

Factory Conditions and Production

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Introduction:

The industrial movement brought many things, one of which being factories and city development. With factories came the invention of factory towns where the people who worked in said factories could live. These factory towns were stock full of people. They consisted of apartment complexes where multiple families would live in close quarters to one another. They were unsanitary and overfilled with people looking for jobs and homes near the more urbanized areas. Factories brought both wonders to the world of innovation and urbanization, but they also brought capitalism and pollution. With factories brought labor laws showing how people should be treated in the workforce, and unionization. According to Prude (1996), a factory was made to “cast substantial influence over the economy,” (p. 238). This shows that factories were made to help expand society. There are many ways that the initial production of factories and factory towns have helped out society today in the long run. Factory towns were eventually turned into major cities all over the United States and because they worked like a machine, they typically had jobs readily available for people. Another factor that came from factories, that people typically take advantage of, is the fact that with the production of factories came the production of labor laws that have helped save many people’s lives throughout history. According to Gottdiener, Hohle, & King (2019),

“Above all, the rapid increase in population provided US industry not only with much-needed labor power but also with consumers who could use the products being turned out by the factories.”

Labor laws created a safety blanket for employees that have changed drastically over time. At first labor laws were vague, but society has fixed them to fit a new standard of living allowing employees breaks, age limits for certain jobs, minimum wages for jobs and eventually health

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care. All of this improved factory production and created an incentive for people to go to work. This made working feel more enticing to many people and it improved the lively hood of many workers. This paper will discuss the many other ways that factory conditions and production have affected urbanization and society as a whole.

What brought people to urban areas:

Many people saw urban areas as a sign of a new life and new hope. Especially compared to the rural areas people were used to. Urban areas brought more types of jobs, including factory jobs. Whereas rural areas had only agriculture-related jobs. Urban areas also brought in different techniques such as new types of machinery, textiles, and even healthcare-related technology. According to Gottdiener, Hohle, & King (2019),

“Indeed, many different factors have contributed to urban expansion... These factors include the role of economic forces, transportation, construction, and communication technology, political changes, immigration policy, success at wars, and cultural factors like the role of racism.”

Urban areas quickly became flooded with people looking for opportunities. This became a bit of an issue regarding space and housing but that was soon fixed with the addition of factory towns. Factory towns were small areas full of factories and housing similar to today's apartment complexes. Here people were able to live and work near each other. This was fairly innovative for its time. It allowed for multiple families to have a “home” in only a little amount of space. Factories contributed immensely to the way that society works today. The way that factory production brought a new system to the workforce allowed for many people to branch out from their typical farm jobs. Many people gravitate toward cities looking for opportunities and

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factories provided just that. Factories were an innovative way for things to be produced by the masses. According to Hoselitz (1955),

“The almost automatic association of industrialization with the introduction of the factory system as it was practiced in the mid-nineteenth century made us forget that the advantages and disadvantages of technological change.”

They were an easy way for a lot of people to be guaranteed a job no matter their social class, age or even sex at times. There were many different opportunities for people in factories, some places needed children because they could use their smaller hands for more delicate jobs, while there were others that required men to work long hard hours producing major machinery. This vast amount of job opportunities was wonderful for families out of money looking for work. Families who were all working in factories had opportunities to make a decent amount of money that had not been available before moving to the factory towns. These families would be provided with jobs and housing.

There were many different types of factory jobs. The invention of the railroad brought different types of factory work, including track building, locomotive repair, working on the different kinds of train cars and for passenger trains building the seating for the train cars. These were still not the only kinds of factory jobs there were also textile jobs that included creating fabric, weaving yarn together to make different types of clothing or blankets and overall household products. These kinds of jobs were typically given to women and children. There were also different mills that people worked in. These types of jobs worked with perishable goods. They included work in slaughterhouses, working with water systems and any other kind of food system. They also included cotton mills where people who helped send things out to textile

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factories that would soon be sewn into clothing or blankets. Along with those some mills created types of steel and lead to help create buildings.

Healthcare was another form of innovation that came from cities. Like factories, healthcare has improved over time with the help of society. People in rural areas didn't have a healthcare system, a majority of the time they relayed on the help of others in their household as their "doctors". This caused people to die of unnecessary complications due to waiting out diseases instead of looking for help from another. In urban areas, however, because there was so much readily available, people had access to medicine and doctors easily. This was important. After all, when people are moved from being around just their families to being close to many people, they are more likely to get sick because their body is not used to the new germs of others.

Why they're needed to be a reform in the factory industry:

Factories were the peak of society during the industrial movement but as wonderful as factories are, they also had a downside to them. Many issues came from factory productions one of them being the very close relationship factories have with capitalism. This issue is one of many in the factory community. According to Gottdiener, Hohle, & King (2019),

“The very heart of industrialization was the factory, which was the engine that drove the industrial stage of capitalism.”

Capitalism was not invented because of factories but it expanded after them. Many people who worked in factories were treated differently based on ranking. This created a divide within the factory. Another social problem that came from factory production is its unusual grasp of child labor laws and the treatment of women in the workplace. Many kids were put into factories to help provide for their families. This was a good thought at the time, but the working conditions were terrible, and many kids were harmed and even died in the process. Women were often

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mistreated in the workplace and there was little done about it. People treated children and women with absolute disrespect. They walked all over the two groups and gave no attention to their needs. Many children would work hours unfit for some adults. According to Foster and Clark (2018),

“This robbery of the male and female worker’s health within the workplace naturally carries over into the realm of the household and the social reproduction of labor power.”

They would be given brutal jobs for hours without break. This was detrimental to their mental and physical health. There was often sexual harassment in the workplace, which women endured daily. Women of all ages would be stuck in small factories with little room to move around, and they were given very few breaks. Women also endured job discrimination in this process. If a woman was pregnant then the person in charge of the factory would likely not hire them because they would not be able to work as hard as someone else. In many instances, the workplace was not suited for people to work in at all. There were no fire escapes or basic safety instructions. In the case of the T-shirt Factory fire, society saw that a reform was needed to prevent something like that from happening again.

The book “The Jungle” by Upton Sinclair, provided a look into the way that factories worked on the inside. This book was important to the way that the sanitation situation changed for factories. It brought to light things such as public urination in the workplace, and moldy meat being passed off as fine pieces of meat.

According to Sinclair (1905), “This is no fairy story and no joke; the meat would be shoveled into carts, and the man who did the shoveling would not trouble to lift out a rat even when he saw one—there were things that went into the sausage in comparison with which a poisoned rat was a tidbit.”

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This made the food industry seem gross and the workers in it unsanitary. Another reason factories needed a clear reform was because of the lack of unionization. Many people were not treated well in factories and that needed to be changed. Factory workers worked extremely hard and deserved to be treated like hard workers. They worked in conditions that others can only imagine. Their jobs were mundane, and they are treated and paid like dirt.

The outcome of the reform:

The invention of factories and labor laws brought many things that in today's society are taken for granted. Such as child labor laws, explaining that children cannot be overworked or exploited by factories. Children would be worked to the bone causing many of them to have health issues. Children were treated as though they were adults when they were still merely children, they were worked an insane amount, but with the addition of child labor laws, they were taken care of. These labor laws saved millions of kids from working in coal mines, textile factories, and mills. It brought a level of safety to children and families and encouraged school. According to Lingwall (2014),

“As the growing textile industry raised the demand for child labor in a factory setting, states experimented with several methods for ensuring childhood education.”

This reform also brought better working conditions. Many people were able to have breaks in their hard day's work, this improved people's mental and physical health. It allowed for individuals to not be overworked and have less of a stressful workday. When employees are overworked every day, this can cause them to mess up when working. It can cause sleep deprivation making people feel fatigued on the job, which is especially dangerous. Over time when healthcare was provided in jobs, this allowed for people to feel safe in their jobs knowing

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that if something were to ever happen, they, along with in some instances their families would be provided for.

A way that the labor reform impacted society is through the women's movement. Women gained a sense of power in society by being the ones working, this allowed them a platform to speak up for themselves and eventually lead to the women's rights movement. Women having a job led to them fighting for their right to vote. They did not have a clear say in what was happening to them, but they did have a case to back it up. The labor force needed them, and they had to ability to argue for their rights as well as those of their children.

A major issue that has always been prominent in factories was sanitation issues. Upton Sinclair's book "The Jungle" showed only some of the terrible conditions that factories, specifically those in the food processing industry, endured. Though after the addition of labor laws these changed, "The Jungle" brought all of these issues to light and showed society that there was a major issue in the factory industry and the government worked to change them. Workers were no longer allowed to urinate wherever they please, there are now designated bathrooms for factory workers. Meat that has gone bad is no longer allowed to be packaged up with meat that isn't moldy. The book caused the Pure Food and Drug Act along with the Meat Inspection Act. These have improved the health of both the workers and the community. Now factories are sanitized and cleaned every day. This allowed for not only a healthier environment but also provided more jobs. With the need to have a clean working environment, factories hired a custodial staff to take care of major spills and overnight cleaning. This way factory workers could work their shifts during the day and not worry about being overworked, having to stay late and clean, the custodial staff would take care of spills and sanitize the factory for the next day. This has provided everyone with a clean healthy working environment.

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Unionization is another extremely important factor to come out of factory conditions and production changes. Unionization is best known as a sort of democracy in a workforce. This allows factory workers to come together when they believe that they are not being treated fairly and stand up for themselves. It is a major contributing factor to the production and employee community.

According to Gottdiener, Hohle, & King (2019), “The decentralization of industry was an important tool for minimizing union influence.”

Unions allow employees to speak up for themselves, making their issues known to everyone even on a cooperate level. The success of the company relies on how the employees engage with it. Employees are the key public to any operation and unionization brought the vital needs of employees to light.

Conclusion

In conclusion, factories have changed drastically over time from labor laws and unions; to sanitation issues and working conditions. According to Prude (1996),

“Yet the early factory did have particular and considerable influence on life and work in post-1789 America”.

However, there are still issues that have yet to be fixed in the world of factory conditions and production. For instance, there is still an issue of pollution. Many factories have a poor habit of polluting the earth by dumping out old products or wasting unused products. Factories also pollute the air and the land, when companies cut down trees and erode land to make room for a new factory, which harms the land and the oxygen level in that area. According to Gottdiener, Hohle, & King (2019),

“Factories filled the air with the smoke of manufacturing activity.”

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Many people have taken strides to address this issue. They have even prevailed onto a children's level as seen in "The Lorax" a children's book by Dr. Seuss in 1971. Although the issue of pollution is still not yet fully fixed, factory production's long history of fixing public issues gives hope to the situation. Factories have come a long way, but they also have a long way to go to perfect the concept. No matter what though, factories have contributed immensely to the way society is urbanized today.

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