

Job pride and work orientation among blue-collar workers in the Finnish vehicle industry

Job pride and
work
orientation

Tuija Koivunen, Pasi Pyöriä and Tiina Saari

Faculty of Social Sciences, Tampere University, Tampere, Finland

229

Received 12 April 2023
Revised 27 June 2023
28 August 2023
Accepted 28 August 2023

Abstract

Purpose – Although the number of blue-collar industrial workers has been declining, manufacturing jobs continue to have considerable importance, even in technologically advanced economies. This study gives a voice to this often-overlooked group of workers, focusing on the Finnish vehicle industry.

Design/methodology/approach – The study assessed how manual workers in automotive manufacturing describe their job pride and how their accounts were related to conceptualizations of work orientation. The data included semi-structured interviews and an open-ended survey question on situations in which the respondents had felt proud of their work. The data were analysed using thematic analysis.

Findings – According to the results, the respondents had a high level of job pride in general, but the meaning given to this attitude varied considerably, depending on the situation. The study participants' work orientation was a mixture of instrumental and intrinsic traits. However, there were also respondents who did not experience job pride or who had lost it because of the work circumstances.

Originality/value – Relatively little research has assessed the importance of job pride in the context of industrial manufacturing. Recognizing job pride in its variety is crucial information for employers who aim to develop working conditions and employee retention.

Keywords Assembly line, Automotive manufacturing, Blue-collar work, Job pride, Manual work, Skill, Vehicle industry, Work orientation

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Automotive manufacturing has been widely studied from organizational and managerial perspectives (Nieuwenhuis and Wells, 2015; Pardi, 2021; Sturgeon *et al.*, 2009; Womack *et al.*, 2007; Zacharatos *et al.*, 2007), and recent research has focused on employment and working conditions in the automotive industry (ILO, 2020). Yet, less is known how blue-collar workers in this field experience their work.

This article focuses on Finnish vehicle industry workers and their accounts regarding job pride. The objective of the study is two-fold: first, to assess how and in what kind of contexts job pride is experienced and, secondly, how these descriptions are related to conceptualizations of work orientation. The study uses the responses to an open-ended survey question and semi-structured interviews as empirical data, which is interpreted by thematic analysis. It is important to study job pride, because it provides motivation and meaning at work or, vice versa, lack of opportunity for having pride in one's work can be damaging to work motivation and organizational commitment (Hodson, 2007).

The study contributes to the discussion on job pride (Lips-Wiersma *et al.*, 2016; Lu and Roto, 2016) by analysing the ways in which blue-collar workers describe their work instead of



using job pride determinants defined by researchers. Rather than finding the source of job pride, the focus is on what contexts and circumstances contribute to experiencing pride in a job well done. Secondly, in many instances, workers' expressions of job pride become meaningful in accordance with their work orientation; that is, work-related values and attitudes (Inkson and Cammock, 1987; Parker *et al.*, 1997; Rose, 2005). Thus, pride in blue-collar work is analysed as a context-sensitive phenomenon, considering different forms of work orientation as relatively stable and personal basis for pride. Consequently, this is an exploratory study, which brings together two very basic concepts of work.

Job pride, especially among blue-collar workers, remains an understudied subject, even though other positive aspects of work, such as work engagement (Bakker and Albrecht, 2018; Knight *et al.*, 2017), meaningful work (Carton, 2018; Lips-Wiersma *et al.*, 2016), dignity (Buzzanell and Lucas, 2013; Lucas, 2011; Lucas and Buzzanell, 2004) and recognition (Arnolds *et al.*, 2010), have received significantly more attention. Blue-collar work is seen as dirty, physically demanding, low-skilled and low-paid activity, providing little or no intrinsic value for workers (Torlina, 2011). It is not typically seen as a source of pride, unlike professional jobs. This was the dominant view of industrial sociologists (Springer, 1999) until the turn of the millennium, when positive psychology began to gain ground. More recent accounts have pointed out that blue-collar workers may find their work important, meaningful and something to be proud of after all (Lips-Wiersma *et al.*, 2016; Kreiner *et al.*, 2006; Torlina, 2011).

Moreover, blue-collar careers seem to lack the most common cultural meanings and signs of success, such as financial compensation and organizational status. Signs of success with passion for work, career happiness and freedom to do what one enjoys often presume white-collar salaries, employability security and jobs that offer challenge and autonomy, which are missing in most blue-collar careers. Nevertheless, blue-collar workers define their own success in terms of status hierarchies built around seniority, job skill, or perceived danger of certain jobs (Lucas and Buzzanell, 2004; Thomas, 1989).

Recognizing the meaning that blue-collar workers give to their "craft" is also crucial information for employers who aim to develop productive working conditions and attract and retain skilled workers. In their analysis of the British automotive industry, Focacci and Kirov (2021) showed that workers' ability and willingness to adapt to changing skill requirements has been one of the keys why car manufacturing in the UK has survived global competition. The Finnish automotive sector lends support to this interpretation.

The article is organized as follows: the next section offers theoretical background and defines the concepts of job pride and work orientation. Context is also provided by reviewing relevant studies of the vehicle industry. Then, the empirical data are presented: open-ended answers to a survey question and semi-structured interviews and the method of analysis. Next, the results of the thematic analysis are presented; that is, the ways of feeling or not feeling pride in one's work. Finally, a summary, discussion and conclusions are presented.

Job pride, work orientation and the vehicle industry

The research literature on job pride is relatively scarce, despite pride having been described as the most powerful motivational force in work organizations (Katzenbach, 2003). In psychology, pride is typically regarded as an emotion, but also as an attitude, a means to express self-esteem, motivation, personality dimension, source of utility and a strategy (Lea and Webley, 1997). Lu and Roto (2016), emphasize self-oriented and event-based achievements as the principal sources of pride. Empirical evidence indicates that job pride has positive outcomes, and is linked to, for instance, work engagement, which may lead to organizational commitment (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002).

In contrast to the self-focused achievements highlighted in psychology, organizational management research considers pride a collective attitude derived from other-focused activities, such as teamwork, which is fostered by the sense of belongingness or togetherness (Lu and Roto, 2016). Gouthier and Rhein (2011), distinguish two types of organizational pride: emotional pride is triggered by successful organizational events, whereas attitudinal pride is a more general, durable state that is nurtured by employees' sense of belonging to their workplace community.

Sociologically oriented studies often see job pride as being closely linked to the use and development of skills at work (e.g. Fearfull, 2005; Thompson, 1988). Following Green (2013), this study maintains that skills are personal qualities that can produce value at work; they are expandable and socially determined.

Blue-collar work in modern factories is a case in point. Today's industrial workers no longer merely work with their hands. Because of computer-based automation, many traditional industries can accommodate large variations in product types and respond to different customer needs on a just-in-time basis (Nieuwenhuis and Wells, 2015). For workers, the changing technological landscape has necessitated learning new skills pertaining to automation and robots. Manufacturing workers also typically work in teams and participate in collaborative decision-making, especially when production problems arise, or production needs to be reconfigured (McDermott, 1995).

In one of the relatively few empirical studies in which job pride has been at the centre of analysis, Magee (2015) defined pride in terms of doing. His analysis considered pride in work to be based on what a worker *has done*, such as overcoming obstacles to achieve success, whereas job satisfaction was more strongly linked to *having* (e.g. job-related resources), even in the absence of effort.

Meaningfulness of work is essential to key work outcomes, and therefore organizational leaders are required to establish the conditions that enhance it (Carton, 2018). On the other hand, there are studies pointing out that coercive controls found in manual jobs promote abuse that may intensify shame, creates hostility toward management and contributes to conflict among co-workers. Resentment toward management arises from humiliation embedded in the relational processes they tend to promote rather than from coercive control (Crowley, 2014). Similarly, job pride may change according to different work circumstances and duties. However, as job pride is based on relatively stable work orientation, it may be brought up in another circumstances of work again. Thus, we need to better understand what is changing and what is not in one's relation to work. This study answers to this call for more thorough understanding.

Work orientation

Individuals engage in paid work for different reasons. A key concept to consider when determining these reasons is work orientation. In sociology, orientations towards work (Furåker and Håkansson, 2020) denote value-laden configurations of cognitive preference that embrace the thematic *rationales* of paid work in the context of the individual's life course. Here, a conceptual distinction between orientation and rationale is not made, but they point to the same phenomenon.

Goldthorpe *et al.* (1968) differentiated three types of work orientation in their classic study. First, *instrumental orientation* regards work as a means of acquiring the income necessary to support life and work itself has little or no intrinsic value. Second, *bureaucratic orientation* refers to a career; that is, work in return for steadily increasing income, social status and long-term security. Third, Goldthorpe *et al.* differentiated work as a group activity at different levels of organization and loyalty to one's employer or workplace community as *solidaristic orientation*. Thus, an employee with instrumental orientation regards work predominantly as

a source of income, while an employee with bureaucratic orientation is engaged with career development, and an employee with solidarity orientation connects with the workplace.

According to Rose (2005), work orientations are made up of thematic rationales of paid work. He points out that work rationales often have at least a general consistency and they also appear to be relatively stable, although he also argued that youths' rationales of work altered significantly over time. The first, *expressive rationale*, emphasizes the idea of seeking work for self-actualization, while the second, *instrumental rationale* prioritizes work for its economic return, whether to support everyday living (instrumental provisioning) or certain lifestyle (secondary instrumental). Rose (2005) also pointed to a third rationale he found applicable only to a small number of people; that is, *social rationale*, which indicates that some people work to avoid loneliness and foster social interaction.

Parker *et al.* (1997) have identified two additional work orientations which, they argue, employees are required to adopt in manufacturing settings. These are, first, customer-focused *strategic orientation* and second, a broad and proactive *role orientation*. Strategic orientation involves employees' endorsing key strategies such as increased flexibility, the minimization of inventory control, preventive problem-solving, continuous improvement and other principles of modern organizations. When employees develop such an orientation, their efforts will probably focus on reducing costs, increasing customer orientation and improving quality, which are aims in almost any organization. However, a change in strategic orientation is not enough and employees also need to develop new, complementary role orientation. Employees need to embody broad and proactive approach to their work roles, in which they take responsibility of work beyond their immediate operational tasks and recognize the importance of acquiring and utilizing a wide range of know-how, which enable them to contribute at broad level.

The forms of work orientation presented above and utilized in this article are summarized in Table 1. Other theories of work orientation exist (Furåker, 2020), but for the aims of this article the conceptualizations summarized in Table 1 appropriately explain the differences in blue-collar workers' job pride experiences. Based on Table 1, the forms of work orientation are utilized as follows:

- (1) Instrumental orientation: Work for economic return
- (2) Career-focused orientation: Work as social status, continuity, promotion and security
- (3) Solidaristic orientation: Loyalty to a work organization

	Instrumental orientation	Work as a means of acquiring income
Goldthorpe <i>et al.</i> (1968)	Bureaucratic orientation	Work as income, social status and security – a career
	Solidaristic orientation	Work as group activity and loyalty to a work organization
Rose (2005)	Expressive rationale	Work for self-actualization
	Instrumental rationale	Work for economic return
Parker <i>et al.</i> (1997)	Social rationale	Work to avoid isolation and make friends
	Strategic orientation	Focus on customers, flexibility, preventive problem-solving, continuous improvement
	Role orientation	Proactive, responsibility for work beyond one's immediate operational tasks

Source(s): Authors' own creation

Table 1.
Examples of work orientations and rationales presented in previous studies

- (4) Expressive orientation: Work for self-actualization
- (5) Customer-related orientation: Preventive problem-solving and continuous self-improving
- (6) Proactive orientation: Work beyond one's immediate operational tasks
- (7) Social orientation: Work as group activity, solidarity with co-workers

These forms of work orientation are used in the analysis of job pride among vehicle industry workers. It has been stated that instrumental attitude toward work, work as a game or contest, investment in the social relationships that work provides or turning work into a form of self-expression could be identified as ways in which workers adjust themselves to the realities of restricted opportunities (Thomas, 1989). In this article, however, one's attitude towards work is seen as something more stable and constant. Work orientation is considered as constant personal basis for one's adjustment to different kinds of work situations and organizational circumstances. The aim is to consider the interrelatedness of job pride and work orientation and the ways in which they act in co-operation.

Automotive manufacturing in Europe and Finland

Unlike some European countries such as Germany, Italy, France, the UK, or Sweden, Finland is not known for its vehicle industry, albeit small-scale car assembly ventures in the country date back to the 1920s. There is no Finnish passenger car brand, but according to the [Finnish Information Centre of Automobile Sector \(2021\)](#), vehicle manufacturing and related areas employ some 7,000 people in Finland. The entire automotive sector – including the manufacture of vehicles, the sales of car parts and accessories, the car trade, and repair and inspection operations – employ over 50,000 people, and the total turnover of the automotive cluster exceeds EUR 20 billion annually. In recent years, vehicle manufacturing in Finland has grown rapidly, but it has also suffered from economic fluctuations, high staff turnover and criticism of working conditions. The Finnish vehicle industry has nonetheless kept abreast with global competition.

With global trade, flexible just-in-time production, computer-based automation and agile logistics integrating the entire supply chain, the days of the Fordist car factory focusing on a standardized product with little variation are long gone. Since the mid-1970s, as [Tolliday and Zeitlin \(1998, p. 231\)](#) write, “sweeping changes in markets and technology have transformed international competitive conditions and spurred automobile manufactures in every country to experiment with new strategies based on greater product diversity and more flexible methods of production.” Co-operation with the government and research institutions has also had an important role in the evolution of this sector ([Focacci and Kirov, 2021](#)).

Industrial manufacturing today is characterized by extenuated supply chains and networks of economic actors connecting flexibly raw materials and finished goods ([Pettinger, 2019](#)). In this respect the Finnish vehicle industry is a case in point – a hub in an extensive global network of contract manufactures assembling car models from parts supplied from all around the world. It also has benefited from corporate subsidies and publicly funded research and development. However, its strategy has been somewhat different from the norm. It has invested heavily in robotics in body and paint shops, but on assembly lines, the Finnish automotive industry relies more on manual work than its foreign competitors. This is seen as a cost-effective, flexible approach, as a human is still more agile than a robot.

Know-how of the individual worker is a basic underlying requirement for the production technique developed first in Japanese car factories and later on adopted in the US and Europe ([Womack et al., 2007](#)). The total body of knowledge of assembly work is distributed and utilized among the workers, and a large body of knowledge is required from every team member. The workers themselves control the totality of assembly work and work pace. They

have the complete set of materials for assembling one car, and therefore they can perform their work efficiently. This kind of competence enables individuals to have an overview and understanding of the assembly process. Once an individual achieves this kind of understanding it becomes possible to trace new and better ways to perform (Ellegård, 2007).

There are, however, differences between car factories in different European countries. In some, there is power imbalance between labour and the employer in favour of the latter, which has led to declined worker autonomy and workers' ability to maintain control over the pace and intensity of work (Stewart *et al.*, 2010). Despite the differences among car factories, what is common is that work in the vehicle industry is hard and done in fast pace with advanced automation (Focacci and Kirov, 2021; Zoller, 2003).

Research question, data and methodology

This article concentrates on pride in blue-collar work in the context of the Finnish vehicle industry, which is an example of lean manufacturing that combines automation and robots with skilled assembly line workers. The study asks, first, how do blue-collar vehicle industry workers describe the job pride they experience and in what situations and contexts do they recognize it? Second, it asks, in what ways, if any, are workers' job pride and work orientation interrelated? Two qualitative data sets are analysed to answer these questions.

The first data set included answers to the following open-ended survey question: "In what situations have you been proud of your job or work? Describe these situations." A total of 129 answers (85 men, 44 women) to this question were received and included in the data. All respondents worked in the Finnish vehicle industry. The length of the responses varied from one word to about 70 words. Most of the responses were in Finnish, but some were also in English and French. All responses were analysed in original language and translated for the publishing language.

The online survey was conducted in spring 2020 in co-operation with two Finnish trade unions representing different industrial subsectors. The invitation to answer the survey was sent to workers in three industrial subsectors, including 2,401 invitations to vehicle industry workers, of which 217 workers responded the survey. Although the response rate is not high (9%), it is in line with some other online surveys aimed at lower socio-economic groups in Finland (e.g. Walsh *et al.*, 2022). Even fewer (n = 129) respondents answered the open-ended question concerning job pride. Yet the responses build up a rich set of qualitative data and the respondents form relatively homogeneous group coming from similar organizational culture. 66% of the respondents were men, 31% were women and 3% did not want to identify their gender as a woman or a man. The average age of the respondents was 44 years, and the range was from 21 to 65 years. All the survey respondents and interviewees were trade union members and represented the same company and worked in the same region.

The second, complementary data set comprised semi-structured interviews (n = 7) with Finnish vehicle industry workers. The interview questions concerned interviewees' current job and work history, work task requirements and rewards, supervisors' work and self-management, meaningfulness of work and changes in work during the COVID-19 pandemic. The formulation and order of the questions, and the number of follow-up questions varied. The interviewees were asked in what situations, if any, they had felt proud of their job or work. Responses to this question and possible clarifying questions following it were included in the analysis. No direct question about work orientation was posed, and only the responses related to job pride were analysed.

The interviewees were recruited through the online survey. The survey respondents were offered the option of writing down their contact information for the interview. 134 respondents from the vehicle industry gave their contact details. The interviewees were selected among those who had given their contact details and answered the open-ended

survey question about job pride. They were selected to represent both genders, different job titles and various work positions. Despite this relatively small number of interviewees, the aim was to ensure the variation of viewpoints and experiences. The first author of this article e-mailed nine vehicle industry workers in late spring 2020 and interviewed seven of them over the phone (two workers did not answer) in Finnish. The interviews lasted 33–63 min, were voice recorded and transcribed verbatim by a professional firm.

All the interviewees gave informed, oral consent prior to the study. They had been informed about the aims of the study and their rights to withdraw their consent anytime. Asking unnecessary personal data was avoided. The survey respondents were informed about the aims of the study online and responding the survey was considered as consent to participate.

The method of thematic analysis was used (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). All survey responses were included in the analysis, even when the respondents used different kinds of conceptualizations of job pride in their answers. The first round of coding indicated if the respondent had work pride or not. Moreover, the coding made a difference between two categories: “no work pride” and “work pride earlier but not anymore”. The second round of coding indicated seven separate codes, which were created based on the responses. Throughout the coding process, constant comparative method was utilized to compare the data applicable to each code and modify code definitions (Tracy, 2013). All the categories are presented and analysed in detail in the next section, where the quotations are survey responses without any details to ensure the respondents’ anonymity.

All the interviewees indicated that they felt job pride. The interviews were also coded thematically according to the themes that were identified in the survey response analysis. The interviews were first coded as feeling job pride, secondly reduced to match the same themes as the survey responses, and thirdly, the interviews were used to help understand, contextualize and interpret the survey responses on job pride. Finally, the empirical analysis and themes were juxtaposed with the conceptualizations of the work rationales presented in Table 1.

Results

In this section, the results of the empirical analysis are presented according to the nine themes related to job pride that were identified: (1) continuous pride; (2) pride in one’s pay; (3) pride in positive feedback; (4) pride in the brand and product; (5) pride in one’s skills, work performance and helping others; (6) pride in one’s work tasks; (7) pride in telling others about one’s job; (8) pride in workplace community and teamwork; and (9) no pride in work.

Continuous pride in work

Job pride may vary from a temporary emotion to a durable attitude (Lu and Roto, 2016). In the data, some answers indicated that the respondents were constantly proud of their jobs.

Every day, my work brings me a lot of satisfaction.

I have always had some kind of job pride, no matter where I work. I think all work is important.

Pride in work is highly context-specific and closely related to the workplace community (Hodson, 1998, 2004), but the second respondent seemed to have more general pride in work. More specifically, being proud of one’s work is part of the respondents’ general attitude or orientation towards working, as the second response points out that “all work is important”. Thus, these responses do not indicate the actual source of pride but its temporal continuity.

This kind of work pride is associated with expressive work orientation, which refers to self-actualization through work. With such work orientation, paid work is seen as an opportunity to apply one’s full personal abilities, whether innate or trained, in order to achieve a sense of accomplishment in a work role considered worthwhile and enjoyable.

Pride in one's pay

A distinction is made between no pride in work and working only for pay, which is addressed last and feeling proud of one's pay, which is discussed here. Wages in the vehicle industry are relatively low, especially in comparison to some other manufacturing industries, such as the forest industry. In the vehicle industry, it is common to work in three shifts, 1 week at a time. When doing so, a large proportion of one's pay is extra pay for working the night shift or other non-normal hours.

The only pride I feel is the one coming from my bank account and salary.

I've earned so much by working overtime that I've surprised even myself. I'm proud.

Both responses refer to hard work and working overtime. In a previous study, car workers who were exposed to repetitive strain injuries in ever-accelerating assembly lines, felt pride in their hourly wages being higher than those for other jobs (Zoller, 2003). The second respondent was proud of his hard work that also showed in his bank account. This was associated as a way of feeling pride with instrumental work orientation, but there also was a glimpse of proactive orientation, especially in the second answer, in which the respondent emphasizes that he had worked long and hard, exceeding all requirements.

Proactive orientation refers to responsibility for work beyond immediate operational tasks. It is assumed that the worker had worked overtime not only for the money, but also for a greater goal – that of ensuring the smooth running of vehicle production – as working beyond regular hours must always be voluntary according to the Finnish Working Hours Act (872/2019, 16 §).

Pride in positive feedback

Another theme in the data was feeling proud for receiving positive feedback for one's work. Pride can be evoked by, for example, organizational celebration and reputation (Lu and Roto, 2016). Praise is a powerful but underutilized tool to motivate workers (Katzenbach, 2003) and a source of job pride (Webster *et al.*, 2003). According to some respondents, feedback was given for both individual accomplishments and the performance of the team or the whole plant.

When the client praises us.

If I've been praised for work or my ideas have been listened to and I've got positive feedback. Neither happens very often and ideas don't turn into practice, and you can't write them down anywhere.

The second respondent pointed out that being praised or even listened to is not an everyday incident, which may be why it felt so special. The interviewees were asked whether they received positive feedback for their work and learned that it happens rarely, and is not part of the organizational culture. One interviewee explained at length how he himself knows best how to organize his work and workstation, but that workers are not listened to in relation to their work. An official protocol for developing one's work is in place, but in practice it does not lead to any changes.

It is interpreted that job pride from positive feedback should be associated with proactive orientation and customer-related orientation, but these cannot be differentiated from each other here. Proactive orientation refers to an attitude that considers common objectives and that one's work role extends beyond one's immediate work tasks. Customer-related orientation, on the other hand, refers to continuous self-improvement. All these aspects make positive feedback important.

Pride in the brand and the product

Another theme of being proud in our data was pride that was associated with the vehicle brand and the premium car models produced in the plant.

Whenever I see the finished products, I feel proud that I've contributed to the overall work. I also feel proud of the company brand to some extent.'

When I see a vehicle that is made in our factory on the road, I feel proud.

Being able to see the final product created pride among the workers, as well as the car brand they were manufacturing, even though the average customer may not know or care where their vehicle has been produced. This kind of job pride could be associated with a solidaristic orientation, although not quite in the sense in which [Goldthorpe et al. \(1968\)](#) defined the term, since the respondents feel pride because of the end result of the production rather than the organization itself.

On the one hand, the workers were proud of belonging to their workplace community. This is the essence of a solidarity orientation, as understood by [Goldthorpe et al. \(1968\)](#). On the other hand, the workers were proud of being part of a bigger success story of the car brand for which they worked.

Pride in one's skills, work performance and helping others

Another theme of feeling pride in one's work was being a skilful worker and being able to use and develop one's skills at work ([Green, 2013](#)). This was indicative of doing one's work well, without mistakes and on time. The interviewees also described situations in which they had made an extra effort to correct their peers' mistakes or poor skills, in order to ensure the smooth progress of the assembly line. Proud moments included:

When I've solved a problem that the bosses couldn't solve.

When I worked in production and made no mistakes or could do a difficult repair. In what I do now if I manage to help and support a colleague so that they feel they are being helped.

[Thompson \(1988\)](#) has argued that the process of deskilling in automotive manufacturing, which began as a luxury craft trade of skilled engineers and coachbuilders and transformed into repetitive semi-skilled assembly line production, is a well-known story. The data, however, tell a different tale. The workers were clearly skilled in their "craft".

Preventing or solving problems was a common source of pride expressed in the data. It was clearly related to customer-related work orientation, which emphasizes preventive problem-solving and continuous improvement of the work process.

Pride in one's work tasks

This form of job pride arises from specific work tasks one has performed or is currently performing. Work on the assembly line was considered repetitive and boring, but the workers had possibilities to move on to new work tasks or even be promoted, which would bring variation to old routines.

The highlight of my work was the project for starting the manufacture of a new product.

I've been promoted while working for this employer.

As the first respondent points out, the launch of a completely new product was an exciting experience. The second response indicated pride in career advancement when promotion had caused a prominent change in work tasks.

In this context, pride in one's work tasks was associated with career-focused work orientation, which refers to one's career and the factors contributing to career advancement. Although factory work typically offers limited career prospects, it is not impossible to move to a higher position in the organizational hierarchy or have more challenging work tasks if one wants to.

Pride when telling others about one's job

These answers indicated that the respondents were not only proud of doing their work skilfully, but also of having a good job with benefits. For example, they were proud when telling others that they had managed to make a career change or find a new job at the car factory. There also was an understanding that vehicle manufacturing is a respected industry, especially among women workers. Pride in the industry was clearly emphasized in the interviews.

When I talk about my job to those who are interested.

When I say that I got my current job at a relatively old age and I'm also able to work and manage well in that sense. I like to tell people that I'm involved in making magnificent cars.

Here again, the workers do not indicate the source of their job pride, but the situation or context of it. Having a respectable job and telling people about it made the respondents proud. Pride when telling others about one's job is best associated with solidaristic orientation, which refers to one's loyalty to one's employer and identification with the workplace community.

Several of the interviewees had worked for the car factory for decades, but at the same time, employee turnover was high. The company had sometimes run large recruitment campaigns. One of the interviewees mentioned that the firm welcomed women recruits. In Finland, the labour market is highly gender segregated, and women represent a minority in industrial manufacturing.

Pride in workplace community and teamwork

Several respondents mentioned successful teamwork and co-operation as a source of job pride.

When team-work is carried out.

At times, when there's a tough situation and people proudly work together for a common goal so that we can finish the task.

Several female respondents mentioned this social source of pride in their survey answers, but none of the male respondents did. However, the male workers emphasized the importance of their work team and their co-workers in the interviews when they were asked what is meaningful in their work. It is concluded that the workplace community and co-workers are important to both female and male workers, but that they express this in different ways.

These responses emphasized the social orientation of work, which is built around the idea of seeking paid work as a means of relieving domestic routine and isolation, or for the opportunities it provides to meet new friends. According to [Rose \(2005\)](#), this kind of work orientation is important for only a small minority of people, but based on the analysed data it is not possible to completely agree with this view. Social relations are quite commonly expressed as very important and an important source of motivation at work, although any quantitative generalizations cannot be made here. Moreover, it is relevant to associate pride in workplace community and teamwork with social orientation, identification with the team and solidarity with co-workers.

No pride in work

The survey data contained several answers that clearly indicated that the respondent had never been proud of their work. This situation was usually mentioned briefly instead of in detail, as in the following responses:

Work is just work.

I need a job to get money, that's why I work there.

Such responses were only found in the open-ended survey responses, whereas all interviewees described feeling job pride. Some respondents claimed that working conditions in the vehicle industry were so poor that they had never been proud of their jobs at the factory. Others indicated that they had been proud of their work initially but had later lost this attitude. Several answers criticized the employer's business model as being far removed from sustainability. The reason for losing job pride was related to working conditions, which some respondents criticized vociferously.

In other responses, apparently of long-term employees, the respondents said that they had been proud of their work in the past when things had been better:

When I first started in 2017, I felt proud. After finding out the truth about the company culture, the means of managing and operating the company, I only feel embarrassment and repulsion towards the factory. Especially its management.

When I worked in the logistics department in the 90s, the work pace wasn't determined like clockwork. Like it is today.

The first respondent describes how he feels only embarrassment and repulsion towards his employer. He uses rather harsh words, as do some others when describing why they feel no job pride. These descriptions raise the question of how can a worker continue their everyday work with such strong, negative feelings towards their employer and work circumstances. Answering that question is beyond the scope of this study and cannot be covered by the data. It is not possible to associate any kind of work orientation to these responses, but it would be important to find out more about it in order to tell whether their job pride could be returned in their current or in some other job.

Never feeling pride in work reflects an instrumental work orientation. In this case, work is essentially seen as a mandatory and instrumental activity, rather than an activity valued for itself. It has been suggested that pride both motivates workers and provides a lens through which they experience their work (Hodson, 1998). Thus, the work motivation of workers who do not feel job pride comes from elsewhere, and assumingly their main motivation is simply money.

Summary

In line with prior research (e.g. Lucas, 2011; Torlina, 2011), the workers in vehicle industry have various sources of pride in their job. As summarized in Figure 1, all forms of work orientation identified in the literature could be analysed in the responses. This strengthens the starting point of this study that the forms of work orientation offer a relatively stable and personal basis for job pride in the changing circumstances of work. Although the feeling of job pride is contextual, work orientation remains unchangeable irrespective of work circumstances.

However, not all workers doing the same tasks or working in the same organization have job pride similarly. Instead, there are workers who state that they do not feel any proudness of work at all, while others have pride all the time, no matter of their work tasks. Some situations of job pride are clearly based on having a job instead of doing certain work tasks, such as the situations in which the respondent tells others about having a job.

Discussion

Studying job pride is important for a variety of reasons, and its implications extend to organizational development and society. Job pride is linked to employee well-being, motivation and work engagement (Hodson, 2007; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002). When employees take pride in their work, they are more likely to experience positive emotions, higher levels of job

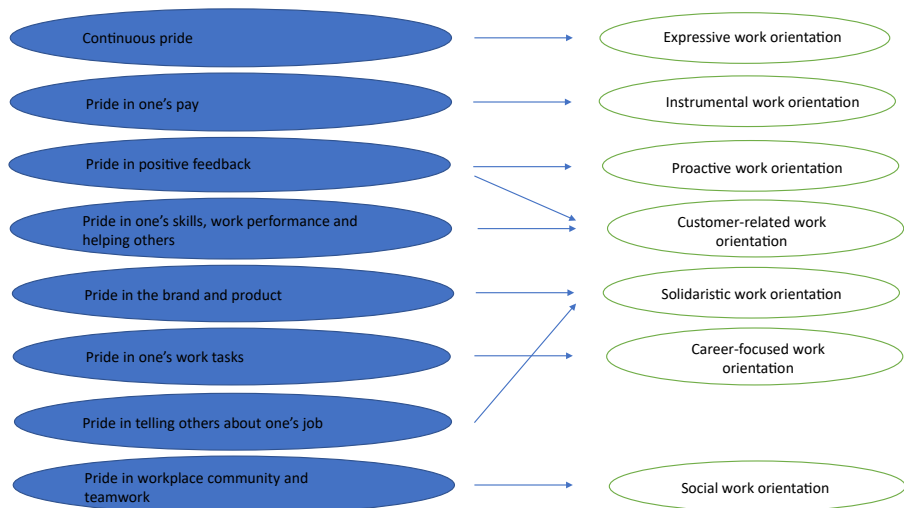


Figure 1.
The dimensions of job pride and their relation to work orientations

Source(s): Authors' own creation

engagement and overall job satisfaction (Lu and Roto, 2016). This may lead to better productivity, reduced stress, improved mental health and a better quality of life.

The results of this study indicate that employees who feel a sense of pride in their work are committed to the organization's goals. It is also likely that job pride fosters staff retention and enhances an organization's reputation making it a sought-after place to work, although more research in this regard is needed. Organizations can develop strategies to enhance job pride by creating a supportive work environment, recognizing and rewarding employees' contributions and aligning job roles with employees' skills. To achieve this, managers should promote open communication, provide opportunities for skill development and involve employees in decision-making.

Conclusions

In this study, the focus was on the context and circumstances where job pride is felt. An unanswered question remains how the workers who had no job pride can cope with their daily work and perform well enough to keep their jobs. Thus, more information about the division and effects of job pride in blue-collar jobs is needed, especially about the situations in which one has lost their job pride they previously had.

Instead of occupational deprivation and alienation, Finnish vehicle industry workers are generally proud of their "craft". Their work orientation is a mixture of instrumental and intrinsic traits. Having a job is a necessity to make ends meet, but the study participants also took pride in their skills and contribution to their workplace community. This interpretation is in line with Torlina's (2011) claims that blue-collar workers value their work highly, even if society does not recognize its worth. Also concurring with the results here, Lucas (2011) concluded that blue-collar workers' dignity is based on the quality of the job performed and not the socio-economic status of the job. In a similar vein, Magee (2015) has argued that job pride stems from action, such as working to overcome obstacles to reach a desired work-related outcome – the experience of job pride flows from doing; what one does or has done determines one's self-worth.

Despite the analysis lending support to the interpretation that blue-collar workers are active individuals who have healthy self-worth, manual labour commands far less respect

outside the confines of factories and working-class communities. To borrow Goodheart's (2020) distinction, society at large, and the mainstream media in particular, glorify people who work with their *heads* (cognitive work) and dismiss those who work either with their *hands* (manual work) or *hearts* (care work). This article offers no panacea to this problem, but it would certainly be beneficial if blue-collar work received more scholarly attention than it currently does.

This study is not without limitations. First, the response rate was fairly low, although it is quite typical for this usually hard-to-reach group. Those who belong to a lower socio-economic level do not answer to surveys as active as those in higher levels (Tolonen *et al.*, 2006). Nonetheless, the majority of respondents also answered the open-ended question about the pride they felt at work. Moreover, all the respondents and interviewees were union members. Second, because of the qualitative methodology applied in this study, the results cannot be directly generalized outside of the original context of vehicle industry in Finland. At the same time, this limitation opens an avenue for future studies in other countries and regions to compare the vehicle industry workers' job pride, or even to compare job pride across different industries.

References

- Arnolds, C., Boshoff, C., Mazibuko, N. and Klemz, B. (2010), "The motivational impact of job security, recognition, monetary incentives and training on the job performance of blue-collar employees", *South African Journal of Labour Relations*, Vol. 34 No. 1, pp. 86-102, available at: <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC59636>
- Bakker, A.B. and Albrecht, S. (2018), "Work engagement: current trends", *Career Development International*, Vol. 23 No. 1, pp. 4-11, doi: [10.1108/CDI-11-2017-0207](https://doi.org/10.1108/CDI-11-2017-0207).
- Buzzanell, P.M. and Lucas, K. (2013), "Constrained and constructed choices in career: an examination of communication pathways to dignity", *Annals of the International Communication Association*, Vol. 37 No. 1, pp. 1-31, doi: [10.1080/23808985.2013.11679144](https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2013.11679144).
- Carton, A.M. (2018), "I'm not mopping the floors, I'm putting a man on the moon: how NASA leaders enhanced the meaningfulness of work by changing the meaning of work", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 63, pp. 323-369, doi: [10.1177/0001839217713748](https://doi.org/10.1177/0001839217713748).
- Crowley, M. (2014), "Class, control, and relational indignity: labor process foundations for workplace humiliation, conflict, and shame", *American Behavioral Scientist*, Vol. 58 No. 3, pp. 416-434, doi:[10.1177/0002764213503335](https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764213503335).
- Ellegård, K. (2007), "The creation of a new production system at the Volvo automobile assembly plant in Uddevalla", in Sandberg, Å. (Ed.), *Enriching Production. Perspectives on Volvo's Uddevalla Plant as an Alteria to Lean Production*, Avebury, Aldershot, pp. 37-59.
- Eriksson, P. and Kovalainen, A. (2008), *Qualitative Methods in Business Research*, Sage, London, doi: [10.4135/9780857028044](https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857028044).
- Fearfull, A. (2005), "Using interpretive sociology to explore workplace skill and knowledge", *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, Vol. 8 No. 2, pp. 137-150, doi: [10.1080/13645570320001143736](https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570320001143736).
- Finnish Information Centre of Automobile Sector (2021), "Statistics: automotive industry in Finland", available at: https://www.aut.fi/en/statistics/automotive_industry_in_finland (accessed 1 June 2023).
- Focacci, C.H. and Kirov, V. (2021), "Regional entrepreneurial ecosystems: technological transformation, digitalisation and the longer term—the automotive and ICT sectors in the UK and Bulgaria", *Local Economy*, Vol. 36 No. 1, pp. 56-74, doi: [10.1177/02690942211025776](https://doi.org/10.1177/02690942211025776).
- Furåker, B. (2020), "Theoretical and conceptual considerations on work orientations", in Furåker, B. and Håkansson, K. (Eds), *Work Orientations: Theoretical Perspectives and Empirical Findings*, Routledge, London, pp. 16-36, doi: [10.4324/9781351121149-2](https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351121149-2).

- Furåker, B. and Håkansson, K. (2020), (Eds), *Work Orientations: Theoretical Perspectives and Empirical Findings*, Routledge, London. doi: [10.4324/9781351121149](https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351121149).
- Goldthorpe, J.H., Lockwood, D., Bechhofer, F. and Platt, J. (1968), *The Affluent Worker: Industrial Attitudes and Behaviour*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Goodheart, D. (2020), *Head, Hand, Heart: Why Intelligence Is Over-rewarded, Manual Workers Matter, and Caregivers Deserve More Respect*, Free Press, New York.
- Gouthier, H.J. and Rhein, M. (2011), "Organizational pride and its positive effects on employee behavior", *Journal of Service Management*, Vol. 22 No. 5, pp. 663-649, doi: [10.1108/09564231111174988](https://doi.org/10.1108/09564231111174988).
- Green, F. (2013), *Skills and Skilled Work: an Economic and Social Analysis*, Oxford University Press.
- Hodson, R. (1998), "Pride in task completion and organizational citizenship behaviour: evidence from the ethnographic literature", *Work and Stress*, Vol. 12 No. 4, pp. 307-321, doi: [10.1080/02678379808256869](https://doi.org/10.1080/02678379808256869).
- Hodson, R. (2004), "Work life and social fulfilment: does social affiliation at work reflect a carrot or a stick?", *Social Science Quarterly*, Vol. 85 No. 2, pp. 221-239, doi: [10.1111/j.0038-4941.2004.08502001.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0038-4941.2004.08502001.x).
- Hodson, R. (2007), "The consequences of management competence for working with dignity: a cross-methods validation", in Bolton, S.C. (Ed.), *Dimensions of Dignity at Work*, Butterworth-Heinemann, London, pp. 109-133, doi: [10.1016/B978-0-7506-8333-3.50012-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-7506-8333-3.50012-3).
- ILO (2020), "The Future of Work in the automotive industry: the Need to Invest in people's Capabilities and Decent and sustainable work", *International Labour Organization*, available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/—ed_dialogue/—sector/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_741659.pdf (accessed 1 June 2023).
- Inkson, K. and Cammock, P.A. (1987), "Orientations to work: a two-stage approach", *The Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 29 No. 3, pp. 281-294, doi: [10.1177/002218568702900302](https://doi.org/10.1177/002218568702900302).
- Katzenbach, J.R. (2003), *Why Pride Matters More than Money: the Power of the World's Greatest Motivational Force*, Crown Business, New York.
- Knight, C., Patterson, M. and Dawson, J. (2017), "Building work engagement: a systematic review and meta-analysis investigating the effectiveness of work engagement interventions", *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, Vol. 38 No. 6, pp. 792-812, doi: [10.1002/job.2167](https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2167).
- Kreiner, G.E., Ashforth, B.E. and Sluss, D.M. (2006), "Identity dynamics in occupational dirty work: integrating social identity and system justification perspectives", *Organization Science*, Vol. 17, pp. 619-636, doi: [10.1287/orsc.1060.0208](https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1060.0208).
- Lea, S.E.G. and Webley, P. (1997), "Pride in economic psychology", *Journal of Economic Psychology*, Vol. 18 Nos 2-3, pp. 323-340, doi: [10.1016/S0167-4870\(97\)00011-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0167-4870(97)00011-1).
- Lips-Wiersma, M., Wright, S. and Dik, B. (2016), "Meaningful work: differences among blue-, pink-, and white-collar occupations", *Career Development International*, Vol. 21 No. 5, pp. 534-551, doi: [10.1108/CDI-04-2016-0052](https://doi.org/10.1108/CDI-04-2016-0052).
- Lu, Y. and Roto, V. (2016), "Design for pride in the workplace", *Psychology of Well-Being*, Vol. 6, pp. 1-18, doi: [10.1186/s13612-016-0041-7](https://doi.org/10.1186/s13612-016-0041-7).
- Lucas, K. (2011), "Blue-collar discourses of workplace dignity: using outgroup comparisons to construct positive identities", *Management Communication Quarterly*, Vol. 25 No. 2, pp. 353-374, doi: [10.1177/0893318910386445](https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318910386445).
- Lucas, K. and Buzzanell, P.M. (2004), "Blue-collar work, career, and success: occupational narratives of sisu", *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, Vol. 32 No. 4, pp. 273-292, doi: [10.1080/0090988042000240167](https://doi.org/10.1080/0090988042000240167).
- Magee, W. (2015), "Effects of gender and age on pride in work, and job satisfaction", *Journal of Happiness Studies*, Vol. 16, pp. 1091-1115, doi: [10.1007/s10902-014-9548-x](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-014-9548-x).
- McDermott, R. (1995), "Working in public – learning in action: designing collaborative knowledge work teams", in Beyerlein, M.M., Johnson, D.A. and Beyerlein, S.T. (Eds), *Knowledge Work in Teams*, JAI Press, CT, pp. 35-59.

- Nieuwenhuis, P. and Wells, P. (2015), (Eds), *The Global Automotive Industry*, Wiley, Chichester.
- Pardi, T. (2021), "Lean production in the automotive industry", in Janoski, T. and Lepadatu, D. (Eds), *The Cambridge International Handbook of Lean Production: Diverging Theories and New Industries Around the World*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 204-226, doi: [10.1017/9781108333870](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108333870).
- Parker, S.K., Wall, T.D. and Jackson, P.R. (1997), "That's not my job': developing flexible employee work orientations", *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 40 No. 4, pp. 899-929, available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/256952>
- Pettinger, L. (2019), *What's Wrong with Work?*, Policy Press, Cambridge.
- Rose, M. (2005), "Do rising levels of qualification alter work ethic, work orientation and organizational commitment for the worse? Evidence from the UK, 1985-2001", *Journal of Education and Work*, Vol. 18 No. 2, pp. 131-164, doi: [10.1080/13639080500085885](https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080500085885).
- Schaufeli, W., Salanova, M., González-roma, V. and Bakker, A.B. (2002), "The measurement of engagement and burnout: a two sample confirmatory factor analytic approach", *The Journal of Happiness Studies*, Vol. 3, pp. 71-92, doi: [10.1023/A:1015630930326](https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1015630930326).
- Springer, R. (1999), "The end of new production concepts? Rationalization and labour policy in the German auto industry", *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, Vol. 20 No. 1, pp. 117-145, doi: [10.1177/0143831X99201005](https://doi.org/10.1177/0143831X99201005).
- Stewart, P., Danford, A., Richardson, M. and Pulignano, V. (2010), "Workers' experiences of skill, training and participation in lean and high performance workplaces in Britain and Italy", *Employee Relations*, Vol. 32 No. 6, pp. 606-624, doi: [10.1108/01425451011083654](https://doi.org/10.1108/01425451011083654).
- Sturgeon, T.J., Memedovic, O., Van Biesebroeck, J. and Gereffi, G. (2009), "Globalisation and the automotive industry: main features and trends", *International Journal of Technological Learning, Innovation and Development*, Vol. 2 Nos 1-2, pp. 7-24, doi: [10.1504/IJTLD.2009.021954](https://doi.org/10.1504/IJTLD.2009.021954).
- Thomas, R.J. (1989), "Blue-collar careers: meaning and choice in a world of constraints", in Arthur, M.B., Hall, D.T. and Lawrence, B.S. (Eds), *Handbook of Career Theory*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 354-379.
- Thompson, P. (1988), "Playing at being skilled men: factory culture and pride in work skills among Coventry car workers", *Social History*, Vol. 13 No. 1, pp. 45-69, available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4285656>
- Tolliday, S. and Zeitlin, J. (1998), "Between Fordism and flexibility: the automobile industry and its workers – past, present and future", in Tolliday, S. (Ed.), *The Rise and Fall of Mass Production*, Elgar, Cheltenham, pp. 231-249.
- Tolonen, H., Helakorpi, S., Talala, K., Helasoja, V., Martelin, T. and Prättälä, R. (2006), "25-Year trends and socio-demographic differences in response rates: finnish adult health behaviour survey", *European Journal of Epidemiology*, Vol. 21 No. 6, pp. 409-417, doi: [10.1007/s10654-006-9019-8](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10654-006-9019-8).
- Torlina, J. (2011), *Working Class: Challenging Myths about Blue-Collar Labor*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder.
- Tracy, S.J. (2013), *Qualitative Research Methods: Collecting Evidence, Crafting Analysis, Communicating Impact*, Wiley-Blackwell, London.
- Walsh, H., Nevalainen, J., Saari, T., Uusitalo, L., Näppilä, T., Rahkonen, O. and Erkkola, M. (2022), "Food insecurity among Finnish private service sector workers: validity, prevalence, and determinants", *Public Health Nutrition*, Vol. 25 No. 4, pp. 829-840, doi: [10.1017/S1368980022000209](https://doi.org/10.1017/S1368980022000209).
- Webster, J.M., Duvall, J., Gaines, L.M. and Smith, R.H. (2003), "The roles of praise and social comparison information in the experience of pride", *Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 143 No. 2, pp. 209-232, doi: [10.1080/00224540309598441](https://doi.org/10.1080/00224540309598441).
- Womack, J.P., Jones, D.T. and Roos, D. (2007), *The Machine that Changed the World: the Story of Lean Production – Toyota's Secret Weapon in the Global Car Wars that Is Revolutionizing World Industry*, Free Press, New York.

Zacharatos, A., Herscovis, S.M., Turner, N. and Barling, J. (2007), "Human resource management in the North American automotive industry: a meta-analytical review", *Personnel Review*, Vol. 36 No. 2, pp. 231-254, doi: [10.1108/00483480710726127](https://doi.org/10.1108/00483480710726127).

Zoller, H.M. (2003), "Health on the line: identity and disciplinary control in employee occupational health and safety discourse", *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, Vol. 31 No. 2, pp. 118-139, doi: [10.1080/0090988032000064588](https://doi.org/10.1080/0090988032000064588).

Corresponding author

Tuija Koivunen can be contacted at: tuija.koivunen@tuni.fi