

From: dhulin@cyrus.psych.illinois.edu
Subject: **Merry Christmas**
Date: December 23, 2011 6:22:39 PM PST
To: cddoig@comcast.net

Dear Ivan and Carol,

You two take much more interesting trips than Francie and I do. Your time in Santa Fe must have been interesting even if it was a bit surreal. We are heading for Argentina and Chile for three weeks at the end of January again this year. Great countries, good fishing, and no TV or phones and, hence, no crap from the politicians in DC and here in Springfield (where another of our governors will be reporting to prison in February for a well-deserved 15 years). He will have to serve 12 of the 15 years in the federal system.

We were glad to hear about The Bartender's Tale being finished. We will look forward to reading it next year.

And speaking for songs...did I send you Joe Glazer's CD containing the songs of Joe Hill? I know I meant to. I ordered a copy for myself and it is very good. If I did not send it to you, please let me know and I will rectify my error. Nobody ever accused Joe (Glazer) of having a beautiful voice but it is a great voice for Joe Hill's songs. Glazer was a speaker/singer at the Institute for Industrial Relations here a couple of times. I always sat in the front and sang along with every song he sang. I usually knew all of them. He noticed I was doing it and cornered me afterwards to ask why I knew all of them. I explained my union/blue-collar family background and my interest in laborlore. After his second visit we almost became friends instead of just acquaintances.

We are also looking forward to the sequel to Work Song. I am sure given the setting for the books, the local union activity, the multiple ethnic groups, the Wobblies, and the copper kings, and the political events of the times, it will be much more than interesting. I am also hoping for a few songs in it.

A staging of Prairie Nocturne would be a delight to see and hear. I wish our local community theater would do it. It is interesting to me to learn about the overlap in our memories of our time at Latham house and NU. I also snuck into a few rehearsals both for plays directed by Krauss and some musical events that Tom Lyons was singing in. One of the good things about Latham House, aside from its cost, was its location across the street from the music school and next door to the Hut. They (The Hut) served me my first Reuben sandwich. My home town was totally devoid of Jewish delicatessens...and Jews for that matter.

I have broken with a long tradition of mine of not publishing articles or chapters that do not contain original data. But I have written a chapter for a Festschrift for one of my students who retired at the start of this year. It is about the meaning of work to individuals (which we as psychologists almost never study) and what happens to

workers who lost their jobs. Your friend/acquaintance Illinois State send me his book Bindlestiffs, Hoboes, and Fruit Tramps. I found it interesting and educational. I refer to it a few times in my chapter on work. I will break another tradition and send you a copy of the chapter. I usually do not inflict such things on my non-psychologist friends but there may be enough of interest in it for you to find it worth reading.

We both wish you and Carol a very Merry Christmas and a great holiday season.

Take care and stay in touch.

From: Chuck Hulin <clhulin@cyrus.psych.illinois.edu>
Subject: for Ivan
Date: September 26, 2011 9:23:43 AM PDT
To: cddoig@comcast.net

I am reading a biography of Joe Hill, the Wobblie song-smith celebrated in the song "I Dreamed I Saw Joe Hill Last Night." It is very good. I recommend it. ...but you probably already have read it for more background on the follow-up book to Work Song. I am impressed enough I bought the CD "Songs of Joe Hill" by Joe Glazer so I could follow along and play the songs of his that were mentioned. I know, it probably sounds as if I have too much time on my hands...but I am preparing for an "at-the-house" seminar on Joe Hill with our woefully ill-informed students. They are ill-informed about the labor movement and anything that happened before 1980 but otherwise very smart. It drives me around the bend when I mention something about the union movement in the seminar I sit in on and get 15 blank stares.

I hope things are going well with you and that you are hard at work on your next book.

Work and Being: The Meanings of Work in Contemporary Society

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A Chapter to be published in *The Psychology of Work: Festschrift for Dan Ilgen and Neal Schmitt*, K. Ford and A.M. Ryan, Eds.

30-Inch Coal, *There Will Be No Black Lung in Heaven*, and *Fountain of Blood* are about working in mines and the men who dug each others' graves. *John Henry* celebrates in song the efforts of a fictive steel driver who died after defeating a newly invented steel-driving machine at the Big Bend Tunnel of the C&O road. No song or other laborlore celebrates the inventor of the machine. *Peg and Awl* laments the effects of the mechanized shoe-making machine on the work of cobblers. No song celebrated the inventor of this machine either. There is a large literature, formal and folkloric, concerned with the many meanings of work that can be accessed by scholars but is ignored in both research and our teaching.

Dirty Jobs, *Deadliest Catch*, *Top Chef*, *Cake Boss*, *Design Star*, *Project Runway*, and *Swamp Loggers* are recent televised explorations of work and its meanings to those who do it. *Ice Road Truckers* is about people driving their trucks in dangerous conditions and about their feelings and beliefs about their work. In *Undercover Boss*, the boss learns what work means to the employees who do it. Each of these shows follows individuals as they work or provide work samples. All of them inform us about the ties between a person's identity and his/her work. They may not all be true but many of them are accurate. Current I-O Psychology seems to be more about whether the ice-road truckers' legs are long enough to reach the pedals than about any meaning they find in their jobs or their reactions to the dangers they face (Weiss & Rupp, 2011).

Bindlestiffs, hoboes, and fruit tramps provided the labor to harvest the wheat, hops, fruit, and other crops that built the western United States after transcontinental railroads made it possible to get the crops to Eastern consumers. Their work is ignored and swept

under the rug of society (Wyman, 2010) and ignored by I/O or OB researchers.

We do find these workers lives documented in protest songs. *Deportees*, by Woodie Guthrie, for example, is about a plane that crashed in Los Gatos Canyon while carrying illegal migrants back to Mexico. A report of the accident named the pilot, first-officer, and flight attendant but referred to the passengers only as “28 deportees.” While the song is about the injustice of the depersonalized system that exploits migrant laborers and deports them at the end of the harvesting season...then “they pay all their money to wade back again,” it also comments on the work and the contributions of the migrants in the last verse:

Is this the best way we can grow our big orchards?
Is this the best way we can grow our good fruit?
To fall like dry leaves to rot on the topsoil,
And be called by no name except deportees?

Woodie Guthrie, 1961

The lives and work of those who occupy that portion of the workforce that creates a backward-bending labor supply curve, where the supply of labor dips as wages and pay go up (because families can afford to keep their youngest children out of the fields and send them to school), are important but ignored by researchers. What we know of them largely comes to us from the writings of London (1907), Steinbeck (1939), Wyman (2010), Thompson (2010), Adler (2011), and from songs such as *Deportees*, written in 1950 and still relevant, songs by Joe Hill (Adler, 2011), the “radical” literature of the United Farm Workers and Cesar Chavez, and other similar sources. There is research on these workers by economists and sociologists but little by behavioral scientists. Work’s meanings and role in the lives of workers in this population deserves to be explored systematically by I/O

psychologists.

Books of collected poetry (Liebler, 2010; Oresick & Coles, 1990; Coles & Oresick, 1995) present a rich variety of non-traditional portraits of work and workers. Linked poems by Presnell in *Piece Work* (2007) are about the effects of the closing of a textile mill on the lives of managers and workers. This window into work and workers in a textile mill adds meaning to our statistical pictures of unemployment and job loss. Contemporary collections of short-stories (Zande & Maday, 2010), first-hand accounts of work and jobs by those who do them (Bowe, Bowe, & Streeter, 2000), and short articles by a reporter (LeDuff, 2004) provide valuable background against which researchers can develop more fully articulated networks of hypotheses about work and workers.

None of these non-traditional sources of information about workers can be substituted for theory-based, empirical examinations of the roles work plays in individuals' lives but neither can data-driven studies provide a complete picture of what work means to those doing it. An appreciation for the information provided by both would advance our understanding of this work's meanings.

Centrality of Work in Peoples' Lives

Work is the primary activity of the lives of most people and should be treated as the central core of psychology. Our quotidian work tasks, mundane though they may seem to others, give coherence to our lives (Green (1993) as little else does. A lack of work denies a crucial part of our basic humanity. "Work is about a search for daily meaning as well as

daily bread, for recognition as well as cash, for astonishment rather than torpor; in short, for a sort of life rather than a Monday through Friday sort of dying." (Terkel, 1974). Work psychology has been too long treated as the red-headed step-child of psychology; we should welcome it into our intellectual research family as a full-time member. Work psychology is not a secondary topic to be relegated to the periphery of psychology and labeled "applied research." The "applied" label likely came to be applied because work was seen only in the context of the production enterprise where the performance of work activities was assumed to be for the sole purpose of producing goods and services that benefit the system. Work also benefits those who do it in myriad ways. Work is a core life-activity of most individuals and studying it is not simply for the purpose of applications that improve production.

The construct of work is complex with distinctions between work tasks and non-work tasks variable across individuals, cultures, and times. It is best regarded as a fuzzy set involving:

activities done for an economic reward,

an externally imposed time schedule,

supervision by other individuals,

producing a good or service valued by others,

externally established rules,

and perhaps other characteristics descriptive of work but not leisure or hobbies. The more

then leave for home early after this ritualized topping-out ceremony.

A finish-grinder in the Buick motor plant in Flint uses a diamond-tipped stylus to scratch his initials (ELH) into the end of a crankshaft when he finishes it.

A young assistant professor drops a copy of his first book into the cement foundation of the new psychology building that is being built on his campus.

What do these rituals mean? What do they impart to those involved? These actions are irrelevant regarding the strength of the foundation of a building, the integrity of the structure of a modern high-rise, the utility of the crank shaft, or the latest concerns of organizational managers. But they are relevant and meaningful to the workers who do them. Such traditional work rituals occur daily and leave artifacts and traces that we will not find using our current paradigms or standard scales. They occur without articulation in academic terms; they are not organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs), counter-productive work behaviors (CWBs), work output, withdrawal behaviors, or supervisors' ratings of anything. But they may reflect, albeit imperfectly, the meanings workers acquire from and impute to their work. They would be informative if we found them. We seem blind to many behaviors that are important to workers and lend meaning and coherence to their work. We regard them as unimportant for our theories or our narrow focus on productivity. There is no systematic consideration of them in traditional I/O research writings.

A related phenomenon is what Green (1976) labeled the "Tiffany touch." Workers do things as part of their jobs that have little to do with job requirements or outcomes counted

by organizational managers and are also not OCB's. Green describes a joiner who, when finishing hanging a door, carefully twists all of the screw heads so their slots are parallel. This does not make the door stronger. The alignment of the screw slots takes time and will be noticed by a scant few of the many who pass through the door. The careful alignment of the screw slots speaks to the pride of the joiner in his work.

The joiner is kin to the wood-worker in a canoe works in Maine who aligns the screws in the gunwales of a cedar canoe (owned by the writer) so their slots are parallel to the keel of the canoe. This alignment also adds nothing to the strength of the canoe. It, just as the work of the joiner on the door, is done by the woodworker for him/herself. Few fishermen or canoeists will ever notice it.

A painter dips a Q-tip or his finger into paint so he can get paint into a remote recess above a soffit. Nobody but the painter or the next worker who paints the room will ever see the neatly painted corner. The painter does it because of pride in the work product.

A fly tier, tying flies not for sale but for himself or some of his friends, coats the soft foam back of a beetle dry-fly with clear nail polish so it shines like a real beetle and then uses a water-proof marker to draw lines on the back fly to suggest wings. These time-consuming additions do not make the fly more attractive to trout. They are on the back of the floating fly and cannot be seen by trout below the water surface. The fly tier adds these touches out of some unarticulated feeling of pride in craftsmanship.

A trash collector carefully replaces the garbage can lids and lines up the emptied cans

in an alley in Chicago. When he finishes his pick-up, he looks back at the cans neatly lined up along the edge of the alley, compares it to the clutter that was there before he started, and feels pride in what he has done (Terkel, 1974; James Terborg, personal communication).

These are modern examples of the ancient story about the stone-cutter who was seen polishing all six sides of a stone he was cutting. He was asked why he polished all six sides when only one would show. He replied, "God will know." Today, with the secularization of work that has occurred, the stone-cutter might reply, "I will know."

Tiffany touches by workers should not be confused with general obsessive compulsive behavior. They arise out of a pride and coherence of one's identity with his or her work. The stone-cutter, the joiner, the fly-tyer, or the garbage man likely display such behaviors nowhere but in their work.

For workers who routinely apply Tiffany touches to their work, what is in their work may be their chance to find themselves—their reality that few researchers can know given our usual research practices. These privately executed additions to their work may represent what work really means to them. They may be symbolically signing their work with their Tiffany touches; "signatures" that may reflect the same pride as that felt by an artist when a completed painting is signed. Such touches should also have meaning to researchers.

Examples of the Tiffany touch and related actions that workers engage in everyday tell us that flesh-and-blood workers are behind the activities that produced a door frame, a canoe, a painted room, a trout-fly, or a neat-appearing alley in Chicago. These behaviors are

purposeful within the context of work and working. Such work activities, in all of their quirky manifestations, speak directly to our humanity. The workers who generate our statistics think and feel; our statistics do not.

Work is as purposeful as anything else we do. It has many purposes aside from earning our daily bread. An empirical and theoretical literature and a science of work psychology that acknowledges these trace measures, in addition to counting the doors hung, canoes built, flies tied, stones polished, or garbage cans emptied would serve us well. We began such an enquiry with the study of job attitudes, and continued it later when job affect (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) was added to our research agendas. Unfortunately we got sidetracked into searching for organizationally important correlates of job attitudes and affect. We have stopped short of embracing a true science of work's meanings to workers that explores the dynamic connections among workers' minds, hands, tools, products, and feelings.

Movie directors have provided glimpses of the lives of the fruit-tramp (*The Grapes of Wrath*), the dock-walloper/warf-rat (*On the Waterfront*), the lint-head (*Norma Rae*), the coal-digger (*Black Fury*, *Margaret's Museum*, *Matewan*) and the organizational downsizer (*Up in the Air*). Plays explore the influences of work on the lives of a travelling salesman (*Death of a Salesman* by Miller) and a fireman in the boiler-room of a ship (*The Hairy Ape* by O'Neill). Songs, professionally composed or traditional arising from folk experiences with work that exist in the oral tradition are instructive. *Dark as a Dungeon*, *Sixteen Tons*,

outcomes and too little on the meaning of work and working to the individuals who do it. .

Work is equally important in the lives of individuals *qua* individuals. The time and effort contributions that we make to our work are elements of our lives that are under our control; they are ours to give or withhold and are a vital part of us. Once we reach adulthood, doing nothing negates our humanity. We are defined, privately and socially, by our work. Kreiner, Hollenbe, and Sheep (2006) have explored the difficulty of separating ourselves from what we do; we are often known by our jobs. To ourselves and to others, we are what we do. To do nothing is to be nothing. When work is removed, days become amorphous, providing little basis for a meaningful existence. The estimated 14 million unemployed workers in the United States (as of August 2011) daily face issues of identity and meaning. Wanberg's research (Wanberg, Kanfer, & Rotundo, 1999; Wanberg, Hough, & Song, 2002; Wanberg, Zhu, & VanHooft, 2010) and review (Wanberg, 2012) document the effects of unemployment and job search on individuals. The reactions of the unemployed reported in popular media testify informally to the importance of work. Even without the ongoing recession, the planned obsolescence of workers that is a consequence of the planned obsolescence of the things they make concerns working men and women (Terkel, 1974).

The Many Meanings of Work

Given the importance of work, do we know what it means to those who do it?

Among the workers we might study, we would find those who assert: "I'm a workaholic"

or “Hard work’s my middle name.” Such vernacular lines would get translated into “I work, therefore I am.” by philosophers (Green, 1976). A worker, employed on dead-end and boring job, who told the writer “I can’t quit my job; if I did I wouldn’t *be* anybody.” articulated a belief about being, nothingness, and the basis for being that contradicts those expressed by Descartes and Sartre. Doing, not thinking, is the key to existence for many workers. You do, therefore you are; doing nothing negates meaningful existence. We could find others, on similar jobs, who would say they work for the money and are ready to move on at any time. They were looking for a job when they found the one they have. If they quit, they will be no worse off than they were before. Both views of work, and the meanings of work they imply, should be taken seriously.

Consider the comments by blues singer B.B. King about his life as a share-cropper in the southern US:

“I did more than cope with the crop. I actually loved it. It was beautiful to live through the seasons, to break the ground in the chill of winter, plant the seeds against the winds of spring, and pick the blossoms in the heat of summer. There’s a poetry to it, *a feeling that I belonged and mattered* (emphasis added).” (King, 1996, p. 57)

Feelings of *belonging* or *mattering* achieved through work, as expressed either by B.B. King or a worker who cannot quit a bad job because if he did he “would not *be* anybody,” should be a central panel in the fabric of behavioral science. Feelings engendered by working deserve to be studied as thoroughly as we study the abilities we use to select workers. Weiss and Rupp (2011) have made a compelling argument for the development of a worker-centered psychology of work. We need to heed their arguments.

When psychologists study work, we view it and those who do it through the distorting lenses of our standardized scales and theories. Assessments of characteristics that are said to reflect the meaning of work to individuals (Hackman & Oldham, 1975) or the dimensions assessed by job satisfaction scales (e.g., Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1969; Hulin & Nye, In Press) miss what work means in the lives of workers as often as they capture it. These standardized scales and theories are useful (Roznowski & Hulin, 1992). They are related to a wide range of important work behaviors. They are seductive because they are useful and are approximately correct for many workers. We have learned a great deal about workers using these scales. When we use them, we account for a statistically significant amount of variance of the behaviors we study. With these significant amounts of variance accounted for, we consign the remaining within- and between-person variances, usually the majority of the variance of the phenomena being studied, to the scrap heap of random error. We rest on the laurels represented by the statistical significance or the effect sizes of our findings. Even with these statistically significant effects and moderate effect sizes, there remains much to be learned about work.

Non-traditional Information About Work

Consider these behaviors:

A cement mason drops a silver coin in the mortar at the base of a building under construction.

Iron workers sign the last I-beam put into place in a modern high-rise building and