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WORKERS' REACTIONS TO THE POST OFFICE

by

Holly Frances Gardner

A Thesis  
submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
through the Department of  
Sociology and Anthropology in Partial Fulfillment  
of the requirements for the Degree  
of Masters of Art at  
The University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

1978

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1978

## ABSTRACT

### Workers' Reactions to the Post Office

by

Holly Frances Gardner

The purpose of this study was to explore workers' reactions to their work environment in the Post Office of a large Canadian city.

Karl Marx argued that the capitalist organization of work was characterized by alienation. He criticized the separation of the planning and execution of work and its development of two different classes; capitalists and workers. Marx felt that the loss of control over production by workers was the most fundamental problem facing modern society.

In the Review of the Literature, several studies were discussed which described ways in which workers attempt to re-establish control over their work environment. It was argued that in these attempts workers establish relations among themselves which form the basis for a new organization of work characterized by co-operation and workers' control.

A typology of workers' strategies was developed which categorized activities according to whether they were passive or engaging, individual or collective, and formal or informal. The five categories developed out of these

pairings were withdrawal, competitive individualism, individual restructuring of work, informal group formation, and unionism.

A total of forty-seven Postal workers were interviewed, thirty-three from the Automatic Mail Processing Plant and fourteen from the Counter Service, using a fifty-seven question interview schedule. The schedule contained both forced-choice and open-ended questions. Its purpose was to elicit from the workers information about how often they engaged in the various strategies and what they felt about them. An attempt was also made to develop hypotheses concerning factors which might affect the workers' choice of strategies.

We found that the majority of the workers thought that taking a day off now and then was a better solution to the boredom and pressure of the work than was daydreaming. Absenteeism refreshed the worker and did not interfere with the quality of the work. Workers also reported going for cigarette breaks and going to the water fountain as popular methods of withdrawal.

The workers were interested in using their own ideas on the job. They provided many examples of ways they had thought of to improve the work and to make it more interesting. Competitive individualism was not very widely used by the respondents. Very few of them were interested in getting another job in the Post Office and those that were, were not generally interested in promotion.

The company of other workers was highly valued. Most of the respondents said that they talked a great deal of the time while at work and several described games that they would play at work. There was also a system of mutual aid and the majority of the sample valued the co-operative relations that existed at work. They had also developed group strategies for fighting management, such as petitioning and work slowdowns.

Most workers did not participate in the union to a very great extent but the majority recognized the importance of the union and considered it a resource for backing up informal means of dealing with problems.

We found several relationships between the strategies and other variables. We found that those with an extrinsic or interpersonal orientation to work used informal, collective strategies while those with intrinsic orientations used informal, individual strategies; that workers in mass production jobs used passive strategies more than workers in other kinds of jobs, that workers who were closely watched by supervisors used formal methods, particularly unionism; and that the longer people worked in a job the more likely they were to use engaging strategies.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the Postal workers who took time out to answer a long and difficult interview schedule. Many of the questions took a considerable amount of thought and the respondents were willing to give this thought to the questions.

I would also like to thank the members of my Committee; Dr. Seymour Faber, my Chairman, Gerry Booth, my Second Reader, and Anthony Blair, my Outside Reader. Many of their suggestions and ideas have been incorporated into the report.

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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND  
THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE  
OF THE STUDY



The purpose of this study is to examine the ways in which workers in the Post Office react to their working environment. It is an exploratory study designed to develop a typology of workers' reactions and to suggest hypotheses for further research.

Recently, the Post Office has undergone considerable technological change. Mail which was formerly sorted by hand is now sorted by automatic machines. These machines are fed and watched over by Postal clerks. The machines are connected to a computer which reads the codes that clerks have punched on the letters and directs the letters to their proper slot.

The introduction of machinery has resulted in the creation of a work environment more closely resembling a factory than an office. While many of the workers have been hired since the introduction of automation, others have had to make the change from an office environment to an environment where the produce is referred to as "raw mail" and the work called "processing" mail. Under these circumstances the clerks face the problem of losing the distinction between their jobs and the jobs of factory workers.

The sample for this study was drawn from the workers in the automatic plant and from workers in the Counter Service of the Main Post Office in a large Canadian city. The Counter Service department is non-automated. The

clerks' main task is to serve customers. Differences between the work environment of the workers in the Automated Plant and that of the workers in the Counter Service department is one of the factors that will be looked at in this report. In addition, we will be looking at differences in work expectations, in acceptance of management's authority, in job satisfaction, in length of time the respondents plan to work for the Post Office, in how long they have worked for the Post Office, in their feelings about the importance of good performance of their present jobs on the achievement of their future goals, in the closeness with which they are watched by their supervisors, and in the degree to which their work is subject to objective count.

The theoretical perspective on which this study is based derives from the theory of alienation formulated by Karl Marx.

The term "alienation" was used by Marx to describe certain structural events accompanying the rise of industrial capitalism. Under industrial capitalism, Marx held, production is undertaken for the purpose of producing surplus value rather than to provide consumer goods or interesting activity for the workers. Because the need for constant re-investment and expansion of surplus depends on deferred gratification, a special group or class of individuals arises to ensure that surplus production will

be re-invested rather than consumed. Another class emerges which produces the goods but does not participate in decisions about re-investment. This latter class must be brought under the control of the first group if the production of surplus is to be maintained. This struggle was a historical process which spread from the establishment of legal rights over the product by the merchant capitalists to control over the raw materials, place of work, and the work process itself by the industrial capitalists.<sup>1</sup> Control over the production process itself by the capitalist class meant that this class had taken responsibility not only for the disposal of the product but also for making decisions as to what should be produced, when it should be produced, and how it should be produced. This responsibility gave the industrial capitalists two advantages over the merchant capitalists who only owned the product. First, it allowed them to introduce more efficient technical innovations into the production process. Second, it allowed them to consolidate their power over the workers by removing from the latter group the power which unsupervised work activity and a monopoly on skill had previously given them. By gathering workers together in a factory owned and supervised by the capitalist, the latter was better able to ensure that the workers were producing to their capacity. By dividing the work into minute parts management deprived the workers of knowledge



about the work process, thereby diminishing their political position in the enterprise.<sup>2</sup>

The result of this process was the creation of the wage labourer, a worker who sells his ability to work to the capitalist for money. The "wage labourer" is an ideal type which is only approximate more or less closely in industry. In Wage Labour and Capital, Marx described the situation of the wage labourer:

...the exercise of labour power, labour, is the worker's own life-activity, the manifestation of his own life. And this life-activity he sells to another person in order to secure the necessary means of subsistence. Thus his life-activity is for him only a means to enable him to exist. He works in order to live. He does not even reckon labour as part of his life, it is rather a sacrifice of his life. It is a commodity which he has made over to another. Hence, also the produce of his activity is not the object of his activity. What he produces for himself if not the silk that he weaves, not the gold that he draws from the mine, not the palace that he builds. What he produces for himself is wages, and silk, gold, palace, resolve themselves for him into a definite quantity of the means of subsistence, perhaps into a cotton jacket, some copper coins, and a lodging in a cellar. And the worker who for twelve hours weaves, spins, drills, turns, builds, shovels, break stones, carries loads, etc.--does he consider this twelve hours' weaving, spinning, drilling, turning, building, shovelling, stone breaking as a manifestation of his life, as life? On the contrary, life begins for him where this activity ceases, at table, in the public house, in bed. The twelve hours labour, on the other hand, has no meaning for him as weaving, spinning, drilling, etc. but

as earnings, which bring him to the table, to the public house, into bed. If the silk worm were to spin in order to continue his existence as a caterpillar, it would be a complete wage worker.<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of work for the workers, according to Marx, was not to produce a particular amount of goods but to acquire wages. The capitalist did not commission workers to produce a particular amount of goods but rather bought a certain amount of time in which he was entitled to direct the workers' activity. The capitalist had to ensure that the workers produced the required amount during this time. Workers and capitalists thus stood in a political relation to each other.

Since Marx's time, there have been two major developments in the capitalist organization of the work process. These have been Taylorism, or Scientific Management, and the refinement of mass production through assembly line methods of production. These two developments will now be discussed.

In the last two decades of the nineteenth century an engineer, Frederick Winslow Taylor, developed a theory of management which he called Scientific Management. This theory was intended to analyze ways in which production could be increased through a systematic reorganization of the workplace. Taylor argued that while what he considered the most fundamental motives of labour and management

appeared to be contradictory, they could be reconciled. Labour, he assumed, was primarily moved by high wages while management valued low labour costs. Taylor believed he could satisfy both groups through a more efficient and productive organization of work.

Taylor was concerned with the occurrence of "soldiering" -- that is, the restriction of output among workers. He distinguished between two types of soldiering: natural and systematic. Taylor assumed that workers were naturally lazy and tended to work slowly or to avoid work altogether when not extrinsically motivated. This accounted for natural soldiering. Systematic soldiering was purposeful, organized restriction of output, developed by the work group to protect its interests. Taylor proposed to eliminate both types of soldiering by a piecework plan based on systematic study and analysis of the work process. When rational piecework was introduced it would counteract the lazy tendencies of the workers by providing them with a financial incentive to work hard. It would eliminate systematic soldiering by destroying work group solidarity, thus introducing rigid competition among workers for higher piecework rates. Taylor thought that the fostering of individual competition among the workers was an effective management strategy for controlling workers.

Piecework rates were to be determined by analyzing each man's task into its component parts. A man from

management would then time each part of the task. This would set a standard pace by which all workers doing the job could be evaluated. Taylor thought that workers should develop a working pace which could be kept up not only throughout the day, but throughout their working lives. The workers' normal variations in work pace were to be eliminated.

All planning was to be concentrated in a separate planning department. This policy would remove all initiative and decision-making from workers whose only responsibility would be to obey management's orders. The removal from the work group of all knowledge of the production process and the concentration of this knowledge in management would greatly increase management's power over the workers.<sup>4</sup>

The second development in work organization, assembly-line techniques of mass production, demonstrated the usefulness of technology in consolidating the capitalist's control over the workers. Walker and Guest analyzed assembly-line methods in the automobile industry.<sup>5</sup> They identified six characteristics of mass production jobs:

1. mechanical pacing of work;
2. repetitiveness;
3. minimum skill requirements;
4. predetermination in the use of tools and techniques;

5. minute subdivision of the product worked on;  
and
6. surface mental attention.

The moving conveyor belt determined the pace that workers should work at. This took much of the responsibility for ensuring that workers maintained a standard pace determined by management away from foremen and supervisors. Assembly-line technology was a mechanical aid to management in instituting the type of work organization proposed by Frederick Taylor.

To summarize:

Marx treated the social relations in industry as political relations. By establishing control over both the product and the process of production the capitalist class was able to pursue its own goals in the production process--the creation of surplus value. The capitalist class thus assumed responsibility both for making the major decisions about production and for directing the workers' productive activities. The minute division of labour and the concentration of workers in factories were two important strategies in establishing the capitalists' control over the workers. In the twentieth century Taylorism and assembly-line production have systematized these strategies.

Some researchers since Marx have examined the actions which workers have taken which challenge the control over

the work process by the capitalists. These researchers have been interested in the social organization developed by the workers within the framework of the organization established by management. They have presented the work place as an area in which a struggle between two groups with conflicting goals is taking place. In Chapter II we will examine some of the studies taking this approach to the study of social relations in the work place.

1. For a discussion of this process, see Marglin, Stephen A. What Do Bosses Do?: The Origins and Functions of Hierarchy in Capitalist Production, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Institute of Economic Research, 1971.
2. For an analysis of this use of the division of labour in destroying the power structure of the skilled workers in the U.S. steel industry, see Katherine Stone. "The Origins of Job Structures in the Steel Industry", Radical America, Volume 7, 1963, pp. 19-64.
3. Marx, Karl. "Wage Labour and Capital", in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels; Selected Works, Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1972, .pp. 82-83.
4. Taylor, Frederick Winslow. Scientific Management, New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1947, pp. 64-65.
5. Walker, Charles and Robert Guest. The Man on the Assembly Line, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1952.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE



In this section we will review some of the studies which examine the activities and goals which workers in modern industry have developed.

A. Seymour Faber argues that the social relations and informal practices which workers engage in develop not just as a reaction to scientific management and mass production methods but also in active opposition to these methods. He writes:

In the modern factory there is a set of social relations that has been established by the working class that exists alongside the social relations created by capitalism. These two organizational systems, each with its own goals, and methods of struggle, are the basis for a situation that can be described as dual power.

The working classes' system of organization is generated through the co-operation inherent in their work. It functions further as a basis for humane relations among themselves, and as an object of constant strife and turmoil in their relations with capital. The worker's aim in this war is the humanization of the workplace. In so doing workers press for greater control over their work lives, thereby setting up new social relations at work.<sup>1</sup>

Central to this argument is the idea that activities such as the restriction of output, informal social organization, strikes, sabotage, and other forms of anti-management activities are not random anomalies that can be controlled by adjustments in the production process

instituted by management. Instead, they constitute an organization in the work place which is antithetical in its aims and values to the interests of organized capital.

This perspective is taken by Collins, Dalton, and Roy in their analysis of restriction of output in a factory.<sup>2</sup> They observed that there was a basic social cleavage between office and shop. Both sides had developed a set of values and goals which justified their respective behaviour. The perspective of the office included a business ethic justifying the pursuit of economic aims and deferred gratification. The workers, on the other hand, valued co-operation and enjoyment of work, adopting a critical attitude towards the attempts of management to manipulate them into higher productivity. This conflict of values is illustrated in a story recounted by one of the workers, Joe, about the time he was sent up to the office to talk with Heinzer, the superintendent.

JOE: It was a hot August afternoon and we all sat around in a big circle. Heinzer did the talking. He just went on and on about the company, and what a good place the company is to work at, and how democratic it is here, and how everybody can talk to anybody they please about any gripe, and how he wanted to hear about it if there was anything we didn't like. He just went on and on.

C: What else?

JOE: He told us about how the piecework system was set up so that nobody could hang on anybody else's shirt tail. He said it was every man for himself. He said, "You've got your friends, sure, but you're not going to give them anything unless they give you something in the way of a bargain in return."

He went on this way.

"Now, say that you want to buy a suit and you have a friend who was in the clothing business, you might go in and say, 'Look here, Joe, I'm looking for a suit and I want to pay about \$25 for it. What have you got?' Joe shows you what he has got in stock and you're pretty well satisfied with one and you say, 'I'll come in Monday with the money, Joe.' And you go out, but while you're walking down the street you see this other suit in the window. Just the same suit Joe offered you for \$30, but this outfit only wants \$25. All right, young man, which suit do you buy?

Heinzer looked right at me and I knew what he was getting at. So I thought for a minute and I said, "I'll buy the \$30 suit and lose the extra \$5 if I can help a friend out."

Heinzer didn't know what to say. He took off his straw hat and wiped his forehead with his handkerchief. Then he said, 'But that isn't good business, young man.'

I said, 'When it comes to buying a suit from a friend or from some other fellow I'll buy from a friend and I don't care about business.' (We knew we were both talking about piecework).<sup>3</sup>

The worker, in this passage is indicating to the superintendent that he rejects the competitive ethic which the superintendent values.

The authors argue that the workers did not primarily view piecework as a method for relating financial reward to ability and effort. They saw it instead as a means of increasing their freedom of action by allowing the worker to set his own production goals. In analyzing the statements and behaviour of the workers and management at the plant the authors conclude:

Involved in the thought process leading to output restriction is the workers' conception of their role in relation to

management and to the productive process. Within the three factories reported here this conception has been greatly affected by what workers feel are management attempts to manipulate them. In rejecting these attempts workers have withdrawn both from management and from the productive process. While the development of a code of output restriction is in one sense an attempt at protection for the group, at the same time it expresses a feeling-- that their motivations and goals are quite apart from those of the management-oriented employees.<sup>4</sup>

B. Some researchers have taken an interest in the emergence of informal work groups. A phenomenon which has interested many of them is the pattern of mutual aid and support that workers sometimes develop. Zalzenk studied a plant where an informal status structure developed around the patterns of help given to the operators by the more skilled machinists. He suggests that workers will ask another worker for help rather than ask a foreman because the worker will help without passing a judgement on their competence. Foremen may interpret their need for help as an indication that they are not capable of doing the work.<sup>5</sup> Seashore suggests that the giving and getting of aid among workers creates a co-operative atmosphere which relieves some of the tension engendered by the work itself.<sup>6</sup> This was evident in the comments of several workers taking part in the Hawthorne experiments.<sup>7</sup> The Bank Wiring men formed a highly cohesive group which engaged in card games, horse-racing

pools, and other games as well as mutual aid. One worker said:

Once in awhile a fellow will get behind who ordinarily is a good worker. That sometimes happens to anyone. I know one fellow down there who did that and two other fellows went over and started helping him out...I think it's a good idea to help a fellow out once in awhile. I know I appreciate it. It makes all the difference in the world. It's a funny thing, I'll be working along and be behind, and I'll feel all fagged out. Then somebody comes over and starts in wiring on my equipment with me, and you know I perk up to beat the band. I don't know; it just seems to put new life in you, no matter if he only helps you for a couple of levels. I can pick up and work like the deuce then, up till quitting time.<sup>8</sup>

The work group also develops social relations and norms which mitigate the measures taken by management to foster competition among workers. An assembly-line worker in Britain, for example, reported that on his job piece-rate differentials were eliminated by pooling the job with other workers and splitting the piecework pay equally among them.<sup>9</sup> George Homans reports that the bank-wiring workers at the Hawthorne Plant developed norms controlling the behaviour of each worker. These norms prescribed that each worker should control his output so that he works neither too much nor too little; that no worker should speak to a supervisor about something which could reflect unfavourably on another worker; and that no

one should act officiously.<sup>10</sup>

These studies provide evidence that workers actively counteract the competitiveness and social isolation imposed on them by the logic of the Taylor system. There is also evidence that workers find various methods to combat the uniform pace of work which Taylor advocated and is typified in assembly-line work.

C. Daniel Bell identified two basic concepts of time; time as a function of space and time as duree. The idea that workers should maintain a certain work pace throughout both the day and their entire length of service at a workplace reflects a concept of time as a function of space, that is, as measured by the clock, based itself on certain movements of the earth. Time can also be experienced as a function of human activity, that is time as duree. Bell writes:

These are the psychological modes which encompass the differing perceptions: the dull moment and the swift moments, the bleak moments and the moments of bliss, the agony of time prolonged and of time eclipsed, of time recalled and time anticipated--in short, time not as a function of space, but time as a function of experience.<sup>11</sup>

With its emphasis on standardization and control modern industry attempts to fit human activity into a concept of time as a function of space. Daydreaming is a common way in which the worker seeks to restructure time.

He withdraws attention from the work activity itself, making the time pass more quickly by imagining more interesting activities. Ely Chinoy describes the importance of daydreaming for making work tolerable to automobile workers. Most of the daydreaming was about leaving the automobile plant. He reports:

...the possibility of leaving the shop forms a stable topic of conversation on the job. A dozen men spontaneously observed that "everybody" or "almost everybody", talks about getting out of the shop. This endless discussion, though unrelated in most cases to feasible plans or substantial hopes, serves an important function. As one assembly-line tender puts it: "It makes the time go quicker and easier if I keep thinking about that turkey farm I'd like to buy."<sup>12</sup>

D. Withdrawal of attention from work is not the only way in which workers struggle against the organization of work and work time imposed on them by management. There is evidence to suggest that workers attempt to restructure their activities in order to obtain a greater degree of self-determination. Henri deMann thought that the attempts of Taylorism to give management complete control over the planning of the work can never be entirely successful. The individual will always find some measures to introduce his own way of doing things into the work process. He writes:

...we must recognize that in practice it is psychologically impossible to deprive any kind of work of all its positive

emotional elements. Complete subjugation of the worker by the machine is no more than a conceptual extreme, which is never realised in the world of fact. The human being refuses to accept so absolute a subordination. He clings to the possibility of a last remnant of joy in his work, without which he would pine away. All activity, however much brutalised by mechanisation, offers a certain scope for initiative which can satisfy after a fashion the instinct for play and the creative impulse. There is no kind of work which cannot be done well or ill. Even when the details of performance have been prescribed with the utmost minuteness, and in accordance with the latest dictates of the Taylor system, there will be left for the worker certain loopholes, certain chances of escape from the routine, so that when actually at work he will find it possible now and again to enjoy the luxury of self-determination. He will still be able to think out for himself means of influencing the speed or the quality of his work....He will not invariably try to make his movements as automatic as possible, so that he can free his thoughts and let them roam at large. He will be ever in search of dexterous manipulations which will enable him to get better results with less effort. The pursuit of this end will bring a certain amount of satisfaction safeguarding him against becoming utterly stupefied.<sup>13</sup>

Sayles and Strauss describe two strategies used by workers to achieve a degree of self-determination. There are changing job requirements and making a game of work.

Changing job requirements allows the worker to introduce variations in the work, thus reducing the monotony. Sayles and Strauss write:



They drag out set-ups, find excuses to pick up parts more frequently than necessary, and perhaps let the machine break down in order to create a slight change in pace.<sup>14</sup>

Walker and Guest describe an activity called "building up a bank", whereby the worker builds up a certain quantity of the product he is working on. He is then able to rest for a few moments at a time chosen by himself. Walker and Guest point out that for the worker: "the advantage is that he may--within limits--vary his work pace."<sup>15</sup> Games are another way in which workers restructure their time and activity. Donald Roy describes a game he created while working in a factory. It involved the setting up of short range production goals whereby as he did a certain amount of materials of one colour or shape he would then work on different coloured or shaped materials.<sup>16</sup> The advantage of this game was that it allowed Roy to break up the day through the accomplishment of goals rather than by the passing of uniform hours.

Workers also co-operate with each other to restructure the work and to play games. In the packing house studied by Fred Blum, the workers in the most cohesive and militant area of the plant would "carry" the work for fellow workers who were taking time out.<sup>17</sup> Aronowitz reports that workers in the Lordstown automobile factory engaged in a practice called "doubling up" which means that two men working

together take turns in doing the work of both, thus giving each in turn, a chance to rest.<sup>18</sup> Donald Roy reports

a game played by workers in the factory he worked in.

At a certain point in the day, Sammy, a worker, would bring out a peach and share it with the other workers.

This would initiate a great deal of talk and joking around.

This interruption in the work was called "peach time". At

a later time another worker, Ike, would steal a banana out of Sammy's lunch box, yelling "banana time". He would

then eat Sammy's banana. This was followed by playful

bickering among the workers. These interruptions in the

work day went on regularly, every day. There was also fish

time and coke time, as well as a number of other unnamed

times. Roy writes:

Their significance lay not so much in their function as rest pauses, although it cannot be denied that physical refreshment was involved. Nor did their chief importance lie in the accentuation of progress points in the passage of time, although they could perform that function far more strikingly than the hour hand on the dull face of George's alarm clock. If the daily series of interruptions be likened to a clock, then the comparison might best be made with a special kind of cuckoo clock, one with a cuckoo which can provide variation in its announcements and can create such an interest in them that the intervening minutes become filled with intellectual content. The major significance of the interactional interruptions lay in such a carryover of interest. The physical interplay which momentarily halted work activity would initiate verbal exchanges and thought processes to occupy group members until the next interruption.

The group interactions thus not only marked off the time; they gave it content and hurried it along.<sup>19</sup>

Bill Watson discovered that workers in the automobile plant where he worked had developed games, some of them highly organized. For example, rod-blowing contests were held, involving co-operation between the assembly workers and the inspectors.<sup>20</sup>

E. Modern industry is characterized by the fact that the workers do not own the plants they work in, the materials they use to produce, nor the products. Yet research indicates that control over these items is an important aspect of production for many workers. Alvin Gouldner, in his study of a Gypsum plant, found that a major part of the informal relations that had evolved between workers and management in the plant was the fact that the workers were allowed to use company equipment and materials for work on their homes.<sup>21</sup> Walker discovered that workers in the automatic mill he studied used the P.A. system not only for work-oriented communication but also for joking around and for social talk.<sup>22</sup> Donald Horning studied blue-collar theft in an electronics assembly plant. He found that workers classified property into three categories: personal property, company property, and property of uncertain ownership. Property of uncertain ownership was property which technically belonged to the company but which the workers felt the company was not

concerned about. Examples would be discarded materials or tools which the worker had had for so long that the company had forgotten about them. One worker expressed the importance to workers of control over property of uncertain ownership.

Most of it belongs to the Company-- but there are some things that are furnished by the Company which ya might say we own--for instance, I got me a little electric fan that I made from junk I found out there--I've got my name pinned on it--and nobody better ever try and take it--it's mine--everybody has things like that--the Company furnishes them but they are outs--the other day they had a big fight near me cause one worker took another guy's stool--you see what I mean.<sup>23</sup>

Gerald Mars studied pilferage among longshoremen. He found that the dock workers had developed a highly complex social organization for the purpose of pilfering. This is illustrated by the theft of a cargo of men's suits, an event which involved the co-operation of vessel crew, stowers, and fork truck drivers for its execution.<sup>24</sup> Other than providing the longshoremen with an addition to their wages, pilfering also gave the men a feeling of independence. Mars describes a practice called "working the value of the boat". This entails pilfering the equivalent value in goods as the wages one receives from unloading a boat. Mars writes that:

...the concept expresses a level of achievement men should aspire to. To say of a man, 'he always works the value of a boat' is a compliment; a confirmation of his independence and ability to outwit employers...<sup>25</sup>

In addition to establishing control over the materials at work, members of an organization might also seek control over areas of the building. Goffman noted this practice in the mental hospital he studied. Inmates would often find places where there were no attendants to order them about. Goffman called these areas "free places" and described them as "pervaded by a feeling of relaxation and self-determination".<sup>26</sup> Bill Watson reported that automobile workers often established the washrooms as free places.

The "off-limits" character of these areas is solid as was demonstrated when a foreman, looking for a worker who had illegally arranged to leave his job, went into one of the workers' bathrooms. Reportedly, he walked up the stairs into the room, and within seconds was knocked out the door, down the stairs, and onto his back on the floor. That particular incident involved two foremen and several workers and ended with the hospitalization of two participants with broken ribs and bruises.<sup>27</sup>

A further concern of workers is the product itself, particularly the quality of the product. William Whyte studied a test plant in which two unpopular chemical engineering graduates had just taken over supervision of the workers. These engineers issued detailed instructions

about how the work was to be done but the workers felt that many of these methods were ineffectual, and that they would be blamed for making mistakes.

To get out from under this criticism, the workers took to "boiler-housing" the figures on the Daily Operating Data sheet. When they were given instructions that they felt would not produce the required results, the workers filled in on the data sheet the readings the foremen would think correct. Meanwhile, they simply operated the plant in the way that experience had taught them would be effective.<sup>28</sup>

Bill Watson reported an extended struggle between the workers and the company over quality. The company had designed a very poor motor which the workers objected to building. The workers had many ideas on how to improve the quality of the motor but the company refused to listen to these ideas. The workers became angry and some started to sabotage the motor by misassembling or omitting parts. The sabotage of the motor was quite well organized.<sup>29</sup>

F. Workers may develop strategies for controlling the behaviour of management. Trist and Bamforth described a defense used by coal miners in Britain which the authors referred to as "self-compensatory absenteeism". If bad conditions or problems remained unresolved by those responsible the worker simply withdrew from the situation. One worker expressed this defense in saying:

I've tried cursing 'em but it's no use,  
and pleading with 'em but it's no use.

I'll take a day off for this."<sup>30</sup>

Another method workers have developed for asserting their own control over production is restriction of output. In the early 1930's Stanley Mathewson and his research assistants undertook a massive study of output restriction as practiced by unorganized workers. They studied over 100 workplaces and interviewed nearly 350 workers. They recorded 223 instances of output restriction. An important motive among the workers was the fear that if management knew how hard they were capable of working it would cut the rates for a job. The workers would then have to work harder for the same amount of money. Workers also restrict output because of grievances against the company. Workers, particularly resented companies which paid low rates. In a machine manufacturing plant characterized by low pay and extensive loafing, one worker stated:

We would carry our tools needlessly from one part of the shop to another; hammer at pieces for no reason at all; purposely get tied up with crane work when no crane was available, and make unnecessary and prolonged trips to the 'library'.<sup>31</sup>

Often workers will be interested in developing more effective production methods but judge that to do so would be against their own interests. For example, if they invent a tool which increases production, management may find out and increase production quotas. The worker may

end up having to work harder to make the same wages.

Seymour Faber called this "the worker at war with himself".

He writes:

Workers face a situation where the exercise of initiative or ingenuity interferes with management's plans or acts to their own detriment so that to be involved and inventive is either suppressed or hidden from management. In this regard, there is evidence of workers building labour saving jigs and fixtures or devising short cuts in their jobs and hiding them to ensure their not being detected by management out of fear that it will be used by the company to raise the workers' work standard.<sup>32</sup>

In a workplace characterized by class conflict the worker's concern for the product may turn into sabotage of the product. Harvey Swados reported the ambiguous attitudes that automobile workers have towards their product, the automobile. On the one hand, they admire the product, seeing it as a symbol of the material goods which their earnings are making available to them.

On the other hand it is hated and despised-- so much so that if your new car smells bad it may be due to a banana peel crammed down its gullet and sealed up thereafter, so much so that if your dealer can't locate the rattle in your new car you might ask him to open the welds on one of those tail fins and vacuum out the nuts and bolts thrown in by workers sabotaging their own products.<sup>33</sup>

Laurie Taylor and Paul Walton have classified



sabotage into three categories: attempts to reduce tension and frustration, attempts at easing the work process, and attempts to assert control. The first category is categorized by the arbitrariness of the target and the spontaneity of the act. Further, this type of sabotage does not seem to be directed towards an end but is an end in itself. It is not directed towards restructuring social relations or power, it does not make the work any easier, and it does not directly challenge authority. An example which the writers give from their research is of a young fitter in a carpet factory who started a fire that caused a great deal of damage. The fitter testified in court that he had not intended to start a big fire and referred the court to the smaller fires which he had started in the factory. The plant had been characterized by low pay and poor working conditions. Sabotage served as a way of releasing tension as well as providing relief from the work while the fires were being put out. Under this category the authors include sabotage which is undertaken for fun and is usually collective rather than individual.

The second type of sabotage is undertaken to ease the work process. While this type of sabotage does not aim to restructure social relationships it can directly challenge some levels of authority. It attempts to make the work easier, involves planning, and has a highly

specific target. These activities usually involve the workers ignoring some of management's instructions in order "to get on with the job".

A humorous, and undoubtedly apocryphal, example draws attention to the ingenuity with which workers may 'rig' a situation in order to facilitate the completion of tasks. The story, from Soviet Russia, describes the dilemma faced by management and men in a screw factory when they were obliged to carry out the apparently impossible State-defined requirements of producing twenty thousand tons of brass screws per year. A massive act of sabotage realized the target: they produced one almighty screw filling the factory and weighing exactly twenty thousand tons.<sup>34</sup>

The third category is sabotage used in an attempt to assert control. This type of sabotage aims to restructure social relationship, is usually planned or coordinated and is directed against those in power. An example of this type of sabotage is the machine-smashing of the Luddites in the early 19th century, who used sabotage in an attempt to establish a bargaining position. This type of sabotage tends to be highly self-conscious and is seen as a strategy of struggle.

Sit-down strikes are quite commonly used by workers to resist control by management. A spot welder interviewed by Studs Terkel described a sit-down strike that he took part in at an automobile plant. This action was initiated by a foreman who was harassing a black worker. The worker

reacted by pushing or grabbing the foreman. To ensure that disciplinary measures would not be taken against him the other workers on the line sat down for twenty minutes. The worker reporting the sit-down was very enthusiastic about it saying:

Jim Grayson, the guy I work next to, he's colored. Absolutely. That's the first time I've seen unity on that line. Now it's happened once, it'll happen again. Because everybody just sat down. Believe you me. (Laughs). It stopped at eight and it didn't start till twenty after eight. Everybody and his brother were down there. It was really nice to see, it really was.<sup>35</sup>

At Lordstown, the workers discovered that sit-down strikes had several advantages over walk-outs. Aronowitz quotes a skilled worker who said;

It would be better to sit down on the job and make them pay our wages. Last night we maintenance welders were given a direct order to repair an electric motor. We refused because that's the job of the electricians. We didn't wildcat because we knew the company wouldn't talk to us if we were on the outside. We simply sat down by the machines. In a few minutes the committeeman was there and the foreman took it up to the upper echelons of supervision. They were embarrassed that they had violated the contract. They took back their direct order to do electricians' work.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to sit-down strikes, wildcat strikes have become prevalent in the last few decades. In their study of the wildcat strikes during World War II Scott

and Homans found that most of the strikes were directed against company discipline, policies, or discharge of employees. They give an example of a walkout precipitated by the discharge of an employee for insubordination. Seven workers stopped work in protest and when five of them were fired, 320 workers left the plant.<sup>37</sup>

Alvin Gouldner studied a wildcat strike which took place at a gypsum plant in a small American town. The strike was initiated by three major changes which management instituted in the plants. First, new machinery was introduced into the plant without consulting the workers. Second, because the machinery was new, management was constantly experimenting with it, leading to constant speed-ups and uncertainty among the workers about how much work was expected from them. Third, the new machinery brought members from upper management around the plant more frequently than they had been before, leading the workers to feel under more stringent supervision and pressure. The changes which took place in the plant created a great deal of anxiety and hostility among the workers, finally erupting in a walkout.<sup>38</sup>

G. Summary. In the review of the literature studies have been discussed which illustrate some of the active ways in which workers struggle against the organization of work developed by management. Evidence was presented that suggests that workers develop ways of mitigating

the competition and social isolation among themselves which Scientific Management attempts to induce. Workers may also attempt to establish control over the pace of work and the organization of the work. Sometimes workers attempt to establish control over the tools they work with and the product they work on. Finally, these studies described strategies workers have developed for challenging the authority of management in the workplace directly. Restriction of output, sit down strikes, and wildcat strikes are all weapons that workers have developed for increasing their control in the workplace.

In Chapter I, it was argued that the capitalist class has developed strategies for establishing and consolidating its control over the work process. Its purpose in doing so was to enable them to increase the amount of surplus value available for re-investment. In the present chapter, methods which the workers have developed to increase their control over the work process have been discussed. The present study draws on the workers' activities reported in the literature to develop a typology of workers' strategies in the work place and to explore the workers' thoughts about these strategies. The next chapter will describe the present research project.

## Chapter 2

FOOTNOTES

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CHAPTER III

THE PRESENT RESEARCH PROJECT

This chapter will propose a typology for classifying workers' strategies, explain the specific objectives of the study, describe the operationalization of the concepts, and discuss the research methods.

A. Types of Strategies

1. In the above review of research into workers' behaviour several activities of workers were discussed. Among these were daydreaming, talking, games, mutual aid, output restriction, absenteeism, restructuring jobs, sabotage, and strikes. To the kind of behaviour elicited in the previous chapter, two others may be added. The worker may accept the ethic of competition and work hard in order to get ahead on his own merits or he may work through the union to change the job.

The above behaviours can be classified into three pairings. Some of them, such as daydreaming and absenteeism, are passive. They involve withdrawing from work rather than trying to change it in some way. Others, such as restructuring jobs, sabotage, and games are engaging; rather than withdrawing from the work place the worker becomes more involved in his surroundings than the work itself requires. The strategies of workers can be classified into groups depending on whether they involve withdrawal or engagement. Another way in which they can be classified is by whether they are done alone or in a group. "Building up a bank", for example, is an individual method of restructuring

jobs while "doubling up" is a collective way of restructuring work. Whether an activity is individual or collective is another way of classifying workers' strategies. The third way in which the strategies can be classified is by whether or not they utilize the formal organization at the plant; either the formal union structure or the formal management structure. Workers' strategies are formal if they employ the formal organization at the plant and informal if they bypass the organization.

The above three ways of classifying workers' strategies help to organize the data reported in the literature. They are intended to organize behaviour, not individuals. Thus, one worker at different times may engage in each type of strategy in an attempt to make his work tolerable.

2. Five categories of workers' strategies have been developed out of these pairings. These are: withdrawal, competitive individualism, individual methods of restructuring jobs, informal group formation, and unionism. These categories will now be discussed in more detail.

a. Withdrawal. This strategy involves the worker removing his attention and sometimes his physical presence from the entire work environment. The two most common activities which constitute withdrawal are daydreaming and absenteeism. Withdrawal is passive, individual, and informal.

b. Competitive Individualism

Workers using this strategy compete with other workers for better jobs in the plant. It involves reliance on meeting the requirements for advancement or transfer. Where the union has established promotion or transfer by seniority or where transfer or promotion are easy to obtain the workers may engage in very little competition and may not perceive themselves as competing with others at all. However, where management has encouraged competition among workers and no worker organization has emerged to discourage it this strategy may result in extreme mistrust among the workers. The janitors studied by Raymond Gold provide an example of an occupation dominated by this strategy. Gold describes the practice of "cutthroating" among janitors whereby one janitor tries to steal another janitor's buildings. This lack of solidarity among janitors resulted in each janitor having to work extremely hard in order to keep the buildings. One janitor explained to Gold:

Now take me--I'm luck, I'm alone on this block. The only other building I haven't got is that six-flat next door. My mother-in-law owns it, and Joe is janitor there. I don't have to worry about cutthroating, you see. Take the case where a janitor has three big buildings in a row like I have, and say there's a two flat next to them that another janitor has got. Say it's a snowy day. Well, what that other janitor does is clean away the snow real quick all the time and keep the two-flat building looking spic and span. Pretty soon one of

your owners asks you why you don't get the snow shovelled so fast and neat like the janitor who has the two-flat does. Then you tell him that it takes more time for you because you have so much more to do than the other guy. Then the owner says that if that's the case he had better give his building to the other janitor. Some janitors are pretty smart, and they pull that stuff on each other to get their buildings away from them. Out east of here where the apartment buildings are thicker than flies, it's really terrible. When one janitor is seen on the street with a mop in his hand, every janitor on the street gets his mop out and lets everybody know he's got the mop out too. When one mops, they all mop.<sup>1</sup>

When competitive individualism occurs in a plant, it is individual, engaging, and oriented to the formal organization of the workplace.

c. Individual Methods of Restructuring Jobs

In adopting this strategy workers attempt to humanize the work place by using such methods as individual games, for example, the quota game described by Roy<sup>2</sup>; the development of individual "systems" of doing the work; and individual output restriction and sabotage. Government work and pilferage without the aid and support of the work group are also included. This strategy is individual and active. It is not oriented to the formal organization of the plant.

d. Informal Group Formation

The worker may attempt to develop and assert some control over his environment by joining with other workers into informal groups. Activities which are included in

this category are group games, conversation, the getting and giving of aid, doubling up, wildcat strikes, organized restriction of output, and sabotage. Informal group formation is collective, engaging, and informal.

e. Unionism

Workers using this strategy depend on the union to further their interests. They emphasize the importance to the workers of having labour-management relations written out formally in the contract. Their complaints are usually taken up by grievance procedure. This strategy is collective, engaging, and formal.

3. The categories which have been developed from the three pairings were not exhaustive. There were three other possible combinations which have not been developed into categories. One combination that was not included was activities which were withdrawing, social, and informal. However, any activity which is socially organized would involve a certain amount of engagement to accomplish. For example, a walkout might be considered collective absenteeism yet the fact that it is collective means that the workers involved in the walkout are directing their attention to an aspect of the work place; their fellow workers. The same argument would apply to the second combination, those activities which are withdrawing, social, and formal. The third combination, activity which is withdrawing, individual, and formal bears some resemblance

to Merton's category, "ritualism", which is part of his typology of anomie.<sup>3</sup> The individual using "ritualism" follows the means which the organization prescribes for him but withdraws interest from pursuit of the prescribed goals. In the case of industrial behaviour this would mean that the individual is attentive to the type of productive behaviour which management wants from him but is not striving for the rewards it promises him, for example, transfer or promotion to a better job. This response, however, does not make the work more tolerable for the worker; either by concentrating on or doing something else, as in the case of withdrawal, by restructuring the work some way, by trying to get another job in the workplace, or by directly struggling with management to change the job in some way. The third response is really an adjustment which the worker makes to the organization of the work.

B. Specific Objectives of the Study. In the statement of purpose it was stated that it was the intention of this study to examine the ways in which workers in the Post Office react to their work environment. There are three specific objectives of the study.

1. The first objective of the study was to explore the extent to which workers exhibit the various strategies. We wanted to know how often the workers use each type of strategy.

2. The second objective was to find out what the

workers thought about the various strategies available to them. We wanted to know, for example, were some strategies considered more effective than others by the workers? Were some strategies rejected because they went against the worker's values? Did they think some of the strategies were harmful to themselves or others?

3. The third objective of the study was to identify variables which may determine the use of one particular strategy rather than the others. We looked specifically at three factors which may be related to the use of a particular strategy: expectations about work; acceptance of management's authority; and the technical organization of work. These factors will now be discussed.

a. Work expectations. Critics of the modern, highly rationalized organization of work have emphasized needs which workers have for self-fulfillment and self-expression in work. When these needs are not met workers experience dissatisfaction.<sup>4</sup> Other writers such as Dubin<sup>5</sup> and Goldthorpe<sup>6</sup> have argued that many workers do not expect these types of rewards from work, developing instead an instrumental orientation to the hours spent at work. Fox points out that the daily experience of those in the lower level occupations does not teach them to develop high expectations towards work. He writes:

For large numbers of people, therefore, and particularly those in the lower ranks of



the occupational hierarchy, the lesson taught by the experience of work is that it must be expected to offer mainly extrinsic satisfaction. Intrinsically; it must be expected to be burdensome, restrictive, and often irksome, involving subjection to the control of others and often proving monotonous and stultifying in the bargain.<sup>7</sup>

We attempted to determine the expectations that workers have towards work. Orientation towards work, that is, whether the worker expects both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards or whether he has only an instrumental orientation, will be related to the type of strategy he adopts.

b. Attitudes toward the legitimacy of authority.

Because it is extremely difficult for any authority to constantly police the activities of its subordinates, it usually develops an ideology which is designed to justify its right to govern and norms which are designed to legitimize the rules it imposes on its subordinates. In this section we explored the workers' internalization of the rules they work under and their acceptance of the right of management to direct their activity during work hours.

c. Technology and the organization of the job. The

worker was asked several questions about the organization of his job. Each of the two types of job we looked at in this study will be evaluated in terms of the features of mass production work which

Walker and Guest have described.<sup>8</sup> These were: mechanical pacing of work, repetitiveness, minimum skill requirements, predetermination in the use of tools and techniques, minute subdivision of the product worked on, and surface mental attention.

There were, then, three objectives to this study. The operationalization of the concepts that are used in each objective will now be discussed.

C. Operationalization of the Concepts.

1. The first objective of the study was to find out how often the workers engage in the various activities. An ordinal scale was used for reporting how often the workers engaged in the activities they reported. For example, if the worker reported that he daydreamed at work he was then asked whether he daydreamed all of the time, most of the time, about half of the time, or not very much of the time. The five strategies will now be operationalized.

a. Withdrawal. If the respondent reported that he daydreams at work or that he takes days off without being sick this will count as withdrawal.

b. Individual Competitiveness. When a respondent reported that he had competed with other workers or that he was taking action or planning to take action toward getting another job in the Post Office this was counted as individual competitiveness.

c. Individual Methods of Restructuring Jobs. If a respondent reported that he took steps towards establishing control over his pace of work, if he said that he devised his own system of working, if he reported any measures which he took to make the work more interesting, or if he reported that he engaged in individual sabotage, this was counted as individual methods of restructuring jobs.

d. Informal Group Formation. Informal group formation was counted if the respondent reported that he talked to other workers during work time, if he talked to them during coffee or lunch break, if he saw any of them after work, if he reported talking or playing games with other workers, if he reported restructuring work with any other workers, or if he reported the giving or getting of help with the work to or from other workers respectively. It was also counted if he reported participating in a wildcat strike or organized sabotage.

e. Unionism. If a worker reported that he attends union meetings regularly or if he reported having used the grievance procedure, or if he was a union official, unionism was counted.

2. The second objective of the study was to examine the workers' thoughts about the strategies. No presuppositions were made about the possible responses which may emerge to

questions asking the workers to evaluate the strategies. The questions were quite general. An example of the type of question the respondent was asked is: "Do you think that talking with other people is a good way to make the time spent at work more enjoyable or not? Please explain?" The categories that develop were reported under two broader classes: favourable assessments of a strategy and unfavourable comments about a strategy. These categories were reported on frequency tables.

3. The third objective was to develop hypotheses about the use of the strategies. The workers were classified into the different categories of reactions depending on how often they used each strategy and what they thought about the strategy.

There were three factors that we looked at to see if they had any bearing on the choice of strategy: work expectations, acceptance of the authority structure, and the technical organization of the job. Respondents were asked several questions about each of the factors.

a. Work Expectations. Here we looked at whether the worker had an instrumental or an intrinsic orientation to work. The instrumentally-oriented worker saw work primarily as a means to make money for his life away from work. He was not emotionally involved in his work. He said that if he inherited enough money to live comfortably without working he would not continue

to work. The intrinsically-motivated worker thought work should be interesting and challenging, was involved in his job, and said that he would continue to work even if he inherited enough money to live comfortably.

b. Acceptance of the Authority Structure. The high-acceptance respondents said they followed all or most of the rules, said they would follow a rule that doesn't make sense to them even if there was no one around to catch them breaking the rule, thought that most of the rules were necessary, thought that supervisors were necessary, and accepted the right of management to direct all their productive activities. The low acceptance respondents said they sometimes broke the rules, that they would not obey a rule that didn't make sense to them if no one was around, thought that few of the rules were necessary, and thought that workers should have more say in the planning of work and the making of rules.

c. Technology and the Organization of the Work.

Under this category we were interested in comparing the strategies of workers who work in the Counter Service department (or Wickets) with those who worked in the automatic plant.

D. Research Methods.

1. The Sample. A sample of thirty-five workers was randomly drawn from a union list of 303 workers at the Mail Processing Plant. Their addresses were obtained from the City Directory. Four of the people in the original sample had left the Plant and these were replaced by four other workers. Two members of the sample refused to participate in the study. The sample of workers in the Mail Processing Plant consisted of thirty-five people with two refusals. We approached the entire population of workers in the Counter Service Department, or Wickets, of the Main Post Office. This was twenty people. Six refused to participate and so the final sample of Wicket workers was fourteen. The total sample, then, was forty-seven.

The sample consisted of forty-three percent males and fifty-seven percent females.

TABLE 1

Sex

(in percentages)

Male . 43.0

Female 57.0

Total percent 100.0

N = 47

Twenty-three percent of the respondents were twenty-five

years of age or under, thirty-six percent were between twenty-six and thirty-four, eleven percent were between thirty-five and forty-nine and twenty-three percent were over fifty.

TABLE 2

Age

(in percentages)

25 years or under	23.0
Between 26 and 34	36.0
Between 35 and 49	11.0
50 and over	23.0
Non-response	7.0

Total percent 100.0

N = 47

Fifty-seven percent of the respondents were single, separated, divorced, or widowed while thirty-eight percent were presently married.

TABLE 3

Principal wage earner

(in percentages)

Principal wage earner	68.0
Share equally	9.0
Not principal wage earner	17.0
Non-response	6.0

Total percent 100.0

N = 47

The sample, then, was largely female, under thirty-five and not presently married. The members generally had a good education and most of them were the principal wage earner in their family.

2. The Questionnaire and Interviewing. For the purposes of data collection we constructed a fifty-seven question interview schedule (See Appendix 1). The majority of the questions were forced-choice but quite a few were left open-ended. Generally, the respondent would be asked a forced-choice question and then be asked to explain his or her answer. Two interviewers were used to interview the forty-seven respondents; one a graduate student in sociology and the other a former postal clerk with some experience in interviewing. The interviews were conducted in the respondents' homes and took from one half hour to an hour to complete.

3. Editing, Coding, and Check-coding. The interviews were edited immediately after the interview by the interviewers. All the coding and check-coding was done by myself. Every interview schedule was checked for correct coding.

E. Summary. In this chapter we have described the typology of workers' strategies, explained the objectives of the study, discussed the measures to be used, and described the research methods. In the next chapter, we



will describe the work activities of the clerks working at Counter Service and those working in the Mail Processing Plant.

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CHAPTER IV

THE WORK

The purpose of this section of the report is to provide a description of the work activities required of each of the two groups of postal workers and to report the workers' feelings about these activities. We will compare the job descriptions and job satisfaction of the clerks working in the Automatic Plant with those of the clerks working in the Counter Service.

A. Descriptions of the work.

1. The Automatic Plant. The mail is first separated into parcels and letters and the letters are sent to the plant. The letters go through the Culler/Facer/Canceller machine. An operator loads the mail into the machine and watches the mail go through to ensure that the mail does not get jammed in the machine. If the mail does get jammed the operator either clears the jam or calls in a mechanic. The Culler sorts mail into those pieces which fit the standardized requirements of the automatic processing system for thickness, size, width, and stiffness and those which do not fit. The latter pieces of mail are rejected and set to manual sortation. The Facer/Canceller then turns letters face up and cancels the stamps. This is done at a speed of up to 17,000 letters an hour. The cancelled mail is then transferred by clerk to either a coding suite or to the Optical Character Reader. The coding suite is a set of twelve coding desks, with an

operator sitting at each desk. The mail is fed into the suite by a clerk. Each letter drops in front of an operator who reads the code and then punches the code on punch keys. The code which the operator has punched flows into the computer which instructs a printing device to print yellow bars on the envelope. The letters then go down a conveyor belt to output stackers. Letters which don't have the postal code are rejected and sent to manual sortation. Letters with the code are taken from the output stacker by a clerk who feeds them into the LSM, or letter sorting machine. The Optical Character Reader is used to read codes which are typewritten on the envelope. The machine reads the code on the envelope and the computer instructs a printing device to print the correct bar-code. Mail that the Optical Character Reader rejects goes either to the coding suites or to manual sortation. Mail which the machine has coded goes to the LSM. Letters which have arrived at the LSM from either the coding suite or the Optical Character Reader are scanned for the bar-code. This information is sent to the computer which tells the LSM to place the letter into one of 288 bins. Clerks take the sorted mail from the LSM to bags or cases. When the bags or cases are filled they are put down a chute.

Mail that has been rejected by the machines are taken to manual sortation. Here, clerks sit in front of cases which are divided into sorting slots. As new mail comes in, it is brought around to the manual sorters by

mail handlers. The mail handlers remove the sorted mail.

Workers in the plant frequently rotate jobs. The Post Office requires these clerks to be familiar with all the different tasks in the plant.

2. The Counter-Service. There are eighteen clerks plus two rotational day relief clerks assigned to the Main Post Office Counter Service. The eighteen positions are covered by each clerk on a monthly rotational basis. The hours of operation of the Wickets are from 6 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, 7:45 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday. The various duties of these clerks are as follows.

(1) A clerk lists in a call book all Registered Mail which failed of delivery by the letter carriers the previous day, for residents of the West End of the city and the Downtown Business section. (2) A clerk lists in a call book registered mail for the Main Office boxholders while another lists received mail for customers at general delivery in a call book. (3) A clerk hands out Money Packet classification registered items to the Loomis Armoured Car Service and bank messengers. This is done in a security vault. (4) The C.O.D. clerk writes up in a book all the C.O.D.'s that haven't been delivered by a mail carrier. They also receive all the money that has been collected from C.O.D. customers by the mail carriers. The clerk has to account for the money and make up all the money orders to the company from which the item was ordered. (5) All

the short paid postage due for box holders and for anyone who wasn't home is sorted by a clerk, bundled up, and a bill made up. This bill is then entered into a customer's account and the amount is deducted from the account.

(6) All the parcels that are not delivered have to be labelled and put on a shelf to wait for the customer to pick them up. All parcels and registered mail and certified mail that have not been picked up within five days have to have a final notice card issued. (7) Money order and postal stamp clerks weigh mail, give the rates to customers, sell stamps, money orders, and cash money orders. They also accept payment on government annuities. The stamp wicket clerks accept payments for C.O.D. They also rent post office boxes and issue keys. This involves keeping records of the boxes. They keep a balance of the money orders issued. (8) The parcel post clerks accept parcels for sending and postage on scales. They also hand out carded parcels, certified letters, and postage due items. They dump mail bags down a chute. (9) Another section sets postage into postage machines which are rented by companies. The clerks in this section transfer postage meters from one post office to another when the companies renting them move. A major part of this job is keeping records of all these postage meters. They accept payments for "postage paid in cash" which are deposits for people who receive mail regularly with postage due. The postage machine clerks set up accounts so there will be money to cover the postage.

(10) The General Delivery clerks sort all general delivery mail alphabetically and deliver over the counter to customers. (11) The late registration clerks receive items to be registered for forward despatching over the counter and deliver over the counter all carded registered items. They then despatch the registered mail to the fourth floor. (12) The Philatelic section sells collectors' stamps and other items such as coins.

This then, is a brief summary of the work duties performed by our respondents.

B. Mass Production and the Post Office. In Chapter One we listed the six characteristics of mass production work analyzed by Walker and Guest. These characteristics were:

1. mechanical pacing of work,
2. repetitiveness,
3. minimum skill requirements,
4. predetermination in the use of tools and techniques,
5. minute subdivision of the product worked on, and
6. surface mental attention.

We would now like to contrast the work done by Wicket clerks with that done by clerks in the Automatic Plant to see which activities more closely resemble mass production work. The respondents were asked the five following questions regarding their work:



1. How long did it take to learn to do your job?
2. Is your job repetitious?
3. On your job, how much of the time can you think about things other than the work?
4. Can you control the speed at which you work or is it controlled by machinery?
5. Does your work allow you much freedom in determining how to do the work?

These questions were intended to elicit information regarding, respectively, skill requirements, repetitious work, required mental attention, mechanical pacing, and restrictions on the workers' determination of work techniques and methods. We did not ask the workers about the subdivision of the product worked on as the wicket clerks do not work on a single product but rather provide a variety of services.

1. Skill. Walker and Guest maintain that modern mass production techniques tend to curtail or eliminate the skill that characterized craft industries. We asked the respondents how long it took them to learn to do their job. The replies were divided into three categories: minimum skill, requiring two weeks or less of training; medium skill, requiring between two weeks and six months; and maximum skill, requiring over six months to learn their job. Of the workers in the Automatic Plant, thirty-nine percent reported that it took them two weeks or less to

learn their job, thirty-nine percent reported that it took them between two weeks and six months, and twenty-two percent reported that it took them over six months. Forty-three percent of the workers in Wickets reported learning their jobs in two weeks or less, seven percent said it took between two and six months to learn, and fifty percent reported that it took them over six months to learn their job. Several said that they were still learning. The difference between the two groups was statistically significant at the .04 level, with Plant workers reporting less skill requirements than Wicket workers.

TABLE 6

Length of time taken to learn job	Type of Work	
	1. Plant (in percentages)	2. Wickets (in percentages)
1. Under 2 weeks	39.0	43.0
2. Between 2 weeks and six months	39.0	7.0
3. Over 6 months	22.0	50.0
Total percent	100.0	100.0

N = 47

Cramer's  $\gamma = .35310$  Chi square = .04

2. Repetitiveness. We then asked the respondents if their job was repetitious. Fifty-eight percent of the workers in the Automatic Plant reported that their work

was very repetitive, thirty-nine percent reported that it was somewhat repetitive, and three percent said that it was not at all repetitive. Of the workers in Wickets, twenty-nine percent said that their work was very repetitive, fifty-seven percent said their work was somewhat repetitive, and fourteen percent said their work was not at all repetitive. The differences between these two groups was significant only at the .11 level. However, this could be due to the small size of the sample.

TABLE 7

Repetitiousness of work	Type of Work	
	Plant (in percentages)	Wickets (in percentages)
Very	58.0	29.0
Somewhat	39.0	57.0
Not at all	3.0	14.0
Total percent	100.0	100.0

N = 47

Cramer's V = .30366      Chi Square = .11

3. Required Mental Attention. Walker and Guest argue that one of the most dissatisfying aspects of mass production work is the surface mental attention required by the work. This means that while the job does not provide enough stimulation for the worker to become completely involved

in his work, it does require too much attention to allow him to become involved in other activities such as daydreaming and talking. We asked the respondents how much of the time they could think about things other than their work. If the respondent answered never his job was defined as requiring high mental attention, if he answered not much of the time or some of the time his job requires surface mental attention, and if he answered all of the time or most of the time his job requires low mental attention. Among the workers in the Plant, forty-eight percent said they could think about other things all or most of the time, thirty-three percent said they could think about other things some of the time, and nineteen percent said they could think about other things never or rarely. Fourteen percent of the Wicket workers said they could think about other things all of the time, thirty-four percent reported that they could think of other things some of the time, and fifty percent said they could never think about other things. The relationship between mental attention and type of work was Cramer's  $V = .37519$ , significant at the .03 level, although there was very little difference between the two groups in regard to surface mental attention.

TABLE 8  
Type of Work

	Type of Work	Plant	Wickets
		(in percentages)	(in percentages)
How much of the time can you daydream?	All of the time	48.0	14.0
	Some of the time	33.0	36.0
	Not much of the time	19.0	50.0
	Total percent	100.0	100.0

N = 47      Chi Square = .03

Cramer's V = .37519

4. Mechanical pacing. We then asked the respondents if they controlled the speed at which they worked or if it was determined by machinery. Eighty-two percent of the workers in the Plant said that they could control the speed at which they work while eighteen percent said that the speed was determined by machinery. All of the workers in Wickets said that they could control the speed at which they work.

TABLE 9  
Type of Work

		Plant (in percentages)	Wickets (in percentages)
Control Over Work Pace	Yes	82.0	100.0
	No	18.0	0.0
Total percent		100.0	100.0

N = 47

Chi Square = 21

Phi = .24917

5. Predetermination of tools and techniques. Lastly, we asked the workers if their job allowed them much freedom in determining how to do the work. Thirty-three percent of the Plant workers reported complete freedom, twenty-one percent reported some freedom, and forty-six percent reported not much or very little freedom. Of the workers in Wickets, sixty-four percent reported complete freedom in determining work techniques, fourteen percent reported some freedom, and twenty-two percent reported very little or no freedom. While the difference was significant at only the .13 level a larger sample may increase the significant differences between the two.

TABLE 10  
Type of Work

Freedom in determining work techniques	Type of Work	Plant	Wickets
		(in percentages)	(in percentages)
	Complete	33.0	64.0
	some	21.0	14.0
	Not much	46.0	22.0
	Total percent	100.0	100.0

N = 47

Cramer's V = .28557

Chi Square = .13

Conclusions. While we failed to find many significant relations between type of work and mass production characteristics the percentages indicate that this may be due to a small sample size. The frequencies of responses given by both groups indicates that work in the Automated Plant more closely resembles mass production work than does work at the Counter Service.

C. Job Satisfaction and the Post Office. Walker and Guest reported that the satisfaction of workers with their jobs varied directly with the degree of mass production characteristics of the work.<sup>1</sup> Since work in the Plant contains more mass production characteristics than work in

the Wickets, we would expect those respondents who work in the Wickets to report greater job satisfaction. In order to test this we asked the respondents, "Are you satisfied with your work as it is now?" The respondents were only given two choices; yes or no. Most job satisfaction studies try to discriminate among various degrees of job satisfaction by providing at least five categories of responses ranging from "very satisfied" to "not at all satisfied". However, because this study is exploratory and is not mainly concerned with the issue of job satisfaction we were only looking for gross distinctions between the two categories of workers and the two responses were considered sufficient for the purposes at hand.

The hypothesis that Wicket workers would express more job satisfaction than workers in the Automated Plant was not supported. There were no significant differences between the two groups although two-thirds of the Plant workers reported dissatisfaction with the work while only forty-two percent of the Wicket workers reported dissatisfaction. This is quite a large percentage difference and failure to find statistical significance was probably due to the small sample.



TABLE 11  
Type of Work

Job Satisfaction		Plant	Wickets
		(in percentages)	(in percentages)
Job Satisfaction	Yes	36.0	57.0
	No	64.0	43.0
Total percent		100.0	100.0

N = 47

Phi = .19220      Chi Square = .31

The respondents were then asked why they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the work. The satisfied workers in the Automatic Plant pointed to the variety of jobs they performed, the simplicity of the work, and the security of the job as reasons for liking their work. One worker also mentioned good relations with fellow workers as a satisfying aspect of the job. Some of the replies given by the plant workers were:

Not hard, good pay, good people.

Because it is set up in a simple procedure that anyone can follow

Gives more variety than manual sorting, security of government job.

Two of the workers in the Automated Plant who had reported that they were satisfied with the job replied that

they did not have very high expectations and thus were not dissatisfied with this job. They said:

As good as can be expected.

Don't feel that I can expect more, I enjoy being able to move around and regulate speed of work.

The dissatisfied workers in the Automated Plant felt their work boring and repetitive, providing them with no sense of accomplishments. They felt the quality of the work was poor due largely to the organization of the work and the lack of proper training for workers. Some of their comments were:

Boring, degrading (treatment by the public frustrating).

Lack of supervision. Lack of interest on large majority of help.

Due to introduction of machinery there is a large drop in quality of mail worked.

Very boring and totally uninspiring.

The whole set-up has gone steadily down-hill. Initiative is unwelcome. Frustrations abound.

No feeling of accomplishment and change jobs every month. Never feels its a job well done.

Never feel you have accomplished anything. Supervisors treat you so badly.

The satisfied workers among the workers at Wickets mentioned good relations with fellow workers, dealing with the public, and the variety of tasks they performed as reasons

for finding their work satisfying. For example:

It offers variety and is seldom dull.

I deal with the Public and am responsible for my own decisions. No one questions my actions and my boss backs me up.

It is all right, pay is not too bad. Most workers are nice to work with.

There is just enough variety so that it doesn't get boring.

The dissatisfied workers at Wickets thought that there was not enough people to do the work, that the department was poorly organized and that there was little feeling of accomplishment in the work. Some of these comments were:

No challenge in doing same job, day in, day out.

Insufficient trained people to help with heavy volume. No incentive for well done job other than personal satisfaction.

Relatively low pay and no feelings of accomplishment.

I think I could do a better job if the department in which I work was better organized.

Next, the respondents were asked the question, "What is there about your job that makes it interesting?" All of the Wicket workers were able to think of at least one thing about their job which was interesting. Nine of the clerks in the Automated Plant replied "nothing" or "very little". Several clerks in the Automated Plant were interested in geography and liked handling mail from different areas of the province, country or world. Some of these replies were:

Foreign mails-very interested in world geography, etc.

If you were ever interested in geography in school, this job really takes you to all the places, near and far.

Formerly working in different departments, learning new areas of B.C., Canada, and foreign mail and U.S.A.

Learning geography of B.C.

I always find more places than I thought existed and its a challenge to see if I can sort all the mail for the province that I have stacked up before despatch time.

Several other workers in the Automatic Plant enjoyed the company of the other clerks. They said:

There are lots of different duties that have to be done and there is a very good relationship between workers.

The people I work with.

Working with good partners.

Other sources of interest reported by the workers in the Plant were the mail itself, the machinery, and the ability to change jobs during a shift. The workers in the Wickets also mentioned fellow workers as a source of interest. Many of them enjoyed working with the public. For example:

My job is selling and I enjoy talking to the customers many of whom are much better informed about Philatelics than I.

The challenge of making management abide Postal Regulations to all customers.

Working with the people. Fellow clerks and the public as well.

Serving the public which is varied and rarely dull.

Several others liked the variety and the challenge of the work. They said:

I work from crisis to crisis, smoothing out problems. I never know what is going to happen next, so it never becomes boring. The human contact in my job is unique and satisfying.

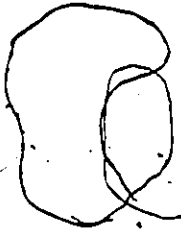
Variety of working, as I said to a previous question, new situations come up almost daily.

Always something new crops up every day.

#### D. Conclusion.

In this section, we have been examining the work activities performed by the two types of clerks we interviewed. We concluded that the jobs in the Automatic Plant more closely resembled mass production jobs than did the Wicket clerks' jobs. The clerks in Wickets also expressed more job satisfaction than did the workers in the Automatic Plant, although the difference was not statistically significant.

In the next section we will be reporting the informal activities engaged in by workers in the Post Office and the feelings of the workers towards these activities.



CHAPTER V

WORKER STRATEGIES IN THE POST OFFICE



In the description of the present research project five categories of workers' strategies were identified. These were withdrawal, individual restructuring, competitive individualism, informal group formation, and unionism. The strategic practices in the Post Office will be reported under each of these category headings. This section will be concerned with reporting frequency of participation in the various types of activities included under the strategy categories and with reporting the workers' feelings about the various activities.

A. Withdrawal. In Chapter II activities such as daydreaming and absenteeism were discussed. These activities allow workers to temporarily escape, either physically or mentally, from a boring or troublesome situation. In the discussion of the present research project these activities were placed under the category of withdrawal. These two activities will now be discussed.

1. Daydreaming. The respondents were asked the question, "How often do you daydream or think about things other than the work on your job?" Twenty-five percent of the respondents reported that they daydreamed all of the time or most of the time while thirty percent said that they daydreamed some of the time. Forty-five percent reported that they didn't daydream much of the time or at all.

TABLE 12

Amount of daydreaming  
(in percentages)

All of the time	25.0
Some of the time	30.0
Rarely or never	<u>45.0</u>
Total percent	100.0

N = 47

The respondents were then asked whether or not they thought daydreaming was a good way or a bad way to make the work more enjoyable. Fifty-two percent thought it was a good way while forty-eight percent thought it was a bad way.

TABLE 13

Attitudes toward daydreaming  
(in percentages)

Good way	52.0
Bad way	<u>48.0</u>
Total percent	100.0

N = 47



Those who thought it was a good way to make work more enjoyable stressed the boredom of the job and the need to escape from boredom by thinking of more involving things. Some of their comments were:

Only thing you do is think about home, family, etc. It takes you away from the boredom.

It makes the work much less boring, although any problem can get out of proportion.

This is a natural way of giving your mind a rest from getting into a dull drum.

Keeps eyes on greener pastures.

It is the one way you can escape work and continue to produce.

Another group of respondents reported that they daydreamed to help make the time pass more quickly. For example:

Makes you tend not to think about the job so much, and the time passes much quicker.

Doing some jobs, concentration isn't needed so daydreaming passes the time quite quickly.

Passes time but doesn't effect my productivity on repetitive jobs.

Another reason that daydreaming was thought to be a good thing was that it allowed workers to deal with their off-the-job activities while at work. They were able to plan activities and resolve problems. Some of these comments were:

Because a great portion of one's day is spent at work and there's always too many things to think over and not enough off the job hours to do it in.

It certainly helps with my studies. Almost always I can organize my off the job activities as well as plan for the future. I'm using my mind whereas I wouldn't be if I just think about work.

The frequencies with which each of the three reasons for thinking daydreaming was a good way to make the time at work more enjoyable are reported in the following frequency table.

TABLE 14

Reasons for favourable attitudes toward daydreaming

(in percentages)

Helps mitigate boredom	46.0
Makes time go faster	35.0
Can do off-the-job activities	19.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 26

Four major reasons were given by the respondents who thought daydreaming was a bad way of making the time at work more enjoyable. Sixty-four percent of those who thought daydreaming was bad said that it interfered with job

performance. These workers argued that concentration on the work itself was needed in order to avoid errors and to keep up the required speed. For example:

It interferes with productivity and results in error.

You can't concentrate on what you're doing, therefore it slows everyone down.

Can't be done without harming output which demands speed and concentration if anything is to be accomplished.

Cause you are wasting company's time and you are not accomplishing what you are paid for.

If you're daydreaming you're not paying attention to your job and more likely to make errors.

The second most frequently given reason was that daydreaming made the time go slowly. Eighteen percent of the respondents who thought daydreaming was bad felt that rather than speeding up time, time tended to drag when they were not thinking about the work that they were doing. They felt that the work itself should be involving and that workers should not have to think about things other than the work. For example:

If someone has to spend 8-9 hours a day at work, the job should be stimulating enough not to have to daydream (but it isn't).

It makes the time drag more.

Fourteen percent of the respondents thought that daydreaming was a frustrating experience. It made them even

more dissatisfied with what they were doing. The contrast between pleasant thoughts and unpleasant and boring activity made these respondents feel worse about their job. For example:

It can make you very unhappy because you still have to stay there and work.

It is frustrating when you come back to reality.

You are still in an unpleasant, boring job and daydreaming makes it seem worse.

Finally, four percent thought that daydreaming was dangerous as lack of concentration when working with machinery could result in injury. These frequencies are reported on the following table.

TABLE 15

Reasons for disapproving  
of daydreaming

(in percentages)

Interferes with performance	64.0
Makes time go slower	18.0
Too frustrating	14.0
Safety	4.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 47

In conclusion, the majority of the respondents reported that they did not spend much of their time at work daydreaming. They were nearly evenly divided in their feelings about daydreaming with a slight majority thinking that it was a good way to make the time at work more enjoyable. A large number of those who thought it was a good way pointed out that it did not interfere with their job performance as the work was quite repetitious and did not require complete attention. Most of those who thought it was a bad thing to do at work, however, felt that daydreaming did interfere with performance and productivity. Those who thought daydreaming was good felt that it made the time pass quickly and that thinking about more enjoyable things lessened the boredom of the work. A minority of respondents, on the other hand, thought that daydreaming made the time go slower and resulted in frustration rather than relief.

2. Absenteeism. The respondents were asked, "How often have you taken a day off work just because you needed a break from work?" Fifteen percent of the respondents reported that they frequently took a day off work when they needed a break while thirty percent reported that they did sometimes, and fifty-three percent that they rarely or never took a break from work when they were not sick.

TABLE 16

	Absenteeism (in percentages)
Frequently	15.0
Sometimes	30.0
Occasionally or never	53.0
Non-response	2.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 47

We then asked them what they thought of this practice. The majority did not disapprove of people taking a day off work and most expressed sympathy with them. They thought that the type of work they were doing at the Post Office made a few days off every now and then necessary.

TABLE 17

	Attitude towards absenteeism (in percentages)
Sympathetic	59.0
Critical	15.0
Up to individual	15.0
Non-response	11.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 47

Some thought that continuous work in the Post Office was bad for the mental health of the workers. The boredom, lack of freedom, and pressure of the job was made more bearable by occasional absenteeism. Some of their comments were:

It's up to the individual, sometimes need a break. Should be allowed just to breathe.

Just to feel the freedom of being away from work and away from the plant and being paid at the same time.

I think sometimes people need a day off for the benefit it has keeping their sanity. In other words, though not physically ill they are preventing mental illness by taking a day off.

We got to a point, we have to do this just to help get through a workweek. So I think that it isn't wrong.

Bad practice but sometimes necessary to avoid nervous breakdown due to frustration and boredom.

They may be sick from nerves and can't face that particular day.

Many respondents argued that taking a day off when you really don't feel like coming in is beneficial not only to the individual but also to the Post Office. Frustrated, anxious workers tended to make mistakes and to interfere with the efficiency of the workplace. If they stayed off a day they would come back rested and able to work much better, thus making up for the time lost. For example:

If not overdone can be beneficial to all concerned. Could create more efficiency.

Sometimes it is necessary. Keeps him coming to work at the Post Office.

It's okay. The work is such that time off is necessary. I feel that people would not produce much anyway at these times.

Several respondents stressed, however, that the practice should not get out of hand or be taken advantage of by employees. The respondents recognized, then, that there were legitimate reasons other than physical illness for taking days off work but did not have an entirely permissive attitude towards absenteeism. The absentees were still required to have a "good reason" for staying away but this reason did not have to be physical.

A second group of respondents thought that absenteeism was a personal matter between the employer and the employee and that it was not up to them to pass judgement. They did not think about practices of other workers in respect to absenteeism.

The third group of respondents thought that absenteeism was morally wrong. They thought that when people stayed away from work the work suffered and the other clerks had to work harder. They also thought that these workers were taking advantage of the paid sick leave which the Post Office provided. Some of their comments were:

Continuous practice offends my sense of right and wrong.

We are allowed 1½ days per month with paid sick leave. Some people use them regardless.



I think they are being unfair to their co-workers because they will have to work harder to get the work done that day.

I think it stinks. Other people have to do their work for them.

Very little of the person or the practice or the management who condone it.

In conclusion, absenteeism was an established and generally approved method of relieving the tension and boredom of work. Many thought that it was an effective way of improving the quality of work.

Summary: In this section we have been reporting respondent's activities and attitudes with regard to withdrawal. Between daydreaming and absenteeism, the latter seemed to meet with the least disapproval. This could be because by staying away one is not actually interfering with the quality of the work done, the absentee is just not doing his share for that day. The daydreamer, however, not only does not get his share of the work done, he is also likely to make mistakes. Further, daydreaming was not seen to have the beneficial effects of staying away from work. Only a few thought that daydreaming actually did allow you to escape from work; for the others it seemed to be more a half-measure and a very ineffective one for combatting the boredom and pressures of work.

B. Individual Restructuring. Individual restructuring of the work process was described in the discussion of the research report as an individual method for humanizing

work. Here, we are looking particularly at the development by the workers of alternate methods of doing the work. We asked the respondents four questions to find out about their restructuring activities. These were:

1. Do you ever figure out better ways of doing the job?
2. On any part of your job can you use your own ideas in planning how to do the job?
3. Do you ever set yourself an output...say, so many pieces of work per day?
4. Do you ever work faster to get within reach of the target early on and then take it easy for a bit? (This question was contingent on a "yes" response to Question 3).

Of our sample, sixty-four percent replied that they did try to figure out better ways of doing the job, while thirty-six percent reported that they did not.

TABLE 18

	Ever figure out better ways to do work?
	(in percentages)
Yes	64.0
No	36.0
Total percent	<u>100.0</u>

N = 47

Fifty-five percent said that they were able to use

their own ideas on their job while forty-five percent said they were not.

TABLE 19

	Can Use Own Ideas (in percentages)
Yes	55.0
No	45.0
Total percent	<u>100.0</u>

N = 47

We asked those who replied "yes" to either of these two questions to give an example of the ways which they had developed for doing the job better or using their own ideas. There was a variety of answers given to these questions. Because the answers to the two questions seemed to be similar they have been combined here for the purpose of reporting specific practices.

One method by which the respondents tried to improve the way their work was done was through a more efficient setting-up procedure. For example:

Breaking down problems of sorting ahead of time.  
Keeping equipment set up for ready use ahead.

Having extra bags on hand instead of always looking for them right in the middle of the job.

Arranging products for ease of handling.

In setting up any of three positions it is left up to the individual to carry out the job with maximum efficiency or not.

Having everything ready instead of waiting till someone comes.

In making an alphabetical list of 500 or so addresses. Photostat master list, cut it up, and rearrange it alphabetically and re-photostat it. Original list is left intact for reference and no writing or typing is involved.

Since the job I do most often is a one-person job, I can do it when and if I want, also set up the case like I want it. I also rearrange the desks so they were easier to work with.

Another way in which the respondents restructure their work activities was by rearranging the order in which they would perform particular operations.

I like doing final notices on parcels or register, either due date stamping first or writing up the cards first.

In doing local mail I do the "no such address" first-the other types later.

Do the most difficult part first then take it a little easy.

In "air despatch" you can drop all half full or full bags just before final tie-out so it doesn't take as long to drop all the bags at the despatch time.

I work the Alberta case and when it's tie-out time you have 1-2-3 lots which are all over, if all the 1's were grouped together (and all the 2's and the 3's), it wouldn't take so long to despatch the mail.

I make it a little less monotonous by picking up a tray of mail, sorting it, tie out a few slots, pick up some more mail, so as I'm not

sitting for any length of time.

Settling your bags or what is to be done first.

When working on the LSM, you choose your own work methods, for example, despatch time and routing.

Workers were also able to restructure their work by setting their own pace. For example:

Pacing output, when to start despatch, checking to find correct methods when faults are found.

Arrange your own time.

Organization of job to keep flow of mail going so it won't lag behind.

Some workers also reported changing the arrangement of their equipment or changing the type of equipment used.

Rearranging equipment. Discussing changes with management.

If the drawers in Philatelic were of a proper size it would make the job much easier. In fact, the entire set up should be changed.

Making province cases more convenient to the primary and changing names of one city that doesn't get much mail for one that gets a lot of mail.

There were also general comments in which the respondents did not mention particular ways they had of restructuring the job but did report that they structured their job in order to do things in the easiest and quickest way. For example:

There are different ways of doing every job.  
I find the simplest and fastest.

Just quicker ways instead of old-fashioned ways.

New job created three years ago-allowed to set  
up procedure myself.

A more efficient way of doing the final notices  
for carded items. How to do the paperwork so  
that it is done quickly and correctly.

In sorting certain items such as magazines where  
sorting facilities can't handle the volume.

Several workers indicated that they thought about  
different ways of doing the work but due to management's  
unwillingness or the technical organization of the job  
they were not able to put these into practice. Some of the  
examples they gave were:

Proposed scheme for clearing bottle-neck in old  
plant by moving two cases and establishing one  
way flow of mail in one section in which confusion  
reigned supreme. Approved by co-workers. Rejected  
by management.

I've always figured if there was an easy way and  
a hard way -- we were supposed to do it the hard  
way.

Management won't accept.

No -- the job is a security area; but it is  
easy to figure out ways that are quicker and  
more efficient than the old ways set down years  
ago which you must follow practically to the  
letter.

In the other areas but not much in coding. There  
is too much mechanization to make changes.

The respondents were then asked two questions to see  
if they valued opportunities to plan their own work. These

questions were:

1. Which would you prefer: a job where someone tells you exactly how to do the work or one where you are left to decide for yourself how to go about it?
2. How about the job you do now? Would you like more say, less say, or is your job just right?

When asked which kind of job they preferred, nineteen percent of the respondents said they liked a job where they were told how to do the work while seventy-two percent said they preferred to decide for themselves how to do the work. The other nine percent said they liked to be told initially how to do the work and then left on their own. Forty-five percent of the respondents said that their job was just right. Only two percent said that they would like less say.

TABLE 20

	Preferred Place of Work (in percentages)
Told how to do the work	19.0
Left to decide for self	72.0
Told initially and then left to decide	9.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 47

TABLE 21

Feelings about present job	
(in percentages)	
Would like more say	45.0
Job just right	53.0
Would like less say	2.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 47

The respondents were asked if they ever set themselves an output target. Fifty-five percent of the respondents replied that they did set an output target for themselves.

TABLE 22

Set output target	
(in percentages)	
Yes	55.0
No	45.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 47

These respondents were asked if they ever worked faster to get within reach of the target and then take it easy for a bit. Seventy-seven percent replied that they



did while twenty-three percent replied that they did not.

TABLE 23

Ever Work Towards Output  
Target and Then Rest

(in percentages)

Yes	77.0
No	23.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 26

Those who said that they did set an output target but did not take it easy when it was reached explained that they liked to establish their own goals but were not able to rest when these goals were obtained. Setting an output target was seen as a way of making work more interesting or more self-determined. For example:

Set output just to help combat boredom, not for the purpose of taking a break.

I just keep trying to work fast.

I like working a self-established rate-approximately 60 letters per minute.

We usually did this (set an output target) when sorting changeover and there was no end to them so we just kept right on.

Summary. From the variety of ways given by members of our sample to do the work better, individual restructuring seems

to be an important type of activity for Postal workers. The respondents displayed a strong concern with doing the work quickly and effectively as well as with increasing their own feeling of involvement in the work.

C. Competitive Individualism. Competitive individualism refers to attempts by workers to change their work activities to more desirable ones by meeting the requirements of management for transfer. Respondents were asked if they were planning to stay at the Post Office or if they were planning to find employment elsewhere. Those who replied that they were planning to stay for longer than two years, thirty respondents, were asked if they were interested in getting other jobs in the Post Office, if they were doing anything towards getting the jobs they wanted, and if they were interested in becoming supervisors.

Thirty-three percent said they were interested in getting other jobs in the Post Office, only one-third of those who were planning to stay. Eighty percent of those who wanted another job said that they were doing something towards getting that job. Three were applying for other jobs, two were taking courses, one was trying to do his work well and learn on the job, one was looking for openings, and another was trying to create his own position by convincing management that it was necessary.

TABLE 24

Interested in getting another  
job in Post Office

(in percentages)

Yes	33.0
No	67.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 30

The job of supervisor was not a very desirable position to the sample. Only three respondents said that they were interested in becoming supervisors, just ten percent of those who were planning to stay at the Post Office.

TABLE 25

Interested in becoming  
Supervisor

(in percentages)

Yes	10.0
No	90.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 30

We asked those who said that they would not like to be supervisors why they felt that way. Forty percent

complained about the responsibilities and pressures that accompany the job. These workers preferred to just put their eight hours in and then forget about the job. Some of the comments were:

Pay does not equal the added responsibility.

It's too much anxiety for too little remuneration.

Like eight hours and then go home and forget about work.

I just want to do my work and make the money.

Too much pressure.

Nineteen percent did not like the bad relations that supervisors have with other groups of personnel in the plant and with each other: The position that supervisors were in, in between management and the workers, was not envied. The supervisors were under pressure from both groups and from the union. For example:

I think they have one of the rottenest jobs I've seen. In a 3-way box between upper management, the union, and the mainly dissatisfied or incompetent employees.

No backing from higher up officials.

Too much throat-cutting among supervisors.  
Too many hassles with the union.

Because I don't want the hassle they have with employees and employers.

Because the employees have no respect for them.

Fifteen percent did not want to become supervisors

because they did not like to tell other workers what to do.

Some of their comments were:

Because I do not want to tell or supervise people working. Not my bag.

I would hate to think I was one of them.

I don't mind explaining things to people but I don't like telling them what to do.

I don't like ordering people around nor do I like being told what to do by senior supervisors.

Eleven percent didn't want the job because of inconvenience. Two of these were part time workers who wished to remain part time and one was a worker on day shift permanently who did not want to go back to shift work. Two workers said they were satisfied with the job they were doing and did not want a change while two said they were too close to retirement to bother changing jobs. These frequencies are reported on the following table.

TABLE 26

Reasons for not Wanting  
to be Supervisor

(in percentages)

Too much responsibility	40.0
Don't like telling people what to do	15.0
Bad relations with others	19.0
Inconvenience and other reasons	26.0
Total percent	100.0

N = 26

The replies to the last three questions indicate that changing jobs within the organization is not a very common strategy for improving the work experience. Most of the workers who were planning to stay with the Post Office were not looking for other jobs in the Post Office.

The respondents were also asked if they thought incentive plans should be used in the Post Office. Forty-seven percent of the respondents thought that they should be used while fifty-three percent thought that they should not.

TABLE 27

Attitudes Toward Incentive Plans	
(in percentages)	
Yes	47.0
No	53.0
Total percent	<u>100.0</u>

N = 47

The explanations of those who favoured incentive plans were divided into four categories. Twenty-seven percent favoured incentive plans because they would encourage slow or lazy workers to do their share of the work and would thus increase production. Some of these responses were:

It would encourage those lazy ones to do at least some work or create some incentive.

Perhaps rather than hide from work, the majority might even seek it out.

Encourages productivity.

If it were possible. Some people do almost nothing for eight hours and some people work the full eight hours. This is not fair.

About one-third of the staff work. The rest just put in time.

Twenty-two percent favoured piecework because it gave them a goal to work towards and thus made the job more interesting. For example:

Yes, because it would probably give them a goal of a sort with this never-ending flow of work.

It would encourage people to move from section to section and by increasing their knowledge gain incentive pay.

There is no incentive program at all. Give somebody something to work for.

In the plant there is little sense of achievement at any time; to provide incentives would offer this and possibly improve productivity.

When the work is as boring as this, there is practically no where to go as far as promotions go - there needs to be something to get people inspired to do good work.

Twenty percent favoured incentive plans because they felt they would give recognition to hard workers. These workers said:

The present situation leaves knowledgeable and productive workers frustrated and some

tend to produce downward.

A lot of the employees feel that nobody notices or cares how much they do.

The person who works should receive more recognition than the one who doesn't.

Reward those people who want to work and do work but without recognition.

Twenty-two percent favoured incentive plans because it gave them an opportunity to make more money.

I would work much harder, this job is so boring, the money is what we work for.

Money is the reason most people do this work. I feel people would increase their output greatly.

Overtime is very important in the Post Office. Most people hate the work but put up with it for the money.

TABLE 28

Reasons for favouring  
incentive plans

(in percentages)

Encourages lazy workers	27.0
Gives more money	22.0
Gives workers a goal	22.0
Gives recognition to goal workers	20.0
Non-response	9.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0



Those who thought that incentive plans were a bad idea tended to point to one of four problems with piecework: incentive plans were unfair to slower workers; they were infeasible because of the technical organization of the work; they could be abused by management; and they caused bad feelings among workers.

Thirty-two percent thought that incentive plans were unfair to those workers who could not produce as much as others. Older people would be disadvantaged as would those workers who did good quality work but were not as fast as others. Some of their criticisms were:

Some people just can't produce as fast as others, also it would eventually put pressure on the workers.

It's not fair to slower workers.

Some people are handicapped in some ways and cannot produce as much as others.

The older people would always be making less money and yet they're working to the best of their ability.

Some very competent workers are also slow workers - people who tend to use a lot of sick leave try to work harder to compensate.

Twenty-eight percent objected to incentive plans because the way the work was organized made it difficult to find a plan that was fair and that would not damage the quality of the work.

Because coding is so much faster than manual sorting that it would not be fair.

The flow of mail is too indeterminable (slow nights and overflow nights).

Not all jobs are the same. It would be too hard to implement a fair plan.

It would only increase the already high existence of careless errors.

Sixteen percent feared that management would abuse piecework plans by using them to express favouritism or to put more pressure on workers. For example:

I don't like piecework in any form. It leaves too many loopholes for favouritism.

It would be taken advantage of by management.

Who would judge production? Anti-union.

Because you are getting back 50 years. Slave driving.

Sixteen percent felt that piecework caused bad relations among workers: The competition engendered by incentive plans would destroy the co-operative, friendly atmosphere they valued. Some of these comments were:

Excessive dissention among workers.

It causes a lot of bad feelings among people.

Makes an unpleasant working atmosphere.

Introduces competition.

These frequencies are reported in the following table.

TABLE 29

Reasons for opposing incentive plans	
(in percentages)	
Unfair to slower workers	32.0
Technology of workplace	28.0
Abused by management	16.0
Causes bad feelings among workers	16.0
Other	8.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 25

We then asked the respondents if management encouraged the workers to compete with each other for higher productivity. Overwhelmingly, the workers answered that it did not, some emphasizing that this was against contract agreements. Only one respondent reported that management encouraged competition. He said that he did compete with other workers.

Summary. In the first part of the discussion of competitive individualism we concluded that looking for another job within the Post Office was not a very common way of improving the quality of work activities. In this part, we have been looking at workers' thoughts about incentive plans. A majority of the workers opposed incentive plans, some specifically mentioning the competition they caused as a

bad feature of them. The majority of those who favoured incentive plans did not seem to favour them because of the personal advantage they offered but thought that incentive plans would get people to do their share of the work and would institute a sense of fairness and justice in the Post Office by rewarding and recognizing hard workers. They also thought that incentive plans would make the work more interesting by breaking up the continuity of the work. They felt that this was important because postal workers do not produce discreet commodities but work on a flow of mail which never stops coming in. By instituting incentive plans, goals could be set up to combat the feeling that nothing is ever accomplished as there is just as much mail when a worker leaves work as there was when he arrived.

From the responses of our sample, then, the Post Office did not appear to be a highly competitive place. Competitive individualism was not a widely used method for combatting boredom or solving problems at work.

D. Informal Group Formation. In the review of the literature several activities were reported which were constituted under the heading of informal group formation. Some of these were conversation, the giving and getting of aid, group pressure on management organized restriction of output, and group games. We asked the respondents several questions about informal group activities at the Post Office. These will be reported under the subheadings

of talk, mutual-aid, games, and fighting management.

1. Talk. The respondents were asked how much they talked with the people that they worked with. Seventy-six percent of the respondents said that they talked a good deal or a fair amount of the time, twenty percent said that they talked just now and then, and four percent said they hardly ever or never talked. Talking with fellow workers, then, was a prevalent activity in the Post Office.

TABLE 30

	Amount of talking (in percentages)
Good deal or fair amount of time	76.0
Just now and then	20.0
Hardly at all or never	4.0
Total percent	100.0

N = 47

We asked the respondents whether they preferred to work in a place where people talk and joke around with each other or in a place where people keep to themselves. Eighty-one percent said they preferred to work in a place where people talk and joke around while nineteen percent said that they preferred to work in a place where there is no talking and joking.

TABLE 31

Type of workplace preferred  
(in percentages)

Place where people talk and joke	68.0
Talking and joking but not excessive	13.0
Place where people don't talk or joke	19.0
Total percent	100.0

N = 47

Some of those who said they liked talking qualified their answer by saying that talking and joking should not be done to such an extent that it interferes with the work.

Some of these comments were:

Within reason and they must work too. It helps pass the hours.

Just to a point as long as they are not boisterous or completely disrupting other people.

You cannot exactly work without talking once in awhile. Otherwise it could be boring. Bad jokes and talking must be moderate.

I like talking and joking to a point. However, I like to get the work done. It makes for a less stressful, more easy atmosphere in which to work.

Several other respondents argued that talking and joking were beneficial to production because they relieved the tension of the work. These people felt that workers were

more effective if they were in a good mood. For example:

I feel that people who can occasionally relax and talk will usually produce more when there is the need, they will respect the responsibility given them.

More gets done when there is harmony and good feelings.

It is more relaxing and when you can take a break you also work harder other times.

People are generally happier in this atmosphere and more productive and the job is done with greater efficiency.

Many of the respondents thought that talking and joking created a good atmosphere within which to work.

Friendliness was strongly valued by these workers.

Friendlier atmosphere makes better working condition.

Work seems less an obligation if one has cheerful companions.

I'm gregarious. I like human contact. Life is better when shared. I like to communicate.

Better relaxed atmosphere. A happy place is better to work in.

If you must work, I want things to be as pleasant as possible.

Talking and joking around were also seen as effective ways of making the time go faster and relieving the boredom of the work. Interacting with others made the Post Office seem less of a workplace. For example:

Makes work seem more fun.

Work goes faster if you're happy and you can discuss the different difficulties of a job and maybe get an easier way of doing it.

The time goes better and unless I could communicate inside the job I couldn't last as long as I have. It wouldn't be worth it.

In the coding department a certain amount of humour is necessary, it breaks a pattern of work.

Being part of a group makes the day go faster. Knowing you're not lonely.

I don't know. The time passes more freely with comradery, relieves boredom, allows for new ideas to come forth.

Those who preferred a place where people don't talk thought that talking interfered with their concentration. They saw this interference as both annoying and harmful to the work itself. For example:

I can't concentrate and do a proper job of things with a lot of noise or jabber.

Can't concentrate if it goes on all the time and don't feel like joking in the morning.

Do the job properly and get it finished. Joking around permits a slacker too much leeway.

I feel that people are being paid to work not fool around.

No one can work in the Post Office and concentrate on the work while fooling around. Mistakes result.

The majority of the sample, then, thought that talking was an effective method of combatting boredom and making the work more enjoyable. Most of the respondents did not feel



that it interfered with the quality of the work as long as the amount of talking and joking was moderate.

2. Mutual Aid. The respondents were asked if their fellow workers ever helped them with their work in any way. Thirty percent of the respondents reported receiving help a lot of the time, forty percent said that they were helped sometimes, and thirty percent replied that they were helped only occasionally or never. These frequencies are reported on the following table.

TABLE 32

Receive Help With Work  
(in percentages)

Help a lot	30.0
Help sometimes	40.0
Help occasionally or never	30.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 47

We asked those who said that they did receive help to give an example of a time when they were helped. Fifty-eight percent reported being helped with doing the work itself. If a worker was behind in his work or had a particularly large work load other people offered to do some of his work. For example:

When I am late with despatch somebody comes to help.

If I need help to get a job done someone is always willing to give a hand.

If I need help to get a job done somebody comes to help.

If I had to tie-out a case in a hurry someone would probably offer to help me.

Help put bags in truck.

Helps with moving mail between machines or with mechanical problems.

When I am overloaded with customers someone always comes to help, i.e. help in general delivery in setting meters.

Twenty percent reported that they were helped by more knowledgeable workers who gave them advice or information. They were also taught how to do the work by fellow workers. The more experienced workers taught the newer workers some of their techniques. For example:

Helps me find the location of various addresses.

All new employees learn from older employees. Management doesn't know all that much.

They help with a heavy work load. Also may know an address which you do not. Also new knowledge is passed around as when a big company has moved.

In settling a problem someone may have knowledge of the last item or have received a bulletin I have not read, or know of a problem in a specific area that could help with mine.

By explaining things that I am unfamiliar with.

Twenty-two percent reported that interdependence was

part of the nature of their job. For example, on the LSM one worker feeds the machine while another stacks.. Some of the comments were:

It's general on all phases of the work, work is not isolated, we are a group.

Nature of our work requires two or more to work together.

When we work on any machines but coding one feeds and one more stacks.

We're very interdependent in my work section. Co-operation is very useful.

When learning new machines and when working on LSM or NCR someone feeds and someone stacks.

TABLE 33

Type of help received (in percentages)	
With work itself	58.0
With knowledge or advice	20.0
Interdependent job	22.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 36

The respondents were then asked if they ever helped anyone else out with their work. Thirty-two percent said that they helped others a lot of the time, forty-seven percent said they helped sometimes, and twenty-one percent said that they helped occasionally or never.

TABLE 34

Give Help with Work  
(in percentages)

Help a lot	32.0
Help sometimes	47.0
Help occasionally or never	21.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 47

Eighty-four percent of the respondents reported helping others do the work itself. For example:

Girl was closing out primary mail alone and there should be two people on that job so I said ~~and~~ help.

A man doing "clean mail" had a lot. I was doing local mail and finished early -- I started on the clean mail -- so we processed the lot.

Mail gets caught in runners and can jam up machines causing mail to fly all over.

I try and keep an eye on General Delivery and Registration in the afternoon when I'm not busy and if they are back-logged I will go help.

Ten percent said that they helped others by providing information or knowledge and six percent mentioned the interdependent nature of their work. These frequencies are reported on the following table.

TABLE 35

Type of Help Given  
(in percentages)

With work itself	84.0
With knowledge or advice	10.0
Interdependent job	6.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 47

We asked the respondents if they preferred a place where people help each other or where people do just their own work. Ninety-four percent of the respondents said that they preferred to work in a place where people helped while only four percent said they liked a place where people do just their own work.

TABLE 36

Reasons for Preferring  
Place Where People Help

(in percentages)

Place where people help	94.0
Place where people do own work	4.0
Non-response	2.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 47

The most common reason given for liking a place where people helped each other was that it created a pleasant, friendly atmosphere and this seemed to make the work itself more enjoyable. Thirty-seven percent of those who liked a place where people helped each other gave this reason. For example:

I like people. We spend so much time working alone when coding it is a nice change.

It's more interesting and fun to work with other people. I find it boring to work alone.

Because co-operation is a pleasant way of working and will make the work interesting.

Makes for better atmosphere as long as everyone gets along. Makes it more interesting and sometimes fun. Not as sterile as just doing your own.

Twenty-six percent thought that co-operation made the work easier or helped improve the quality of the work and ensured that all the work would be done. Some of these comments were:

Makes the job easier when you are very busy.

Because everything would run smooth.

I like participation, also two heads are often better than one.

Certain jobs are busier in this office and at certain times we all need assistance.

It makes the work load easier.

Many hands make light work. Spirit of comradery passes time rapidly.

It's nice to know someone wants to help or someone is there when needed.

Twenty-two percent liked a co-operative work place because mutual help created a feeling of unity and comradeship among workers and worked against competition and backstabbing. For example:

Better community feelings between clerks, more comradeship.

Cuts out cut throat competition.

Everybody is happier. Less backstabbing like, "I can do the job in half the time he can."

This is the only way to develop friendly working conditions.

There is more unity between the workers.

A system of mutual aid was also seen as a way of ensuring that workers shared equally in the work.

Everybody co-operates with each other and nobody gets left behind or can sit around doing nothing when their job is done.

This way if one person has too much to do the others can help, otherwise one might do too much and the others not enough.

TABLE 37

Reason for preferring place  
where people help

(in percentages)

Makes the work seem interesting	37.0
Improves speed and quality of work	26.0
Creates unity among workers	22.0
Everyone does their share	15.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

The respondents were then asked if they thought that the best way that a number of persons can get the most work done is with each person doing his part of the job on his own or with everyone working together at the job. Sixty-nine percent of the workers thought that the most work got done when everyone worked together while twenty-five percent thought that the most got done when everyone did their own part of the job.

TABLE 38

How do people get most work done?

(in percentages)

Everyone working together	69.0
Everyone doing his own part of job	25.0
Non-response	6.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 47



Co-operation was seen to create a pleasant atmosphere which increased production. In addition, the combined skills of a number of people were seen as necessary for accomplishing a difficult job. For example:

People working together will accomplish more, because of their related skill.

Each person is slow or fast at one job and everybody helping gets it all done faster.

Keeps out the competitiveness and gets more done.

I believe co-operation the key to a successful operation.

Helps to know there is a back-up around on heavy days.

Some section periodically get bogged down, requiring a team effort.

Those who thought that the work could get done with everyone doing their own job thought that people working together caused confusion. They said that individuals developed their own particular ways of doing a job and team effort would interfere with these methods.

Everyone has their own way of doing things and sometimes others are a hindrance.

It causes confusion and not get the job done properly.

"Too many cooks spoil the broth."

Too many people can cause confusion.

Mutual aid, then, was strongly favoured by the majority of our respondents. It not only got the work done but

also provided a more pleasant atmosphere and a feeling of group solidarity.

3. Games. We asked the respondents if the people that they worked with ever got together to play games at work or to try to make the time go faster in some way. Thirty-six percent answered that they did get together to play games while sixty-two percent said they didn't.

TABLE 39

Do people at work play games?

(in percentages)

Yes	36.0
No	62.0
Non-response	2.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 47

The type of game mentioned most frequently was mail sorting contests. Card games were also popular, particularly bridge or poker during coffee or lunch breaks. One respondent reported that the workers would make a game out of the job of finding sorting areas by trying to guess the location of an obscure B.C. town. Locations of areas were also used to play memory games such as remembering what district a small town's mail is sorted to. Bets on sports were taken and trivia questions asked. One respondent

reported that his fellow workers had tried to give a mail-handler an enema. Several respondents said that there were certain times in the day when everyone seemed to feel restless and to look for ways to pass the time together.

Often you see a pattern of hours of hard work, after which everyone feels the need to relax almost simultaneously.

Between lunch and last coffee break when everyone gets restless.

During slack periods when hand-sorting mail.

We also asked if people at work ever have contests among themselves without management knowing about it. Thirty-eight percent of the respondents replied that they did have contests while sixty-two percent said that they didn't.

TABLE 40

Do people at work have contests?  
(in percentages)

Yes	38.0
No	62.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 47

Some of the examples given were:

Memory recall on B.C. cases -- first one to answer most time, etc.

To see who could tie more bags or a certain amount of them.

Not now. But in previous years when larger quantities of cheques were manually sorted we used to have a contest when we started sorting in empty cases to see how quickly all the slots were filled up.

Once to relieve boredom a friend and I had a race to see who could sort the most in a set time.

Sometimes two or three try to code as fast and as accurate and as long as they can just to relieve the boredom.

We try to sort a tray of mail faster than the other and sometimes quiz each other to see who can remember where some of the smaller places get sorted to.

On LSM, who can get through the most mail, who can code more trays, who counts more postcards, often just silly things.

Side bets on which one can clear his/her case load the quickest.

Games do not seem to be as prevalent as conversation or mutual aid but they were used by quite a number of workers to make the time go faster or to make work more acceptable. Many of these games used the work itself as materials, thus turning the work into a game.

4. Fighting Management. We asked the respondents if the people that they worked with ever got together on their own to improve working conditions or to fight management. Forty-seven percent of the workers said that they did get together while fifty-one percent said that they did not.

TABLE 41

Do people at work  
fight management

(in percentages)

Yes	47.0
No	51.0
Non-response	2.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 47

The former respondents were asked to give an example of a time that workers had gotten together to fight management or to improve working conditions. Some of the answers they gave were:

Fought to prevent a mailhandler being sent to a different job.

Filed a grievance as shop steward for myself to protest short staffing and invited others to sign. Whole shift did.

Everybody walked out one night because things told to our supervisor were never relayed to 'higher-ups' and after the walk out we got a meeting with bosses and discussed the problems.

Petition circulated to ask for removal of an undesirable supervisor.

When improving the parcel post situation we convinced management our way was to everyone's benefit.

When there is a grievance against management workers get together to sign petition.

We got together to buy plants for the office to make it more cheerful.

On being refused equal opportunity at overtime they threatened to file grievance forms. The situation was remedied.

When a change of positioning of the cases would improve the selected light to the betterment of the sortation.

Once all got together to try to get a bigot of a supervisor removed from the section.

When parttimers were being given more overtime and cutting down on full time work.

Summary. In this section of the report we described some informal group activities of Postal workers. Our respondents reported that conversation was frequent in the Post Office and was generally seen as an effective way of making the time spent at work more enjoyable. They also reported that a network of mutual aid existed which not only helped workers to get their work done but also provided a friendly and satisfying atmosphere to work in, thus mitigating the boredom of the work itself. Games and contests were also used to pass the time, particularly those which used the work itself as material. Finally, the variety of examples of workers getting together to fight management or improve working conditions reported by the respondents indicated that Postal workers were capable of formulating common goals and demands and of acting in concert to achieve their goals.

E. Unionism. The respondents were asked questions

about their union activities and their feelings towards the union. Nearly all the respondents (ninety-eight percent) were members of the union. Of this group only nineteen percent reported that they had ever held a position in the union and only two percent were currently holding a union position.

TABLE 42

Held union position  
(in percentages)

Yes	19.0
No	81.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 45

We asked the respondents how often they attended union meetings. Only thirteen percent said that they attended all or most union meetings, twenty-five percent said that they attended some meetings, forty-five percent said that they attended a few or only important meetings, and thirteen percent reported that they never attended union meetings.

TABLE 43

Attend Union Meetings  
(in percentages)

Attend all or most	13.0
Attend some	25.0
Attend a few or only important ones	45.0
Never attend	13.0
Non-response	4.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 47

We asked those who reported attending only some, a few or important meetings, or never attending meetings why this was. A wide variety of answers were given to this question. Several respondents considered these meetings a waste of time as nothing important was ever discussed or accomplished. For example.

Too much time wasted on reading minutes of last meeting, inconsequential things that could be settled with shop steward. Meeting time should not be longer than one hour, one pertinent topic being dealt with.

Most of it is a waste of time.

Nothing ever occurs at them -- a lot of hogwash.

Nothing seems to come of it. Sometimes you wonder if their minds are made-up.

Another reason given for not attending meetings was



that it was not always easy to find the time to attend regularly. Some respondents said that the meetings were held during their shift and attending would result in loss of pay. Several others said that they got information about the meetings from shop stewards or other workers. Two respondents did not attend because the vote privilege had been taken away from them and another reported a personality clash between himself and a union official. Several others thought that union meetings were dull. Finally, some respondents said that they didn't like that particular union and thus didn't attend many meetings. For example:

Out of touch with young radicals.

I have mixed feelings about our union and therefore only attend when there is a vote to be taken or other important dealings.

Our union meetings are radical and usually fights start.

They were then asked about their use of and feelings toward the grievance procedure. We asked them how often they used the procedure when they felt that they had proper grounds. Only fifteen percent said they used it always or almost always, six percent that they used it more than half the time or half the time, six percent used it less than half the time, and seventy percent said that they used it almost never or never.




TABLE 44

Use grievance procedure  
(in percentages)

Always or almost always	15.0
More than half or half the time	6.0
Less than half the time	6.0
Almost never or never	70.0
Non-response	3.0
Total percent	<u>100.0</u>

N = 47

We then asked the respondents if they thought that the grievance procedure was an effective way of solving problems that they have at work. Forty-seven percent thought that it was an effective method while forty-five percent thought it was not.

TABLE 45

Is grievance procedure  
effective?

(in percentages)

Yes	47.0
No	45.0
Non-response	8.0
Total percent	<u>100.0</u>

N = 47

Those who thought it was an effective method emphasized the need for group support for individual problems, as well as the need for legal constraints on management. For example:

When it involves us all, it's the only way to do it.

You can't have it all to yourself, some situations have to have mass participation.

A legal contract is binding on both parties. Any breach should be handled in a legal manner.

It is the fastest and most constructive means. The union has a loud voice and knows the procedures.

It is a legal form of complaining when you think there has been a real wrong done to you. Better than verbal confrontation with one person.

I first go to management and if I don't get results I have to go to the union for help. Once management knows you're getting help from the union they speed things up.

Those who thought it wasn't an effective method said that it took too long and was too bureaucratic a method for solving problems that come up at work. These people thought that confronting the supervisor personally was a better method of solving problems. For example:

Takes too long to see any results. By the time grievance procedures are followed the situation has already been cleared up.

Because even if it is a cut and dry situation management will send it all the way to the top -- and it takes too long.

Time loss factor -- often loses impact by the time a grievance is processed. Often times

the original grievance is forgotten or otherwise resolved.

It's too time consuming. An arbitration of some sort would be better.

Not for me -- I've always gone to the supervisor and straightened it out.

We asked the respondents if they thought that the union helped or hindered workers in improving conditions of work. Eighty-three percent replied that they thought the union helped workers while only seventeen percent thought that it hindered.

TABLE 46

Union Helps or Hinders.

(in percentages)

Helps	76.0
Qualified helps	6.0
Hinders	15.0
Non-response	3.0
Total percent	100.0

N = 47

Six percent of those who answered that it helped qualified their answers. They felt that sometimes the union could be a hindrance to workers.

Sometimes helps, sometimes hinders.

Both helps and hinders. Approximately neutral effect.

It helps in so far as management having to consider its actions. Strict adherence to rules of contract generates rigidity -- with no allowance for special circumstances.

Those who thought that the union helped workers pointed to the powerlessness of individuals. Many of them felt that without a union management would take advantage of the workers. This was particularly true for those who had worked in the Post Office before the union became active.

We'd be working under nineteenth century conditions without unions.

I have seen conditions before the introduction of the union and afterward.

We now have a say in what goes on and we never had one before.

There can't be favouritism in job selection or nobody can be persecuted because of personality conflicts.

Because the union is made up of workers and what we want is put forward by us.

The individual is worth little. The union does have a voice that is heard.

Many conditions in the Post Office would never have changed without a union.

The individual worker has no voice without a union.

As has been proven, a union equals people (workers) standing together can always right a situation.

Those who said that the union hindered workers thought that the union was not responsive enough to its members or

that the union defended poor workers. Some of these comments were:

Union often takes actions involving members without consultation with members.

Sometimes when the union gets involved management gets very bitchy. The union is only interested in confrontation.

The union does nothing for part timers.

Too many minor injuries, time wasted on, where that same time could have been spent on important issues.

Because when management tries to discipline the lazy employees, the union sticks up for the employee instead of suggesting he improve his work habits.

The workers were then asked if they thought that the union acted in their interests. Seventy-six percent said that it did act in their interests while fifteen percent said that it did not. However, of those who said they thought it acted in their interests forty-seven percent qualified their approval by arguing that the union often acted in its own interests or by stating that they do not really think about it or are not interested. For example:

Bit of both, don't really know.

Most of the time but sometimes I feel the union acts in its own interests. It is very strong and a lot of its members are intimidated.

Sometimes. I feel at times, though, the union does fight for better working conditions, better pay, etc., they also use us for their political gains.

Sometimes. I'm not comfortable with them at all.

In most cases they will try however some union men are out for their own gains.

Most of the time it does but sometimes it acts in its own interests.

Its supposed to. Sometimes its questionable.

TABLE 47

## Union Acts in Interests

(in percentages)

Yes	40.0
Qualified yes	36.0
No	15.0
Non-response	9.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 47

The reasons given for thinking that the union acted in the respondents' interests were similar to those for thinking that the union helped workers in improving their work conditions. For example:

The union is made up by us, would not be re-elected without our votes.

We would never get a raise, working conditions would be worse.

Because union is made up of its members who work in the Post Office.

We need someone to be a watch dog on management.

Because I have worked for non-union employers. In most cases they have one thing in common -- to get the most out of you for the least pay.

What helps conditions of work helps us.

If the union doesn't then who in God's name does?

Those who didn't think that the union acted in their interests commented:

Personally they have done nothing for me when I have asked for assistance.

Not always as the shop stewards seem to have no sense of their jobs. I know it is unpaid but sometimes their lack of knowledge and understanding is mindboggling.

Personal conflict.

Very few executives of the union truly have members interests at heart. Most are interested in the position or salary or advancement.

Summary. In this section we have been discussing the workers' union activities and their feelings toward the union. While workers generally expressed favourable attitudes toward the union they did not seem to participate in union activities to a very great extent. Few members of our sample had held union positions and very few attended meetings. They also did not take advantage of the grievance procedure. These findings suggest that the union is considered very important by the workers in looking after their interests but is usually called in as a last resort after other channels have been exhausted.



F. In addition to the questions on withdrawal, competitive individualism, individual restructuring, informal group formation, and unionism we asked the respondents four hypothetical questions about problems which may arise at work. These questions were:

1. You and the people you work with are doing your work when the supervisor comes up and tells all of you that from now on you will be expected to do a particular amount of work more than you have been doing. What do you think would happen in this situation?
2. You and the people you work with are doing your work but everyone feels particularly bored and restless. What do you think would happen in this situation?
3. If you were angry at something the supervisor said or did what would you be most likely to do?
4. If you found that sometime during the work day time was dragging and you were really bored what would you be most likely to do?

In answer to the first question, the majority of workers said that the union or the shop steward would most likely be called in. They felt that the union structure was the best way to deal with the problem. For example:

The shop steward would explain to him that this is not in the job description.

We would get the union to come in and straighten things out.

Approach the shop steward re grievance.

We would discuss it, hold a union meeting, and vote on the decision.

Breach of union contract. Call a shop steward.

These answers suggest that the union is more important in dealing with day-to-day problems than was indicated by the previous section. Other respondents thought that the workers would argue with the supervisor or try to get rid of him themselves. For example:

Co-workers and myself would flare up in anger and would rebel against the situation. Unfortunately, a negative atmosphere would be around for some days afterward.

People would argue and say they already did more than their share and probably win.

We would thumb our noses at him and make funny noises.

Others thought that the supervisor would be ignored and that the clerks would go on doing their work as they were doing. One worker said he thought they would just tell the supervisor to "get lost". Another way of reacting to the situation was slowing down production.

A great feeling of resentment and rebellion. There would also be a move to do less work in more time.

They wouldn't care. We would probably all do less work.

Probably slow down and do even less work. If he persisted we would probably really resist. Set the union in on the fight.

Some workers thought that people would quit or book-off sick while others thought that the workers would grumble or complain but would try to do the extra work.

We then asked what the workers would do if they were feeling bored and restless. The most frequent response was that they would take a break, probably in the washroom.

For example:

Work would slow down, people would talk more and make longer trips to washroom.

They would head up to the washroom for a smoke break, as for myself, I don't smoke so I would probably go have a quick chat with someone.

Go to the washroom, shut machines down by pulling emergency stop switch.

People would go up to the washroom or try to find something to do.

We would try to find some "porn" magazines or else drift off to the washroom.

Talk and games were also mentioned by the respondents. They thought that boredom and restlessness would increase the amount of joking around that went on at work. For example:

Some one start joking-reminiscing, question each other.

Crack a few jokes to liven it up before we would get too bitchy.

I think the racket would be awful and the supervisor would find something to keep us busy.

There are ways to get them out of boredom, probably just one remark from one and you have all of the people get in the act.

My answer would have to be purely hypothetical. Suppose they would fool around - fire rubber bands, or go to the washroom.

Production will slowly wither away. People will start fooling around, joking, shooting elastic bands, just killing time.

It happens here a lot. Everyone in this situation would talk about how they're going to get out of working here, i.e., win the lottery, get another job, travel.

Many workers thought that the amount of work getting done would decrease as people got more restless.

Production would slow, probably go smoke a cigarette in the washroom.

They would start to slack off. It's just expected though. Wouldn't you?

They wouldn't get much work done that day.

When asked what they would do if they were angry at the supervisor the two most common answers were speaking up to the supervisor personally or going to the union. Some said that they would talk to the supervisor first and if that didn't work they would then go to the union. Others said they would talk it over with their fellow workers. Discussing it and complaining to their co-workers allowed them to get rid of some of the anger. Two respondents said they would take a break or stay home sick, while another two said they would slowdown their work. A fairly large number replied that they would do or say nothing but just continue with their work. The frequencies with which each of these responses were given is reported on the following table.

TABLE 48

Angry at Supervisor  
(in percentages)

Talk with the supervisor	42.5
Go to the union	21.5
Nothing, keep mouth shut	15.0
Talk with fellow workers	13.0
Take a break or stay home	4.0
Slowdown	4.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 47

Most of the respondents gave more than one answer to the question, "What would you do if you were bored?" Forty percent of the respondents said that they would take a break, go for a walk, or go home. Many of these said they would go to the washroom and have a cigarette break or go to the drinking fountain. Twenty percent said they would look for someone to talk to or to joke around with in order to pass the time. For example:

Tease my workmates.

I would joke around with my fellow clerks to get some action going.

Either talk to someone or take a short break. Probably talk to someone.

Fifteen percent said they would change jobs in order

to combat boredom. Some of those on the machines thought that a major advantage of working on machines was the fact that you could change jobs if you were bored. For example:

Take a cigarette break and change jobs, which is one benefit to coding, you can always feed or stack, and occasionally sort.

Get up and change jobs, from coding to sweeping, etc.

Thirteen percent said that they would either try to think about something else or listen to the radio. Some of their replies were:

Start thinking of something else to do when I get out.

Either try to make myself meet a work goal or listen to more interesting show on radio earphones, such as CBC discussions.

Start feeling restless, frustrated, ready to quit. Once again! Think about when I quit.

Six percent said that they would just carry on with their work while four percent thought that they would try to concentrate on the work and become involved in it. Two percent said that they would probably slow down. The frequencies with which each type of activity was reported is listed on the following table.

TABLE 49

What would you do if you were bored?

(in percentages)

Take a break, go for walk	40.0
Talk to someone	20.0
Change jobs	15.0
Think about something else, listen to radio	13.0
Carry on with work	6.0
Concentrate on trying to get involved in the work	4.0
Slowdown	2.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 47

G. Summary. In this chapter we have been reporting the types of activities which Postal workers have developed for making the time spent at work more enjoyable and for establishing control over their own work activity.

Considering the number of respondents who thought that the job was boring daydreaming was not widely used as a means of withdrawing from the work. Many respondents thought that daydreaming was an ineffective way of combatting boredom. Three other forms of withdrawal were reported by the respondents. One was absenteeism, an activity which the majority of the respondents were sympathetic to. Another

commonly mentioned withdrawing activity was going to the washroom for a cigarette break. The third form of withdrawal that was reported was listening to the radio on earphones while working.

Competitive individualism was a very infrequent method of making the work more enjoyable. Only one-third of the respondents who were planning to stay at the Post Office for over two years said that they were trying to get another job in the Post Office. Most of the jobs that these people were trying to get, furthermore, were not promotions but transfers to other clerical jobs that offered more freedom and variety. For example, several of the respondents who worked in the automatic processing plant wanted to transfer to a job carrying mail or serving customers in Wickets.

The questions we asked the respondents about their attempts to think of different ways of doing the work brought up a number of responses which indicated that Postal workers spend a considerable amount of their time thinking about the work itself. The majority of the respondents valued opportunities to plan their work and to use their minds at work. The ways the respondents had developed for injecting their own ideas into the work were mainly limited to deciding on their own order for doing the different tasks or setting their own pace. However, several respondents had developed more elaborate suggestions for personalizing their work.

The responses of our sample indicate that informal



group formation was a prevalent activity at the Post Office. The two most common forms of informal group activities were talking and mutual aid. The majority of the respondents highly valued these activities and some said that without the support and friendship of their work group they would not have been able to continue working at the Post Office. In addition to talking and helping the work group was also able to develop games and to arrive at strategies for fighting management and improving the conditions of work.

From the replies to the questions about union activities it appeared that the respondents did not make use of the union structure to a very great extent in solving daily problems which arose at work. However, in responding to the hypothetical questions the union was mentioned quite frequently as a means for solving problems. The union may function for the workers as a source of power to be used as a bargaining tool with management. Thus, while grievance procedure is not used very often it serves as a threat for arriving at informal agreements between the work group and management.

H. Discussion. In this section we will discuss some of the results of this study. We will be looking at norms and values, solidarity, mobility aspirations, estrangement from work, and quality.

1. Norms and Values. In Chapter II we discussed the article by Collins, Dalton, and Roy which argued that workers in the factories they studied had developed their own set of

goals and values.<sup>1</sup> These goals and values were quite different and often contradictory to the ones that management subscribed to. An example of the different ways which management and workers viewed the workplace was the rejection by the workers of the competitive ethic involved in pursuing piecework rates. One worker objected to the deprivation of enjoyment which would result from full-scale pursuit of piecework rates. This worker commented: "The way it works out none of us are going to be Van Asterbilts so why not get a little pleasure out of living together and working together."<sup>2</sup>

The authors argue that the worker did not primarily view piecework as a method for relating financial reward to ability and effort but rather as a means of increasing their freedom of action by allowing the workers to set their own production goals. As one worker commented:

When you're on piecework you're working against the clock. That makes time go faster. That old hand moves right around because its trying to beat you and you're trying to beat it. Then when you've got a pool built up you can spend your time the way you please so long as you keep out of sight of the office crowd.<sup>3</sup>

The workers in our sample did not display the same social cleavage shown by those observed by Collins, Dalton, and Roy. They did appear to have developed a strong value on co-operation over competition and several expressed the belief that work should provide some enjoyment for the worker. However, they also expressed a strong concern for

production goals. Many of them seemed to be attempting to reconcile a concern for production with a desire for co-operative, friendly relations with fellow workers.

A majority of the workers disapproved of incentive plans, largely because of the competition which piecework induced. They felt that incentive plans were not fair to slower workers and could interfere with the quality of the work. These workers valued the good relations they had with their fellow workers and did not think that the opportunity to make more money was worth destroying these relations. Some of them also distrusted management and felt that incentive plans would be used to pressure the workers. Those who favoured incentive plans did not seem to think of piecework from the perspective of a business arrangement. That is, it did not seem to be the money itself that was important but rather the recognition of superior effort incentive plans expressed. Many workers thought that their efforts were not being appreciated and that piecework would rectify this situation.

The qualitative comments given in response to a number of questions indicated that production was an important value to the respondents. Many of the workers' strategies were disapproved of because they interfered with production goals. On the other hand, the same strategies were often justified by appealing to production. For example, several respondents thought that talking and joking around was a good thing because it allowed workers to relieve

their tensions and do a better job. The qualitative remarks about production indicated that production was an important part of the "vocabulary of motives" which workers used to articulate and interpret their own and others' behaviour in the workplace. C. Wright Mills argued that motives could be analyzed as socially-situated accounts of behaviour. He speaks of social situations as having "vocabularies of motives" for their members to draw on in giving accounts of their own behaviour or opinions. He writes:

As over against the inferential conception of motives as subjective "springs" of action, motives may be considered as typical vocabularies having ascertainable functions in delimited societal situations.<sup>4</sup>

Production goals are part of the vocabulary of motives used by management to define the purposes of work and the goals of labour. The workers in our sample adopted this vocabulary as a means for accounting for their behaviour. However, they tended to interpret this goal in such a way that it did not interfere with their enjoyment of one another, or with their attempts to establish control over their work.

The workers also valued co-operation. Co-operation was encouraged by the need for new workers to learn from the older workers. Exchange of information about the best and easiest way to do the work was an important part of the culture of the Post Office. Not only did co-operation

get the work done, it was also valued because of the feeling of friendliness it expressed. Here it is interesting to recall Roethlisberger and Dickson's findings about the importance of co-operation to the bank-wiring men at the Hawthorne Plant. One of the workers that they interviewed said:

Once in awhile a fellow will get behind who ordinarily is a good worker. That sometimes happens to anyone. I know one fellow down there who did that and two other fellows went over and started helping him out...I think it's a good idea to help a fellow out once in awhile. I know I appreciate it. It makes all the difference in the world. It's a funny thing, I'll be working along and be behind and I'll feel all fagged out. Then somebody comes over and starts in wiring on my equipment with me, and you know I perk up to beat the band. I don't know; it just seems to put new life in you, no matter if he only helps you for a couple of levels. I can pick up and work like the deuce then, up till quitting time.<sup>5</sup>

Several of the respondents in our sample also reported the good feeling that mutual aid created. It helped to make the work more interesting and enjoyable. For example:

Co-operation is a pleasant way of working and will make the work interesting.

Makes for a better atmosphere as long as everyone gets along. Makes it more interesting and sometimes fun. Not as sterile as just doing your own.

Mutual aid provided a means for workers to get together and develop a norm of co-operation. In doing so, it also allowed individual workers to develop a sense of solidarity

with their fellow workers. We will now discuss this solidarity.

2. Solidarity. The Taylor system of Scientific Management was designed to counteract the solidarity of the workgroup as this group-feeling allowed the workers to collaborate in restricting their output. Taylor intended to induce a concern with the pursuit of individual goals in the workers through a piecework plan. In Chapter II we discussed studies which indicated that the attempt to counteract work group solidarity have not met with a great deal of success. 6,7,8

Our respondents made a considerable number of references to a "spirit of comradery" and "community feelings" among the Postal workers. We did not ask them specifically about restriction of output but several workers thought that if a supervisor demanded too much of them the work group would slow down. Output restriction did not seem to be just an individual response to pressure from management, rather it was recognized as a typical strategy by the work group. To estimate the prevalence of restriction of output participant observation techniques would be needed.

The respondents also mentioned quite a number of incidences where the work group had gotten together to fight management. The most important weapon in these struggles was a petition backed up by the threat of union activity. Workers also complained directly to the supervisor

and one respondent reported a walk out in which everyone in the work area participated.

The workers not only co-operated to improve conditions that effected everybody but also to help individuals. For example, the work group got together to prevent a mailhandler being sent to a different job.

Some of the games described by the workers also indicated a considerable amount of organization. Several workers would go to the washrooms and play cards, others had sorting competitions. The workers also participated in a kind of collective daydreaming. For example, when asked what would happen if everyone was bored one worker replied:

It happens here a lot. Everyone in this situation would talk about how they're going to get out of working here, i.e. win the lottery, get another job, travel.

The union was another way in which the workers expressed a sense of solidarity. In their study of a luxury foods factory in Britain, Beynon and Blackburn discerned two different attitudes towards unionism; an ideological and a business orientation. The ideological orientation emphasized the solidarity of workers and the control and respect unionism gives to the working class. This type of orientation was expressed by an operator who said:

The unions have got the worker everything that he's got today. Above all they've given him his self-respect. I'd say a lot of things against them - especially this

one here - but we just couldn't think of being without one. A bad union is better than no union at all.<sup>9</sup>

The second orientation, business unionism, is less emotional and more individually oriented. The business unionist values the economic benefits which union membership gives him.

While few of our respondents expressed a purely ideological orientation, they were much closer to it than they were to business unionism. Several of them felt that the union was the workers and thus the question we asked about the union acting in the workers' interests did not make very much sense to them. Others reported feeling that the union was quite distant from them, several of these respondents felt that the informal group was closer to their interests. However, almost all the respondents saw the union as an important back-up force to give the work group and their own individual actions some power and influence. The grievance procedure, while not actually used to a great extent, was still a common feature of the workplace and an important threat to be used against management. The respondents recognized the importance of group action in dealing with a large bureaucratic organization. Group action seemed to be a more important strategy than individual methods of improving conditions of work. The unimportance of individual methods was revealed particularly in the workers'



lack of mobility aspirations.

3. Mobility Aspirations. Traditionally, a major advantage of clerical work in contrast to manual labour is the opportunity for upward mobility offered by others. Braverman points out that in the early nineteenth century in some industries "chief clerk" was the title given to the manager of an office.<sup>10</sup> Braverman likened the early clerk to a craftsman who started as an office boy or apprentice and learned the business, eventually moving up to the position of chief clerk. While advancement opportunities were being limited for manual workers by the separation of office from shop floor, clerical work provided a means of mobility into management. Three major trends combined to transform this aspect of clerical work; the increase in the number of clerical workers, the rationalization of the office, and mechanization. In terms of growth, clerical workers have expanded more rapidly than any other occupational group in all of the industrialized nations. From a small fraction of a percentage of all employees in the late nineteenth century clerical workers are now the single largest occupational group. More important, and to a certain extent causing, the growth in the number of clerical workers was the change in office organization which occurred in the early twentieth century. The principles of scientific management and rationalization were applied to the office, sometimes taking quite extreme forms. Elizabeth Baker quotes one description of an early office to which the conveyor belt had been introduced.

Orders were passed along by means of a belt and lights from a chief clerk to a series of checkers and typists, each of whom does one operation. The girl at the head of the line interprets the order, puts down the number and indicates the trade discount; the second girl prices the order, takes off the discount, adds carriage charges and totals; the third girl gives the order a number and makes a daily record; the fourth girl puts this information on an alphabetical index; the fifth girl time-stamps it; it next goes along the belt to one of several typists, who makes a copy in septuplicate and puts on address labels; the seventh girl checks it and sends it to the storeroom.<sup>11</sup>

While both mechanization and rationalization appeared during the same period, rationalization preceded the large-scale introduction of machines and provided the necessary social organization for mechanization. Once introduced, however, machines tended to increase rationalization where it existed and to necessitate rationalization in other offices. Machinery, even in its most simplest form, is not as flexible as the human clerk and thus removed from the clerk much of the uniqueness of the material he worked with. In standardizing tasks it also removed many of the steps through which clerks could increase their knowledge and move up the office hierarchy.

The terms "mail processing plant" and "raw mail" give expression to the way that mail sorting is not only coming to resemble blue-collar job but also to be thought of as one. The workers seemed to be responding to this by lowering their mobility aspirations. Very few respondents

expressed a desire to become a supervisor and only one seemed to be interested in an upper management position. Those respondents who were looking for another job in the Post Office were mostly interested in changing to a job with the same status as the one they already had. Many of the workers said that they were not interested in promotion because of the responsibilities it would entail. However, they also felt that opportunity was really limited in the Post Office. For example:

In the Post Office only to the extent that one performs slightly above the low average. Union imposes seniority and management nepotism and favouritism, still beating that system. Seriously impede opportunity for advancement. Besides (Present performance has) little bearing (on promotion).

Education helps advancement foremost.

The Post Office does not seem to believe that knowledge is a good thing.

It was quite evident from most of the qualitative remarks regarding mobility aspirations that the Postal workers saw their position as a job rather than a career. This was true for both those who were planning to leave the Post Office in the next two years and those who were planning to stay indefinitely.

In spite of the perceived lack of rewards for special effort few of the respondents expressed complete apathy towards the work. This is evident in their feelings about withdrawal and in their concern with quality.

4. Estrangement from Work. Karl Marx argued that in separating the conception and execution of work, capitalism had created a wage labourer. The wage labourer worked for the means to live rather than for the satisfaction which creative activity provided. In modern industry the mind of the workers and thus their subjective involvement in work is not bought by the capitalist, rather the capitalist buys a certain amount of the workers' time in which he can direct the workers' activities. The workers still bring their minds into the workplace, however, and those minds must be engaged somehow. In the literature daydreaming was reported as one means by which workers can keep their minds occupied. In daydreaming, workers separate their thoughts from their activities, making the time pass more quickly by imagining more involving activities. Friedmann mentions the daydreaming type of accommodation as a major factor in producing habituation or resistance to change. As one worker said to him; "When there are changes, we have to think of our work."<sup>12</sup>

Walker and Guest felt that one of the major problems with assembly-line work is that it does not engender complete involvement but also does not allow the worker to escape through daydreaming.<sup>13</sup> Friedmann questions whether the habituation and apathy engendered by this activity does not detrimentally affect the personality of the worker.<sup>14</sup> An assembly-line worker identified the withdrawal of attention

from work with becoming like an automaton. He writes:

My work comes to me in a completely automatic way, in the gesture of an automaton. With a rag wrapped round my eyes I could still do it, and could do dozens before I realized that I had done any at all. But underneath this my mind never stops working. It lives by itself. Some call it dreaming, and if so, I am dreaming all day long, five days a week.

The whole bench dreams like this. It is a galley of automatons locked in dreams. Someone who has something to say to you has to come right up to your ear and scream into before you can wake up or answer.<sup>15</sup>

Daydreaming and other methods of withdrawing attention from the work serve another purpose; that of maintaining self-respect when engaging in activity which does not allow one to feel much pride. For example, a nightwatchman discusses the hostility which the over-involvement that a new nightwatchman displayed in his work engendered among the other workers.

Ignorantly, helplessly he broke the basic law of labour. He loved it, or tried to: Where it was only permissible to prostitute oneself, he gave himself blindly and eagerly to the work-machine, he prostrated himself under it...His being was a blind demand for esteem, too urgent to admit moments of withdrawal or self-containment. So he could not tolerate what everyone else found necessary: a certain distance from work.<sup>16</sup>

Many workers in modern industry, then, face a dilemma in regard to withdrawal. Total withdrawal of attention from work activities may result in a loss of feeling like

a whole person. It threatens to turn the worker into an automaton. However, a certain distancing from the work is necessary in order for the worker to establish a sense of self apart from his work activities. It allows him to maintain self-respect while working at a job that does not permit him full utilization of his abilities.

Several of the Postal workers we interviewed indicated that they were aware of the harmful effects of daydreaming yet felt that in the type of job that they were doing it was often necessary. Absenteeism and going to the washroom for a break seemed to provide a partial solution to this problem. They could focus attention on the work and then when it got too boring or was producing too much tension they would walk away from it for awhile. Absenteeism and cigarette breaks were spoken about much more sympathetically than daydreaming was. These types of activities provided a real break from the work and did not engender the same frustration that daydreaming created.

The struggle against the complete separation of thought and activities was also indicated by the many different ways which respondents reported personalizing the work. Several respondents were critical of the ways in which management had organized the work and were able to describe better methods in detail. A major problem with mechanization was that it eliminated many opportunities for planning the work which were available to workers in manual

sortation. Those who were able to plan quite a bit of their own work reported this fact with pride and satisfaction. Others who were prevented from using their own ideas still thought of better ways to do the work and were critical of management for not taking their ideas into account.

Most of the people we interviewed, then, were unwilling to withdraw all attention from the work. They thought about ways to improve the work and several tried to set up production goals for themselves. Daydreaming was viewed as sometimes necessary but usually harmful to the work or to the individual. Most respondents favoured absenteeism or taking a break over separating thought from work activity.

5. Quality. In Chapter II we discussed studies which indicated that workers express concern over the quality of the product. An important source of work tension for many workers appears to be frustration engendered by working on a product that one cannot take pride in. A steel mill worker interviewed by Studs Terkel complained about the lack of skill in his job. Work for him did not provide the sense of pride which he associated with productive work. He said:

You can't take pride any more. You remember when a guy could point to a house he built, how many logs he stacked. He built it and he was proud of it. I don't really think I could be proud if a contractor built a home for me. I would be tempted to get in there and kick the carpenter in the ass (laughs), and take the saw away from him. 'Cause I would have to be a part of it, you know.<sup>17</sup>

The importance of work as something to be proud of was illustrated by the test plant workers studied by William F. Whyte. In the plant there was a certain amount of automation, with automatic controls and charts which the workers had to watch. At one point the General Superintendent had said that there was no skill in the men's jobs as they just had to watch charts. The men strongly resented that remark. Whyte reports:

The men now began talking against the training program management was developing in order to prepare men for the most highly skilled jobs. The men said, in effect, "If we are only watchmen, why should the company want us to learn anything?"

When telephone calls came in to Hi-Test from workers in other local plants, they now asked to talk to the "chief watchman". And for several days the poly operators signed the Daily Operating Data Sheet as "the watchman".<sup>18</sup>

Part of this pride comes from working on a high quality product. Walker and Guest report the remarks of one worker who was worried about the lack of quality engendered by assembly-line methods of production:

You cannot get quality and quantity. That's my big worry about the place. I don't like it. I always liked to be proud of my work. But I can't be on this job very much. Everyone is working under too much pressure for speed and "get it out".<sup>19</sup>

While we did not directly ask the respondents about quality several of them expressed concern with the quality



of their work and with the lack of pride they felt. For example:

Due to introduction of machinery there is a large drop on quality of mail worked.

Insufficient trained people to help with heavy volume. No incentive for well done job other than personal satisfaction.

I think I could do a better job if the department in which I work was better organized.

The whole set-up has gone steadily down-hill. Initiative is unwelcome. Frustrations abound.

No feeling of accomplishment and change jobs every month. Never feel it's a job well-done.

Would not want job forever. Feel I have more potential.

Many Postal workers avoid doing this (describing themselves as a Postal worker). They don't want to listen to a tirade of the shortcomings of the Postal system.

Many of the respondents felt frustrated by their inability to do better work under the present organization of the Post Office. They also had a number of suggestions for improving the work organization and for increasing the quality of the work. They seemed quite cynical about management's willingness to listen to their suggestions, however.

I. Conclusions. In Chapter II we argued that workers created their own social relations and their own goals within the organizational framework provided by management. In this chapter we have described some of the relations and goals

created by Postal workers. The significance of these activities to an understanding of workers in modern industry has been expressed by Bill Watson:

The "sabotage of the rationalization of time" is not some foolery of men. In its own context it appears as nothing more than the forcing of more free time into existence; any worker would tell you as much. Yet as an activity which counteracts capital's prerogative of ordering labor's time, it is a profound organized effort by labor to undermine its own existence as "abstract labor power". The seizing of quantities of time for getting together with friends and the amusement of activities ranging from card games to reading or walking around the plant to see what other areas are doing is an important achievement for laborers. Not only does it demonstrate the feeling that much of the time should be organized by the workers themselves, but it also demonstrates an existing animosity toward the practice of constantly postponing all of one's desires and inclinations so the rational process of production can go on uninterrupted.<sup>20</sup>

In the next chapter, we will be concerned with identifying variables which may effect the social organization and activities developed by workers.

## Chapter 5

FOOTNOTES

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CHAPTER VI

FACTORS AFFECTING  
WORKERS' BEHAVIOUR

In this chapter we will be concerned with suggesting factors which might effect the workers' choice of behaviour and with developing hypotheses. Because this is an exploratory study we will be dealing only with simple two-variable relationships and will not be making any inferences about the nature of the relationships.

A. The variables. The purpose of this section is to discuss the independent variables we are looking at and to report their frequencies.

1. Expectations about work. We asked the respondents three questions to arrive at their expectations and involvement in their work. The first question was:

Some people are completely involved in their job--they are absorbed in it night and day. For other people, their job is simply the way they make their living. How involved do you feel in your job?

Fifty-seven percent of the respondents reported that they felt strongly or moderately involved in their job, eight percent reported feeling slightly involved, and thirty-two percent said they were very little or not at all involved in their work.

TABLE 50

Involvement in work	
(in percentages)	
Strongly or moderately	57.0
Slightly	8.0
Very little or not at all	32.0
Non-response	3.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 47

The second question was:

Below is a list of things often thought important about a job. Could you look them over and then list them in the space across from the list in order of their importance to you.

The list included thirteen factors: work is not too hard, work is interesting, work is close to where you live, work gives you a chance to try out your own ideas, work gives you a chance to do something worthwhile, good pay, good people to work with, work not repetitious, can set your own pace, a supervisor who doesn't breathe down your neck, security and benefits, good chance of promotion, and a good union. These factors were then classified in accordance to the involvement in the work itself that they indicated. The first group of factors indicated an interest in work that involves the individual's mind and skill. Thus,

people valuing these factors were defined as having an intrinsic orientation towards work. This group consists of work is interesting, work gives you a chance to do something worthwhile, work is not repetitious, and can set your own pace. The second group of factors indicates an interest in interpersonal or political features of the workplace. This group includes good people to work with, a supervisor who doesn't breathe down your neck, and a good union. The third group of factors indicates an interest in external rewards or in convenience or ease of the work. Workers valuing these factors were defined as having an instrumental orientation to work. This group includes work is not too hard, work is close to where you live, good pay, security and benefits, and good chances of promotion.

The group of factors which was most commonly selected as the most important factor about a job was the third group, external factors. Forty-nine percent of the respondents picked a factor from group three as their first choice, forty percent picked a factor from group one, and eleven percent picked a factor from group two. The low number of respondents choosing group two is surprising in respect of all the favourable comments made by the respondents about informal relations in the Post Office. This could be due to the fact that people do not think of social relations as a major aspect of work because they feel that good social relations are a luxury which they cannot demand in a job.



That is, in our society work is not defined as an occasion for engaging in social relations; social relations are considered incidental to the major purposes of work. Informal relations would, then be something which would be missed if not allowed for in a job yet not consciously sought after while looking for one.

TABLE 51

Most important factor  
in job

(in percentages)

External factors	49.0
Intrinsic factors	40.0
Social factors	11.0
	<hr/>
	100.0

N = 47

The third question we asked was:

If you inherited enough money to live comfortably for the rest of your life without working would you still work?

Sixty percent of the respondents said that they would still work, although some of them emphasized that they would not work at the Post Office. Forty percent said that they would not work if they inherited enough money to live comfortably.

TABLE 52

If inherited money  
would still work

(in percentages)

Yes	60.0
No	40.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 47

2. Acceptance of management's authority. We asked the respondents five questions to elicit their attitudes toward the authority of management and towards the rules they work under. The first question we asked was: "Do you follow all the rules or do you sometimes break some?" Forty-three percent of the respondents said that they never or hardly ever broke rules, fifty-three percent said that they sometimes broke rules, and four percent said that they broke rules often or always.

TABLE 53

Amount of rule-breaking

(in percentages)

Never or hardly ever	43.0
Sometimes	53.0
Often or never	4.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 47

Thus, fifty-seven percent of the sample reported that they sometimes or often broke rules. They were then asked:

If a rule did not make sense to you would you follow it even if there was no one around to catch you breaking it?

Fifty-seven percent of the respondents said that they would not follow a nonsensical rule while forty-three percent said that they would.

TABLE 54

Follow a senseless rule

(in percentages)

Yes	43.0
No	57.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 47

Generally, those who said that they would not follow a senseless rule also reported breaking rules sometimes or often. This is shown on the following table.

TABLE 55

Would you follow a senseless rule?	Amount of rule-breaking		
	Never or hardly ever (in percentages)	Sometimes (in percentages)	Often or always (in percentages)
Yes	68.0	7.0	0.0
No	32.0	19.0	2.0
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total Number	19	26	2

N = 47

Some of the comments of those who said that they would indicated a concern to stay out of trouble, implying that it is easier just to follow the rule without having to worry or think about whether or not there is someone there to catch you breaking it. Other respondents thought that if you broke a rule when there was no one around to catch you, you might get into the habit of breaking rules and eventually get caught. These two types of responses seemed to indicate not acceptance of management's authority, but rather a lack of involvement in the job. Following rules allowed these people just to get the work over with without having to concentrate on who was watching them. Instead of a commitment to rules these respondents seemed to be expressing an apathy towards the workplace. Rule-breaking usually requires

the rule-breaker to be alert to his surroundings while following rules allows for withdrawal of attention. In a larger sample it would be informative to separate those who follow rules because they are apathetic to the workplace from those who follow rules because of a commitment to them. The latter group could then be controlled for when looking at the effect of acceptance of management's authority on behaviour at work.

The third question they were asked was:

All in all, do you think that most of the rules are necessary or do you think that the work would be done just as well without them?

Sixty-eight percent of the respondents thought that all the rules or most of the rules were necessary, thirty percent thought that some of the rules were necessary, and two percent thought that very few or none of the rules were necessary.

TABLE 56

Think rules are necessary

(in percentages)

All or most are necessary	68.0
Some are necessary	30.0
Very few or none are necessary	2.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 47

Many of the respondents thought that the rules were necessary to keep order and to keep things running smoothly. Rules served to introduce continuity and uniformity. For example:

With so many people involved pandemonium would result with no rules.

In a large establishment with rotating both shifts and individual assignments there must be a set pattern to avoid an absolute chaos.

By rules, people do the same thing.

They keep a continuity in the Post Office.

Others thought that rules were necessary for safety in the plant.

Safety requires some rules.

A lot have to do with safety.

Several respondents thought that rules were necessary as workers would not otherwise be motivated to do the work.

Discipline is the only way to truly control the actions of an employee.

If there weren't rules, no one around that place would do any work.

There are some people who if they didn't have strict rules would be totally unmanageable.

People have a tendency to take advantage.

Others thought that some rules were necessary but that too many rules caused dissension and bad feelings among the

employees. For example:

You have to have some rules on any job. The more rules you have on a job they are the cause of the employees being either obnoxious, destructive, etc.

Too many rules cause dissension and disruption.

It's too confining and structured.

The fourth question they were asked was:

Do you think supervisors are really necessary to get the work done or would the work get done anyway?.

Sixty-four percent thought that supervisors were necessary while thirty-four percent said that the work would get done anyway.

TABLE 57

Think supervisors  
are necessary?

(in percentages)

Yes	64.0
No	34.0
Non-response	2.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 47

Many respondents thought that without supervision people would not work hard. Some of these comments were:

Because only about one-third of staff actually work: Supervision is lousy.

Some people need supervision before they will work.

There are always some who slack off work when they think they can.

For me, no, for some people all the supervisors in the world would not make them move, because they are not interested in giving value for their money.

Because some of the workers are not here for work, just for fun or something to do.

Others thought that supervisors were necessary because they co-ordinated the work, knew what work needed to be done, or performed other clerical tasks which were considered essential.

They are necessary to check bad workers - answer questions about mail.

Sometimes a supervisor has to tell people what kind of a job they are doing, and make time tables.

They assign jobs so you don't get bored, put people where they are most needed at that time.

Someone has to control the flow of mail. For the amount of actual supervising we could have about 50% with grade clerks doing paper work.

Supervisors have other duties than maintaining work schedules. Someone is required to do these jobs.

It is interesting that most of the respondents saw the supervisor as either a disciplinary force or a co-ordinator. These two functions differ in that a disciplinary force deals



with people while a co-ordinator deals mainly with things. In the above answers, for example, a respondent who saw supervisors as a disciplinary force talks about the problems of getting people to work while a respondent who sees supervisors as a co-ordinating force talks about controlling the flow of mail. Further studies which attempt to describe workers' acceptance of supervision would take account of these two reasons for acceptance as they seem to indicate two different attitudes. It would be interesting to examine the relationship between the degree of the division of labour in a workplace and the workers' perception of the function of supervision. In Chapter I we suggested that the division of labour into minute parts was an important strategy in depriving workers of power over the work process. One effect of this division of work seems to be a mystification of the work process. That is, the division of knowledge about the work process as a whole comes to be seen as an inevitable feature of modern industry and a co-ordinator role seen as necessary to the work itself. Acceptance of supervision as a co-ordinating force may be a result of the division of labour in the work place. On the other hand, those who accept supervision as a disciplinary force seem to recognize the political functions of supervisors and this acceptance may be better explained by looking at personality characteristics of the respondents or by factors such as skill background and whether the respondents are upwardly

or downwardly mobile. This is a hypothesis which could be tested through surveying workers in industries which vary in the degree of division of labour. In our sample, there was no difference between the attitudes towards supervisors of those who worked in the plant and those who worked in the Counter Service.

TABLE 58

		Type of work	
		Plant (in percentages)	Wickets (in percentages)
Think supervisors are necessary	Yes	66.0	64.0
	No	34.0	36.0
Total percent		100.0	100.0
Total number		32	14

N = 46.

Those who thought that the work would get done anyway pointed out that supervisors usually did not know the job better than the clerks, that they interfered with the work, and that they were a source of annoyance. For example:

All they seem to do is interrupt people and just delay things.

We do the work. The supervisors make management happy and informed with reports and end of month balances.

With the pressure from some of the supervisors the work will sometimes slow down a bit.

I don't think the supervisor knows all the job, some don't even know the postage rates.

In most cases people know what they have to do and will get it done.\*

Pain in the ass, they only get in the way, just try to combat their own boredom. Learn more from other staff, supes just watch.

In general, the workers seemed to accept rules to a greater extent than they accepted supervision.

The fifth question we asked was:

Do you think that it is right that the planning of the work and the making of rules should be done by management or do you think the workers should have some say in it?

Four percent thought that management should make all the rules, thirty percent thought that management should make most of the rules but workers should have some say, sixty-two percent thought that workers and management should share equally in the making of the rules. Many respondents thought that worker input into the authority structure of the plant would result in more harmonious labour relations.

TABLE 59

Who should make rules?

(in percentages)

Management should make all	4.0
Management most but workers should have some say	30.0
Workers and management should share equally	62.0
Workers should make all	4.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 47

3. The organization of the work. The two groups we will be comparing are the Wicket clerks and the clerks in the Automated Plant. The differences between the jobs and the job attitudes of the two groups were discussed in Chapter 4. As already reported, thirty percent of our sample worked at the Counter Service and seventy percent worked in the automatic mail processing plant.

TABLE 60

Type of work

(in percentages)

Plant	70.0
Wickets	30.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 47

4. In addition to the previously discussed variables, we will look at several others. The first of these is job satisfaction. Forty-three percent of the workers in our sample reported that they were satisfied with their jobs while fifty-seven percent said that they were dissatisfied.

TABLE 61

Job Satisfaction  
(in percentages)

Yes	43.0
No	57.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 47

We will then look at the length of time the respondents plan to stay at the Post Office. Thirty-six percent of the respondents said that they were planning to leave the Post Office within the next two years while sixty-four percent said that they would stay longer than two years.

TABLE 62

Length of time planning  
to stay at Post Office

(in percentages)

Over two years	64.0
Two years or under	36.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 47

Next, we will look at the length of time that the respondents had worked for the Post Office. Twenty-three percent of our sample had worked there under one year, thirty-two percent had worked there between one and five years, and forty-five percent had worked for the Post Office for over five years.

TABLE 63

Length of time worked-  
at Post Office

(in percentages)

Under one year	23.0
Between one and five years	32.0
Over five years	45.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N. = 47

Another variable we will look at is whether or not the respondents think that their getting the kind of job that they want in the future depends on their performance of their present job. Eleven percent thought that it depended a lot on their present performance, twenty-five percent thought that it depended somewhat, and fifty-three percent thought that it only depended a little or not at all.

TABLE 64

Future job depends on  
present performance

(in percentages)

Depends a lot	11.0
Depends somewhat	25.0
Depends a little or not at all	53.0
Non-response	11.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 47

We will also look at the effect that the authority structure has on their behaviour. The two variables we will look at here are the closeness with which the respondents' work is watched by the supervisors and whether or not their work is subject to objective count. Twenty-five percent of our sample reported that they were watched very closely or quite closely, twenty percent said that they were not watched very closely, and thirty-eight percent reported that they were hardly watched at all:

TABLE 65

How closely does  
supervisor watch work?

(in percentages)

Very or quite closely	25.0
Not very closely	20.0
Hardly at all or not at all	38.0
Non-response	17.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 47

Fifty-one percent of the workers said that their work was not subject to objective count and forty-five percent said that it was.

TABLE 66

Work subject to  
objective count

(in percentages)

Yes	45.0
No	51.0
Non-response	4.0
	<hr/>
Total percent	100.0

N = 47

This, then, is a description and frequency distribution of the major variables which we will be looking at in this chapter.



B. The findings. In this section we will be reporting the relationships between the variables we just discussed and the workers' strategies.

1. Withdrawal. The first set of relationships we will look at are those between withdrawal and expectations about work. We compared the amount of daydreaming reported by those who said they were strongly involved in their job with those who said that they were somewhat involved or involved just a little or not at all. There were no differences among these groups. We next compared the attitudes toward daydreaming of the three groups. Strength of involvement in work was not related to opinions about whether daydreaming was a good way or a bad way to make the time at work more enjoyable. There was also no relationship between involvement in work and taking days off without being sick or between involvement in work and feelings toward others taking a day off. Those who reported being strongly involved in their work did not appear any less sympathetic to those who took breaks from work than did those who reported that they were only slightly involved or not at all involved in their work. We had thought that degree of involvement in work would be strongly related to daydreaming and it is difficult to explain our failure to find a relationship. This could be because of the small number of cases. Another explanation could be that those who replied that they were strongly involved in their jobs were thinking that for a job of that kind they were strongly involved. What constitutes "strong" or "moderate" involvement

for the workers may be relative to the type of job they have. The argument here is that the respondents have lowered their expectations and are interpreting degree of involvement in light of their lowered expectations. If this is the case, we have an interesting problem of the measure of a variable being weak because the measure itself is being affected by the variable. That is, we are suggesting that lowered expectations about work lowers workers' conceptions about what constitutes strong involvement in work; involvement in work being a measure we wished to use for describing work expectations.

We then looked at the relationship between withdrawal and the respondents' feelings about what the most important thing to look for in a job was. There was no relationship between the factor reported by the respondents as most important about a job and frequency of daydreaming. Those respondents who reported an intrinsic factor as the most important thing to look for in a job did not report less daydreaming than did those who mentioned an interpersonal or external factor. There was also no significant differences among the three groups in regard to attitudes about daydreaming. We found no relationship between orientation to work and taking a break from work or between orientation to work and opinions about others taking a break from work without being sick. The third measure of expectations about work was whether the respondent replied that he would continue to work

if he inherited enough money to live comfortably or if he would stop working. There was no relationship between this measure and any of the four instances of withdrawal.

Expectations about work did not seem to have an effect on withdrawing activity.

TABLE 67

If inherited money  
would still work

(in percentages) (in percentages)

		Yes	No
Amount of Daydreaming	All or most of time	21.0	31.5
	Some of time	25.0	37.5
	Not much of time or never	54.0	31.5
Total percent		100.0	100.0
Total number		28	19

N = 47

Goldthorpe found in his study of automobile workers that some workers had lowered their expectations as to what rewards work should provide and thus did not experience job dissatisfaction.<sup>1</sup> This would lead to the hypothesis that these lowered expectations also allow the worker to do his work without withdrawing attention from it as the reduced expectations make the job seem less boring. This hypothesis

was not supported as workers with instrumental orientations to work did not report daydreaming any less than those who valued intrinsic work rewards. This could be due to poor measures of work expectations. However, the discrepancies between these findings and Goldthorpe's could also be due to problems with measuring job satisfaction through attitude surveys. Edwin Locke argues that social scientists have spent their time operationally defining job satisfaction, ignoring the development of a proper conceptual definition of it.<sup>2</sup> Robert Blauner suggests that in American society one's occupation is a vital part of one's identity and to criticize his job may be interpreted as demeaning to the respondent's self-esteem.<sup>3</sup> Georges Friedmann suggests that not only will people underestimate their dissatisfaction with work to others but they also repress it in themselves.<sup>4</sup> If this is true, behavioural indicators of satisfaction may be more accurate than attitudinal measures. In support of this hypothesis, we found a stronger relationship between type of work and daydreaming than we did between type of work and job satisfaction.

TABLE 68

## Type of Work

	Type of Work	
	Plant (in percentages)	Wickets (in percentages)
Amount of Daydreaming		
All or most of time	33.3	7.0
Some of time	33.3	21.0
Not much of time or never	33.4	72.0
Total percent	100.0	100.0
Total number	33	14

N = 47

Cramer's V = .36616 Chi square = .04

TABLE 69

## Type of Work

	Type of Work	
	Plant (in percentages)	Wickets (in percentages)
Job Satisfaction		
Yes	36.0	57.0
No	64.0	43.0
Total percent	100.0	100.0
Total number	33	14

N = 47

Phi = .19220 Chi square = .31

We did not find a statistically significant relationship between working at a job with strong mass production

characteristics and reported dissatisfaction, a relationship which many researchers with a larger sample have found.<sup>5</sup> We did, however, find a significant relationship between type of job and daydreaming. Workers in the Plant reported daydreaming more than did workers in the Counter Service, where mass production characteristics were not as pronounced. Thus, while lowered expectations may affect the worker's tendency to report dissatisfaction it does not seem to lower his tendency to try to escape mentally from dissatisfying work.

We next looked for relationships between the respondents' acceptance of the authority structure in the Post Office and their use of withdrawal. There was a relationship between following the rules and daydreaming. Those who said that they broke rules sometimes or often were more likely to daydream than were those who said they rarely or never broke rules. The level of association was  $\text{Gamma} = .51100$ , significant at the .02 level.

TABLE 70

## Amount of rule-breaking

Amount of Daydreaming	All or most of time	Never or hardly ever	Sometimes	Often or always
		(in percentages)	(in percentages)	(in percentages)
		20.0	24.0	100.0
	Sometimes	15.0	44.0	0.0
	Rarely or never	65.0	32.0	0.0
	Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
	Total number	20	25	2

N = 47

Gamma = .51100

Significance = .02

There was also a relationship between the respondents' attitudes toward daydreaming and the frequency with which they reported breaking the rules. Those who said they hardly ever or never broke rules were more likely to think that daydreaming was a bad way to make the time at work more enjoyable than those who said that they broke rules sometimes or often. The level of association was Gamma = .58278, significant at the .04 level.

TABLE 71

## Amount of rule-breaking

Attitudes toward daydreaming	Never or hardly ever	Sometimes	Often or always
	(in percentages)	(in percentages)	(in percentages)
A good way	35.0	62.5	100.0
A bad way	65.0	37.5	0.0
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number	20	24	2

N = 46

Cramer's V = .58278 Chi square = .04

While the relationship between breaking rules and taking days off from work when not sick was not significant at the .05 level, there was a tendency for those who never break rules to report that they very rarely took days off and those who sometimes or frequently broke rules reporting that they sometimes or frequently took days off. Gamma = .44118 which was significant at the .08 level. A larger sample size may have resulted in a significant relationship..



TABLE 72

		Amount of rule-breaking		
		Never or hardly ever	Sometimes	Often or always
		(in percentages)	(in percentages)	(in percentages)
Absenteeism	Frequently	5.0	17.0	50.0
	Sometimes	26.0	37.0	0.0
	Never	69.0	46.0	50.0
Total percent		100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number		19	24	2
Total = 45				
Gamma = .44118    Significance = .08				

The relationship between breaking rules and opinions about those who take days off when they are not really sick was not significant. It is interesting to see that willingness to follow rules extends to co-operating with management even in activities such as daydreaming which are not normally visible to supervisors.

The next measure of acceptance of management's authority we looked at was the answers respondents gave to the question, "If a rule did not make sense to you would you follow it even if there was no one around to catch you breaking it?" There was no relationship between this variable and any of the four instances of withdrawal. Earlier we had pointed to two rationales given by the respondents for following a rule that didn't make sense. The first rationale

emphasized the importance of following rules and thus did express an acceptance of authority. Those giving the second rationale, on the other hand, thought that it was easier to go along with the rules because breaking them required too much attention in order to avoid being caught. They seemed to express apathy and withdrawal from the work place. It is possible, then, that following rules because they are felt to be legitimate is negatively related to daydreaming while following rules because of apathy is positively related to daydreaming, thus cancelling each other out. This hypothesis could be tested on a larger sample.

There was also no difference between those who thought that all or most of the rules were necessary in regard to withdrawing activities and attitudes towards these activities. The fourth measure of acceptance of management's authority, that is, whether or not the respondents thought the supervisors were necessary, was not significantly related to withdrawal. However, there seemed to be a trend for those who thought that supervisors were necessary to be more critical of people taking days off from work when they were not really sick. Phi was .32733 and while this was only significant at the .1 level a larger sample might increase the significance of the relationship.

TABLE 73

Think supervisors  
are necessary

		Yes	No
		(in percentages)	(in percentages)
Attitudes toward Absenteeism	Sympathetic	71.0	100.0
	Critical	29.0	0.0
		<hr/>	<hr/>
Total percent		100.0	100.0
Total number		28	12

N = 40

Phi = .32733    Chi square = .1

The last measure of acceptance of management's authority was not related to daydreaming, attitudes about daydreaming, and taking days off when not sick. However, there was a relationship between those who thought management should make all or most of the rules and those who were critical of people who took days off without being sick. The respondents who thought that workers and management should share equally in the making of the rules and those who thought that workers should make all the rules were more likely to be sympathetic to people taking days off work. The measure of association was Cramer's  $V = .46485$ , significant at the .03 level.

TABLE 74

Who should make rules?

Attitudes toward absenteeism	Management make all rules (in percentages)	Management most-workers same say (in percentages)	Share equally (in percentages)	Workers make all rules (in percentages)
Sympathetic	0.0	86.0	83.0	100.0
Critical	100.0	14.0	17.0	0.0
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number	2	14	24	1

N = 41

Cramer's V = .46485, Chi square = .03

Acceptance of management authority seems to have a considerable bearing on withdrawal. A larger sample would be needed to bring out the nature of this relationship more clearly.

We then looked at the type of work the respondents performed. There was a significant relationship between workers in the Plant and workers in the Counter Service in regard to daydreaming. Those who worked in the Plant reported daydreaming more often than those who worked in Wickets.

Cramer's V was .36616, significant at the .04 level.

TABLE 75

Amount of of daydreaming	Type of Work	
	Plant (in percentages)	Wickets (in percentages)
A lot	34.0	7.0
Sometimes	28.0	21.0
Rarely or Never	38.0	72.0
Total percent	100.0	100.0
Total number	32	14

N = 46

Cramer's V = .36616      Chi square = .04

The relationship between type of work and attitudes toward daydreaming was  $\Phi = .31253$ , significant at the .07 level.

TABLE 76

Attitudes toward daydreaming	Type of work	
	Plant (in percentages)	Wickets (in percentages)
Good way	62.5	28.5
Bad way	37.5	71.5
Total percent	100.0	100.0
Total number	32	14

N = 46

 $\Phi = .31253$       Chi square = .07

Jon Shepard also examined the relationship between the technical organization of the work and withdrawal of interest from work. He suggested that when a situation offers the participant self-esteem he will remain in the situation and consider it an important part of his life. For those who do not achieve self-esteem and status recognition the situation will be regarded instrumentally, interest will be removed. He further argues that perceived high ranking on freedom-control, meaning, and advancement opportunities on the basis of ability provides status recognition and will result in work being evaluated as important. Powerlessness, meaninglessness, and normlessness will lead to a withdrawal of interest and an instrumental work orientation. In a sample of 213 maintenance craftsmen and assembly-line workers he found positive relations between instrumental orientation and powerlessness, meaninglessness, and normlessness but the relations were low.<sup>6</sup> These findings seem to point to a conflict in the worker himself, who may derive small satisfaction from work but cannot withdraw interest altogether. This is supported by our study as we found a relationship between instrumental orientation and withdrawal.

There was no relationship between the type of work and absenteeism or attitudes toward absenteeism. Workers in the Plant, then, thought that daydreaming was a good solution to the boredom of work to a greater extent than workers in Wickets but did not seem to take days off to any greater

degree than did those in Wickets.

There was no significant difference between those who were satisfied with their jobs and those who were dissatisfied in regards to withdrawal. Metzner and Mann found that job satisfaction and absenteeism were related in their sample for white-collar men working at low level skill jobs and for blue-collar men but not at all for white-collar women or white-collar men working at higher levels.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps the large number of females in our sample is obscuring a relationship between satisfaction and absenteeism. A possible explanation might be that women take days off for the purpose of attending to their families rather than through a need to escape from the work. This could be tested by comparing the relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism in married women and single women.

We also found no significant differences between the withdrawing activities and attitudes toward withdrawal of those who were planning to leave in the next two years and those who were planning to stay at the Post Office longer than two years. We had thought that those who were not planning to stay at the Post Office for a long period of time would find it easier to accept the ethic of deferred gratification and would not be as motivated to find ways of making the work enjoyable as would those who were planning to stay. It would then be easier for those people to sustain

a separation between their thoughts and their work activities. This hypothesis was not confirmed. The findings seem to indicate that even those who change jobs frequently try to find some enjoyment and meaning in the work. They suggest that workers do not develop the instrumental attitudes toward work that researchers such as Goldthorpe and Dubin describe.

There was a significant relationship between those who had worked at the Post Office for more than five years and those who had worked there for a shorter period. The longer people worked for the Post Office the less frequently they tended to daydreaming. Gamma was .63600, significant at the .0009 level.

TABLE 77

Length of time worked  
at Post Office

Amount of daydreaming	Under two years	Between 2 and 5 years	Over 5 years
Often	64.0	27.0	5.0
Sometimes	27.0	27.0	33.0
Rarely	9.0	46.0	62.0
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number	11	15	21

N = 47

Gamma = .63600

Significance = .0009



This could be due to the fact that those who found the work so uninvolving that they daydreamed frequently tended to leave the Post Office to look for more interesting work and that those who had stayed did so because they found the work reasonably involving. However, it could also be that those who had been there longer became concerned about excessive daydreaming, feeling that they were dreaming a large part of their life away. They then tried to find other ways of making the time spent at work more enjoyable. Another explanation could be that those who had been at the Post Office longer were generally older than those who had not been there as long. Herrick and Sheppard reported that the young workers had greater expectations about work than older workers. The young workers may find the work less interesting in comparison to their expectations and may thus feel the need to escape from it to a greater extent than the older workers.<sup>8</sup> We did find that the younger workers in our sample tended to daydream more often than the older workers.

TABLE 78

		Age	
		Under 35 (in percentages)	35 and over (in percentages)
Amount of daydreaming	Often	38.0	0.0
	Sometimes	27.0	37.5
	Rarely or never	35.0	62.5
	Total percent	100.0	100.0
	Total number	29	16

N = 45

There was also a tendency for those who had worked at the Post Office for over five years to be more critical of daydreaming than those who hadn't worked there as long. Cramer's V was .33764, significant at the .07 level.

TABLE 79

Attitudes toward daydreaming	Length of time worked at Post Office		
	Under 2 years (in percentages)	Between 2 and 5 years (in percentages)	Over 5 years (in percentages)
Yes	57.0	47.0	40.0
No	43.0	53.0	60.0
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total Number	28	15	20

N = 47

Cramer's V = .33764

Chi square = .07

There was no significant relationship between length of time spent at the Post Office and absenteeism or attitudes toward absenteeism.

The next variable we looked at was the respondents' opinions about whether or not the way they performed their present jobs would have any bearing on their getting the jobs they wanted in the future. There was no relationship between withdrawal and this variable.

TABLE 80

Future job depends  
on present performance

Amount of daydreaming	A lot  (in percentages)	Somewhat  (in percentages)	A little or not at all  (in percentages)
All or most of time	20.0	17.0	37.0
Some of time	40.0	33.0	22.0
Rarely or never	40.0	50.0	41.0
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number	5	12	27

N = 44

Gamma = .16436      Significance = .68

We were unable to find a relationship between this variable and any of the strategies. This is surprising since promotions and recommendations are two of management's strategies for ensuring that workers will accept the formal

organization of the workplace. They are intended not only to induce workers to comply with management by appealing to the workers' self-interest but also to induce a commitment to the hierarchical organization of the workplace by creating a system of rewards that will be seen as just by the workers.<sup>9</sup> Our inability to find a relationship between workers' strategies and feeling that future rewards depend on present performance may be due to the very small number of respondents who thought that their future job depended considerably on their present performance. Many of the respondents reported that the Post Office was no longer promoting people from the shop floor into management but were instead hiring university graduates for management positions. Management seemed to be foregoing the system of rewards through promotions characteristic of early offices<sup>10</sup> and relying on purely monetary rewards. Thus, the respondents appeared to be reacting to a realistic appraisal of the lack of opportunity in the Post Office. The clerks were responding to this in much the same way as the automobile workers studied by Ely Chinoy responded to their limited opportunities for mobility. Chinoy found that the workers he interviewed had little hope of advancing up to the top echelons and few even seriously considered the possibility of becoming foremen. They were found also to have a cynical attitude toward the means of advancement, feeling that merit and ability were not as important as "pull". Rather than aspiring to move

up the hierarchical ladder, Chinoy found that most workers had lowered their aspirations considerably, pursuing small goals on the shop floor.

By labelling the small goals they pursue in the shop as "getting ahead", these workers maintain for themselves the appearance of sustained effort and ambition. Then, if they managed to secure a job that pays 5 cents an hour more or one that is less exacting or more interesting, they seem to be advancing. "I'll be getting ahead all right", said a discontented line tender, "if I can just get off the line".<sup>11</sup>

Most of the workers who said they were interested in getting another job in the Post Office were not trying to move up the job hierarchy but into a job with a similar status which offered more variety. Other respondents complained that the work they did was so specialized that the skills they developed at the Post Office were not applicable to other work places. This complaint was particularly common among the workers in the Plant.

We found no relationship between withdrawal and the closeness with which the respondents' work was watched by supervisors or between withdrawal and whether or not the work was subject to objective count.

In summary, then, the most important factors that we looked at in influencing withdrawing behaviour and attitudes were acceptance of the authority structure, the type of work performed, and length of time spent at the Post Office. The more accepting workers were of management's

authority, the less likely they were to use withdrawal. Those who had worked at the Post Office for five years or more were less likely to daydream than were those who hadn't worked there as long. Workers in the Plant reported daydreaming more frequently than those who worked at the Counter Service.

2. Individual Restructuring. In examining the relationships between the variables which we have discussed and individual restructuring we will be using four instances of individual restructuring. These are; figuring out different ways of doing the work, setting an output target, using own ideas in the planning of the work and preferring to decide how to do the work for oneself.

There was no significant relationship between involvement in the work and individual restructuring. However, there was a tendency for those who reported being strongly involved in their work to report that they could use their own ideas on the job. Cramer's V was .31598, significant at the .09 level.

TABLE 81

Can use own ideas	Involvement in work		
	Very	Somewhat	A little or not at all
	(in percentages)	(in percentages)	(in percentages)
Yes	57.0	100.0	40.0
No	43.0	0.0	60.0
Total Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total Number	28	4	15

N = 47

Cramer's V = .31598      Chi square = .09

Further research could determine whether or not this relationship holds for a larger sample and possibly try to establish which variable is really independent in this case. That is, those who tend to be involved in work may look for ways of using their own ideas, creating opportunities which more instrumentally-oriented workers have overlooked. On the other hand, the differences between involvement levels may be due to actual differences in the jobs performed by those who are involved in their work and those who are not. Involvement in work may be a result of opportunities that the work provides for using the worker's own ideas. The present research indicates that the second explanation is more likely as we found no relationship between our other

two measures of work expectations and using own ideas on the job. This is reinforced by a measure of association of  $\Phi = .30463$ , significant at the .07 level between type of job and use of own ideas.

TABLE 82

Can use own ideas	Type of Work	
	Plants (in percentages)	Wickets (in percentages)
Yes	45.0	78.0
No	55.0	22.0
Total percent	100.0	100.0
Total Number	33	14
	N = 47	
	$\Phi = .30963$	Chi square = .07

Thus, the job itself seems to be more important in determining whether or not the respondent can use his own ideas than the attitudes which the respondent brings to the job. Further research is needed to establish the nature of the relationship between job involvement and use of one's own ideas with more certainty.

We then looked at the relationship between individual restructuring and acceptance of management's authority. There was a significant relationship between figuring out



better ways of doing the job and breaking rules. Cramer's V was .41302, significant at the .01 level. The largest percentage of those who figured out better ways of doing the work were those who said they sometimes broke rules. Both those respondents who said that they broke rules often said they didn't try to figure out better ways of doing the work while half of those who said they never or hardly ever broke rules said they didn't figure out better ways of doing the work.

TABLE 83

Ever figure out better ways to do work	Amount of rule-breaking		
	Never or hardly ever (in percentages)	Sometimes (in percentages)	Often or always (in percentages)
Yes	50.0	80.0	0.0
No	50.0	20.0	100.0
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number	20	25	2

N = 47

Cramer's V = .41302      Chi square = .01

This lends support to our earlier observation that the attention required in breaking rules indicates an involvement in the workplace, if not commitment to the formal authority structure of the workplace. This involvement is also

expressed in finding different ways of doing the work. Breaking rules could indicate a desire for greater control and creativity. It contradicts Robert Dubin's argument that workers withdraw interest from the workplace and derive compensatory satisfaction from outside activities. While workers may report being more involved in outside activities than in work they still find it difficult to withdraw entirely from the workplace.

We found no significant relationships between individual restructuring and following a rule that didn't make sense or feeling that the rules were necessary. There was also no relationship between thinking that supervisors were necessary and individual restructuring. There was a significant relationship between feelings about who should make the rules and using own ideas on the job. Those who thought that workers should have some say or should share equally in the rules were more likely to report being able to use their own ideas on the job than were those who thought that management or workers should make all the rules. However, the small number of workers who thought that either management or workers should make all the rules may have resulted in an inaccurate measure of significance. Cramer's V was .47863, significant at the .01 level.

TABLE 84

## Who should make rules?

Can use own ideas	Management make all	Management most- workers some say	Share equally	Workers make all
	(in percentages)	(in percentages)	(in percentages)	(in percentages)
Yes	0.0	85.0	48.0	0.0
No	100.0	15.0	52.0	100.0
Total Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total Number	2	14	29	2

N = 47

Cramer's V = .47863 Chi square = .01

There was also a significant relationship between thinking that workers should have some say in the making of rules and preferring a job where you are left to decide for yourself how to do the work. Both respondents who thought that management should make all the rules preferred to be told how to do the work. Seventy-seven percent of those who thought that management should make most of the rules but workers should have some say preferred to decide how to do the work themselves, and eighty-eight percent of those who thought that workers and management should share equally in the making of rules preferred to decide on how to do the work themselves. Of the two respondents who thought that workers should make all the rules, one preferred

to decide for himself. Cramer's V was .48221, significant at the .01 level.

TABLE 85

Preferred place of work	Who should make rules?			
	Management make all (in percentages)	Management most-workers some say (in percentages)	Share equally (in percentages)	Workers make all (in percentages)
Told how to do work	100.0	23.0	12.0	50.0
Left to decide	0.0	77.0	88.0	50.0
Total Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total Number	2	13	26	2

N = 43

Cramer's V = .48221 Chi square = .01

Thus, acceptance of management's authority seemed to have some effect on individual restructuring but it is not very clear from our data what that effect is. Further research is needed to clarify the relationship.

We did not find that acceptance of management's authority caused workers to lose interest in applying their own ideas to the work. Some of those workers who consistently expressed an acceptance of management's perspective gave quite detailed accounts of their attempts to personalize the work.

We then looked at the relationship between type of work and individual restructuring. Type of work was not significantly related to figuring out better ways to do the work, setting an output target, or preferring to decide on how to do the work oneself. As was previously reported, the relationship between type of work and using own ideas was  $\Phi = .30463$ , significant at the .07 level, with Wicket workers reporting being able to use their own ideas more frequently than workers in the Plant (see TABLE 82).

There was no significant relationship between job satisfaction and individual restructuring. A larger sample may reveal a relationship between job satisfaction and being able to use own ideas on the job. Sixty-five percent of those who were satisfied with their work said they could use their own ideas on the job while only forty-eight percent of the dissatisfied reported being able to use their own ideas. It is not certain which way the relationship holds. Do the satisfied workers look for ways to use their ideas on the job or does the opportunity to use their own ideas on the job result in satisfaction? To resolve this question it would be necessary to have more detailed information about the respondents' jobs.

TABLE 86

Can use own ideas	Job satisfaction	
	Yes	No
Yes	65.0	48.0
No	35.0	52.0
Total percent	100.0	100.0
Total number	20	27

N = 47

Phi = .16759

Chi square = .39

There was no relationship between length of time respondents were planning to stay at the Post Office and individual restructuring. The length of time that the respondents had worked at the Post Office seemed to have an effect on individual restructuring. The relationship between length of time and figuring out better ways of doing the work was Cramer's  $V = .32735$ , significant at the .08 level. Workers who had been at the Post Office over five years tended to report figuring out other ways of doing the work more frequently than did those who hadn't worked there quite as long. In discussing the relationship between daydreaming and length of time worked we noted that workers who hadn't been at the Post Office very long reported more daydreaming than those who worked there a long time and suggested that

those who had been there a long time had looked for other ways to make the work more involving. Figuring out better ways of doing the work might be one of those ways.

TABLE 87

	Length of time worked for Post Office		
	Under 2 years (in percentages)	Between 2 and 5 years (in percentages)	Over 5 years (in percentages)
Ever figure out better ways to do work?			
Yes	36.0	66.6	76.0
No	64.0	33.3	24.0
Total percent	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Total number	11	15	21

N = 47

Cramer's V = .32735    Chi square = .08

We also found a significant relationship between length of time worked at the Post Office and ability to use own ideas on the job. The longer the respondents worked at the Post Office the more likely they were to report being able to use their own ideas.

TABLE 88

Can use own ideas	Length of time worked for Post Office		
	Under 2 years (in percentages)	Between 2 and 5 years (in percentages)	Over 5 years (in percentages)
Yes	9.0	53.0	81.0
No	91.0	47.0	19.0
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number	11	15	21

N = 47

Cramer's V = .56713    Chi square = .0005

There was no significant relationship between preferring a workplace where one can decide for oneself how to do the work and length of time spent at the Post Office.

There was no relationship between individual restructuring and thinking that getting a job in the future depends on present performance. There was a relationship between how closely the respondents were watched by their supervisors and being able to use their own ideas on the job. Those who were not closely watched by their supervisors were more likely to report being able to use their own ideas on the job than were those who were closely watched. Cramer's V was .63609, significant at the .0003 level.



TABLE 89

Can use own ideas	How closely does supervisor watch work			
	Very or quite closely (in percentages)	Somewhat (in percentages)	Not very (in percentages)	Hardly at all (in percentages)
Yes	25.0	25.0	44.0	94.0
No	75.0	75.0	56.0	6.0
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number	12	8	9	18

N = 47

Cramer's V = .63609      Chi square = .0003

Degree of supervision was not significantly related to the other instances of individual restructuring. There was also no relationship between the objective countability of the work and individual restructuring.

In summary, acceptance of the authority structure and length of time spent at the Post Office had some effect on individual restructuring. Those who favoured worker participation in the making of rules seemed more interested in structuring their own work. However, those who favoured worker participation were less likely to report being able to use their own ideas on the job than were those who were in favour of management making most of the rules. This could

be a result of those who are allowed to use their own ideas not being aware of how much they would value this privilege if it were taken away. The fact that they can use their own ideas on the job may lead to a greater satisfaction with the way management runs the workplace. Those who were working at the Post Office for a longer period of time were more likely to report being able to use their own ideas on the job. This could be because the newer workers had to work in the Plant while those who had been there longer had been able to transfer to Wickets. More Wicket workers reported being able to use their own ideas on the job than did workers at the Plant. Finally, those who reported being watched closely by their supervisors were less likely to say that they could use their own ideas on the job than those who weren't as closely watched.

3. Competitive Individualism. We next looked at the relationship between work expectations and competitive individualism. Level of involvement in work was not significantly related to either of the two questions about competitive individualism. There were no differences between those involved in their work and those not involved in their work in regard to whether or not they were interested in getting another job in the Post Office or whether or not they thought incentive plans were a good idea. There was also no significant relationship between competitive individualism and our two other measures of work expectations.

Work expectations, then, did not seem to be related to competitive individualism.

Next we looked at the relationship between acceptance of the authority structure and competitive individualism but were unable to find any significant relationships. There was also no relationship between type of work and competitive individualism.

The other variables we looked at were job satisfaction, length of time respondents planned to stay at the Post Office, length of time they had worked there, whether they thought that their future job was dependent on their present job or not, how closely their work was watched by supervisors, and whether or not their work was subject to objective count. None of these variables were significantly related to competitive individualism. It is possible that the reason that we failed to find any factors which may have influenced competitive individualism was that our measures of competitive individualism were inadequate. However, the qualitative answers to the questions about competitive individualism suggests that this strategy is not very important to Postal workers. Almost all of the respondents said that management did not encourage competition and very few were seeking managerial positions. The lack of mobility aspirations and opportunities was also reflected in the feeling that getting the kind of job the respondents wanted in the future was not dependent on their present performance.

4. Informal Group Formation. In examining the relations between informal group formation and our independent variables we will be using five indicators of individual group formation. These were the amount of talking the respondents reported doing, whether they preferred to work in a place where people talked and joked or a place where people didn't talk and joke, how often they reported being helped by fellow workers, how often they reported helping other workers, and whether they preferred working in a place where people helped each other or a place where people did just their own work.

We first looked at the relationship between expectations about work and informal group formation. There were no significant relationships between level of involvement in the work and any of the indicators of individual group formation. There was no relationship between the amount of talking done by the respondent and what he feels to be the most important factor in looking for a job. There was a significant relationship between most important factor in a job and a preference for a place where people talk and joke around. Those who had an interpersonal or an external orientation towards work tended to prefer a place where people talk and joke to a greater extent than did those who thought that intrinsic factors were most important about a job. The level of association was Cramer's  $V = .37613$ , significant at the .03 level.

TABLE 90

Type of Workplace Preferred	Most important factor in job		
	Intrinsic (in percentages)	Interpersonal (in percentages)	External (in percentages)
Place where people joke	63.0	100.0	91.0
Place where people don't joke	37.0	0.0	9.0
Total Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total Number	19	5	23

N = 47

Cramer's V = .37613 Chi square = .03

This was quite a strong association. It lends support to Walker and Guest's finding that workers' tended to think of informal interaction with fellow workers as compensating for dissatisfying work. Those in our sample who had an instrumental orientation towards their jobs did not try to make up for the lack of interest in the work itself by withdrawing their attention from the workplace. Instead, they turned to interaction with their fellow workers. This suggests that informal group relations may become more important to the worker as the work itself becomes less challenging and the worker comes to see instrumental goals as the major purpose of work. This would contradict Dubin's

findings that the work group is not important to the instrumentally-oriented worker.<sup>12</sup> It would lend support to Walker and Guest's findings. They wrote:

The ultimate value and importance of the more satisfying kinds of social relationships were demonstrated by the qualitative comments. In discussing the amount of talking they did, the isolates were the most vehemently negative. The largest group, those working side by side but independently, were more likely to refer to their social relations in the negative terms of how they would feel were they not able to talk, and of the effects of interaction in counteracting other job tensions.<sup>13</sup>

There were no other significant relationships between this variable and informal group formation. The third measure of work expectations was whether or not the respondents would work if they inherited enough money to live comfortably without working. There were no significant relationships between this measure and any of the indicators of informal group formation.

We next examined the relationship between acceptance of the authority structure of the Post Office and informal group formation. We found no relationship between breaking rules and informal group formation or between following rules that don't make sense and informal group formation. There was a significant relationship between talking and feeling that all or most of the rules were necessary, with those who thought that all or most of the rules were necessary, reporting talking more than those who thought that only some of the rules

were necessary. The relationship was  $\Gamma = .78277$ , significant at the .0018 level.

TABLE 91

## Think rules are necessary

Amount of talking	All or most	Some	Few or none
	(in percentages)	(in percentages)	(in percentages)
A lot	91.0	43.0	100.0
Now and then	9.0	43.0	0.0
Hardly at all	0.0	14.0	0.0
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number	32	14	1

N = 47

$\Gamma = .78277$

Significance = .0018

This could reflect a general commitment to social interaction with its rules and restrictions as well as its potential for satisfying individual needs. In this case, support of rules may not actually represent acceptance of management but instead a willingness to limit pursuit of merely individual goals in the interests of co-operative relations with others. This position is supported by the greater number of positive feelings about the necessity for rules as compared with positive feelings about the necessity

for supervisors. However, the fact that there was a positive relationship between feeling that supervisors were necessary and amount of talking casts some doubt on this interpretation.

TABLE 92

Think supervisors  
are necessary

Amount of talking	Yes	No
	(in percentages)	(in percentages)
A lot	83.0	63.0
Now and then	17.0	25.0
Hardly at all	0.0	12.0
Total percent	100.0	100.0
Total number	30	16

N = 47

Cramer's  $V = .32018$

Chi square = .09

There was no relationship between acceptance of the necessity of the rules and the other indicators of informal group formation. The relationship between thinking that supervisors are necessary and talking was Cramer's  $V = .32018$ , significant at the .09 level. While this relationship was not significant at the .05 level, it did indicate a tendency for those who thought that supervisors were necessary to



report talking more than those who thought that they were not necessary (See TABLE 92). There were no other relationships between thinking that supervisors were necessary and informal group formation.

The relationship between amount of talking and attitudes toward who should make the rules was Cramer's  $V = .35336$ , significant at the .06 level. Those who thought that management should make all or most of the rules tended to report talking more than did those who thought workers should share equally in the making of the rules or should make all the rules. However, when the percentages are taken into account there appears to be no real differences. Only two people reported talking hardly at all. The number of zero cells may have affected the correlation measure.

TABLE 93.

Amount of talking	Who should make all rules?			
	Management make all	Management most-workers some say	Share equally	Workers make all
	(in percentages)	(in percentages)	(in percentages)	(in percentages)
A lot	100.0	79.0	76.0	50.0
Now and then	0.0	21.0	20.0	0.0
Hardly at all	0.0	0.0	4.0	50.0
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number	2	14	29	2

N = 47

Cramer's V = .35336

Chi square = .06

There was also a significant relationship between feelings about who should make the rules and preferring a place where people talk and joke. Cramer's V was .48757, significant at the .01 level. However, the true relationship between these variables may be distorted by the very small number of people who thought that management or workers should make all the rules. There was not much difference between those who thought management should make most of the rules and those who thought that management and workers should share equally in the making of rules.




TABLE 94

## Who should make rules?

Type of workplace preferred	Management make all	Management most-workers some say	Share equally	Workers make all
	(in percentages)	(in percentages)	(in percentages)	(in percentages)
Place where people talk and joke	50.0	79.0	90.0	0.0
Place where people don't talk and joke	50.0	21.0	10.0	100.0
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number	2	14	29	2

N = 47

Cramer's V = .48757      Chi square = .01

There was a significant relationship between attitudes toward who should make rules and how much people report being helped by their fellow workers. The level of association was Cramer's V = .36457, significant at the .05 level. Those who thought workers should share equally in the rules or should make all the rules were more likely to report being helped more often than were those who thought that management should make all or most of the rules.

TABLE 95

Who should make rules?

Receive help with work	Who should make rules?			
	Management make all	Management most-workers some say	Share equally	Workers make all
	(in percentages)	(in percentages)	(in percentages)	(in percentages)
A lot	0.0	44.0	21.0	100.0
Sometimes	0.0	28.0	52.0	0.0
Rarely	100.0	28.0	27.0	0.0
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number	2	14	29	2

N = 47

Cramer's V = .36457      Chi square = .05

Attitude toward who should make rules was not related to helping others or preferring a place where people helped. Type of work performed by the respondents was not significantly related to any of the indicators of informal group formation.

TABLE 96

Amount of talking	Type of Work	
	Plant (in percentages)	Wickets (in percentages)
A lot	73.0	86.0
Now and then	21.0	14.0
Rarely or never	6.0	0.0
Total percent	100.0	100.0
Total number	33	14

N = 47

Cramer's V = .16703

Chi square = .51

TABLE 97

Type of Workplace Preferred	type of Work	
	Plant (in percentages)	Wickets (in percentages)
Place where people talk and joke	79.0	86.0
Place where people don't talk and joke	21.0	14.0
Total percent	100.0	100.0
Total number	33	14

N = 47.

Cramer's V = .08050 Chi square = .88

There has been considerable research into the conditions under which group solidarity or cohesion arise. The findings, however, have been inconclusive. William F. Whyte studied a plant in which a certain area, the vat lines, were characterized by a high degree of cohesion and militancy. Whyte identified seven aspects of the group and its activity which distinguished it from the other workgroups. Whyte thought that two of these aspects accounted for the cohesion shown by the group. First, the vat line workers were homogenous with respect to skill, pay level, education, and social background. Second, they had considerable opportunity for talking because of the conditions of the work.<sup>14</sup>

Stanley Seashore put forward several hypotheses regarding the conditions which facilitate group cohesiveness. He thought that relative uniformity of age among members as well as relative uniformity of educational level would be related to high cohesion. These hypotheses were not supported by his data.<sup>15</sup> A third hypothesis, that groups with high status would be characterized by high cohesion, was supported but Seashore felt that the measure of status used was unsatisfactory. Finally, Seashore thought that cohesiveness would increase as opportunity for interaction within the group increased. He found that those groups who had been together for a long period of time had higher cohesion as did groups composed of small number of members.<sup>16</sup>

Jim Monk has pointed to the organization of the productive process as a force shaping the organization of the workers. He writes of the automobile plant he works in:

The plant is broken down into various departments—chassis, metal shop, trimline, motor line, axle lines, paints, etc. The workers in each department operate as a unit, not only in their work, but in their struggles as well. Within each department there are smaller groupings of workers determined according to the logic of how a truck is put together.<sup>17</sup>

Seashore argues that group cohesion is facilitated by work which requires a high degree of interdependence among workers, through the technical organization of the work.<sup>18</sup>

George Friedmann maintains that neither homogeneity nor interdependence in the work process is necessary for solidarity to develop. Rather, the division of labour and levelling of skills, which gives each worker a feeling that he is in the same situation as other workers, results in solidarity.<sup>19</sup> The group that Zalzenik studied developed strong group cohesion in spite of the fact that the members were highly heterogeneous both in skill, pay, and job responsibility and in terms of the social, educational, and ethnic background of the men. Further, the work itself was not interdependent, there was no technical need for the men to interact.<sup>20</sup>

Our inability to comment on the relationship between technology and solidarity is limited by our lack of detailed description of each respondents' job. However, our findings seem to support Zalzenik's position that homogeneity of tasks or interdependence of the work are not necessary for informal group formation. Work in the Plant was more interdependent than was work in the Wickets. In addition, work in the plant was more homogenous and the division of labour more pronounced. Opportunity to talk and pay structure were similar in both workplaces. From these conditions workers in the plant should have expressed more group feeling. This hypothesis was not supported, however. The workers in Wickets were just as favourable to informal group activities.

Unlike Seashore, we found no relationship between length of time worked in the Post-Office and informal group behaviour. We were also unable to find any relationship between job satisfaction and informal group formation. In spite of the many favourable comments given by the respondents about friendly relations where they work, the work group did not seem to compensate for the boredom of the job. From the qualitative remarks it seemed that the respondents thought that the work group made their jobs bearable but not satisfying.

None of the other variables we have been looking at were significantly related to informal group formation.



In summary, acceptance of management's authority seemed to be the most important variable in determining informal group activities. However, the relationship between these two concepts is quite complex. For example, talking seemed to be done more frequently by those who accepted management's authority while aid was received more by those who had a lower acceptance of management's authority. Possibly a more complex multi-variable analysis on a larger sample would clarify this relationship. Another method of approaching this problem would be to treat various work groups as the unit of study, rather than individuals. That is, instead of asking individuals about their amount of talk and feelings toward talk, work groups could be rated as to cohesiveness. This might allow researchers to control for such individual factors as other-directedness or conformity.

5. Unionism. In order to examine the relationship between the variables we have been looking at and union activity we used six indicators of unionism. These were: whether or not the respondent had ever held a union position, how often he used grievance procedure, whether he thought that grievance procedure was effective or ineffective, whether he thought that the union helped or hindered workers in improving their working conditions, and whether or not he thought that the union acted in his interests.

We found no significant relationships between work

expectations and unionism. Those who were intrinsically motivated were just as likely as those who were instrumentally motivated to participate in union activities and to respond favourably to the union.

TABLE 98

Attend union meetings	Most important factor in job		
	Intrinsic (in percentages)	Interpersonal (in percentages)	External (in percentages)
All or most	23.5	0.0	9.0
Some	18.0	0.0	39.0
A few or important ones.	41.0	80.0	43.0
Almost none or none	17.5	20.0	9.0
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number	17	5	23

N = 45

Cramer's V = .29212      Chi square = .26

Union activity, then, does not just compensate for lack of involvement in the work. This casts some doubts on the efforts of those who try to combat militancy by making the work more involving.

We then looked at the relationship between acceptance of the authority structure and unionism. Only one of our

measures had any significant relationship to an indicator of unionism. Attitudes toward who should make rules was related to frequency of attending union meetings. Those who thought that workers should share equally in the making of the rules or should make all the rules were more likely to report attending most meetings or some meetings than were those who thought that management should make all or most of the rules. Cramer's V was .48238, significant at the .0003 level.

TABLE 99

## Who should make rules?

Attend union meetings	Who should make rules?			
	Management make all (in percentages)	Management most-workers some say (in percentages)	Share equally in (in percentages)	Workers make all in (in percentages)
All or most	0.0	0.0	15.0	100.0
Some	0.0	21.0	33.0	0.0
A few or important ones	0.0	58.0	48.0	0.0
Almost none or none	100.0	21.0	4.0	0.0
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number	2	14	27	2

N = 45

Cramer's V = .28238 Chi square = .0003

It is possible that this question was a more powerful indicator of acceptance of management's authority than the other questions. It seems to be significantly related to a number of workers' strategies. However, it is also likely that the lack of any other relation between unionism and acceptance of management's authority indicates that the union had a high degree of legitimacy within the Post Office. It did not seem to be seen as a radical organization which threatens management but as an established and taken-for-granted feature of the workplace representing workers' interests within the present authority structure.

We next looked at the effect of the type of work performed by the respondents on unionism but found no significant differences between those who worked in the Plant and those who worked in the Counter Service department.

TABLE 100

Attend union meetings	Type of Work	
	Plant (in percentages)	Wickets (in percentages)
All or most	19.0	0.0
Some	29.0	29.0
A few or important ones	39.0	57.0
Almost none or none	13.0	14.0
Total percent	100.0	100.0
Total number	31	14

N = 45  
Cramer's  $\bar{V}$  = .26788 Chi square = .35

Leonard Sayles developed a scheme for classifying the behaviour of work groups in an attempt to correlate workers' strategies with the technology of the workplace. He calls the first type "apathetic". These groups are categorized by withdrawal of involvement from work, few grievances, and lack of group cohesiveness. Jealousy and conflict usually characterize the relations among members.

The second category is erratic groups. These groups display highly unpredictable behaviour. They will go for long periods of time without expressing any complaints and then initiate actions over matters defined by management as trivial. They usually have strongly centralized leadership.

The third type, strategic groups, possess high cohesion. They are usually involved in union activity and have a high degree of internal unity. These groups show the most consistent pursual of goals and develop effective means of applying pressure to management. They are particularly troublesome to management.

The fourth type is the conservative group. These groups possess scarce skills and are usually the elite of the work groups. While conservative groups are capable of militant action when their interests are threatened they are usually constrained in their demands. They show patience in making complaints and are usually willing to go through formal grievance procedure.

The technological environment in which apathetic

groups work is characterized by highly differentiated tasks with little functional dependence. Long assembly lines usually give rise to apathetic behaviour. Erratic groups are usually found in jobs requiring crew operations and homogeneity of tasks. Individual operations with some differentiation of tasks tend to produce strategic groups while conservative groups develop in work situations characterized by individual operations and scattered jobs.<sup>21</sup>

Goodman and Whittingham are critical of Sayles' technological determinism. They describe a group which works in a technological environment conducive to erratic behaviour yet display apathetic behaviour.<sup>22</sup> Sayles has also been criticized by Beynon and Blackburn who write:

No one who has seen a packing line in operation can doubt that its profitable operation sets limits upon the actions of any packer. However, to commit the packer's behaviour to the limbo of non-strategic aimlessness stretches the case a bit far. A packing line is not reducible to its technology. The worker relates to the belt through a particular structure of social relationships in the work situation. The technology is mediated through the culture of the work force and through a series of formal rules, neither of which is deducible directly from the technology of mass production. To argue, therefore, that sustained collective action is unlikely to emerge in work situations dominated by conveyor belts is to argue a one-sided case which ignores the influence of these other factors. In their strike action over the employment of students, and their general approach to grievances, the night-men at Brompton demonstrated that strategic action is possible in work situations that are dominated by mass production technology.<sup>23</sup>

Our findings also contradict Sayles' technological determinism. The technology of the plant most closely resembled the technology which Sayles identifies with erratic behaviour while the Wickets more closely resembled the type of technology which gives rise to conservative groups. However, we did not find any significant differences between the two groups in regard to union activity. For example, the workers in Wickets were not more likely to report using patience and reliance on formal methods of achieving goals, although this strategy characterizes conservative groups.

There were no significant relationships between unionism and job satisfaction or length of time the respondents planned to work for the Post Office. We then looked at the relationship between unionism and length of time the respondent had worked for the Post Office but found no relationship. There was a tendency for those who had been there over five years to report having held a union position. None of the workers who had been there under two years had held a position, twenty-one percent of those who had been at the Post Office between two and five years had held a position, and twenty-nine percent of those who had been there over five years had held a position.

TABLE 101

Length of time  
worked for Post Office

Held union position	Length of time worked for Post Office		
	Under 2 years (in percentages)	Between 2 and 5 years (in percentages)	Over 5 years (in percentages)
Yes	0.0	21.0	29.0
No	100.0	79.0	71.0
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number	10	14	25

N = 45

Cramer's V = .27817    Chi square = .17

There also seemed to be a tendency for those who had worked at the Post Office over two years to be more critical of the union. All of the respondents who had been at the Post Office less than two years thought that the Union acted in their interests and that it helped the workers improve their working conditions.



TABLE 102

Unions help or hinders	Length of time worked for Post Office		
	Under 2 years (in percentages)	Between 2 and 5 years (in percentages)	Over 5 years (in percentages)
Help	100.0	71.0	86.0
Hinder	0.0	29.0	14.0
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number	11	14	21

N = 46

Cramer's V = .29205      Chi square = .14

TABLE 103

Union acts in interest	Length of time worked for Post Office		
	Under 2 years (in percentages)	Between 2 and 5 years (in percentages)	Over 5 years (in percentages)
Yes	100.0	73.0	78.0
No	0.0	27.0	22.0
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number	11	15	16

N = 44

Cramer's V = .27666      Chi square = .18

We found no significant relationship between unionism and whether or not the work was subject to objective count. We did find a relationship between how closely the respondent was watched by his supervisor and whether or not he thought grievance procedure was effective. Those who were watched somewhat closely or not very closely were more likely to think that grievance procedure was effective than were those who were watched very closely or hardly watched at all. Cramer's V was .45522, significant at the .03 level.

TABLE 104

How closely does supervisor watch work?

Is grievance procedure effective?	Very	Somewhat	Not very	Hardly at all
	(in percentages)	(in percentages)	(in percentages)	(in percentages)
Yes	36.0	100.0	55.0	37.5
No	64.0	0.0	45.0	62.5
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number	11	7	9	16

N = 43

Cramer's V = .45522      Chi Square = .03

The relationship between being closely watched and thinking that unions helped was only significant at the .09

level but indicated a tendency for those who were watched very or somewhat closely to think that the union helped workers more than did those who were watched a little or hardly at all. Cramer's V was .37254.

TABLE 105

Union helps or hinders	How closely does supervisor watch work			
	Very (in percentages)	Somewhat (in percentages)	Not very (in percentages)	Hardly at all (in percentages)
Helps	100.0	100.0	75.0	72.0
Hinders	0.0	0.0	25.0	28.0
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number	12	8	8	18

N = 46

Cramer's V = .37254      Chi square = .09

There was also a tendency for those who were closely watched to think that the union acted in their interests. Cramer's V was .39037, significant at the .08 level.

TABLE 106

Union acts in interests	How closely does supervisor watch work?			
	Very (in percentages)	Somewhat (in percentages)	Not very (in percentages)	Hardly at all (in percentages)
Yes	91.0	100.0	89.0	62.5
No	9.0	0.0	11.0	37.5
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number	11	8	9	16

N = 44

Cramer's V = .39037 Chi square = .08

It is interesting that those who were closely watched tended to favour a formal strategy such as unionism rather than the more informal strategies such as withdrawing, individual restructuring, and informal group formation. It would be informative to examine this relationship more closely using participant observation methods.

C. Summary. While the majority of the variables we looked at failed to show any relationships we were able to find a number of relationships which were either significant at the .05 level or which might have become so given a larger sample size. We found that those respondents who reported breaking rules sometimes or often, those who

worked in the Automatic Plant, and those who had worked for the Post Office for a short time tended to report daydreaming more than those who rarely broke rules, who worked in the Wickets, and who had worked at the Post Office for a longer time. Those who broke rules sometimes or often were also likely to take more days off when they were not really sick, as were those who thought that workers should have some say or equal say in the making of rules. Those who thought that supervisors were necessary were more likely to be critical of people taking days off when they were not really sick than were those who thought that the work would get done without supervisors.

We found that workers who were strongly involved in their work, those who thought that workers should have some equal say in the making of the rules, those who were not closely watched by their supervisors, and those who worked at the Wickets reported being able to use their own ideas on the job. It is interesting to note that there were no differences between any of these groups in answering whether or not they figured out better ways of doing the work. In spite of limitations placed on them by the technology of the workplace or by their supervisors, respondents were still able to figure out different ways of doing the work. There was some relationship between figuring out ways of doing the work and feeling that workers should have some say or share equally in the making of the rules. There was also a

relationship between length of time the respondents worked in the Post Office and whether or not they figured out better ways of doing the work. Those who had worked for a fairly long period of time were more likely to report figuring out their own ways of doing the work.

We were unable to find any variable that was related to competitive individualism. As was reported in the previous chapter, competitive individualism was not a very prevalent strategy in the Post Office.

We found that those who talked the most tended to think that all the rules were necessary, that supervisors were necessary, and that management should make all or most of the rules. Those who thought that workers should share equally in the making of the rules reported receiving help from fellow workers more than did those who thought that management should make all or most of the rules. Workers with an interpersonal or external orientation towards work were more likely to prefer a place where people joke and talk than were those with an intrinsic orientation.

Respondents who thought that workers should share equally in the making of the rules or should make all the rules reported attending union meetings more often than did those who thought management should make all or most of the rules. Those who reported that they were watched closely by their supervisors thought that grievance procedure was more effective than did those who were not

watched as closely. Those who were closely watched also tended to report that the union helped workers and that the union acted in their interests to a greater degree than did those who were not as closely watched.

From these relationships we developed four hypotheses which might be tested in future research. These are:

1. Workers who have external or interpersonal orientations to work tend to use informal, collective methods to make work more enjoyable while those with intrinsic motivations are more likely to use informal, individual methods.
2. Workers in mass production jobs are more likely to use passive methods of making the work more enjoyable than are workers in jobs which are not characterized by mass production features.
3. The more closely workers are watched by their supervisors the more likely they are to use formal methods of improving their work such as unionism, while those who are not watched closely are more likely to use informal methods such as individual restructuring.
4. The longer that people work in a job, the more likely they are to use and favour active strategies such as individual restructuring over passive strategies such as daydreaming.

These hypotheses have been formulated in general concepts which can be tested in a wide variety of work places.

## Chapter 6

FOOTNOTES

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CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND  
CONCLUSIONS

Summary and Conclusions

A. Summary. Karl Marx considered the capitalist organization of work to be alienated. He thought that consciously planned labour was the most fundamental activity whereby man expressed his special nature. When the conception and execution of labour is performed by different classes of individuals the worker loses his distinction from other species. Marx felt that this loss was the major problem facing modern society. He thought that the overthrowing of this type of work organization by the working class was the only solution to this problem.

Many researchers who have been concerned with this organization of work and the problems it engenders have expressed pessimistic attitudes toward the possibility of the working class overcoming this organization. They feel that workers do not become critical of alienated work because this is the only organization of work that they have experienced. Their socialization teaches them that they should not expect work to provide them with intrinsic rewards such as control over the planning of the work. The memory of craftsmanship is no longer part of working class consciousness and so the working class is unable to formulate a criticism of the capitalist organization of work. To repeat a position quoted in Chapter III:

For large numbers of people, therefore, and particularly those in the lower ranks of the occupational hierarchy, the lesson taught by the experience of work is that it must be expected to offer mainly extrinsic satisfactions. Intrinsically, it must be expected to be burdensome, restrictive, and often irksome, involving subjection to the control of others and often proving monotonous and stultifying in the bargain.<sup>1</sup>

Researchers such as Goldthorpe<sup>2</sup> and Dubin<sup>3</sup> argue that workers develop instrumental attitudes toward work and thus do not demand or desire control over the work. Good wages are the only satisfaction they expect from work.

In contrast to the above position we reviewed a number of studies which indicated that workers actively seek control over their work environment. Taylorism was not only fought by the craftsmen and skilled labourers whose work organization it was introduced into but is still being opposed by workers who have never known any other work organization. Co-operation and control over the work are values which the worker learns in his day-to-day attempts to make the work more acceptable and satisfying.

In this report we have been discussing the types of activities and organization developed by Postal workers. The strategies which our respondents reported had much in common with strategies developed by workers in the industries discussed in Chapter II. Restriction of output, daydreaming, games, mutual aid, absenteeism, setting of output targets, and figuring out different ways to do the work were recognizable

activities to the members of our sample. We found that the Postal workers placed considerable value on a work place characterized by co-operation among workers and opportunities for developing their own methods of doing the job. Many of the workers expressed a strong dislike of competition among workers and disapproved of proposals which they thought would foster competition.

In evaluating many of the activities which we asked them about workers seemed to be measuring their concern for productivity against the fact that so much of their life was spent working that they needed to inject enjoyment into the work situation. This conflict was often reconciled by the workers through the strategy of making work into a game. Sorting contests allowed the workers to maintain productivity while engaging in informal group games. Another way of resolving this conflict was by working on jobs which did not require a great deal of concentration so that they could daydream while doing the work. Workers could also justify activities such as absenteeism by arguing that taking a rest when needed would result in increased production by refreshing the worker.

The informal work group seemed to provide for the individual a way of relaxing or of releasing tension on the job. The system of mutual aid which the respondents valued also gave them practical assistance with the work. In addition it provided a friendly atmosphere which helped

them face the tensions of the job. Games such as sorting contests, memory contests, and elastic band fights were an important part of the working class culture created by the workers in the Post Office. This culture also provided an organizational basis for struggles with management. Workers with problems were able to organize petitions and sometimes slowdowns or walkouts. Informal strategies were usually backed up by the threat of union intervention.

We also found a considerable concern among Postal workers over control of the equipment which they worked on and control over areas of the workplace. Many of the respondents felt that the way the equipment was placed and set up by management was inefficient and difficult to work with. They seemed to put considerable thought into different ways of arranging and using the equipment. The washrooms served the function of being "free places" for workers; somewhere they could go to escape the pressures of the work and the supervisors. The respondents also used the opportunity to walk around the work area and go to the water fountain as ways of withdrawing from the work. Although we did not specifically ask workers about these activities and thus did not get their estimates about the frequency with which they were used they seemed to be more prevalent methods of withdrawal than did daydreaming.

The small sample with which we were working did not allow for an extended statistical analysis of the relationships among the variables we discussed and the respondents' strategies.

We were able to find several statistically significant relationships which were used to develop four hypotheses to be tested in future research. One hypothesis developed from the study was that workers who have external or interpersonal orientations to work tend to use informal, collective methods to make work more enjoyable while those with intrinsic motivations are more likely to use informal, individual methods. The second hypothesis was that workers in mass production jobs are more likely to use passive methods of making the work more enjoyable than are workers in jobs which are not characterized by mass production features. However, they do not seem any less likely than workers in non-mass production jobs to use active methods as well. The third hypothesis we developed was that the more closely workers are watched by their supervisors the more likely they are to use formal methods of improving their work such as unionism while those who are not watched closely are more likely to use informal methods such as individual restructuring. Our study indicated that if workers are not able to develop their own methods of doing the work they look for more indirect methods of controlling their environment. The union structure was important to these people. The fourth hypothesis was that the longer that people work in a job, the more likely they are to use and favour active strategies such as individual restructuring over passive strategies such as daydreaming. The relationships we found between length of time worked at the Post Office and daydreaming indicated that daydreaming

only provides a temporary solution to the boredom of the work.

We did not look at the effect of personal attributes of the respondents such as sex, age, education, and marital status on behaviour as we were interested in behaviour and attitudes which developed out of the work experience itself. These variables may have important controlling implications for the relationships we did look at. Multi-variate analysis on a larger sample may clarify the importance of personal differences among workers in producing the relationships which we found. Another important factor which we were not able to examine as thoroughly as we would have liked is differences in work setting. A larger sample composed of workers from different work settings would allow a more detailed examination of the effect of work setting on worker strategies.

In Chapter III we developed a typology for classifying worker strategies. We found that this typology was useful for organizing the information we got from the respondents. We also found a number of relationships between the categories and our independent variables. The relationships we found, however, were sometimes confusing or inconsistent. We felt that this may have been due to inadequacies with the typology. Rather than developing a typology from reviewing literature which other researchers have already organized, extensive observation of several workplaces may be a better strategy.



B. Suggestions for further research. The research methods used in this study had several limitations. First of all, the small sample with which we were working did not allow for more detailed or extended statistical treatment of the data. We were only able to suggest relationships. A larger sample would allow testing of hypotheses and specification of the relationships we did find. A survey of workers in a number of different work places would not only allow for hypothesis testing and detailed examination of the relationships but would also establish the generalizability of the relationships. We could find out if these relationships are limited to the Post Office or if they are applicable to other work places.

A further limitation of the study was that we were unable to describe the attitudes of the workers in very great detail. In-depth interviewing would allow researchers to explore the meanings which each of the different activities have to the workers. It could also establish the importance of the different values which the respondents used in explaining their feelings toward the activities we asked them about. In-depth interviewing would be particularly valuable in exploring the workers' feelings about the union. It was in this area that we found a particular amount of ambivalence.

Finally, the true frequency with which the respondents engaged in the various strategies may have been distorted by the memories of the respondents, the different time spans

that they were thinking of when answering the question, and the ambiguity of words such as "often" or "sometimes". Participant observation studies would be able to establish a more methodical approach to counting activities.

The findings of this study demonstrate the usefulness of a mixed-format interview schedule for an exploratory study of this type. By using both forced-choice and open-ended questions we were able to obtain descriptions of behaviour and attitudes as well as variables which could be cross-tabulated. The major value of the study, however, lay in its limitations. That is, by discovering the type of things which cannot be done in this type of study it is possible to formulate research projects which are more appropriate for acquiring the findings which are needed in establishing a sociology of work.

C. Conclusions. Research into working class culture within the capitalist organization of work is an important endeavor for those who are interested in changing this organization. The extent to which workers do attempt to re-organize the workplace and make it more acceptable to them is not captured by job satisfaction studies which focus on attitudes rather than behaviour. These efforts by the working class provide the basis for a new organization of work characterized by co-operative relations and working class control over both conception and execution of work.

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APPENDIX

THE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. What is your job classification? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How much seniority do you have at the Post Office?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How long have you been working at your present job? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How long did it take you to learn to do your job?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Is your job subject to objective count? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Is your job repetitious?  
\_\_\_\_ very repetitious  
\_\_\_\_ somewhat repetitious  
\_\_\_\_ not at all repetitious
7. On your job, how much of the time can you think about things other than the work?  
\_\_\_\_ all of the time  
\_\_\_\_ most of the time  
\_\_\_\_ some of the time  
\_\_\_\_ not much of the time or never
8. Can you talk to the other people working with you?  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Can you control the speed at which you work or is it controlled by machinery? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Does your job allow you much freedom in determining how to do the work?

- complete freedom  
 quite a lot of freedom  
 some freedom  
 not very much freedom  
 no freedom

11. How closely does your supervisor watch your work?

- very closely  
 somewhat closely  
 not very closely  
 hardly at all or not at all

12. Are you satisfied with your work as it is now?

- yes  
 no

Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

13. What is there about your job that makes it interesting?

\_\_\_\_\_

14. Do you ever figure out better ways of doing the job?

- yes  
 no

If you answered yes, could you please give an example? \_\_\_\_\_

15. Do you ever set yourself an output target--say, so many pieces of work per day? \_\_\_\_\_

16. If you answered yes to question 15, do you ever work faster to get within reach of the target, and then take it easy for a bit?

yes

no

17. On any part of your job, can you use your own ideas in planning how to do the work?

yes

no

If yes, could you give an example? \_\_\_\_\_

18. Which would you prefer: a job where someone tells you exactly how to do the work, or one where you are left to decide for yourself how to go about it? \_\_\_\_\_

19. How about the job you do now? Would you like more say, would you like less say, or is your job just about right? \_\_\_\_\_

20. If someone asked you to describe yourself, what things would you mention as most important? \_\_\_\_\_

If you did not include the work you do as part of your self-description, please explain \_\_\_\_\_

21. As things stand now, how long do you think that you will be employed at the Post Office? \_\_\_\_\_

If you are not planning to leave the Post Office

within the next two years, are you interested in getting another job in the Post Office?

yes

no

Would you like to be a supervisor?

yes

no

Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

22. Would you say that your getting the kind of job in the future that you want depends on how well you do your present job?

depends alot

depends somewhat

depends a little

not at all

23. Some people are completely involved in thier job-- they are absorbed in it night and day. For other people, their job is just the way they make their living. How involved do you feel in your job?

strongly or moderately involved

slightly or very little involved

not at all involved

24. Below is a list of things often thought important about a job. Could you look them over and then list them in the space beside the list in order of their importance to you, starting with the most important?



- work is not too hard
- work is interesting
- work is close to where you live
- work gives you a chance to do something worthwhile
- work gives you a chance to try out your own ideas
- good pay
- good people to work with
- work not repetitious
- can set your own pace
- a supervisor who doesn't breathe down your neck
- security and benefits
- good chances of promotion
- good union
- other (Please specify)

25. If you inherited enough money to live comfortably without working for the rest of your life, would you still work?

- yes
- no

26. About how many of your close friends work in the Post Office? \_\_\_\_\_

27. About how much do you talk with the people you work with?

- a good deal
- a fair amount
- just now and then
- hardly at all
- never

28. Do the people at work besides the supervisor ever help you with your work in any way?

- help alot of the time
- help some of the time
- help occasionally
- never help

Could you describe one situation in which you were helped?

29. Do you ever help anyone else out with their work?

- help others alot
- help sometimes
- help occasionally
- never help

30. Do you prefer to work in a place where people help each other or a place where people do just their own work? \_\_\_\_\_

31. In which of these ways do you feel that a number of people can get the most work done?

- each person doing his part of the job on his own
- everyone trying to work together at the job

Why do you feel this way? \_\_\_\_\_

32. Some people like to work in a place where people talk and joke around with each other while others prefer a place where people do their own work without talking or joking around. Which do you prefer? \_\_\_\_\_

33. Do people you work with ever get together and play games at work or try to make the time go faster in some way?

\_\_\_\_\_ yes

\_\_\_\_\_ no

If you answered yes, could you describe one time when this was done? \_\_\_\_\_

34. Do people you work with ever get together on their own and do things to improve working conditions or fight management?

\_\_\_\_\_ yes

\_\_\_\_\_ no

If you answered yes, could you describe one time when this was done? \_\_\_\_\_

35. I would like to describe to you some imaginary situations and ask you what would be most likely to happen in these situations.

- a. You and the people you work with are doing your work when the supervisor comes up and tells all of you that from now on you will be expected to do

a particular amount of work more than you had been doing. What do you think would happen? \_\_\_\_\_

b. You and the people you work with are doing your work but everyone feels particularly bored and restless. What do you think would happen? \_\_\_\_\_

36. In some places incentive plans are used to pay people by how much they produce. Do you think it would be a good idea to have an incentive plan at the Post Office?

\_\_\_\_\_ yes

\_\_\_\_\_ no

Why do you feel this way? \_\_\_\_\_

37. Where you work are the clerks encouraged by management to compete with each other for higher productivity?

\_\_\_\_\_ yes

\_\_\_\_\_ no

38. Do the people you work with ever have contests among themselves without management's knowing about it?

\_\_\_\_\_ yes

\_\_\_\_\_ no

If yes, can you describe one situation where this happened? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

39. If you were angry at something the supervisor said or did what would you be most likely to do? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
40. If you found that sometime during the work day time was dragging and you were really bored what would you be most likely to do? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
41. How often do you daydream or think about things other than the work on your job?  
 all or most of the time  
 some of the time  
 not much of the time
42. Do you think that daydreaming is a good way or a bad way to make the time spent at work more enjoyable?  
 a good way  
 a bad way  
 Why do you feel this way? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
43. How often have you taken a day off work just because you needed a break from work? \_\_\_\_\_
44. Do you think that other people at the Post Office take days off when they're not really sick?  
 yes  
 no  
 If yes, what do you think of this? \_\_\_\_\_

45. Are you familiar with the rules which govern employees at the Post Office?
- all or most of them
- some of them
- not many or none of them
46. Do you follow all the rules or do you sometimes break some?
- never or hardly ever break rules
- sometimes break rules
- break rules often or always
47. If a rule did not make sense to you, would you follow it even if there was no one around to catch you breaking it?
- yes
- no
- Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_
48. All in all, do you think that most of these rules are necessary or do you think that the work would be done just as well without them?
- all of the rules or most are necessary
- some of the rules are necessary
- very few or none of the rules are necessary
- Why do you feel this way? \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
50. Do you think that it is right that the planning of the work and the making of rules should be done by management or do you think the workers should have some say in it?

- management should make all the rules  
 workers should make all the rules  
 workers and management should share equally  
 in the making of the rules  
 management should make most of the rules but  
 workers should have some say  
 workers should make most of the rules but  
 management should have some say

Why do you feel this way? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

51. Are you a member of the union?

yes

no

If you are a member of the union please answer questions 52, 53, 54, 55, and 56. If not, please go on to question 57.

52. Have you ever held a position in the union?

yes

no

If yes, do you hold a position now? \_\_\_\_\_

53. How often do you attend union meetings?

all or most of the meetings

some or a few of the meetings

only important meetings like strike votes

never attend meetings

54. How often do you feel that you have grounds for making a complaint through the grievance machinery?

- at least once a day
- at least once a week
- at least once a month
- less than once a month

55. When you have these complaints, how often do you actually use grievance procedure?

- always or almost always
- more than half the time
- about half the time
- less than half the time
- almost never or never

56. Do you think that going through grievance procedure is an effective way of solving problems you have at work?

- yes
- no

Why do you feel this way? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

57. What do you think your union could do to help workers improve their conditions that they don't already do? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

58. Do you think that the union helps or hinders workers in improving conditions of work?

- helps
- hinders

Why do you feel this way? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

59. Do you think that the union acts in your interests?

- yes
- no



Why do you feel this way? \_\_\_\_\_

I would now like to ask you some questions about yourself for statistical purposes.

1. Sex

\_\_\_\_\_ male  
 female

2. Age

\_\_\_\_\_ under 21  
\_\_\_\_\_ 21 to 29  
\_\_\_\_\_ 30 to 39  
\_\_\_\_\_ 40 to 49  
\_\_\_\_\_ 50 to 54  
\_\_\_\_\_ over 54

3. Marital status

\_\_\_\_\_ married  
\_\_\_\_\_ single  
\_\_\_\_\_ divorced  
\_\_\_\_\_ separated  
\_\_\_\_\_ widowed

4. What was the highest grade of school you completed?

\_\_\_\_\_ eight years or under  
\_\_\_\_\_ between nine and eleven years  
\_\_\_\_\_ completed high school  
\_\_\_\_\_ post-secondary training (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

5. What is the original nationality of your family on your father's side? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What is the original nationality of your family on your mother's side? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What is your religious preference? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Who is the principal wage earner in your family?
- \_\_\_\_\_ you
  - \_\_\_\_\_ spouse
  - \_\_\_\_\_ parent
  - \_\_\_\_\_ other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

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