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Vance F. Mitchell, Vishwanath Baba et Timothy Epps

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On the Relationship Between Job Involvement and Central Life Interest

Vance F. Mitchell
Vishwanath Baba
and Timothy Epps

The present study investigates the relationship between job involvement (JI) and central life interest (CLI) for a sample of automobile workers chosen from three organizational levels containing unskilled employees, skilled workmen and foremen. Possible associations of job involvement and work as the « Central Life Interest » with job levels in the occupational hierarchy, age of the individuals and the length of employment were also explored. The results disconfirmed the hypothesized positive relationship between JI and CLI. In fact a low but significant negative relationship was obtained between JI and CLI. Job levels, age and length of employment were found to have negligible influence on both JI and CLI. On the basis of the obtained results, directions for future research are indicated.

Many have attempted to define job involvement and their definitions appeared to include a broad spectrum of concepts.¹ JI was mainly taken to be the psychological identification with work and work as contributory to one's self-esteem

MITCHELL, V.F., Professor, Chairman, Division of Organizational Studies, Faculty of Commerce and Business Administration, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C.
BABA, V., Ph.D. Student in Organizational Behaviour, Faculty of Commerce and Business Administration, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C.
EPPS, R.T., Supervisor of Human Resources Management for General Motors of Canada Ltd. in Oshawa, (Ont.)

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(Lawler & Hall, 1970, Lodahl, 1964, Lodahl & Kejner, 1965, Mansfield, 1972). Patchen (1970) associated high motivation and a sense of solidarity and pride from work with JI. Similarly French and Kahn (1962) saw involvement as the extent to which job performance was « central » to a person where centrality was the degree to which an ability affects self-esteem. Siegal (1969) also concurred with the self-esteem or self-worth idea of JI. In all of these related views psychological identification with the job and self-esteem seem to figure prominently in the definition of JI. Hence for the purpose of this study JI is defined as the psychological identification with the job.

Roughly about the same time, the concept of « Central Life Interest » was being discussed variously among sociologists. According to this concept, at one extreme were the people in whose life, work and employment occupied a central place. At the other extreme were those whose real center of life was to be found in institutions other than work. Thus central life interest was defined as the « expressed preference for a given locale or situation in carrying out an activity » (Dubin, 1956). Later Dubin (1961) explained CLI as a reflection of the degree of emotional involvement characterizing the individual in a given locale or situation. Hence it is possible that the concept of work as central life interest may be related to the concept of JI.

According to Lodahl and Kejner (1965) Wickert's (1951) research on telephone operators concerning ego-involvement, Dubin's (1956) study of industrial workers CLI and Lodahl's (1964) experiments on assembly line workers were all related to the concept of JI as they all seemed to relate, in some way or other, to the internalization of values about the importance of work in the worth of the person and perhaps to the ease with which the person can be further socialized into the organization. Maurer (1969) also suggested a small but definite relationship between JI and CLI. He obtained a point bi-serial correlation of .37 ($p \leq .01$) between the JI instrument and the CLI schedule. Since there had not been any study besides Maurer's (1969) that had specifically examined both constructs of JI and CLI experimentally the present investigators felt a need for examining the relationship between JI and CLI. In the light of the expressed similarity between the two constructs in the literature a positive relationship between JI and CLI was hypothesized here.

Maurer (1969) found that work role involvement bore a direct relationship with the levels of occupation. Weissenburg and Gruenfeld (1968)

also found that JI increased with increasing levels of satisfaction with motivator variables. Since advancement to a higher level could be taken to be a motivator variable, a positive relationship between JI and levels of occupation also was hypothesized.

Age was one variable which could be expected to bear some relationship with JI. It would be natural for the older workers to be more involved with their job. The higher involvement may be derived from the fact that they would perceive a certain amount of permanency in their job (Rakich, 1970). Some researchers had shown a low positive relationship between age and JI (Lodahl & Kejner, 1965, Rakich, 1970, Schwyhart & Smith, 1972). Hence a positive association between age and JI was hypothesized here.

Previous research showed company tenure to be unrelated to JI (Lodahl & Kejner, 1965, Maurer, 1969, Schwyhart & Smith, 1972). Hence a no relationship hypothesis was proposed between company tenure and JI.

With regard to CLI, the results of Dubin & Goldman (1972) and Orzark (1963) suggested that the percentage of people with work as CLI could be expected to increase with job level. Hence a positive association was hypothesized here between job level and CLI. Corrie (1957) and Goldman (1973) found it positively related to age. Our hypothesis here attempted to test this relation between age and CLI.

Corrie (1957) also reported a moderate association between CLI and length of tenure. The final hypothesis attempted to verify this relationship.

METHOD

Sample

The data for the present study were obtained from three levels of the organizational hierarchy in a large automotive manufacturing complex. The respondents worked either in the production aspects of the system or in service and supervisory capacities. The sample consisted of 300 unskilled workers, 200 skilled tradesmen and 150 foremen. All the respondents were male.

Measuring Instruments

Questionnaires were mailed to the respondents along with a self-addressed and stamped envelope for returning the completed questionnaires to the investigators directly. The respondents were informed that participation was voluntary and anonymity was also assured. The return rate was 34.5% for the unskilled, 43.9% for the skilled and 44.0% for the foremen, yielding an overall return rate of 39.7%. This was found to be consistent with the return rate for such surveys with no follow up.

The questionnaire consisted of three parts containing JI instrument, CLI schedule and demographic data respectively.

The JI was measured using the 6-item, shortened version of the Lodahl & Kejner (1965) instrument derived from their original 20-item scale. The responses were obtained in the form of a seven-point Likert-type scale. In all but one of the questions (item 6) answers which reflected strong agreement were interpreted as indicating high JI. This was a departure from the negative scoring used by Lodahl & Kejner in their instrument (1965). The positive scoring was adopted for ease of analysis. The direction of scoring was reversed for the negatively worded item 6.

The CLI of the subjects were measured using Dubin's original forty-item CLI schedule. The scoring was by a forced choice technique. One behaviour was specified and the subjects were given the choice to select from a job-oriented, passive or non-job-oriented response. The interested reader is referred to Dubin (1956) for a detailed description of the instrument. The behaviour described by the CLI schedule was subdivided into four categories: behaviour in formal organization; behaviour in relation to technical environment; behaviour in informal personal relations; and behaviour in areas of general life experience (Dubin & Goldman, 1972). The distribution of the schedule items in each of the above sub-categories was seven, ten, fourteen and nine respectively. In addition, an overall total score was determined for each respondent. A respondent was taken to be job-oriented if at least 50% of all his responses in each section were job-oriented. Alternatively, if 70% of the responses were equally divided between job-oriented and passive categories, the respondent was considered to be job-oriented. The remaining respondents were considered to be non-job-oriented as their responses laid more emphasis upon non-job-oriented and passive aspects. Extending the same proce-

ture, scores were obtained for the overall measure of centrality of the job as a life interest for each respondent by combining the answers to all the forty items.

The last part of the questionnaire collected information relating to the respondent's age, length of tenure and job level.

RESULTS

Factor Analysis of Job Involvement

Table 1 gives the factor loadings for the job involvement section of the questionnaire. The principal components method of factor analysis was employed with rotation to the varimax criterion (Kaiser, 1958). It was determined that three distinct and interpretable factors existed that explained 76% of the common variance and an examination of the eigenvalues also lent support to the three-factor structure. The first factor contained the scale items 1, 2 and 3 as shown in Table 1. The second contained item 5 and the third factor contained item 6. Item 4, dealing with personal involvement, was discarded owing to its ambiguous loading on the first and second factors.

TABLE 1
FACTOR LOADINGS OF THE JOB-INVOLVEMENT ITEMS

No.	Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
1	The major satisfaction in my life comes from my job.	0.826	0.206	--0.141
2	The most important things that happen to me involve my work.	0.866	-0.016	--0.117
3	I live, eat and breathe my job.	0.789	0.037	0.030
4	I am very much involved personally in my work.	0.423	0.639	--0.167
5	I am really a perfectionist about my work.	-0.084	0.904	0.068
6	Most things in life are more important than work.	-0.094	-0.020	0.985

The first factor seemed to tap the dimensions of JI dealing with the perception of work as an end in itself. The second factor could be said

to indicate an attitude of defining oneself in terms of work while the third showed an attitude of indifference or instrumentality towards work.

Table 2 presents the mean JI score controlled for job level, age and length of tenure. In the above table, the differences between the means were insignificant in most of the cases.

TABLE 2
MEAN JOB INVOLVEMENT ITEM SCORES BY JOB LEVEL,
AGE AND JOB TENURE.

	<i>N</i>	<i>Job Involvement Items</i>					
		<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
JOB LEVEL							
Unskilled	104	4.5	4.9	5.5	4.3	3.3	3.9
Skilled	88	4.8	5.2	6.1	3.8	2.9	4.1
Foremen	66	3.9	4.2	5.7	3.1	3.8	4.4
AGE							
20-29	42	5.2	5.2	6.0	4.7	3.7	3.9
30-39	85	4.9	5.1	6.1	3.9	3.3	3.9
40-49	84	4.1	4.7	5.5	3.6	3.0	4.4
50+	46	3.7	4.3	5.6	3.5	3.4	4.3
JOB TENURE							
< 1 yr.	5	4.8	4.4	6.0	3.2	2.4	4.4
1-5	50	5.0	5.1	6.0	4.4	3.5	4.0
6-10	83	4.7	5.1	5.9	3.9	3.1	4.1
11-15	9	4.6	5.3	5.8	4.0	2.7	4.0
15 +	111	4.0	4.4	5.6	3.6	3.3	4.2

Table 3 presents the results of the central life interest showing 60.8% of the sample to be job-oriented. The central life interest of the workers controlled for job level, age and length of tenure are shown in Table 4. A closer examination of the pattern of results in Table 3 casts some doubt on the suitability of Dubin's second decision criterion out-

lined in the previous section. The vast difference between the job-oriented responses obtained by the two different criteria indicated the danger of coding a large number of passive responses as job-oriented. Hence it was decided to adopt only the first criterion of Dubin for determining the job-oriented responses in the CLI schedule. This was subsequently used in the correlational analysis between JI and CLI. Table 5 presents the correlation matrix showing the relationship between JI and CLI. The factor scores were computed for each respondent summing (or using) the response values for the items or item forming the particular factor in the JI section of the questionnaire. These scores were correlated with the individual's total of job-oriented answers in the CLI schedule. Almost all the CLI measures were found to bear significant negative relationships to the job involvement factors. Thus the hypothesized relationship between JI and CLI is untenable.

TABLE 3
CENTRAL LIFE INTEREST — OVERALL ANALYSIS *
(N = 258)

	<i>Rule # 1</i>	<i>Rule # 2</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>% of Job-oriented workers</i>
Overall	6	151	157	60.8
General Relations	9	110	119	46.2
Informal Relations	2	78	80	31.0
Formal Relations	86	162	248	96.2
Technical Relations	91	82	173	67.0

* Here both the rules of Dubin were used in computing the % of job-oriented workers.

The relationships between JI and levels of occupation and age shown in Table 2 failed to support the hypothesized positive relationship and hence the null hypothesis was accepted. Table 2 also showed that JI and company tenure bore no relationship to each other.

The relationship between CLI and job level was slight as can be seen from Table 4. It was statistically insignificant and hence the null hypothesis was accepted. Similarly no significant relationships were found to exist between CLI and both age and company tenure. (Table 4).

TABLE 4
CENTRAL LIFE INTEREST BY JOB LEVEL,
AGE AND TENURE *

	<i>N</i>	<i>% of job- oriented workers</i>
<i>Job Level</i>		
Unskilled	104	56.8%
Skilled	88	62.5%
Foremen	66	65.2%
<i>Age</i>		
20-29 yrs.	42	47.7%
30-39 yrs.	85	54.1%
40-49 yrs.	84	70.2%
50 yrs. and over	46	69.6%
<i>Company tenure</i>		
less than 1 yr.	5	60%
1-5 yrs.	50	46%
6-10 yrs.	83	60.2%
11-15 yrs.	9	44.4%
over 15 yrs.	111	68.5%

* Here both rules of Dubin were used in computing the % of job-oriented workers.

TABLE 5
CORRELATION BETWEEN *CLI* SCORE AND *JI* FACTORS

<i>CLI Schedule</i>	<i>Job Involvement Factors</i>		
	<i>Factor 1</i>	<i>Factor 2</i>	<i>Factor 3</i>
Total	-0.45*	-0.18**	-0.28*
General	-0.36*	-0.09	-0.15**
Informal	-0.22*	-0.14**	-0.15**
Formal	-0.34*	-0.11	-0.27*
Technical	-0.38*	-0.15**	-0.24*

* $p \leq .01$

** $p \leq .05$

DISCUSSION

The findings indicated a significant negative correlation between JI and CLI which disconfirm the hypothesized relationship between the constructs of « job involvement » and « central life interest ». The results showed that workers who do not identify themselves psychologically with their jobs can still find their centrality of life interests within the work environment and vice versa.

In returning to consideration of the original hypothesis, it appears that in referring to JI, the investigators' failure was one of distinction. The wordings in the Lodahl and Kejner instrument suggested that the individual, rated as highly involved, must be submerged to an unusual degree in the pure work aspects of the job. Statements such as « major satisfaction in life », « most important things in my life » or « I live, eat and breathe my job » seemed to verify this as being the case. On the other hand, the Dubin schedule tended to tap a different work value than the former (Maurer, 1968). A critical examination of the Dubin schedule indicated that the statements with very few exceptions emphasized social relationships as their measures of central life interest. They seemed to tap the attitudes relating to the social environment in the work place. Given that, our results showed that the respondents were differentiating between job-work involvement and job-social involvement. This view was strengthened by Starcevich's (1973) observation that many workers who were psychologically involved in their jobs were also non-job oriented in the Dubin sense of the word.

Even though the results showed a significant negative correlation between JI and CLI, the results must be interpreted with great caution. One might argue JI as operationally defined through out instruments might well be associated negatively with CLI or social satisfaction in the work place. Yet in the light of the relatively small proportion of the total variance explained by the correlations in the present study and in the absence of replications of the obtained relationship the authors prefer to take a conservative stance and argue that the two constructs namely JI and CLI bore no relationship to each other.

It was also possible that working conditions, as suggested by Maurer (1968) might have played a significant role in moderating the relationship between JI and CLI. Siegal and Ruh (1973) indicated that organizational and situational variables could have a considerable impact on the job involvement of a person.

The results focusing on the CLI of the workers showed that the degree to which the work environment occupied a central place in their lives was much higher in the present study compared to Dubin's original study. Numerous studies on CLI suggested that Dubin's contention about the diminishing importance of work and the work place was not universal. (Blauner, 1964 ; Corrie, 1957 ; Friedlander, 1966 & Kornhauser, 1965). In fact, the CLI depended upon several job and environmental characteristics. But Dubin's predictions of higher job orientation in the formal and technical relations categories were found to be true for the present sample as shown in Table 3.

As shown before, both JI and CLI failed to bear any significant relationship with age, job level and length of tenure. Here caution should be exercised in generalizing these relationships across samples. As pointed out by some researchers (Schwyhart & Smith, 1972 ; Wood, 1972) the multidimensional JI concept would be more precisely measured by designing special scales for different occupational groups than by using the six-item instrument recommended by Lodahl and Kejner (1965). Previous research had also indicated that different factor structures were obtained for different groups making the dimensions of JI sample-specific (Wood, 1972).

Dachler and Hulin (1969) pointed out an inherent weakness in the Likert type of scoring where any possible bias towards « central-tendency » is not eliminated. Thus, in order to assess the method variance in the results, a replication of this study with a different JI instrument is needed.

In conclusion the study rejected the hypothesized positive relationship between job involvement and central life interest at the foreman-worker level in the automotive industry. Further studies are needed across organizations and across levels to enhance the generalizability of the obtained results. Since the perceptions of intrinsic motivation (Lawler & Hall, 1970) as different from JI, varies from sample to sample, it would be worth studying the relationship between intrinsic motivation and job-social involvement. The relationship between JI and CLI might present some interesting variations when moderated by organizational climate. Also it is needless to emphasize the importance of personality variables as potential moderators in the above relationship. Once these relationships have been established accurately, it will not be long before JI becomes a good predictor for certain types and ranges of organizational behaviour.

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Les rapports entre l'engagement au travail et l'idéal de vie

Cette étude a pour objet d'examiner les rapports entre l'engagement de la personne dans son activité professionnelle et ce qui constitue le centre d'intérêt principal de sa vie à partir d'un échantillon d'ouvriers de l'automobile comprenant trois catégories de travailleurs : manoeuvres, ouvriers spécialisés et cadres inférieurs.

Les définitions du concept d'engagement sont diverses et nombreuses. Un élément qu'on y retrouve toujours, c'est la tendance de l'individu à s'identifier psy-

chologiquement à son travail. Aussi utiliserons-nous ce concept dans la présente étude.

Les sociologues ont beaucoup discuté sur ce qui constitue la notion de centre d'intérêt principal dans la vie. Les uns estiment que le travail est ce qui importe le plus ; d'autres sont d'avis que le but essentiel de la vie se situe ailleurs. En fait, ce qui caractérise ce centre d'intérêt principal d'une personne, c'est sa « préférence pour un milieu physique ou social donné considéré en tant que champ d'activité professionnelle ».

Étant donné que, dans la littérature sur le sujet, les deux modèles présentent beaucoup de points de similitude, nous avons pensé qu'il existait un rapport positif entre le degré d'engagement au travail et la réalisation d'un idéal de vie. De plus, nous avons étudié les rapports possibles de l'intensité de l'engagement au travail en regard des trois facteurs suivants : le niveau de poste occupé à l'intérieur de la hiérarchie des emplois, l'âge de la personne et la durée de l'emploi.

Les résultats de cette étude sont tirés de trois sortes d'employés : travailleurs à la production, préposés à l'entretien et cadres. On comptait dans l'échantillon choisi 300 manoeuvres, 200 ouvriers spécialisés et 150 chefs d'équipe.

Les questionnaires ont été expédiés par la poste accompagnés d'une enveloppe de retour affranchie. La participation des répondants était facultative et ceux-ci étaient assurés de l'anonymat. 39,7 pour cent des personnes à qui le questionnaire avait été adressé le retournèrent.

Ce questionnaire se divisait en trois parties distinctes. Une première série de questions avait pour objet le degré d'engagement au travail des participants ; une deuxième visait à déceler leur idéal de vie ; enfin, la troisième série contenait des questions destinées à obtenir certains renseignements de caractère démographique.

On mesura le degré d'engagement en utilisant un modèle abrégé de l'échelle de Lodahl et de Kejner (1965). On avait retenu six des questions de l'échelle originale qui en comptait 20. On compila les réponses sous la forme d'une échelle du type Likert.

On mesura l'idéal de vie en se basant sur le schéma de Dubin qui comporte 40 questions et on compila les points suivant la technique du choix forcé.

À l'égard d'un comportement donné, les répondants avaient le choix entre une réponse orientée vers le travail, une réponse passive ou une réponse orientée vers un centre d'intérêt autre que le travail.

D'autre part, le questionnaire, dans la partie qui cherchait à connaître l'idéal de vie, était divisé en quatre sections : comportement de l'individu à l'intérieur d'une organisation structurée, d'un milieu technique, d'un réseau de relations sociales, dans la vie en général.

On jugea qu'un individu accordait la première place à sa vie professionnelle si, au moins, la moitié de ses réponses mettait l'accent sur son intérêt pour son travail. On conclut dans le même sens lorsque les réponses, dans une proportion de 70 pour cent, mettaient l'accent sur l'aspect travail ou se révélaient indifférentes ou passives. Quant aux autres répondants, on a constaté que leurs aspirations se situaient ailleurs que dans leur travail ou qu'ils faisaient tout simplement montre de passivité. La dernière partie du questionnaire apportait des renseignements relatifs à l'âge des personnes, à la durée de leur emploi et au rang qu'elles occupaient dans la hiérarchie de l'entreprise.

L'analyse de l'ensemble des données fit ressortir que trois facteurs expliquaient 76 pour cent des *variances* : la perception du travail comme centre d'attrait principal dans la vie, l'identification de l'individu avec son activité professionnelle ou une attitude d'indifférence à l'égard du travail.

La mesure moyenne de l'engagement, du niveau d'emploi, de l'âge de l'individu et de la durée de l'emploi ne permit pas de déceler de variations significatives eu égard à ces éléments.

Quant à la section du questionnaire portant sur l'idéal de vie, elle révéla que 60.8 pour cent des répondants le plaçait dans leur activité professionnelle. Une analyse plus approfondie des résultats pourrait permettre de douter de la valeur du deuxième critère proposé par Dubin.

L'écart marqué quant au nombre de réponses qui étaient orientées vers le travail suivant l'un ou l'autre critères fit ressortir qu'il pouvait être dangereux d'interpréter un bon nombre de réponses de type passif comme des réponses orientées vers le travail. Par conséquent, on décida de n'utiliser que le premier critère de Dubin pour isoler les réponses orientées vers le travail dans la deuxième partie du questionnaire. Par après, on l'a utilisé en vue de l'analyse corrélative entre l'engagement au travail et l'idéal de vie.

Les mesures de corrélation s'échelonnaient entre $-.09$ et $-.45$. On trouva un rapport significatif au niveau $.01$ ou au niveau $.05$ pour 13 sur 15 répondants d'où il ressort que le rapport hypothétique entre l'engagement au travail et l'idéal de vie est insoutenable.

Les rapports acceptés comme hypothèses entre l'engagement, le niveau d'emploi et l'âge ne ressortant pas, nous avons retenu l'hypothèse du résultat nul. De même, il n'y avait pas non plus de rapport significatif entre l'engagement et la durée de l'emploi. Le rapport entre l'idéal de vie et le niveau d'emploi atteint n'étant pas significatif, on retint sur ce point l'hypothèse nulle. Enfin, on ne découvrit aucun rapport significatif ni entre le centre d'intérêt principal de vie et l'âge du répondant, ni entre son âge et la durée de son emploi.

Les résultats indiquent une corrélation négative entre l'engagement au travail et l'idéal de vie, ce qui contredit le rapport hypothétique entre l'engagement et le centre d'intérêt principal de la vie. Ceci montre en réalité que des travailleurs

qui ne s'identifient pas psychologiquement à leur emploi peuvent néanmoins placer leur centre d'attrait principal dans leur milieu de travail.

Quand on y regarde de plus près, on constate que l'erreur des chercheurs concernant l'hypothèse originale réside dans la formulation du problème. Le questionnaire de Lodahl et de Kejner a permis de se rendre compte que l'individu très engagé doit être extrêmement absorbé par les aspects techniques de son activité professionnelle. Des déclarations comme « c'est la plus grande satisfaction de ma vie » ou « j'ai le travail dans la peau » semblent confirmer cette interprétation. Une analyse serrée du questionnaire de Dubin laissait voir, au contraire, une toute autre philosophie du travail, car, dans la plupart des déclarations, on considérait que les relations sociales formaient le centre d'intérêt principal de la vie. Les résultats de la présente enquête ont montré que les répondants savaient faire la distinction entre l'engagement dans le travail en soi et les aspects sociaux du milieu professionnel.

Bien que les résultats obtenus indiquent l'existence d'un rapport négatif entre l'engagement dans le travail et l'idéal de vie recherché, il faut les interpréter prudemment, car elles n'expliquent qu'en partie les variances globales. De plus, il faut noter que ces rapports n'ont pas été confirmés par un deuxième sondage. C'est pourquoi il y a lieu d'adopter une attitude prudente même si l'on peut avancer que les deux modèles, l'engagement et le centre d'intérêt principal de la vie ne présentent aucun rapport entre eux.

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