DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 054 466 CG 006 570

AUTHOR Day, H. I.

TITLE A New Look at Work, Play and Job Satisfaction.

PUB DATE 31 May 71

NOTE 18p.; Speech given before Canadian Guidance and Counselling Association Convention, Toronto, May 30 - June 2, 1971

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29

DESCRIPTORS Career Planning; *Employment; Individual Characteristics; Job Analysis; *Job Placement; *Job Satisfaction; Leisure Time; *Motivation; Need Gratification; Occupational Guidance; Occupational Information; *Vocational Counseling

ABSTRACT

A great deal of literature concerning work, play and job satisfaction is summarized and integrated. The author discusses a number of different conceptions of what work actually is and concludes that, according to all definitions, work is an instrumental activity with only extrinsic satisfactions. It is his contention, however, that work may have intrinsically rewarding aspects. Play is viewed very broadly as: (1) intrinsically rewarding; (2) an activity which includes information search, skill training, and repetitious practice; and (3) a form of learning and rehearsal. The author prefers not to see work and play as mutually exclusive activities, but to view them as complementary components of all activities. On this basis, a model for vocational counseling is proposed, which seeks to evaluate jobs on the relative degrees of extrinsic and intrinsic satisfaction which they can provide, and to determine which individuals would "fit" with what kinds of jobs, utilizing the extrinsic/intrinsic satisfaction dimensions. (TL)

A NEW LOOK AT WORK, PLAY AND JOB SATISFACTION

H. I. Day

The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

paper read at Canadian Guidance and Counseling Association Meeting, Toronto, May 31st, 1971.

A NEW LOOK AT WORK, PLAY AND JOB SATISFACTION

H. I. Day

The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

Work

In contemporary Western culture work is commonly portrayed as a necessary evil. It was forced upon us when Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden of Eden and were told that they must earn their bread by the sweat of their brows. Work is a necessity because the harsh realities of our biological existence force us to labour to provide the basic requirements of life and, if we desire more than those - and who is not motivated today to acquire more than mere subsistence - we must work long and hard. Work is also portrayed in our culture as evil because Adam, and so all mankind, was disobedient and work is the expiation of our guilt feelings for disobedience. More realistically, work is imposed upon us and like all impositions is therefore resented.

Work has not always been viewed as a necessary evil. At different times through the ages it has been variously interpreted. The Greeks and Romans, for example, saw it as evil but with the availability of slaves, were able to reject it as unnecessary for free men. With the rise of Christianity and especially under the influence of the Protestant ethic an attempt was made to remove the stigma of evilness and to represent work as a loving obligation to a divine being. Yet, things that are necessary seem rarely to be viewed as good and gradually, with the rise of capitalism and the misery of sweat shop

conditions, the connotation of evilness returned to the concept of work.

Dictionary definitions of work avoid applying pejorative connotations. Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, for example, defines work as "the exertion of strength or faculties to accomplish something". It also gives synonyms such as "occupation", "employment", "task", and "duty". While the connotation of necessity is obvious in the words "duty" and "task" there is no acknowledgement that within our culture evilness is the commonly held affect.

Santayana (1900) lists three motives for work: want, ambition, and love of occupation. He says,

> "In a social democracy, after the first was eliminated, the last alone would remain efficacious. Love of occupation, although it occasionally accompanies and cheers every sort of labour could never induce man originally to undertake arduous and uninteresting tasks, nor persevere in them if by chance or waywardness such tasks had been once undertaken. Inclination can never be the general motive for the work now imposed on the masses." (p. 34).

Vroom too ponders the reasons that make people work and concludes:

1. They provide wages to the role occupant in return for his services.
2. They require from the role occupant the expenditure of mental or physical energy.
3. They permit the role occupant to contribute to the production of goods or services.
4. They permit or require of the role occupant social interaction with other persons.
5. They define, at least in part, the social status of the role occupant. (Vroom, 1964; p. 30).

Menninger (1964) in a basic textbook used in most vocational guidance courses in America suggests that "to the psychiatrist work is an essential activity of the mentally healthy person, a mature person." He argues that work satisfies many psychological needs which cannot be met easily in other ways. These include an outlet for hostile or aggressive drives and job satisfactions derived from the worthwhileness of work, pleasant personal relations with other workers, a chance to be a member of the team, and the satisfaction associated with allegiance with a superior being.

Common in all of these definitions is one feature - that work is an activity of which the goal is the production of something and whose satisfactions are derived from objects or situations extrinsic to the nature of the task. For example, although Vroom argued that one goal of work is the exertion of physical energy, this goal is not intrinsically bound to the characteristics of the activity itself.

Thus work seems not to be intrinsically rewarding. Rather, the rewards of work are to be sought in its products, in the creation of an object or event that in turn reinforces the worker. The reinforcement may be obtained by selling the product, by displaying it to others, or by the receipt of rewards for having produced something. The rewards may be financial gain, status, prestige, security or even a feeling of weariness. Thus the laborer on a production line is working, as is the surgeon who performs an operation, the artist who sells his work, the academician who publishes his research findings and the teacher who submits a year-end report on his students' progress.

In this sense an activity is pleasurable to the extent that the anticipated reward is pleasurable. If a painter expects to sell the painting he is working on, he enjoys the anticipation of the pleasure he will derive from the receipt and disbursement of the money, and the prestige and fame that may follow its sale.

Yet one would argue that there is usually some pleasure in the performance of a task. Shimmin (1966) argues that while work is often assumed to be neither pleasurable nor self-rewarding, it should not be viewed simply as something people do not like doing. The teacher may enjoy his interchange with his pupils and the writer the creative involvement in his paper. While this may be less apparent with the laborer on the production line, it is not entirely untrue. One can find many blue collar workers who enjoy their labor and not merely the rewards they derive from their jobs.

Thus it must be granted that activities may have intrinsically rewarding aspects. There may be characteristics in an experience that may make its doing pleasurable in and of itself.

Play

Such characteristics are usually inhered in activities which we subsume under the rubric of play. Play might be defined as those activities which work is not - recreation, amusement, hobbies, leisure and other voluntary fun activities.

A number of psychologists and sociologists have attempted to

define the concept of play or have offered criteria that playful behavior would meet. The definitions are not, of course, congruent and some criteria include activities that others would not. But, as with definitions of work, there are common features in many of the expositions. Valentine (1942), for example, defined play as "any activity which is carried out entirely for its own sake." Piaget (1951) listed a number of generally accepted criteria defining play as an end in itself, a spontaneous activity and one carried on for pleasure. Margaret Mead (1950) in a discussion of work and play described work as an activity "that is purposeful and directed towards ends that lie outside that activity" in contrast with the self-rewarding character of play.

In all of these definitions play seems to be characterized as spontaneous, i.e. an act the reward for which is intrinsic to the activity itself. But to relegate the definition of act to spontaneity is to abrogate one's responsibility to scientific investigation and comprehension. For spontaneity can be traced back in time and anchored down to a reaction to an instigatory stimulus with no biologically important consequence, or as Schlossberg (1947) put it, "seems useless in the eyes of an observer".

The motivation for play is derived from stimuli which directly affect the central nervous system. Following theoretical formulations by Berlyne (1960, 1968), play can be defined as one type of response to situations characterized by high levels of ambiguity, complexity, novelty and similar environmental variables - all of which serve to induce a moderate level of uncertainty, response conflict, physiological imbalance and neural tension in the body.

Play is a type of activity that includes information search, skill training and repetitious practice, motivated by lack of information, uncertainty about the conceptualization of a precept and choice of an appropriate response in a situation of high ambiguity, etc. induces exploration of the source of uncertainty. Exploration often takes the form of locomotion, manipulation, and testing of various solutions. Play includes these exploratory responses in any combination, is initiated in the presence of uncertainty and may be abandoned either when all the uncertainty is resolved or when other environmental stimuli with higher levels of uncertainty become more attractive and interesting to the individual and are seen as more conducive to exploration. Children play more than adults, probably because they are more at liberty to choose to react to interesting environments and can move among various alternatives with greater ease. Their behavior is usually termed fun. The "idle rich" have fun too and their amusements are often displayed in the newspapers and magazines to be read by the more restricted and "unfortunate" readers.

Play is also a form of learning and rehearsal. It is practice in gaining competence, i.e. the capacity to interact effectively with one's environment (White, 1959). The individual in the presence of uncertainty must learn through exploration and practice to gain mastery and comprehension over environmental conditions as well as his own abilities. He enjoys the repetitious practice in which he reduces uncertainty and becomes proficient in responding appropriately and efficiently to a situation. This activity is not confined only to children but is an ongoing process through life.

Play is often regarded as frivolous and fit mainly for children.

It may have been the influence of the Protestant ethic that made society [illegible] the role of play and view it as trite, for society had to [illegible] the role of work and reduce the status of pleasure derived from non-work activities. Today, as increased productivity and automation allow people to reduce the proportion of time spent at work, the amount of play is on the increase in the form of recreation, sports, hobbies and other leisure activities.

Generally, work and play are seen as mutually exclusive activities, i.e. a person is either engaged in work or in play. Historically, the Greek and Roman freemen engaged in play although some of their games would scarcely be termed play today. In fact, it is rather difficult to distinguish the two activities in modern games. Today, amateurs and professionals play and work together in competitions such as tennis and golf. They expend equivalent amounts of energy, and the rewards of success lie in the process of playing a good game as well as in the extrinsic rewards of status and prestige. The only distinction between the work of the professional and the play of the amateur lies in the fact that only the former may receive financial and material rewards for success.

It may be more useful to view the two, work and play, not as separate activities, but rather as complimentary components of all activities. Thus, part of each activity is work, and the remainder is play. The painter obtains satisfaction from the creative act as well as in the anticipation of a sale. The car salesman derives satisfaction both from the process of understanding the idiosyncrasies of a customer and in gaining mastery over him and manipulating him to purchase, but also from the commission he receives for completing the sale.

This formulation would be in agreement with Cohen (1953) who suggested that it is appropriate to think of a composite work-play continuum on which a given activity can be placed according to the extent to which it displays several characteristics.

Although every activity includes both work and play components the proportion of each may vary. New, ambiguous and complex tasks are composed of a large proportion of interesting elements. But uncertainty gradually decreases with repetition and competence and tasks tend to become redundant, stereotyped, mundane and tedious. The proportion of play in an activity decreases and the proportion of work increases. The continuation of an activity thus becomes more dependent upon extrinsic rewards. If the status, economic or power reward is sufficient, activities may be continued even when they have become almost exclusively work, although they may be regarded as boring, unpleasant, uninteresting and tedious.

Young children are permitted to pursue activities motivated to a great extent by intrinsic rewards. They can therefore afford to abandon an activity when its intrinsic motivation has diminished. The process of education is, at least in some part, directed to the training of children to remain with activities after the intrinsic rewards are reduced. Such training is carried on under the guise of developing a mature and responsible attitude to life. In school children are taught that work comes before play and that extrinsic rewards are of greater consequence than intrinsic satisfactions.

Neff, in his book Work and Human Behavior (Neff, 1968) argues that "work is not at all a natural human activity." Human beings must learn to become workers and the necessary skills are taught during the

educational process. He feels that a "work personality" must be formed. This personality is willing to carry on activities whose basic objectives are instrumental - the production of something. The formation of such a personality requires the shaping of an individual who is willing to accept restrictions on his free movement from activity to activity and the compulsions of stability, endurance and responsibility for the sake of extrinsic rewards. The successful graduate of the educational system has learned how to work, has chosen a career and is ready to undertake a job.

Job Satisfaction

The term job usually refers to an individual piece of work done in the course of one's occupation or trade. As such it is antithetical to game which is seen as a non-job occupation. But jobs and games have both intrinsic and extrinsic components. Both jobs and games refer to activities that extend over a period of time, have elements of repetition and may include one or more related activities.

The main distinction between jobs and games lies in the motivation for their performance: jobs are mainly instrumental, extrinsically motivated and directed towards the creation of a product. Work constitutes therefore a high proportion of the activities in a job. Games are mainly, but not entirely, intrinsically motivated. Games can also be prestigious. Doing a job well is extrinsically rewarding; it can also be pleasing.

Job satisfaction is derivable both from the activity itself and from the anticipation of the rewards to be obtained upon its completion. Hertzberg attempted to separate out these two constituents of a job

(Hertzberg, 1956). He argued that each job has motivational and hygienic components. The former include achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility and advancement. Hertzberg argued that the existence of motivational characteristics in a job provided satisfaction and their non-existence did not cause dissatisfaction, but merely a lack of satisfaction. Under the heading of hygienic components, he included company policy and administration, supervision, salary, interpersonal relations (supervision) and working conditions. Hygienic characteristics were said to affect the degree of dissatisfaction with the job. Thus, a high salary would not cause satisfaction, but merely reduce dissatisfaction.

Hertzberg may have been extreme in dichotomizing job characteristics into two types and treating them as orthogonal factors. It is true that the hygienic factors are extrinsic to the activity and so do not provide satisfaction to the individual during the performance of a task. But the anticipation of the reward (e.g., money) may be satisfying. One may take pleasure not only in doing a job well but also in expecting that one may get paid well. Moreover, some of the factors that Hertzberg included under the heading of motivational, such as responsibility and advancement, could not be included in the task-intrinsic definition, for their reward, delivered to the worker in the form of recognition, advancement, etc., is not inherent in the nature of the task itself.

Jobs differ in the initial proportion of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational components. These differences may, in part, be due to the flexibility and amount of structure built into them by the employer or by the previous occupants. A job description is usually a poor

exposition of these relationships and knowledge of the proportion of the intrinsic component is generally transmitted by word of mouth, usually from other employees in the organization. Thus a prospective employee may ask how much freedom to "do your own thing" there is on the job, or "how much does the boss ride you?" These questions are mainly directed to ascertaining the amount of flexibility existent in the job that would allow scope for interest and personal growth.

One might expect that jobs with less potential for intrinsic satisfaction would be designed to yield greater extrinsic reward - higher salary, status, etc., but the reverse is often the case. Blue collar jobs that provide little satisfaction in their accomplishment are often poorly salaried and of low status. Their main source of satisfaction may be, as Menninger stated, that they leave the worker exhausted. Realizing this, workers organize into unions and demand increases in extrinsic reinforcement. They insist on higher salaries and more task-extrinsic benefits such as pensions, medical care, shorter hours and longer vacations, for these reinforcements are easily pinpointed and described in contracts. They are also measurable and distributable across all employees in a company. They are also easier for the employer to deliver.

Recently there has been a move by workers to demand that jobs be restructured to provide greater interest. Unions are demanding that jobs be made less boring and repetitious. Gains of this kind are as rewarding to workers as is additional material reinforcement.

In an attempt to describe a utopian society, Skinner, in Walden II (Skinner, 1962) proposed a credit system which would make it possible to evaluate jobs in terms of the willingness of members of the

society to undertake it. In his utopia unpleasant jobs, like cleaning sewers, would have a high value, i.e., receive more labor-credits than more pleasant jobs. On the other hand, working in the flower gardens would have a low extrinsic pay-off because it is so desirable, yielding as it does much greater intrinsic satisfaction. Skinner pointed out that governments make some jobs, such as soldiering appear very honorable and desirable to attract volunteers. By raising the level of extrinsic rewards, such as status and prestige, they facilitate recruitment to that service. Private organizations also exaggerate the status or prestige of some jobs which have low intrinsic payoff and for which they do not wish to pay high salaries by providing uniforms or titles for their personnel.

Eventually the level of intrinsic motivation in every activity is reduced to zero. All activities, if carried on long enough, become repetitious, boring and routine. Usually activities are abandoned before they become boring, but if the extrinsic rewards are sufficiently great, activities may be carried on even after most or all of their intrinsic motivation is gone. Such activities may then be perceived as hateful, and what is hated is the failure of the work to provide intrinsic reward. Such work is then merely tolerated and any satisfaction derived is in anticipation of future rewards.

This phenonemon is not unique to blue collar workers. Professionals and executives, regardless of productivity, insist on annual increments. For every year their jobs tend to become a little less fun and a little more redundant. As the amounts of complexity and uncertainty are reduced through increased rehearsal and gain in competence, as they become mundane, professionals and executives insist on

replacing the diminishing intrinsic character of their jobs with increased extrinsic reinforcement.

The speed at which jobs and other activities evolve into pure work depends in part on the characteristics of the activity itself. Some games and jobs seem to have a high initial level of complexity and ambiguity, but are soon structured, readily mastered, and become repetitive and boring quickly. Others allow greater scope for players and workers to restructure their activities. Games and jobs that involve social interchange to a large degree tend to remain exciting and interesting longer. For humans, the most complex and unpredictable elements in our environment, allow greatest scope for flexibility and learning experiences.

But interpersonal type jobs also require the maximum degree of flexibility and adaptability in a worker. They require him to be tolerant of and to prefer stimulation with a high level of uncertainty and to react competently in the presence of high levels of ambiguity. This does not mean that he must abhor extrinsic reinforcement, but rather that he must insist on activities with high intrinsically motivating character.

Maslow (1954) ordered the various motivating forces into a hierarchical structure, suggesting that extrinsic type needs such as physical security and biological stability are responded to primarily and only when these needs are quiescent are non-biological or intrinsic motivators dominant. Without questioning the necessity of the hierarchical structure one can still accept the premise of the simultaneous existence of intrinsic and extrinsic forces within an individual. People who work in close contact with the complex environments of other

people must somehow be somewhat of a risk-taker or stimulus seeker.

Jobs involving a high degree of interpersonal contact often allow the introduction of novelty and ambiguity by the worker on the job. They also tend to be broad in scope and complex in nature so that they allow the possibility of developing interests in particular aspects of the job, in specialization. Such jobs can also permit restructuring by different workers so that they may all be performing seemingly identical but actually not the same jobs.

A second factor that affects the rate of evolvement of a job to pure work must be sought in the characteristics of the worker. Some people are more capable of rejuvenating and maintaining fun and interest in a job. These people may have greater sensitivity to irregularities and uncertainties in a situation. They may be able to ferret out subtle nuances in situations that seem homogeneous and therefore mundane to others.

Desmond Morris (1969) suggested a number of ways that people seem to react to boring environments. Among these are inventing novel activities or variations on familiar activities, artificially magnifying selected stimuli, and creating new problems to be solved. While he was concerned with exaggerated emphasis on these activities and stressed their unhealthy aspects, it must be recognized that moderate differences in these characteristics can be found among normal people everywhere, especially in their ability to generate variability on an everyday level. In fact, people who introduce novel arrangements of and new ways of reacting to ordinary situations are sometimes said to be creative and are lauded for their efforts.

Finally, some people are more motivated to work for extrinsic rewards. They are not entirely unconcerned with intrinsic satisfaction

and a sense of doing a difficult job well, but rather are motivated largely by money, status, power, etc. Haywood (1971) argued that these people tend to prefer jobs that are predominantly work. i.e., safe, structured and mundane jobs. Such workers may allow any job to become mundane and uninteresting. They may also be attracted to the structured elements within a job and may drift towards the low intrinsically motivating portions thereof, leaving the exciting, and possibly insecure components to others. Thus they may prefer repetitive, clearly defined activities, such as shop clerking, to less structured, more variable but less secure activities, like commission sales.

Modern vocational counseling tends still to be concerned with Parson's (1908) three broad activities, understanding the individual, understanding the needs of the world of work and enmeshing the two. However, the determination of which characteristics of the worker and aspects of the work environment are important to be understood has varied from time to time and from theory to theory. This model argues that a vocational counselor should also concern himself with the three activities but should seek different measures. In the work environment he should seek to identify the initial proportions of intrinsic and extrinsic components of jobs. He should, in other words, not focus most of his examination on the shape of the job, its job description, but rather on its shapelessness, on its potential for flexibility.

The counselor should also concentrate on measuring the flexibility of the counselee, on his motivation to work in uncertain, fairly unstructured jobs and on his ability to induce novelty into games and jobs. Then, he should focus on enmeshing flexible workers with shapeless jobs.

REFERENCES

Berlyne, D. E. Conflict, arousal and curiosity. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960.

Berlyne, D. E. Laughter, humor and play. In G. Lindzey & E. Aronson (Eds.), Handbook of social psychology, 2nd Ed., Vol. III, Boston: Addison-Wesley, 1968. Pp. 795-852.

Cohen, . . The ideas of work and play. British Journal of Sociology, 1953, 4, 312-322.

Haywood, H. C. Individual differences in motivational orientation: A trait approach. In H. I. Day, D. E. Berlyne, D. E. Hunt (Eds.), Intrinsic motivation: A new direction in education. Toronto: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, in press 1971.

Herzberg, F. Work and the nature of man. New York: World, 1966.

Mead, Margaret. Male and female. London: Victor Gollancz, 1950.

Menninger, W. C. Introduction: The meaning of work in Western societ In H. Borow (Ed.), Man in a world at work. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1964, xiii-xvii.

Morris, D. The human zoo. Toronto: Clarke Irwin & Co., 1969.

Neff, W. S. Work and human behavior. New York: Atherton Press, 1968.

Parsons, F. Choosing a vocation. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1908.

Piaget, J. Play, dreams and imitation in childhood. New York: Norton, 1951.

Santayana, G. Atoms of thoughts. Ira D. Cardiff (Ed.). New York: Philosophical Library, 1950.

Schlosberg, H. The concept of play. Psychological Review, 1947, 54, 229-231.

Shimmin, Sylvia. Concepts of work. In B. Hopson & J. Hayes (Eds.), The theory and practice of vocational guidance. New York: Pergamon Press, 1968. Pp. 213-220.

Skinner, B. F. Walden two. New York: The Macmillan Co. (paperback), 1962.

Valentine, C. W. The psychology of early childhood. London: Methuen, 1942.

Vroom, V. H. Work and motivation. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1964.

White, R. W. Motivation reconsidered: The concept of competence. Psychological Review, 1959, 66, 297-333.