

consistency was related to experience and length of service. The mail sorting studies showed that the average performance of older and younger age groups were within 4 percent of the base groups' score. As in the office study, there was little decline in performance up to age 60 and a minor decline from 60 to age 65. While production dropped a little more at age 65, the high consistency of performance among the workers aged 60 or over is an important factor to consider in hiring for operations requiring a constant flow of work. ^{5/}

Work Attitudes

The older worker's strong desire to work is reflected in his job stability, the duration of his employment and relatively fewer job changes, and his attitude of responsibility which is recognized by employers when they request "mature, experienced, and stable" employees. A poll by the National Association of Manufacturers covering 3,000 companies showed that 50 percent of the employers rated the attitudes of older workers superior, and 49 percent rated them equal to the job attitudes of the younger workers.

Ability to Learn

Changing jobs and industrial processes have put a premium on learning ability. The speed and ease of learning a new job are important to employers in any situation where a new worker must be hired.

Intelligence tests have not proven to be good indicators of differences in learning ability by age. Most tests have been standardized on young persons, and there is evidence that cultural and educational differences may affect the results of intelligence tests, with possible increases in the score at older ages when the individual's background experiences have been broadened. However, most authorities agree that an individual experiences no decline in intelligence as he ages.

Tests of learning ability have indicated that the peak learning age is 22, and that the ability to learn at ages 50 and 60 is about equal to that at ages 16 and 14. By age 80, there may be some slight decline in the speed of learning. ^{6/}

A formal test situation sometimes places an additional strain on an older worker who has had little experience with such tests, and whose schoolroom experience is far in the past. Limited literacy of some older workers may affect test results. But given the basic aptitude for learning, the older worker has the advantages of experience, motivation, judgment and reasoning ability, to help him adjust or learn in a

^{5/} Walker, James F., "Job Performance of Federal Mail Sorters," Monthly Labor Review, March, 1964.

^{6/} Schneider, B. V. H., The Older Worker. Institute of Industrial Relations, University of California, Berkeley, 1962.