age group in this period is relatively small.

In addition, there is substantial agreement between the satisfaction reactions of both age groups to their task features during the initial period of a new job. For example, both employee groups have a slightly negative correlation between autonomy and job satisfaction during this first job stage. It is also important to mention that the task dimension-job satisfaction relationships of the 35 to 50 year age group follow the same pattern as the results for the youngest and oldest respondent groups when examined within the job longevity framework. As previously suggested, these results strongly argue that the significant moderating influence of age on the satisfaction responsiveness of employees to their task characteristics is spurious and exists empirically only through the positive association between age and job longevity.

High-Order Needs and Job Longevity

Commensurate with findings from previous studies, Table 4 shows that high-order need strength also significantly moderates the task dimension-job satisfaction relationships. Except for task identity, employees in the high growth

 Insert Table 4 About Here

need strength group have significantly stronger relationships between the various task dimensions and job satisfaction than respondents in the low growth need group.

To investigate the effects of the interaction between personality and situational variables that are independent, i.e., between growth need strength and job longevity; Table 5 compares the task dimension-job satisfaction relationships of the high and low growth need groups within each stage of job longevity. Looking at

Insert Table 5 About Here

the results, it is clear that high-order need strength strongly moderates the task-satisfaction relationships in the first three job longevity periods (although not quite significantly during the initial learning stage) such that the satisfaction scores of the high need group are related more significantly to the task dimensions than the corresponding scores of the low need group. Surprisingly enough, however, during the 3-10 year period of job longevity, the satisfaction responsiveness of employees belonging to the low growth need group is slightly greater (and significantly greater for task significance) than the corresponding task dimension-job satisfaction relationships of the high need group. It may be that although the satisfaction reactions of employees with high growth needs are still not related to all of the task dimensions during the initial learning stage, they are able to accept and respond to the challenging aspects of their jobs sooner than those employees who have lower growth needs and who are more likely to be reactive when they are further along on their jobs. Most important, however, is that the satisfaction values of employees from both the high and low growth need groups are unassociated with the task characteristics of their jobs when there is substantial job longevity, i.e., in the 10+ year period.

Behavioral Results

Addressing the proposed hypothesis that satisfaction is more positively related to performance and more negatively related to turnover during those job longevity stages in which employees were most reactive to the task dimensions, Table 6 displays the comparative relationships between satisfaction and these outcome measures within job tenure periods for the small subset of respondents. It is important to mention that the pattern of satisfaction responsiveness within this small but representative



subset followed the same pattern established for the entire sample: those employees in the early job stages, i.e., 4-12 months and 1-3 years, were significantly ($p < .05$) more reactive, in terms of overall job satisfaction, to the task characteristics of their jobs than the remaining employees, especially those workers in the 10+ year longevity period.⁴

Insert Table 6 About Here

In support of the hypothesis, the results of Table 6 show that job longevity significantly influenced the relationships between overall job satisfaction and performance such that they were most associated during the job longevity stage of 1-3 years, i.e., the stage in which the satisfaction reactions of these employees were most related to their task characteristics. Moreover, satisfaction was somewhat negatively related, though not significantly, to the performance scores of respondents who had considerable job longevity and who were not especially reactive to the task dimensions. In a similar vein, job longevity significantly moderated the relationships between satisfaction and actual turnover. Employees who were dissatisfied during the 1-3 year job stage were most likely to leave the organization over the next 3 years. Eventual turnover, however, did not vary inversely with the overall satisfaction scores of employees from the 4-12 month period of job longevity. Although these findings are important and support the tendered hypothesis with respect to the job satisfaction-outcome relationships, they should still be viewed as highly speculative simply because of the small subsample sizes within each job longevity period.



DISCUSSION

The thrust of the findings from the preceding section suggests that the satisfaction reactions of employees to their task characteristics is significantly affected by job longevity irrespective of age. In fact, employees belonging to each of the age categories, including the young, the old, and the middle-age, appear to have congruent profiles or shapes of satisfaction responsiveness to the various task dimensions across the job longevity continuum. In general, the foregoing analysis suggests that the satisfaction reaction pattern, common to all three age groups, might be described by three transitional stages, i.e., an initial learning stage followed by a responsive period that gradually shifts into an unresponsive stage after considerable job tenure. Although it is impossible to validate these implied transitions with a cross-sectional study, the three stages do seem to capture the satisfaction reactions of the current respondent sample. Moreover, there were no significant differences among the various job longevity groupings with respect to job type as measured by the EEOC classification system or the means and variances of the satisfaction, high-order need strength, and task dimension measures. Carefully planned longitudinal studies, however, are needed to clarify and validate the situation.

Using these 3 stages of job longevity as a descriptive framework, employees who are in the beginning months of a new job are in the initial learning stage. During this relatively short period, it was found that the respondent satisfaction scores were only significantly related to task significance and job feedback and were unrelated to the dimensions of skill variety and task identity and somewhat negatively related to autonomy. Apparently, employees are too concerned

and preoccupied with establishing and clarifying their new situational identities to respond positively to all of the challenging task features of their new jobs.⁵

Following this initial learning stage, however, respondents in all 3 age categories were about equally and significantly reactive, in terms of satisfaction, to the various task characteristics of their jobs, especially during the 1-3 year period of job longevity. Moreover, as hypothesized, satisfaction was strongly related to both performance and subsequent turnover during this purported responsive stage, although such findings must be interpreted with caution in light of the rather small subsample size. In comparison, those respondents, regardless of age, who had been working on the same job for a considerable period of time, around 10 years or more, appear to be the inhabitants of an unresponsive stage, for their satisfaction scores were unrelated to the different task dimensions. In addition, the satisfaction attitudes of this so-called unresponsive group were somewhat negatively associated with the performance measures, though as before, the size of the subsample is rather small.

Individual Differences

In addressing the problem of individual differences, the present study corroborated previous findings that high-order need strength significantly moderates the task dimension - job satisfaction relationships. By incorporating the notion of individual differences into the job longevity framework, however, it was found that high-order need strength may, in fact, affect the rapidity or speed with which the satisfaction reactions of employees become positively related to task characteristics once a new job has begun; and not just simply whether or not the satisfaction reactions of employees are associated with the different task features. Based on the findings presented here, it was found that the task dimension - job satisfaction relationships for both the high and low growth need respondent groups followed the

pattern representing all three transitional stages, i.e., learning, responsive, and unresponsive. The important difference, however, was that employees possessing high growth needs were significantly more responsive to some of the task dimensions in the 4-12 month and 1-3 year job longevity periods than were respondents with low growth needs. On the other hand, the job satisfaction scores for the low need group were slightly more related to the task characteristics during the 3-10 year period than were the high need group. As a result, it is possible that high-order needs (or other similar personality variables such as the need for achievement) significantly affect the task dimension - job satisfaction relationships by influencing the timing and duration with which the three transitional stages transpire along the job longevity continuum. Although these cross-sectional results are important and relevant, longitudinal studies are clearly required to test these implied differences and changes. In addition, the subsample was, unfortunately, not large enough to investigate the effects of the interaction between job longevity and high-order need strength on the relationships between job satisfaction and employee performance and turnover; though in this particular study, high-order need strength did not significantly moderate these relationships by itself.

Implications

If, in fact, the three stages of learning, responsiveness, and unresponsiveness are a valid representation of the satisfaction reactions of employees to their task characteristics along the job longevity continuum, then it is possible that different change programs, policies, or managerial activities may be more relevant for employees at different job longevity stages. According to the present findings, for example, a plan which tries to enhance motivation, satisfaction, or performance by adding challenge, meaning, and responsibility to the individuals' current jobs is likely to be more pertinent and successful for those workers in the responsive stage of job longevity than for employees in the unresponsive stage. Moreover, if it is

true that employees tend to shift across the three stages, then employees who may have at one time been receptive to their task features, i.e., during the responsive stage, could become less receptive to additional challenge and responsibility or redesign efforts, in general, at a later date. Although there are many other factors that have to be considered in any job redesign effort, the present results emphasize the importance of also considering the effects of job longevity on employees' responsiveness to the task features of their jobs.

Although not explicitly covered in this study, it is also possible that different managerial behaviors are more germane during each of the job longevity stages. Since employees were found during the initial learning stage to be highly responsive to task significance but concurrently unresponsive to skill variety and slightly distressed by high autonomy, it seems likely that leadership of a more supportive, integrative, and structuring nature would be more welcomed and perhaps more effective during this brief, but nevertheless, important entry period. The need for this kind of leadership during the learning stage might also help explain why Umstot et al. (1976) found goal-setting to be more effective than job enrichment in their well-designed but short-term field experiment. On the other hand, it is possible that during the responsive job longevity stage, employees are more attentive, involved, and willing to expend additional task effort; hence, leadership of a more delegative and less structuring nature may be more appropriate. Finally, perhaps more directive and less delegative leadership may be more reasonable when employees are not particularly responsive to the task characteristics of their jobs, i.e., during the unresponsive longevity stage. Clearly, additional research is needed to test these deduced possibilities.

With respect to individual differences, the present findings attempt to enlarge upon the notion of "matching the individual to the job" or vice-versa, e.g., Lawler (1975), Mowday, Stone, and Porter (1976), Steers and Spencer (1976). In

addition to matching the amount of job challenge to the high-order need strength or the needs for achievement and affiliation of the various individuals, the present results suggest that one might also consider how quickly the individuals are expected to assume more challenging tasks as part of their jobs. It appears that individuals with high growth needs might be better matched with jobs that allow them to undertake more challenging tasks and responsibilities fairly soon into their jobs while employees with low growth needs might be better matched with jobs that gradually lead to more challenge. Most important, however, is that both need groups were found in this study to have a satisfaction responsive stage to the task characteristics of their jobs. Such results may be very helpful in the assignment of individuals to particular jobs and supervisors. Substantially more research is needed on individual differences, in general, and on the outcomes, i.e., performance and subsequent turnover, of the suggested matching procedures.

Finally, but most important, the current job longevity analysis seems to suggest that job mobility or rotation might help prevent employees from moving into an unresponsive longevity stage or might help shift employees from an unresponsive stage into the learning and subsequent responsive stage regardless of age. With a cross-sectional study of this sort, however, one cannot really ascertain if such is the case. It is possible, for example, that relatively few of the respondents in the responsive longevity stage of the overall sample were employees who had changed jobs after considerable job tenure. As a result, it is unclear from this study whether job rotation might help shift unresponsive employees into the other stages, although the likelihood that job rotation might help forestall employees from shifting into an unresponsive stage is more credible, though not specifically demonstrated, from this study. A great deal of research needs to be done on the effects of job rotation and other kinds of job changes on the responsiveness of employees to their task characteristics. From the present findings, it is possible that such changes

may be found fruitful for maintaining employee responsiveness to the task elements of their jobs--for the young as well as for the old!

The present study represents an introductory exploration into the possible affects of job longevity on employee attitudes and behavior. In addition to longitudinal support and the need to study actual job rotations and change, the present findings should be extended and refined especially regarding possible individual difference parameters and diagnostic methods and with respect to specific kinds of occupations and careers.

FOOTNOTES

1. The author would like to express his appreciation to Professor Edgar Schein, J. Richard Hackman, Chris Argyris, and John Van Maanen for their most helpful comments on earlier versions of this research.
2. In addition to these variables, a number of other moderating factors have been studied, e.g., contextual satisfaction (Oldham, 1976); organizational climate (Zierden, 1975); and organizational structure (Hulin, Hom, and Herman, 1976).
3. Unfortunately, the other three governments preferred not to participate in the performance portion of the study.
4. Using Hackman and Lawler's (1971) model for aggregating the scores of the different task dimensions into an overall Motivating Potential Score (MPS) index, the correlations between MPS and job satisfaction in each of the latter four job longevity periods were: $r = .39; .51; .20; \text{ and } -.16$, respectively.
5. See Katz (1977) for a more thorough discussion of the effects of socialization and resocialization on the satisfaction reactions of employees to task characteristics.

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TABLE 1
 Correlations With Overall Job Satisfaction
 For Different Periods of Job Longevity

Task Dimensions	Correlations with Job Satisfaction					
	All Periods	0-3 Mos.	4-12 Mos.	1-3 Yrs.	3-10 Yrs.	>10 Yrs.
Skill Variety	.23*	.02 ^a	.27*	.33* ^b	.19*	.05 ^a
Task Identity	.22*	.20	.28*	.27*	.26*	.07 ^a
Task Significance	.25*	.44* ^b	.30*	.35* ^b	.23*	.10 ^a
Autonomy	.27*	-.20 ^a	.37* ^b	.39* ^b	.28*	.10 ^a
Job Feedback	.26*	.33*	.36* ^b	.28*	.26*	.16* ^a
Job Longevity =	All Periods	0-3 Mos.	4-12 Mos.	1-3 Yrs.	3-10 Yrs.	>10 Yrs.
N =	2094	57	264	470	827	474

*p < .005

a = Correlation is significantly less than the corresponding correlation for the remaining sample (p < .01).

b = Correlation is significantly greater than the corresponding correlation for the remaining sample (p < .01).

TABLE 2

Correlations With Overall Job Satisfaction
For Different Age Categories

Task Dimensions	-----Age Categories-----		
	<35	35-50	>50
Skill Variety	<u>.28*</u>	.22*	<u>.06</u>
Task Identity	<u>.24*</u>	.20*	<u>.13*</u>
Task Significance	<u>.32*</u>	.24*	<u>.16*</u>
Autonomy	<u>.34*</u>	.26*	<u>.18*</u>
Job Feedback	<u>.30*</u>	.25*	<u>.19*</u>
N =	745	707	612

*p < .001

Note: Underlined correlations are significantly different (p < .01).



TABLE 3

Task Dimension - Job Satisfaction Relationships
By Age and Job Longevity

Task Dimension	Correlations with Job Satisfaction									
	<35	>50	<35	>50	<35	>50	<35	>50	<35	>50
Skill Variety	.10	-.09	.33*	.36*	.32*	.35*	.25*	.25*	.05	.03
Task Identity	.25	.12	.29*	.30	.23*	.23	.20*	.26*	.18	.06
Task Significance	.53*	.30	.37*	.34*	.32*	.41*	.26*	.26*	.20	.11
Autonomy	-.28	-.19	.33*	.48*	.39*	.38*	.29*	.24*	.19	.10
Job Feedback	.25	.37	.28*	.43*	.31*	.30*	.25*	.21*	.21	.19*
Job Longevity =	0-3 Mos.		4-12 Mos.		1-3 Yrs.		3-10 Yrs.		>10 Yrs.	
N =	26	14	150	48	255	76	291	207	20	265

*p < .005

Note: None of the pair-wise correlations are significantly different within job longevity periods.

TABLE 4
 Correlations With Overall Job Satisfaction
 By High-Order Need Strength

Task Dimensions	High-Order Need Strength	
	High	Low
Skill Variety	<u>.26*</u>	<u>.13*</u>
Task Identity	.23*	.21*
Task Significance	<u>.29*</u>	<u>.21*</u>
Autonomy	<u>.34*</u>	<u>.21*</u>
Job Feedback	<u>.33*</u>	<u>.20*</u>
N =	1056	1037

*p < .001

Note: Underlined correlations are significantly different (p < .01).



TABLE 5

Task Dimension—Job Satisfaction Relationships by High-Order
Need Strength and Job Longevity

Task Dimension	High Order Need Strength									
	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
Skill Variety	.16	-.11	.30*	.21	<u>.44*</u>	<u>.20*</u>	.16*	.22*	.11	.01
Task Identity	.32	.09	.32*	.24	.24*	.21*	.22*	.28*	.08	.12
Task Significance	.48*	.36	<u>.40*</u>	<u>.18</u>	<u>.40*</u>	<u>.26*</u>	<u>.17*</u>	<u>.29*</u>	.14	.17
Autonomy	-.01	-.30	<u>.43*</u>	<u>.23</u>	.43*	.33*	.26*	.30*	.16	.13
Job Feedback	.51*	.17	<u>.47*</u>	<u>.20</u>	.31*	.24*	.23*	.29*	.19*	.14
Job Longevity =	0-3 Mos.		4-12 Mos.		1-3 Yrs.		3-10 Yrs.		>10 Yrs.	
N =	28	29	149	115	237	233	416	412	226	248

*p < .005

Note: Underlined correlations are significantly different (p < .01).

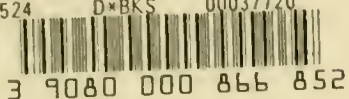
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