

A STUDY OF HOURLY RATED INDUSTRIAL
EMPLOYEE ATTITUDES TOWARDS THEFT
FROM INDUSTRIAL PLANTS IN
SAGINAW, MICHIGAN

Thesis for the Degree of M. S.
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Everett Paul Leek
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AN ABSTRACT

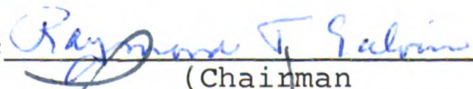
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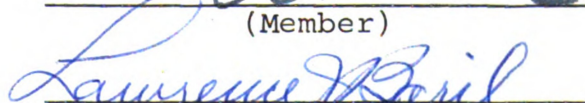
School of Police Administration and Public Safety
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The objective of this study is to test certain hypotheses and theories by investigating the hourly rated employee's attitude towards theft from the industrial plant. This study also evaluates the relationship between an employee's skills, education, and aspirations to his theft attitude. The interview method was employed to obtain the necessary information in an attempt to discover whether hourly rated employees in a certain level of skill are more prone to accept theft as a "way of life" than employees in other levels of skill, income, and aspirations.

Several theft attitude studies have been conducted among white collar workers by such authors as Edwin Sutherland, Donald Cressey, and Norman Jaspan, however, these authors have neglected to give serious thought in their studies to the blue collar or hourly rated employee as a part of the problem of internal theft. This study is a new approach to the problem of internal theft, and it is felt that the conclusions derived are of value to those interested in security.

Everett Paul Leek

Sixty hourly rated employees from several industrial plants in Saginaw, Michigan were interviewed for this study by the writer. Each employee was categorized on the basis of his skill, education, and aspirations as a means for evaluating his potential attitude towards theft, the employee was then interviewed utilizing an interview guide in an open-end discussion and by the questionnaire method.

The results of this study indicate that there is some basis for predicting the employee's attitude according to his labor skill, education, and aspirations; however, the writer feels that additional research and study in this area is needed.

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An expression of gratitude is extended to the hourly-rated employees of the industrial plants of Saginaw, Michigan who voluntarily participated in the study.

The writer expresses deep gratitude to his family for their encouragement and devotion throughout the entire period of advanced study. It is to my wife, Doreen A. Leek, that this thesis is dedicated.

E. P. L.

November, 1964

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"During the past five years American Business has experienced the most shocking wave of shortages the nation has ever known. The price of internal thefts from American Businesses totaled more than one and a half billion dollars a year."¹ This is a statement made recently by F. R. Marxson of the J. L. Hudson Company of Detroit, Michigan at a Michigan State University sponsored seminar on Industrial Security. Mr. Marxson based his statement on information gathered from many companies across the nation as well as his first-hand experience as Inventory Controller for the J. L. Hudson Company. He further implied that of all the varieties of activities or areas with which law enforcement and security agencies are confronted, there is none so high in cost and treated with such minimum concern as that of industrial theft. Such dishonest activity has been increasing at such a pace that it could soon become the nation's number one loss problem.

¹F. R. Marxson, "Inventory Shortage and Its Control." Speech given at Business Security Seminar, Michigan State University, East Lansing, April 17, 1963. (Mimeographed.)

For many years management has accepted theft losses as an unavoidable evil, to be endured within the normal scheme of operations. To offset these losses, it has been deemed sufficient to add a small percentage of the cost to the selling price of the product. This line of reasoning indicated a dangerous condition. It shows that management cannot cope with the seriousness of the theft problem and realize a profit. Instead of pursuing competent methods of preventing such losses, they plan only on offsetting them financially. The increased price is, in many cases, insufficient to make up for the actual loss. Too, many manufacturers underestimate the tremendous expense incurred by internal theft. And, of course, the consumer dollar does not buy as much as it should, nor does the manufacturer receive the profit his quoted price should bring him.²

Industry has lately become more interested in the problems of internal thefts. This may be attributed to such reasons as the tremendous cut in profits, the tightening of business tax laws, the union's demand for a greater share of the company's profits, and the rising cost of protective insurance. Also, industry has in the past been more concerned with the cost of producing materials on a mass basis and have neglected to consider one of the most important factors that lends itself to the rising cost of production: internal

²John R. Davis, Industrial Plant Protection (Springfield: Charles C. Thomas Co., 1957), p. 224.

thefts. It is now apparent that the theft problem can no longer be ignored or treated with passive concern, but that positive steps must be taken to curtail or reduce its effect on the success of a business.

Some sociologists believe that employees of large companies possess little guilt feeling while committing acts of theft from the company because the company represents a large, impersonal figure, and that they lack the necessary moral ingredients that would otherwise make the same act towards an individual a terrible crime. Some sociologists such as Norman Jaspan "The Thief in the White Collar", Donald Cressey "Other People's Money," and Edwin H. Sutherland, "White Collar Crime," have made studies related to such criminal acts as embezzlement, fraud, and theft, and find generally the same type of answers from the employee regarding the materials stolen. The answers and statements tend to support the theory that the employee regards the industrial plant as one big massive structure that cannot be hurt or violated by the mere act of theft. These employees seem to feel that the following statements are sufficient to grant them amnesty from a moral obligation. Such statements as; "they won't miss it," "they can afford it," "they will throw it away anyway," are all excuses to rid themselves of a guilt feeling and make it seem as though the company is at fault for their larcenous attitude.³

³Norman Jaspan, The Thief in the White Collar (New York: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1960), pp. 52-58.

The question now arises as to how wide-spread is the belief that stealing from a company by an employee is not a crime, but something to be casually enjoyed like a ten minute "coffee break" or leaving work a "little early." Most of the employee-attitude studies that deal with the "hourly worker" such as those made by Ely Chinoy in "Automobile Workers and the American Dream," and William F. Whyte in "Industry and Society," fail to regard this question with any serious concern. For the most part those studies were concerned with improving methods for gaining better employee-employer relationships and company loyalty. The remainder of the studies dealt with the white-collar crimes and the attitudes of those employees. Norman Jaspan, Donald Cressey, and Edwin H. Sutherland have devoted a great deal of time, money, and effort in their quest for better understanding of white-collar criminality, but have neglected the need for better understanding of criminality among the hourly rate worker, commonly referred to as the blue-collar worker. The hourly rated worker may not have the opportunity to handle large sums of money or handle the more expensive equipment, but, in this writer's opinion, the thefts by these employees are as important in total company losses as those thefts committed by the white-collar employee.

It is generally understood that some businesses and industries cannot continue to exist if employee thefts trim the margin of profits and render the company helpless in the face of competition. Profits are usually re-invested by the

company to improve their products, enlarge the company's holdings, and improve the economic benefits of the employee. Granted, many companies choose to hide their heads in the sand and ignore the problems of internal theft, but in due time they will have to come face to face with the reality of it's existence and take action to eliminate the problem or as much of it as possible.

The first step in realizing the problem and accepting its presence is finding adequate studies concerning internal thefts and the employee's attitude towards the company. Related studies such as the one made by Donald Cressey, "The Criminal Violation of Financial Trust," American Sociological Review, December 1950, have been conducted among white collar employees concerning their thefts and attitudes towards the employer. It is, therefore, necessary that a similar study be conducted among blue collar workers, commonly referred to as the hourly rated worker, in business and industry. This study is concerned with the industrial employee's attitude towards theft.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

Many sociologists feel today that the American society exerts a great amount of pressure on the individual employee to strive for a middle-class standard of living in all areas of life. The employee is constantly reminded

through radio, television, the newspaper, and magazine advertisements that he should seek for, strive for, and maintain the middle-class symbols. These symbols are expressed through occupational prestige positions, educational achievement, conspicuous consumption, and the family's position in the status structure.

Even with democratic procedures in this country, nature has seen fit to endow some individuals with the innate ability to achieve the desired goals of society while others are denied these abilities to varying degrees. Sharp economic differences exist in our society as well as educational and occupational differences. With the onslaught of the advertising medium, many people are not willing to accept a position on the social scale less than that which identifies them as a member of the middle-class group. This behavior may be classified as status-gaining and status-maintaining. Thefts or embezzlements, in many cases, are used as a direct means by which an individual may establish or maintain a self-image, presenting a picture to others with which he desires to be identified. Donald R. Cressey expresses in his book, Other People's Money, a belief that this phenomenon is a factor to be considered when he states: "In this type of case a problem appears when the individual realizes that he does not have the necessary financial means for continued association with persons on a desired status level, and this problem becomes non-shareable when he feels that he can

neither renounce his aspirations for membership in the desired group nor obtain prestige symbols necessary to such membership."⁴

There are many people in the American society who will succumb to the "hard sell" advertising pressures, and tend to integrate the advertising appeal into their every day lives. This, in turn, creates the "expensive taste," a desire to live beyond their means, and the tendency to spend money foolishly. In an effort to live "graciously" or maintain one's self-image, some will resort to such criminal activity as robbery, some will embezzle, and some will employ schemes to manipulate people or funds for their own benefit. One of the most underrated methods of obtaining financial gain is that of taking materials ranging from office supplies to finished products and converting them into money by selling them to [so-called respectable] wholesalers. One of the most significant factors about this means of obtaining the needed money is that the chances of being caught and the seriousness of the penalty is much less than most any other illegal means of obtaining financial gain. This, coupled with the fact that most industries choose not to prosecute offenders, because they do not wish the company to have this type of negative publicity, has made industrial thefts a relatively appealing form of illicit activity.

⁴Donald R. Cressey, Other People's Money (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1953), p. 54.

Because of the pressures being exerted on the industrial employee to conform to certain social expectancies, it would only seem reasonable that an investigation be conducted into some of the mechanics which threaten the self-image and lead the employee to steal from his employer.

One of the most rapidly increasing frustrations confronting employees today is that of seeing their jobs and skills become obsolete due to advancing science and automation. Automation has taken its toll of certain jobs that were once the pride of only a learned few. Now, machines can duplicate these skills many times over, with greater accuracy, and less cost to the employer than the once proud craftsman. Along with the loss of skill the individual also loses a certain amount of prestige that he once enjoyed: high wages compared to his fellow workers, and the respect that the lesser skilled employees had for them. Today, one may find an unskilled worker earning a gross wage equal to that of the skilled worker, and earning equal respect in occupations that require less skill.

The results of such a situation is aptly related in William F. Whyte's study of the factory community:

Each young man, in direct face-to-face interaction with those above, imitated and learned a way of life while being motivated by the strong desire to escape the irksome limitations of his present low position and to attain the higher places where he would have the satisfaction of making his own decisions and possess the prestige and pay consequent to such eminence. Slowly this way of life degenerated and the machine took the virtue and respect of the workers, and at the same time

broke the hierarchy that dominated their occupation. There was no longer a period for young men to learn the respect for those in the age group above them and in doing so to become self-respecting workers. The "ladder to the stars" was gone and with it much of the fabric of the 'American Dream'.⁵

When the age-grade structure that organized the male aborigines of North America into a hierarchy of prestige and achievement was broken under the impact of white civilization in many of these societies, frustrations suffered by those who had once known self-respect crystallized into aggressive movements or into attempts to abolish the new ways and to retreat into the old and cherished ways of the past.⁶

In this study much of the same problem exists; the process of jobs and skills becoming outdated are forcing the worker to alter his occupation and reducing his self-image to one of lesser status. Those who are unable to accept this may very well adopt the ways of the North American Aborigines, when confronted with frustrations, and react aggressively by stealing from their employer.

Occupational aspirations and resulting social mobility are related to the age factor in industry. The individual is graded heavily by his employer on his age, regardless of his seniority. Even if an older man has attained the same level of education and experience as the younger man in the same job, the present day trend is to upgrade the younger man in belief that the younger man has a longer period of time to be of value to that particular industry.

⁵William F. Whyte, Industry and Society (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1946), p. 54.

⁶Ibid., pp. 54-55.

The requirements for entering some occupations are associated with age: apprenticeship programs, technical schools, management training, etc. In this present age when new advances are being made in science and industry, a "whole new breed of man" is needed to keep pace with these new advances. Also, age plays a very important part in the individual's ability to gain specialized education for certain professions, to accumulate the necessary capital to enter his own business, or to gain the variety of experience necessary to become a foreman, superintendent, or a plant manager.

Frustration occurs when employees who have been aspiring to higher level jobs and possess the merit and leadership qualities necessary for promotions are by-passed, because they have passed a certain age level. When this occurs, there are many reactions to the frustrations, such as an artificial acceptance by seeing other positive factors in their "dead-end" jobs; fears of age and insecurity; and a desire to leave the plant and go into business for one's self. Some employees react by stealing to make up for the difference in wage he presently earns and the wage he would have earned had he received the desired promotion. Such factors as those previously stated are primarily the basis for one of the leading internal problems in this country, industrial thefts.

Most men have a strong desire to attain the goals that the public has sanctioned as symbols of success: wealth

and idleness. Men in all occupational levels strive for the day when they can reach this pinnacle of life regardless of whether it is realistic or a "pipe-dream." Some men will slave away at their jobs both day and night, through overtime and weekends, through vacations, and, in many instances, disregard their health to bring into better focus the "American Ideology of Success." The sad phase of all this is that the great majority of men will not reach this pinnacle of life through hard steady work, thrift and investments, but only through some dramatic event such as an inheritance.

It is at this point that many men become frustrated in their occupational niche and turn to various means to sooth their pride or cushion their fall to the inevitable reality that they have only accomplished the plateau that millions of others have reached through comparable efforts--just enough financial gain to buy simple luxuries and live their final years on a limited income.

The "strivers" of America can be seen on many streets; people who have accepted the ideology of limitless opportunity, but are having personal difficulty in making much headway towards achieving the dream. Inhabitants of our homogeneous suburban developments are often caught up in a particularly dangerous kind of straining in their consumption patterns.⁷

⁷Vance Packard, The Status Seekers (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1959), p. 224.

Many people, on the other hand, do resist the temptation of straining to "keep up with the Joneses"; however, a substantial number have difficulty adjusting to the frustration of little or no mobility, and quite a few have difficulty adjusting to the assumed humiliation of downward mobility.⁸

Financial reward of occupation is undoubtedly the most important factor in assigning status levels to occupations. Occupations that were once thought to be highly rewarding such as a baker, a teacher, a boot-maker, and etc., are less so today. Occupations such as janitors, industrial laborers, etc., once thought of as being a poor or limited source of income are now producing rewards far up the income scale. This factor has created many problems to the self-image and attitudes of the laborer. In many instances he does not regard his limited education as a barrier to a better way of life, but because of the increased opportunities it has fortified the laborers ideology of limitless opportunities. Many of these strivers have tried, almost in vain, to keep pace with the demands of society. Take for example the semi-skilled laborer who is living next door to the young executive who earns the same amount per year. The laborer must continually present a "front" in his habits and behavior so that he may be socially acceptable to the young executive and the remaining neighbors. The other

⁸Ibid., p. 225.

problem, and the most important at this time, is that the laborer is more static in his position than the young executive who, in turn, has many advancement potentials. The laborer is not willing to accept "downward mobility" as the price for his being occupationally static while the young executive has many potentials for "upward mobility."⁹

The question now arises as to how the laborer will truly react to the situation. Will he accept his static position or will he seek other ways to preserve the social status and self-image he presently maintains of himself?

There are many various reasons for workers to seek additional financial support: the worker who has developed the "expensive taste" for gracious living, the worker whose job has become obsolete, the worker whose job has lost its prestige, the worker who is among the "strivers" whose taste has exceeded his income, the worker who has been bypassed in promotions. It appears that all of these, and many other reasons, are primarily the emotional undercurrents that lead employees to steal from their employer to supplement their incomes.

It would be an oversimplification to state that all thefts from the employer are for the individual's own profit. Jaspan, Cressey, and Sutherland have found throughout their studies that many instances of theft are perpetrated by

⁹Jaspan, op. cit., pp. 96-106.

disgruntled employees who wish to harm the company for some personal reason. An example of this type of theft is as follows: A female employee in a company that manufactured toilet articles found her love life left much to be desired. She was not attractive to the male employees in the company where she worked, and she was quite shy in meeting people. The company's success depended upon developing new formulas and getting it on the market ahead of their competitors. The female employee became acquainted with a male employee of a rival company, and this acquaintance developed into a love affair. The female employee felt that it was necessary to do anything requested of her to hold this man. Eventually this man asked her to find out the new products and formulas that her company was to introduce on the market and get them for him. Eagerly, the female employee complied. The results of this, and many other such acts, led to the slump in sales and profits of her company. When she was apprehended, her only reason for doing so was to express her love for this man, not one of seeking personal profit.¹⁰

"The desire of each person individually to excel in the thing he is doing, or is motivated to do, is the most powerful of all human drives. Our inner urge to outdo our fellow beings is the strongest motive known to the human kind. It is even more coercive than hunger for food or the

¹⁰Ibid., p. 96.

biological goal; within conceivable limitations."¹¹ This character trait may take the form of a wholesome competitive spirit, or it can be the basis for the wanton disregard for the property of others.

Hypotheses

It is the opinion of this writer that there is a strong relationship between the employee's "need" to steal and the frustrations he encounters in attempting to support his self-image. Has the employee reached the peak of his advancement potential? Is it necessary for him to earn more money to perpetuate the image he has given his friends and neighbors? Is he capable of holding a higher position but does not receive promotions? In the writer's opinion the answers to these and similar questions will help to explain the employee's "need" to steal. It also appears that there is also some relationship between the degree of the employee's skill and the frustrations he encounters. Therefore, it is this writer's hypothesis that the skilled employee who is confronted with frustrations attributed to his job is more likely to accept industrial thefts as non-criminal than the lesser skilled employee confronted with similar frustrations.

¹¹ Ernest Windle and James Marsh, Man and His Motives (New York: Exposition Press, 1954), p. 27.

II. METHODOLOGY

Societies are systems of human behavior independent of the biological self, generally, except in the instances when survival of the individual is in question. Societies develop cultures, and cultures, in turn, create norms by either learning or imposing. The norms are the rules by which the employee lives. There is question as to how well he accepts them, but the norm-influence is always present. The norm that is being considered in this study is that of theft. Theft in our society is considered an act against the wishes of society to such a degree that norms are both learned and imposed by law against the very act regardless of the severity.

The intent of this study is to explore a small segment of the population to learn the degree this social norm is accepted, or not accepted, in the industrial plant. It has been said that the individual views the industrial plant as a huge impersonal object that is devoid of emotions and cannot be hurt; therefore, it is not subject to the norms of society. Regardless of this definition of the industrial plant, society continues to regard the act of theft from it as a crime and an offense against the norms of society.

A study of individual attitudes toward social problems is dependent upon truthful answers from those persons interviewed, and a degree of certainty that these answers express

the true feeling of the individual towards the questions asked. It would seem virtually impossible for an individual to devise a system of questions that would consistently elicit truthful answers from persons interviewed, therefore, the interviewer must recognize that human nature is fallible and the truth must be assumed.

One of the primary efforts confronting the writer in this study was that of developing an effective instrument that would effectively measure a pattern of responses from the individual towards a social norm that almost defies the individual to be truthful: theft. The basic method by which human attitudes are ascertained is by asking each individual what his attitude is towards certain problems. Unless the answer given is not a breach of socially acceptable norms the truth may be expected, otherwise false attitudes will be given. The type of questionnaire needed for this study is one that will not alienate those persons to be interviewed by causing them to reveal their feelings that are contrary to the socially acceptable norm and their egos. The method that was used in this study for interviewing will be discussed in the remaining pages of this section.

Construction of the Instrument

Methodology. Developing an instrument that effectively probes the person to be interviewed and extracts answers is difficult as a single project. This writer

attempted to develop an instrument that could be easily handled by a single person and yet maintain some accuracy in measurement. This created additional problems for the writer; however, an instrument was developed that would combine both the questionnaire and the interview method of research. The need for an instrument that could be handled by a single person was determined by such limitations as time, finances, and the lack of assistance from qualified researchers, also the need to maintain continuity in interviewing. There were many approaches that would have been suitable for obtaining the desired information; however, the following method was the one selected for this study.

The focused interview method was the major type of interviewing device used in this study. This method was one which required each individual interviewed to have experienced a common stimulus, or at least have been exposed to the common stimulus. For the purpose of this study, the common stimulus experiences are as follows:

1. The industrial trend in the use of the youth-educational factor as a basis for promotion.
2. The exposure to management-employee conflicts through the local unions.
3. Automation in industry.

The focused interview method alone did not satisfy the quest for valid information, but additional steps had to be taken to refine the procedure into a workable instrument.

The next step was to determine which type of questionnaire could be used that would elicit the desired results for the study. It was planned that the writer would use both a prepared questionnaire with fixed alternative questions, and a discussion type of interview with open-end questions that would lend itself to free and unlimited expression. The fixed alternative questionnaire was to be for obtaining factual information pertaining to only that individual's background, and also as a technique for placing the interviewee in a more relaxed atmosphere during the interview. Some questions were of the exploratory type for obtaining background information as well as keeping the interviewee interested in the interview situation.

A questionnaire approach, in the writer's opinion, has the advantage of receiving answers that are definite and easier to tabulate, and avoiding errors of memory. A shortcoming of the questionnaire method is that of making certain that all interviewees understand and interpret the questions similarly. Some investigators feel, however, that the employee feels more free to speak in an interview than writing on a questionnaire, because it gives the subject an opportunity to explain his answers.

One of the most important factors in obtaining valid answers to both the questionnaire and interview is that of assuring the subject that the entire process of testing will be held in the strictest of confidence, and that he will not

be exposed to either his fellow employees or management. Also, that following the interview there will be no way of identifying him with the instrument.

It is difficult to measure the attitudes of the hourly rated worker, but it is much easier than measuring the attitudes of the "white-collar" worker who is management-oriented in the answers he gives. The hourly rated worker is more free to give true feeling in his answers.

The open-end type of question was used primarily in the discussion type of interview for the purpose of allowing the individual ample time to express himself fully and to allow him the opportunity to qualify the initial response he gave to the question. Every attempt possible was made to avoid questions which would lend themselves to cliché answers.

Exploratory type of questions were used throughout the study for two basic purposes:

1. To aid the interviewer in maintaining a relaxed and interesting atmosphere throughout the interview.
2. To cross-check certain questions and answers for credibility.

Direct questions were asked for the following reasons:

1. To test the individual for his willingness to give facts about himself under interview conditions.

2. To obtain facts that pertain only to the subject's background--age, marital status, etc.--therefore, bypassing answers that did not pertain to the study.

Each interview situation was structured to last no longer than thirty to forty-five minutes, while keeping a careful eye towards informants fatigue. In some instances, the interviewee desired to extend the interview far beyond the allotted time. Occasionally an interviewee would extend the interview period by discussing some of his marital difficulties with the interviewer. A situation such as this appeared to give him an opportunity to air "his side of the story" in exchange for the answers to interview questions. Discussion of family problems was discouraged beyond the necessary limits of pertinent information for the study.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted during the months of August and September of 1963 to test the instrument possibilities, the interviewed person's reaction to certain questions, and to gain some insight into the field of interviewing. A very small sample was used for this purpose; two men in Saginaw, Michigan, one man in Detroit, Michigan, one man in Ann Arbor, Michigan, one man in Chicago, Illinois, and two men in Canton, Illinois. All of those interviewed were hourly rated employees in industrial plants. They also represented a cross-section of skills and ages. The results

of the interviews showed that only one interviewee, in the writer's opinion, totally misrepresented himself to the interviewer in answering the questions. The interviewee was willing to be interviewed but attempted to paint a very colorful picture of himself for the benefit of the writer.

The other hourly rated employees interviewed attempted to be factual in their responses; however, some were quite shocked to learn that they were quite uncertain of their real goals in life. Many amusing incidents occurred during this pilot study, but fortunately they added to the interviewing atmosphere. For example, in one instance the writer became the interviewee rather than the interviewer before he could regain control of the interviewing situation. This could be attributed to the lack of experience of the interviewer.

Another area of concern, at that time, was that of determining the atmosphere most conducive to the interviewing situation. The writer attempted interviewing in the home of the employee, at his place of employment, in a group situation with friends, and in group situations among strangers. Of all areas tested, it was found that the most conducive atmosphere for interviewing was found to be in the employee's home, and his place of employment was the second choice. This was the method to be used in the main study.

The success of an attitude survey study is dependent upon a group of people that is large enough to represent a

variety of experiences, behavior patterns, and economic classes for adequate random selection for interviewing. The writer and the thesis committee agreed that it would be necessary to find seventy-five men to be interviewed for this study as an adequate sample.

Sample Selection

The method for selection of the sample was made first by appealing to manufacturing employees in the city of Saginaw, Michigan. This was accomplished by making the appeal at the employee's local union halls, as this was the source which the employees had most in common and trusted. At first most of the employees had reservations towards being a part of a study that could very well be controlled by the company they worked for. After assuring them that this was a study being made by a candidate for a master's degree from Michigan State University, and that this study was in no way connected with their employer but was the partial requirement for the degree the interviewer desired, it was possible to obtain positive responses from the workers. One hundred and seven employees responded to the request for volunteers. Of those volunteering, the writer was able to complete the study with sixty employees who completed all phases of interviewing. The results of those sixty interviews was the basis for this study, and will be discussed in subsequent chapters. The remaining volunteers who failed to

complete the study had various reasons for not doing so: disinterest, promotions to salary jobs, quitting their jobs, and other related reasons.

The writer found that the most appropriate and acceptable method for recording answers during the discussion stage of the interview was to use a small piece of paper, approximately 3 x 5 inches, that did not resemble a form but could be later used as a valid record of the employee's answers. A simple code, consisting of a single mark opposite a number, was used on the recording instrument. This seemed to give the interviewee confidence that their every word was not being recorded for some future reference against them. There were, of course, some interviewees who were not at ease during the first few minutes of the interview while the recording instrument was being utilized. They soon forgot its use when the writer did not draw attention to its presence.

One interview per day was conducted so that the writer could have ample time to think through the interview and record the answers on a more meaningful instrument. This was done to eliminate confusing other interviews with the one being recorded.

The writer chose to make the survey among hourly rated workers in industrial plants in the city of Saginaw, Michigan. A sample consisting of sixty employees was selected from industrial plants having a range of five hundred

to five thousand employees on their payroll. The sample consisted of male employees ranging between twenty-eight and sixty-five years of age, and possessing one of the three levels of labor skills: unskilled, semi-skilled, and skilled. The level of skills was distributed as evenly as possible so that no one skill was decidedly predominate in the study. A cross-section of economic classes, based on the writer's scale of economic classes, was used; lower class, middle class, and upper class, i.e.

The employees were classified into two aspiration categories: reasonable aspirations and unreasonable aspirations. Additional categories by which the employees were classified were the age, educational attainment level, and the range of work skill of the employee. Also, whether the employee's skill or trade was classified as being obsolete or near obsolete, and the employee's family average income per year. The employees were further classified into one of two attitude categories: positive attitude towards theft or negative attitude towards theft. It was necessary to define the strength of the employee's self-image, strong or weak, which is the basis for his social striving.

An interview guide was needed so that the interviewer would be reasonably uniform in his interviews and be certain to ask the same set of questions in each interview. Some of the questions were stock questions which did not need more than memorization by the interviewer. Such questions as the

age of the employee interviewed, the size of his family, his father's occupation, the length of his employment with the company, his present occupation, and other such exploratory questions were asked for the purpose of information pertinent to the study and as a method for placing the interviewee in a more relaxed atmosphere.

The entire interview procedure was prefaced by an introductory statement by the writer informing the interviewee of the importance of this study to the field of industrial security and reassuring him that the entire interview would be held in strict confidence. Also, that the interview would in no way be identified with him. A sample of the interview guide may be found in the Appendix along with a sample of the questionnaire and other reference material.

Limitations of the Study

Due to the scope of this study, certain limitations are obvious. These limitations are as follows:

1. The study is centered around male employees. There are no female employees included in this study, because they are able to escape the problems which confront the male employees. The female, by social dictate, is not compelled to earn a living in the manner and with the necessity as the male. She is also the product of emotions that would be classified

by the male something of minor concern; therefore, to include the female employee in this study would require a separate questionnaire which would reduce the uniformity needed in this type of study.

2. Male employees under the age of twenty-eight are excluded for several reasons. The majority of young employees under this age level are either unsettled, undecided on their life's vocation, more mobile, unwilling to accept his job with the finality of the older employee, and/or is still young enough to improve his skill through education and training.
3. Industrial areas outside the city of Saginaw, Michigan would add another variable to the study. Sufficient samples are obtained within the geographic area designated.
4. Unemployed workers would be more prone to be rational in their responses.
5. Employees of businesses other than industrial plants would possibly have a different set of employment values than the industrial worker. This, too, would add another variable that would be difficult to include.
6. Salaried and supervising employees have a tendency to be management oriented in their answers. They have attained a certain amount of the "success" symbol for which the hourly rated worker is striving.

7. Plant Protection and law enforcement personnel are, by nature of their position, compelled to give answers that are commensurate with the law and society.

The aforementioned limitations are not, by any means, the only limitations confronting this study. They are, however, the primary limitations with which this study was initially confronted.

III. DEFINITION OF TERMS

The industrial community such as the one being studied possesses certain values that would not hold true in other communities, but still these values set the social tone for all of its inhabitants. The values in a college town are quite different from those of the industrial community. The values in a rural community are quite different from those of the college town. Because of this marked difference in each community, it is necessary that the writer define some of the more common terms which will be used throughout this study and which are the basic values of the industrial community. These terms are used to define the employee, his attitudes, and the classifications by which he measures his social success.

Dead-End Jobs: This is a commonly used term to define those jobs which used to be done by the human being, all

or in part, but are now being done completely by the machine. It also defines those jobs that offer no further advancement to the employee due to the employee's limitations: education, skills, age, and/or health.

Labor Skills: One of the more elementary social scales in the industrial community is that of classifying the employee according to the degree of his labor skills. For the purpose of this study, the writer has defined labor skills as the studied community views them, as defined in the dictionary, and as sociologists define them. This is done in an effort to show the industrial communities' definition in relationship to the definitions used in other communities.

The Unskilled worker, as defined in the industrial community, is the worker whose job requires no skill or training other than the initial familiarization with the job or task. Those jobs that only require necessary strength, health, and ability to appear each day and perform the task in a satisfactory manner.

The Semi-Skilled worker is one who has had some special instructions and test to qualify for operating certain machines or vehicles within the industrial plant. These workers usually rote operations.

The Skilled worker is the most envied worker of all the level of skills. This worker possesses one of the jobs

in the industrial plant which requires some form of extensive training, usually precluded by an apprenticeship program and is usually paid on the highest scale of the hourly paid workers.

The dictionary defines the unskilled laborer as follows: Having no special skill or training. Requiring or using no special skill or training. Semi-skilled: partly skilled; of or doing manual work that requires some but not extensive training. Skilled: Having or requiring an ability, as in a particular industrial occupation, machine operation, etc. gained by special experience or a regular program of training or apprenticeship: as a tool maker is a skilled workman.¹²

The same terms as defined by sociologists are as follows: The Unskilled worker possesses one or all of these things:--low paid, "dirty" jobs, involving little public responsibility--generally work of the service or labor type. Considered the least desirable occupation by most people.¹³

Semi-skilled: Those occupations classified between the skilled and unskilled laborer. Occupations that require some special training and places the employee in a more

¹²Webster's New World Dictionary, College Edition: World Publishing Company, 1953.

¹³Richard Bendix and Seymour Lipset, Class, Status, and Power (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1953), p. 411.

prestigious and economically secure position than the unskilled employee.¹⁴

Skilled labor: Those jobs in the labor field that hold highest prestige and are gained by virtue of special training and apprenticeship programs. Those jobs classified as the highest paid jobs among the hourly rated employee.¹⁵

In addition to the above mentioned methods of classifying employees, another category should be mentioned and considered as equal in importance: obsolete skills. These are the skills that were once believed to be too technical for machines but have since been improved and made possible to be done by the machine. Such skills as the blueprint maker, the type-setter, the die-finisher, etc. are now considered as an obsolete skill.

The following are some of the secondary methods of classifying workers in the industrial community, and the terms which are used to describe them:

Strivers: Those persons pre-occupied with attaining the American Dream of living in luxury and leisure. Those persons who over-spend their income and purchase the symbols of success.

¹⁴National Opinion Research Center, Opinion News, Vol. IX (September 1, 1947), p. 9.

¹⁵Vance Packard, The Status Seekers (New York: The David McKay Publishing Co., 1959), pp. 261-262.

Success: Arriving at the plateau of luxury and leisure; being able to afford the symbols of the desired social status.

Frustration: Relating this term to the study of industrial employees, it will be defined as the emotional state of the worker that leads him to be very critical of the employer, his job, and his inability to rise above his present job class.

Aspirations: The dreams and desires of the employee. This term is divided into two categories: reasonable and unreasonable aspirations. Reasonable aspirations: When the employee desires job classifications that are within his level of skills and educational attainment level. One whose stated desires are those that express moderation in spending, and he tends to be satisfied with associating with those of his own level of success. Unreasonable aspirations: An employee who either aspires for jobs far above the range of his skills and educational level, or one who withdraws into attainment levels which are far below his skill and educational abilities. One who seeks companionship with those classified well above or below his own success level.

Mobility: The ability of the employee to move from one social class to another by virtue of his occupation, income, and his educational attainment.

Self-Image: The picture the individual has created of himself, in his own mind, with which he wishes to be identified and as he desires others to see him.

The individual's moral evaluation of events in his home, the community, and the country are considered to be his attitudes which help to shape his behavior. This study is concerned with two categories of attitudes: positive and negative attitudes. The positive attitude is when the individual aligns himself with the traditional belief in the "Golden Rule" aspect of life. He has regards for the rights and property of others. The negative attitude is best described with the individual who is concerned with himself and his own benefits first without regards for the discomfort of others. This person regards the value he is to receive from an act before he considers the moral obligation he has to others.

It would be difficult to make any type of study that takes into consideration the sociological makeup of a community without including a scale of social classes. For the purpose of this study, a distinct social scale for this studied community had to be devised to aid the writer. The following is the social scale used in this study:

Lower Class: The employee whose total family income is below \$7,000 per year, an unskilled laborer, and one who possesses less than a high school education.

Middle Class: The employee who has a total family income between \$7,000 and \$15,000 per year. He is either semi-skilled or skilled in labor, and possesses some high school education or a higher education.

Upper Class: The professionals; doctors, lawyers, educators, business managers, and other persons possessing college educations, and family incomes of \$10,000 to \$20,000 per year and above.

It is conceivable that all the terms used in this study are not included in this section; however, those mentioned on the aforementioned pages represent terms that are not of common usage outside the realm of labor and sociological studies.

IV. ORGANIZATION OF THE REMAINDER OF THESIS

The writer has, thus far, discussed the purpose, the need, the methodology, and the terms used in a study of this type. In an effort to understand the direction taken in the remainder of this thesis, the writer offers a preview of the remaining chapters.

Chapter II of this study is concerned with a review of literature dealing with the problems of industrial thefts, employee problems in society, and employee problems in their place of employment. This section provides the reader with a candid resume of findings in related studies that pertain to this thesis. Also, it shows how the authors of these

reported studies approached problems which are quite similar to those being studied by this writer.

Chapter III contains the survey and its analysis. In this chapter, the writer presents the data collected from the interviews and through the use of charts and graphs attempted to show the relationship of the data, and the variables in this study.

Chapter IV devotes itself to the summary and conclusions of the study. In this section the hypothesis is again tested to show whether it has been supported or refuted. Also, statements are made as to whether there is need for further research on this particular subject of attitudes towards industrial thefts.

Following the aforementioned chapters, a section will be devoted to the bibliography and the appendix. The bibliography will be devoted to the resources and material from which this writer withdrew some of his information. In the section titled Appendix, the writer inserted samples of the interview and recording instrument.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

One of the basic principles of research is that of reviewing literature that is related to the proposed study of the writer. The necessity of review is for the purpose of gaining significant information pertaining to the topic, determining what has already been done in this area of interest, and serving as a source from which the writer may draw the needed information. The writer presents in this chapter a resume of significant studies made by authors of previous studies on the subject of attitudes and internal thefts from business and industries.

The problem of internal theft has been the subject of several studies made by sociologists, security experts, and insurance companies and is primarily centered around the incidences as they occur in the white collar level of employment. Selections are made in this chapter to studies which relate to the attitudes and behavior of employees involved in internal theft.

I. UNDERLYING FACTORS INFLUENCING EMPLOYEE THEFTS

Employee dishonesty, as viewed by John R. Davis, is basically the result of the industrial firm's apathy towards

proper plant protection. In his book, Davis states that the industrial firm shares some guilt in employee thefts by their failing to minimize temptations to the employee through stronger methods and tighter inventory controls. His book primarily deals with methods of security and control, rather than one which is a study of behavior and attitudes.¹⁶

William F. Whyte presented in his study a sociological view of the industrial employee, and their relationship to the community. He relied heavily upon status consciousness of the employee as the primary motivation factor which develops the positive or negative behavior. Job prestige, aspirations, loss of status, and other society orientated values govern the employee's attitude and behavior both at work and at home.¹⁷

The most important phase of Whyte's book, as related to this study, is the emphasis placed upon the deterioration of the worker's status, his loss of prestige, and the frustrations he has encountered. The solution to the problems, in this studied community, resulted in the employee turning to the unions as compensation for their losses and anxieties. If the study were carried further, it is quite possible that

¹⁶John R. Davis, Industrial Plant Protection (Springfield: C. C. Thomas Co., 1957).

¹⁷William F. Whyte, Industry and Society (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1946), p. 143.

the author may have learned much about the relationship of these anxieties to industrial thefts.¹⁸

Ely Chinoy found that employees in the non-skilled production jobs, who have reached the low wage ceiling at the top of the hierarchy of desirability, may be satisfied with what they have achieved or, alternately, they may become very bitter and frustrated because of their inability to go further. Of those who found some satisfaction, some found it in the fact that they have obtained enough seniority to assure them of a job until their retirement. Others had no particular goals other than a steady wage, job, and retirement. The younger and better educated worker with little seniority is characteristic of the frustrated worker. Those of the older group who were frustrated are those who still cling to the American dream of finding success on their own outside the factory in such ventures as their own business. Even so, such dreams are for the benefit of their fellow workers who bestow admiration upon them for possessing the "dream." To the dreamer, he knows that he is married to the low paying, low prestige, non-skilled job.¹⁹

American culture encourages men to seek both occupational advancement and the acquisition of material possessions. Workers who respond to both of these abominations

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ely Chinoy, Automobile Worker And The American Dream (Garden City, New Jersey: Doubleday Co., 1955), pp. 79-80.

use the second to rationalize their failure to achieve the first. As long as possessions continue to pile up, the worker can feel that he is moving forward; as long as his wants do not give out he can feel that he is ambitious.²⁰

Workers may also attempt to cushion the impact of failure and to maintain an identification with the traditional belief of opportunity by projecting their unfulfilled ambitions upon their children--their extended ego, as it were. The hope that one's child may succeed where one has failed may make that personal failure seem less important; ambitions for a child may substitute for ambition for one's self.²¹

The concern with immediate gratifications unrelated to one's occupation is encouraged by prevalent values in American society. Commercial advertising incessantly stimulates the desire for things which are immediately available on the installment plan, if necessary. Together with movies, radio, television, and magazines, advertising sets up attractive, and expensive, models of leisure and recreation, and the models have become increasingly important as American culture has shifted from a central concern with the values of production to the values of consumption.²²

²⁰Ibid., p. 126.

²¹Ibid., p. 126.

²²David Riesman, The Lonely Crowd (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), p. 144.

Many of the automobile workers, because of the small down-payments they have for home purchasing, focussed some of their most deeply held sentiments on home ownership. They have also given home ownership an important role in their definition of advancement and "getting ahead."²³

C. Wright Mills approached the problem of wage earners versus frustration by studying the effects of dwindling prestige of the white collar worker and the increased prestige of the hourly rated worker. Prior to World War II, the white collar worker enjoyed a great amount of prestige through wages, position, both socially and at work, and education. Today, this prestige has dwindled greatly due to wage equalization for the hourly rated worker, and the need for more education in the non-white collared occupations. These factors, in turn, are geared to societies' concern with the individual's ability to buy luxuries and other tangible articles of success, rather than the intangible articles of position, education, and admiration.²⁴

Another aspect to be concerned with in the study of human behavior are the basic trends in society that creates the feeling of success or defeat in the individual. Aspirations are one of the primary factors that set the "pace" of the individual. Levels of aspiration are primarily based

²³C. R. Walker, The Man On The Assembly Line (Oxford University Press, 1952), pp. 118-119.

²⁴C. Wright Mills, White Collar (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 74.

upon the family influence through occupational stratas. In a reasonable family atmosphere, the children will strive to equal the parent's occupation or those occupations rated above them. Accepting occupations rated lower than the parent is an indication that the family has unresolved problems.²⁵

Mobility and aspirations are related to the age factor of the individual in industry more than any other occupational field in the country. The individual is graded heavily on his age regardless of his seniority in the trade. Even if the older employee has attained the same educational and experience level as a younger man in the same field of employment, the present day trend is to up-grade the younger man in the belief that the younger man will be of greater value to the particular industry over a longer period of time. Age also plays a great part in the individual's sense of reality towards attaining certain goals in life.²⁶

Sometime within the next twenty years sixty million Americans in several hundred occupations will find their work changing radically. Some jobs will disappear sooner, and some a little later, but the work of everyone of these employees is practically certain to be obsolete within the

²⁵Thomas W. Harrell, Industrial Psychology (New York: Rinehart and Co., 1949), p. 52.

²⁶D. Anderson and P. Davidson, Recent Occupational Trends In American Labor (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1945), p. 52.

next generation. Incredibly complicated new machines are taking over the work not merely of the unskilled worker, but also the semi-skilled and the skilled worker.²⁷ What will happen to the people now holding the "doomed" jobs? Some, of course, will reach normal retirement before they are consumed by the new advancements, but there are many who have neither the resources nor the background to avert the oncoming frustrations that are associated with this phenomena. Invariably, some of the frustrated employees will choose a form of crime to offset this unavoidable problem.

II. SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL FACTORS INFLUENCING WHITE COLLAR CRIMES

Edwin H. Sutherland, in his book "White Collar Crime," points out that there is a prevailing attitude of "Double Standards" in dealing with crimes committed among persons on the lower socio-economic level and those on the upper socio-economic level. He states that "criminal statistics show unequivocally that crime, as popularly conceived and officially measured, has a high incidence in the lower class and a low incidence in the upper class; less than two percent of the persons committed to prisons in a year belong to the upper class."²⁸

²⁷Michigan Employment Security Commission, When Will Your Husband Be Obsolete?, A Report Prepared by The Michigan Employment Security Commission. Detroit: 1964.

²⁸Edwin H. Sutherland, White Collar Crime (New York: The Dryden Press, 1949), p. 3.

Sutherland devoted his book primarily to showing the incidence of crime on the level of high finance by persons regarded in the community as respectable citizens, financial wizards, pillars of the community, and out political representatives, and how they classify their attitudes outside the rigid code of criminality. "White collar criminality in business is expressed most frequently in the form of misrepresentation through financial statements of the company, manipulation in the stock exchange, commercial bribery, bribery of public officials, directly or indirectly, in order to secure favorable contracts and legislation . . ." "These varied types of white collar crimes in business and the professions consist principally of violation of delegated or implied trust, and many of them can be reduced to two categories: misrepresentation of asset values and duplicity in the manipulation of power."²⁹

Sutherland's book and article deal very little with attitude studies of the various skilled employees in the industrial setting. He does, however, give the reader a view of the white collar criminality and why it is not regarded as being a crime as serious in nature as those crimes among the lower socio-economic level. Too many times when one speaks of crime and its causation the first thought turns to the lower socio-economic level and cites the numerous factors

²⁹ Edwin H. Sutherland, "White Collar Criminality," American Sociological Review, Vol. V (February, 1940), p. 3.

that are present which gives rise to its prevalence on this level. Also, how the crimes of the lower group are costing the country so much money each year. Sutherland points out, in dollar and cents measures, the annual cost of crimes among the white collar group and how it far exceeds the annual cost of the lower socio-economic group.³⁰

The theory of Differential Association is the basis for Sutherland's study. He found that the problem lies more in the interpretation of crime than it does in its frequency. "Differential Association is that criminal behavior is learned in association with those who define such behavior favorably and in isolation from those who define it unfavorably, and that a person in an appropriate situation engages in such criminal behavior if, and only if, the weight of the favorable definitions exceeds the weight of the unfavorable definitions."³¹

The basic reasons for committing crimes on the white collar level may differ greatly from those of the hourly rated blue collar worker, but one thing they do have in common is that their problem is not of the nature that they can reveal it to their fellow employees.

Donald R. Cressey views the problem of white collar crimes similar to that of Sutherland; however, Cressey

³⁰Ibid., pp. 3-4.

³¹Ibid., p. 4.

delves into the attitude of the violator as the basis for his conclusions. Not only does he feel that white collar crimes receive less public scorn and denunciation than does the same crimes of the lower socio-economic class, but also the same set of factors lend itself to crime causation among the white collar workers.

Embezzlement and trust violations, and the study of attitudes is the basic theme of Cressey's study. He conducted his study among inmates of the Illinois State Reformatory at Joliet, Illinois. These inmates had been sentenced to prison for their violations of trust. Cressey based his study on the theory that trust violations are compulsive crimes prompted by the uncontrollable compulsion of a person's will, judgement, and ego. Role playing in life is a primary example of this compulsiveness. The individual acts out the part in life he desires being identified with; however, his subdued emotions will not allow him to enter the role completely due to such factors as the lack of finances. In an effort to protect his ego, his assumed position, and to continue his role, he turns to trust violations for financial support.³²

The trust violator, in addition to his compulsive nature, must in turn minimize the seriousness of his act by assigning his own tailored definitions to the crime. First,

³²Donald R. Cressey, "The Criminal Violation Of Financial Trust," American Sociological Review, Vol. XV (December, 1950), pp. 739-743.

he does not regard his act as a crime, or at least as a crime as defined by statute, then secondly he views his act as only a momentary disruption to his company and that his company will in turn profit from his act. The inmates, however, expressed the idea that they knew the behavior to be illegal and wrong at all times and that they merely "kidded themselves" into thinking that it was not illegal.³³

Trusted persons become trust violators when they conceive of themselves as having a financial problem which is non-shareable, are aware that this problem can be secretly resolved by the violation of the position of financial trust, and are able to apply to their own concept of themselves as users of entrusted funds or property.³⁴ Some of the inmates interviewed at the prison stated that they had no financial emergency in their case, which seems to be the basis for financial trust violations, and a few explained their behavior in terms of antagonistic attitudes towards the employer or feeling of being abused, underpaid, or discriminated against in some way.³⁵

Shame and false pride are the bases for the majority of trust violations as recorded by Cressey from interviews

³³Ibid., p. 741.

³⁴Donald R. Cressey, Other People's Money (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1953), pp. 38-62.

³⁵Cressey, op. cit., p. 741.

for his study of crime causations among white collar workers in trusted positions. Such factors as these may well be construed to be basic factors for crimes among the blue collar workers.

Norman Jaspan cites several factors that are necessary for the employee to misuse funds entrusted to him; the opportunity, the technical knowledge, the economic need, and most of all, the ability to overcome his own conscience by some rationalization as thinking that the money is only borrowed, and he will, in due time, repay it. This attitude of the defaulter has minimized in his own mind the seriousness of the act and placed it on a level of social acceptability.³⁶

Jaspan further states that not all acts against the company are for the profit of the employee. He cites examples of how the desire to help others was the basis for an employee defaulting the company; the employee's need to be identified with charity, search for love and security, and other "romantic" motivations.³⁷ A similar study made during the post-World War II period (1947-1949) shows that living beyond their means, gambling, and the criminal nature of the individual as being the most frequent causes for embezzlement among men. Living beyond their means, and family expenses

³⁶Norman Jaspan, The Thief in the White Collar (New York: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1960), pp. 233-245.

³⁷Ibid., p. 60.

are rated highest among women who embezzle. This article further shows that the incidence of embezzlement among women is most frequent with the single woman, whereas the married man is the most frequent violator among the male embezzlers.³⁸

Reviewing of the literature revealed the lack of material written that deals primarily with the theft attitudes of the blue collar worker, or in the terms of this study, the hourly rated worker. The basic purpose of this study is to focus attention to the neglected areas of theft attitudes among the hourly rated employee.

³⁸Embezzlers: A Post War Study of Defalcations in Business, 1947-1949, Maryland: United States Fidelity and Guaranty Company, 1950, pp. 20-24.

CHAPTER III

THE ATTITUDE SURVEY AND ITS ANALYSIS

The question now arises as to what the writer has accomplished through the research method used in this study. The human being is a highly complex and unpredictable subject to study regardless of the care in preparation of the testing situation. Because of this unpredictability, the results will, in some way, defy your predictions. This study is no different in obtaining the results; it presented a challenge, the writer accepted the challenge, it was studied and tested with the results indicating that a further study is needed in this area of interest. Anyone who studies the human being should not feel that his particular study is the final answer to that particular problem. The one thing that can be hoped for in this study is that a problem be brought into focus to cast some light for future additional study into this area of interest. On that basis, this writer hopes that this study will fulfill its obligation.

I. SUMMARY OF COLLECTED DATA

In order to test this hypothesis the writer made a study of the attitudes of industrial employees in Saginaw, Michigan towards theft from industrial plants.

The writer hypothesized that the skilled employee who is confronted with frustrating situations related to his job is more likely to have a more tolerant attitude towards theft than the lesser skilled employee who is confronted with similar frustrations. The results of this study are summarized in this and the following chapter.

There were sixty male employees completing interviews and questionnaires for the study of the original one hundred-seven that started. Those employees who failed to complete the study did not do so for various reasons such as; promotions to salary jobs, disinterest in the study, quitting their job, etc. Fifty-six of the employees were married, three single, and one divorced. No employee reported that he was a widower. Some of the married employees indicated dissatisfaction with the present state of their marriage; however, this was not recorded as a part of the study.

The respondents were divided into three categories of skills: Unskilled, semi-skilled, and skilled. Seventeen of the employees were unskilled workers, twenty were semi-skilled, and twenty-three reported being skilled laborers. The age spread of the respondents, as shown on Table I, shows the greatest concentration of respondents in the age groups of thirty to forty years of age and fifty to sixty years of age. The remainder of the group spread, twenty-eight to sixty-five, was represented but showed less concentration.

Most of the respondents to questions #1, 2, and 3 of the interview guide showed that their desires were commensurate with the social trends in the Saginaw area: a modest home, a small boat for recreation, and a cottage for retreat during the hot summer months. In most instances, the respondents had two of the three desired possessions; only in rare instances did an employee possess all three.

The educational background of the respondents ranged from elementary school through college. Eight of the respondents had less than an eight grade education, twenty had between an eight grade and twelfth grade education, and twenty-nine were high school graduates. One respondent had one year of college and two possessed college degrees.

One of the college graduates is listed as an unskilled laborer. This employee received a B.S. degree several years ago in his native Germany. When he came to this country in 1950, he was confronted with anti-German attitudes when he attempted to apply for a teaching position in one of the neighboring states. Because of this, he came to Saginaw seeking employment to raise his family in a decent manner. Since that time, he has gained a certain amount of seniority and security in his present occupation, and because of his age he feels that to take advantage of his education would jeopardize his security.

The other employee who listed his educational achievement as being a college graduate is a semi-skilled

worker. He listed his reasons for not pursuing a more professional level of work as follows: the teaching field does not offer the monetary gains which are found in industry, nor would he be able to withstand the reduction in salary necessary for returning to the teaching field. He further stated that there is more occupational challenge in dealing with manufactured products than there is in dealing with children.

TABLE I

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AGE AND MARITAL STATUS

Age Group	Age Distribution	Married	Single	Divorced	Widow
28-29	3	2	1	0	0
30-39	24	23	0	1	0
40-49	15	15	0	0	0
50-59	17	14	3	0	0
60-65	1	1	0	0	0
Total	60	55	4	1	0

TABLE II
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AGE AND SKILLS

Age Group	Skilled	Semi-Skilled	Un-Skilled
28-29	2	1	0
30-39	12	9	3
40-49	3	6	6
50-59	5	4	8
60-65	1	0	0
Total	23	20	17

TABLE III
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AGE AND
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Age Group	Grades 1 to 8	Grades 8 to 12	High School Graduate	Some College	College Graduate
28-29	0	0	3	0	0
30-39	0	3	20	1	0
40-49	2	9	3	0	1
50-59	6	7	3	0	1
60-65	0	1	0	0	0
Total	8	20	29	1	2

The average annual income of the workers in this study is between eight and ten thousand dollars per year. The average family income for employees in the automobile industries in the city of Saginaw for the year of 1963 was between seven thousand-five hundred and eight thousand dollars. This high range of income for these workers is primarily due to the considerable amount of overtime they worked during the year; as well as the past three years.³⁹ The skilled employees interviewed reported their annual income to range between ten and twelve thousand dollars for the year of 1963. These figures and subsequent figures are based upon the excessive amount of overtime worked for the year. The semi-skilled employees reported their annual income would fall within the range of eight to ten thousand dollars per year, with the average being near the nine thousand dollar per year mark. The unskilled employees reported that their average annual earnings fell within the six to eight thousand dollar per year range with the mean being seven thousand dollars. It should be noted that fifty-four of the sixty employees interviewed stated that they were the only member of the family employed outside of the home. Of the remaining six employees interviewed, one unskilled employee reported that his wife was employed outside the home in a clerical position. Two semi-skilled employees reported their wives

³⁹Michigan Employment Security Commission, loc. cit.

working outside the home; one as a clerk, and the other as a registered nurse.

Three of the skilled employees interviewed stated that their wives worked outside the home. Two of the employees' wives are school teachers, and one of the wives is employed in a clerical position. The reported income of the employees with wives working outside the home range from ten thousand to fifteen thousand dollars per year; ten to twelve thousand dollars per year for the one unskilled worker and two of the semi-skilled workers, and twelve to fifteen thousand dollars per year for the skilled employee.

TABLE IV
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SKILLS AND INCOME

Wage Range (Dollars)	Unskilled	Semi-Skilled	Skilled
4,000 - 6,000	0	0	0
6,000 - 8,000	7	2	0
8,000 - 10,000	8	15	8
10,000 - 12,000	1	2	12
12,000 - 15,000	1	1	3
15,000 or More	0	0	0
Total	17	20	23

The large annual income is the basis for the writer making the statement that one of the shortcomings of this study is that these employees have been enjoying better than average success for the past three years. This is primarily due to the automobile market, and its influence on the industrial plants in the city of Saginaw, Michigan.

Employee aspirations were determined by their responses to interview questions concerning their self appraisal, social life, associates, occupational desires, and educational philosophies. One of the most interesting questions was that which asked if the respondent belonged to any social organizations, and why he does or does not belong to any. Responses to the question indicated that thirty-eight employees belong to some social organization or are members of social organizations. The remaining twenty-two did not belong to any organization other than the basic group such as the church, union, and a recreation team. Those employees belonging to some social organization stated that their reasons range from the desire for associating with others with similar likes to those who belong for the sole purpose of making the "right connections" for getting ahead. Four of the employees who stated that their desire for belonging to an organization was for making the "right connection" are members of country clubs (one semi-skilled and three skilled employees).

Aspirations were determined on the basis of the employee's purpose for joining his social organization: whether it was for the purpose of status and personal gains (unreasonable aspirations) or the desire for social intercourse through the exchange of similar likes and interests with others (reasonable aspirations). Results of this question show that six unskilled employees indicated that their reasons were of reasonable aspirations, while one was unreasonable in purpose. In the writer's opinion, further results indicated that seven semi-skilled employees had purposes that were reasonable, while six were unreasonable. Seven of the skilled employees had reasonable desires, and eleven had unreasonable desires.

Those employees stating that they did not belong to any social organizations other than the basic group indicated various reasons for not doing so, but in the writer's opinion the answers were not conclusive enough to measure.

TABLE V
MEMBERSHIP IN SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS

Employee Skills	Yes	No	Reasonable Aspirations (Employees Answering YES)	Unreasonable Aspirations
Unskilled	7	10	6	1
Semi-skilled	13	7	7	6
Skilled	18	5	7	11
Total	38	22	20	18

A question regarding the individual employee's self evaluation was asked to determine how he placed himself on the social ladder as he understands its function. Most of the respondents placed themselves on the scale based on their gross annual income. Two unskilled employees placed themselves on the lower class level, eight on the working class level, and seven on the middle class level. The semi-skilled employees did not conceive of themselves on the lower class level, but eight of the employees indicated that they were of the working class, and twelve of the employees viewed themselves as being of the middle class.

Five skilled employees placed themselves in the working class while eighteen skilled employees placed themselves in the middle class. Most employees used the rank of "working class," in the writer's opinion, to show that they regarded this category as the most honorable and yet not degrading to their self-image. This question did not elicit the desired results for the study, because such factors as the employees' annual income, home, and labor skills would place them in the middle class of social ranking. Answers to this question did, however, give the writer a basis for judgments useful in the remainder of the individuals' interviews.

The questions concerned with the employee's attitude towards the importance of education revealed that most of the interviewees held similar opinions: the educational

attainment level next above their own attainment level was the amount of education needed to "get ahead" in their plant. Twenty-nine of the respondents indicated that a high school education was sufficient, while twenty-six respondents stated that for success in their occupation a college education was the most desired.

All but three of the respondents desired their children an opportunity for a college education. The reasoning was based on the premise that the children would have a better opportunity in life and more security. Eighteen of the respondents stated that they wanted their children to be either doctors or lawyers, and five respondents wanted their children to be engineers. The basis for choosing these exact professions for their children arises from the parent's desire to see the children pursue the profession the parents would pursue if they had their lives to live over. Of the three respondents that had little regard for education, one felt that there was too much sex in college to which their children would be exposed. One felt that children could eventually make a good living without the added formal education. The other respondent flatly stated that any education beyond that which was supported locally was just a waste of money. In this writer's opinion, the latter three respondents represented the extreme response to the education questions.

Job aspirations of the respondents remained within a reasonable distance from their present occupations; however, the selection of their goals, in this writer's opinion, is unrealistic in the majority of cases. Most of the respondents aspired to higher positions within their own departments and skills; seventeen of them aspired to positions outside their normal skills and departments. Of those employees who were seemingly unreasonable in their desires, six employees desired becoming either a General Foreman or the Plant Manager; of these, three were unskilled, one was semi-skilled, and two were skilled employees.

Question #7 of the interview sheet was basically a question concerned with the individual's self-evaluation of his worth and the importance of his job. Thirty-nine of the respondents replied that if they were offered jobs in other industries or plants their asking salary would depend upon what additional benefits they would gain above what they presently had. The general consensus, in this writer's opinion, is that the employees would not ask much more than their present salary or wages; however, twenty-seven employees had the tendency to ask for salaries that were not commensurate with their skills. Nine of these employees seemed quite unreasonable in the salaries desired.

Question #11 was asked of the respondents to ascertain the validity of a statement made by Thomas W. Harrell, author of the book "Industrial Psychology." He stated, in

part, "that in a reasonable family atmosphere, the children will strive to equal the parent's occupation or those occupations rated above them."⁴⁰ The results of this question indicated that most employees did have occupations equal to or above those of their fathers.

TABLE VI
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMPLOYEE'S AND
FATHER'S OCCUPATIONS

Tested Employee's Occupational Level	Below	Father's Occupation Equal	Above
Unskilled	7	8	2
Semi-skilled	3	4	13
Skilled	4	6	12

During the course of the interview, the writer injected five questions that dealt specifically with the employee's attitude towards theft. The employee's answer to the question was classified, in the writer's opinion, into two categories: positive attitude or negative attitude. In the first question, any answer that indicated that the employee would have unquestionably returned the money or sought proper means to return the money to the owner would have been a positive attitude. Any answer that would have indicated

⁴⁰Harrell, loc. cit.

the employee would attempt to derive some benefit from the money at the owner's expense would have been classified as a negative attitude. The question dealt with a hypothetical situation in which the employee found two hundred-thousand dollars in small bills that were not traceable. At this point the interviewer stopped the question to allow the respondent an opportunity to ponder the situation. The question was continued by stating that the finder, in real life, returned the money to the owner. The question was continued by stating that the man who returned the money had since been criticized and ridiculed by people throughout the country for not keeping the money on the principle of "finders-keepers" reasoning.

Following the question, the interviewer immediately asked the interviewee his reaction to the story, and what would he do in a similar situation. Results of this question revealed that eighteen of the employees interviewed expressed a positive attitude towards a solution to the problem. The remaining forty-five expressed a negative attitude towards the problem.

Two of the five questions concerned with theft attitudes failed to give any measurable results and were therefore discarded from the study.

TABLE VII
DISTRIBUTION OF ATTITUDES REGARDING
FINDING A LARGE SUM OF MONEY

Age Group	Unskilled	Semi-skilled	Skilled	Pos. ^a	Neg. ^a
28-29	0	1	2	1	2
30-39	3	9	12	4	20
40-49	6	6	3	2	13
50-59	8	4	5	5	9
60-65	0	0	1	0	1
Total ^b	17	20	23	12	45

^aBased on the opinion of the writer.

^bThree employees did not give an opinion to this question.

A second question was asked concerning the attitude of the interviewees towards a theft incident from an industrial plant. An employee was apprehended while attempting to take a small fire extinguisher from the plant for his personal use and was subsequently fired from his job. An emotional appeal was interjected in the question, concerning the apprehended employee's phobic fear of fire in his home, to minimize the emphasis placed on theft. Twenty-two employees replied that the act of theft was still wrong regardless of the questioned employee's fears. The remaining

thirty-eight gave responses that supported the questioned employee and felt that the penalty was too severe. The interviewees who supported the apprehended employee did not do so on the basis of his fears, but on the basis that the fire extinguisher was such a small article to carry such a severe penalty. It was stated that a lesser penalty would have served the purpose.

The third question that dealt directly with the theft attitude of the employee was concerned with the employee's own evaluation as to what was the most serious "shop rule" an employee could break within the plant. The interviewee was given seven shop rules that had the same penalty in all the plants from which interviewees were selected, and had penalties that ranged from a three day disciplinary lay-off to an immediate discharge. The most serious offense was that of taking scrap material from the plant, which was regarded as a theft and carried a penalty of immediate discharge. Intentional poor workmanship, drinking on the job, and fighting in the plant were the next most serious offenses. The remaining offenses had lesser penalties and were not considered too serious.

In response to the theft attitude question, thirty of the sixty interviewed employees indicated that drinking on the job was the most serious offense. Twenty of the interviewees indicated that refusing to obey orders was the most serious, while the remaining four interviewees stated

that fighting in the plant was the most serious. Following the interviews, the writer found through tabulation that none of the employees had regarded the issue of taking scrap material from the plant as a serious offense, or one with a serious penalty. The writer returned to each interviewee and asked why he had not considered that answer as one of the more serious offenses. Most of the interviewees replied that their plant was not definite in their regulations regarding scrap material, and that some scrap could be taken with the blessings of the supervisor and resulted in no penalty. Others replied that they continued to feel that fighting in the plant, drinking on the job, and refusing to obey orders were the most serious offenses an employee could commit of the selections offered in the questionnaire. These responses were obtained in an unstructured interview, and therefore, are not recorded as resulting from the questionnaire.

The remaining questions asked in the interview guide and questionnaire were for the purpose of obtaining information from the interviewee, and for the purpose of setting a positive atmosphere for the interview situation.

TABLE VIII
DISTRIBUTION OF ATTITUDES REGARDING
A STOLEN FIRE EXTINGUISHER

Employee Skills	Positive Attitude	Negative Attitude
Unskilled	8	9
Semi-skilled	7	13
Skilled	7	16
Total	22	38

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The writer has thus far attempted to present a study to the reader that concerns itself with the attitude of employees of industrial plants towards theft from their place of employment. It has also been the purpose of this study to show the relationship of employee theft attitudes to the employee's age, skill, education, and social pressures.

The interviewed employees did not follow a predictable pattern in their responses to the interview questions. In many instances the data supported the fact that the human being is a very delicate subject to study and understand, and quite difficult to predict. It is difficult to ascertain the measurement of job frustration during a period of time when employees in the enterprises studied are enjoying a better than average employment picture, with resulting steady work, better-than-average promotional potentials, expansion of job opportunities, and above-average annual incomes.

Along with the better-than-average annual income, the employees studied have been able to purchase the social status symbols and participate in activities he would not at other times have been able to afford. The employment picture

has presented a better-than-average opportunity for all employees, in the enterprises studied, to hold respectable jobs regardless of their educational limitations. Only in rare occasions in this study did we find an employee striving for a position that is beyond his skill and educational capabilities.

It is this author's opinion that the data collected in this study did not reveal the interviewed employee's true attitude towards theft. In many instances the negative answer was more related to work fatigue than it was to the social or moral aspect of the question. An example of this is the response given to the question regarding the lost money. It is this writer's opinion that the negative answers were related to the desire for a good vacation more so than the intent to violate a moral code.

This study did, however, reveal that the age group, 30-39 years of age, was most likely to have negative attitudes towards theft regardless of the employee's skill. Also, that the skilled employee was most apt to reply with a tolerant attitude towards theft than employees of the semi-skilled and unskilled groups. One factor that was not measurable but was observed by the writer was the speed in which the skilled employee answered the questions regarding theft; little time was given to thought before giving the answer.

This writer found support for his hypotheses that skilled employees are more tolerant of theft from the industrial plant than employees in the two lesser skills. However, it cannot be concluded from the data available that this attitude is related to job frustration, age, education, and social pressures. It is this writer's opinion that this attitude is, in some way, related to the security the skilled employee finds in his job. The skilled employee who is occasionally praised by his supervisor or has been led to believe that he and his job is necessary to company operations appear least likely to regard theft with a tolerant attitude.

I. NEED FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The results of this study revealed a need for better control of variables that effect the attitudes of the employee and his answers. When employees are enjoying full employment, their attitudes are likely to be optimistic. When the employment picture is doubtful, the employee's attitude is subject to pessimism. Some of the more fruitful lines of inquiry other researchers may follow in future studies of employee attitudes may be along the line of a more scientifically developed measuring instrument, conducting interviews over a short period of time, probing the interviewee for information regarding his beliefs in such areas as religion, prejudices, and the economy of the United

States. Such information derived from these areas may result in a more conclusive study of employee attitudes towards theft.

Future efforts to control a serious problem such as industrial theft may be aided by a more definitive study of the attitudes of employees.

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APPENDIX

The questions appearing on this sheet are for Research purposes only.

DIRECTIONS:

Please do not put your name or other identifying marks on this paper.

Read each of the following questions carefully.

Mark an (X) before each statement that best describes your answer. Example: Which season of the year do you like best?

- ☐ Fall
- ☐ Winter
- ☐ Summer
- ☐ Spring

Please feel free to ask any questions about the questionnaire.

Start when you are ready.

1. What is your marital status?

- ☐ Married
- ☐ Single
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐ Widowed

2. How far did you go in school?

- ☐ Between 1st and 8th grades
- ☐ Between 8th and 12th grades
- ☐ High school graduate
- ☐ Some college
- ☐ College graduate

3. Did you complete a trade school program or in-service training program?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

4. Your home:

☐ Buying

☐ Own

☐ Renting

☐ Sharing it with someone

5. Does your wife work outside the home?

☐ Yes If yes, type of work _____

☐ No

6. Do you enjoy living in your present neighborhood?

☐ Yes

☐ No

7. In which age group do you feel there is more crime in Saginaw?

☐ 12 to 16 year olds

☐ 16 to 21 year olds

☐ 21 to 30 year olds

☐ 30 to 45 year olds

☐ 45 to 60 year olds

8. Which one of the following social classes best describe your family?

☐ Upper class

☐ Lower class

☐ Working class

☐ Middle class

9. Which of the following categories best describes your annual income?
- ☐ \$4,000 to \$6,000
 - ☐ \$6,000 to \$8,000
 - ☐ \$8,000 to \$10,000
 - ☐ \$10,000 to \$12,000
 - ☐ \$12,000 to \$15,000
 - ☐ \$15,000 or above
10. In your plant, which of the following is the most serious shop rule to break?
- ☐ Fighting in the plant
 - ☐ Refusing to obey orders
 - ☐ Taking scrap material from the plant
 - ☐ Loafing
 - ☐ Being absent too often
 - ☐ Drinking on the job
 - ☐ Intentional poor workmanship
11. What is your father's occupation?
- _____
12. What are the occupations of your three closest friends?
- _____
- _____
- _____

INTERVIEW GUIDE

The following questions were used in the open-end discussion interview. These questions are categorized to show their relationship and importance to the total study.

Questions to determine Reasonable or Unreasonable aspirations.

1. What is your opinion regarding owning a home versus renting a home?
 - a. Security reasons are reasonable aspirations.
 - b. Indication of show, pace, or class consciousness is of unreasonable aspirations.
2. Do you own a cottage? Describe it.
3. Do you have a boat? Describe it.
4. Are you a member of any organizations other than church or unions?
5. What interested you in these organizations?
6. Does your foreman or any executive from your company belong to your organization?

(Questions 4 through 6 are asked to determine the social levels with which the interviewee aspires to associate)

7. If you were offered a job in another plant, what would be the minimum salary you would ask for?

(How realistic is he of his worth to the industry)

8. Are you satisfied with your present wages?

(What does it take to satisfy him with what he has to offer)

9. How much education do you feel is needed to get "ahead" in your plant?

(To determine how well he may accept any educational short-comings he may have in reference to job aspirations)

10. According to your education, how far up "the ladder" do you feel you can go in your plant?

(A check question to the previous question)

11. If you were to send your child or children to college, which college would you send them to and why?

(Check question to questions #9 and #10, and also to check for prestige versus education desires)

12. What kind of future would you want for your children?

(Personal aspirations are many times expressed through the goals for their children)

13. What job or position would you like most to have in your plant?

(To determine reality of his goals and check questions for questions #7 and #10)

14. What do you feel would hinder your chances of getting this job or position?

(To determine how realistic are his aspirations)

Questions to determine theft attitudes.

1. About two years ago in Los Angeles, a man found a bag of money (\$200,000.) which had dropped from a Brinks

Armored truck. These bills were all small and non-traceable. This man returned the money to the company. Since that time, this man has been condemned by many people for returning the money and has suffered bad health and ridicule from many people. What would you have done if this had happened to you?

(Positive: any answer that would indicate an unquestionable return of the money. Negative: any answer that would indicate getting some benefit from it.)

2. Occasionally people receive income tax refund checks for sums many times more than what they would ordinarily receive. If this happened to you, what would be your first reaction?

(Positive: anger that the true amount would be even later returning. Negative: a strong desire to keep it, or a desire for a law that would allow them to do so.)

3. If there were a law that the error could not be held against you, what would you do with the check?

(Question of the returning of the check or keeping it.)

4. Recently at one of the plants, an employee was caught taking a fire extinguisher from the plant to use in his home. He later explained that he had a terrible fear of home fires and felt that by having one of the many small extinguishers he could feel more at ease at home. He

was fired from his job. What do you feel that the
company should have done?

(Positive: agree with the original disposition. Negative:
If there is a feeling that the penalty should be minimized)

5. Are you aware of any similar cases like the one above?

(A check question for question #4)

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