

THE SOCIOLOGY OF WORK

A Critical Annotated Bibliography

Parvin Ghorayshi

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ORGANIZATIONS: THEORY & BEHAVIOUR



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Printed on acid-free, 250-year-life paper
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To my mother,
to the memory of my father
and grandparents

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PREFACE OF THE GENERAL EDITOR

The twentieth century has experienced a major transformation in the workplace. While the nature of work has evolved only gradually, the character of the labor force has changed at a much faster rate. The rise in the educational attainment of workers, the changing structure of the family, and greater affluence among workers demand more sensitivity and careful attention by management to the concerns of their workers. The traditional nine-to-five work patterns have been undergoing significant changes. In the past few years, flexitime, job-sharing, permanent part-time employment, a compressed work week, telecommuting, telework or location independent work, and alternative workstyles of single parents have provided a variety of options for employees and employers.

Micro-electronics technology poses a special threat to the growing educated workforce. The same technologies that are eliminating many jobs are also creating lots of new ones. But workers need to be retrained if they are to be able to fill the new jobs. The proliferation of personal computers has facilitated a shift toward more part-time and home-based work. Changing values are changing the face of the workplace as workers demand meaningful participation in decision-making.

In the twenty-first century, dramatic changes will occur in employment patterns. These changes are going to affect how we work and how we are educated and trained for jobs. Much of the work in the next century, it is predicted, will be done by teleworkers—people who stay at home and commute to work via telecommunications. Work in the future may be challenging and satisfying, providing you can get it and can do it.

It is projected that in the next century employers will increasingly provide paid “mental health days,” or flexible leave time, to allow workers to relieve stress. Stress and mental health care will become more important workplace issues in the future. Furthermore, companies will recognize the need to provide more “elder care” benefits—similar to child-care benefits—to assist workers who must care for older relatives.

In recent years, there has been a tremendous increase in research in the sociology of work and industry. Sociologists, economists, psychologists and other social scientists have focused on work structures such as occupations, industries, classes, organizations and unions and their influence on the organization of work, labor-management relations, labor markets, productivity, earnings inequality, and workers' attitudes and behaviors. The sociology of work has shifted its focus away from its earlier micro concerns, such as work and workers, to macro issues, i.e., studying effects of social structures on individuals. This shift in focus has also changed our conception of the worker from a social into an economic one.

Industrial sociology, from the 1930s to the 1950s, was primarily concerned with human relations in factories and offices, and the cultures and the problems of occupational groups. During the 1960s, the field of industrial sociology focused on workers' values and satisfaction and the impact of technology and bureaucracy on workers. Since the 1970s, however, Marxist perspectives have contributed to new lines of research related to alienation, the labor process, the dual economy and segmented labor markets, and earnings determination.

This reference volume reflects the changing world of work. It includes recent research on the various dimensions of work, such as the structure of the labor force, labor market segmentation, technology, employment/unemployment, trade unions, and industrial democracy. A large number of studies cited in this book indicate that what we are experiencing today is more than a cyclical adjustment and help us encounter issues associated with the complex and changing nature of work. Furthermore, with their critical approach, the annotated citations reveal the problems, such as labor market discrimination, unemployment, health hazards and so on, that workers face.

This book provides an integrated view of the various dimensions of work, its distinguishing characteristics, and issues both peculiar, as well as common, to industrialized countries. The author has attempted to synthesize the growing body of recent research and shows how different disciplines have approached work and industrial relations.

Although a major focus of this book is on Western industrialized countries, it draws numerous examples from other societies and makes clear that, in today's world, it is almost impossible to understand the complexity of the issue in any single nation in isolation from other nations. By adopting an interdisciplinary and interactional perspective, this volume aims to provide both the scholar and the lay reader with a range of approaches and

debates that have made a significant contribution toward understanding the changing nature of work and its social impact. It is intended as an introduction but assumes that the reader is not completely unfamiliar with sociological approaches to the study of work. It attempts to set out the background of theory and research with which students need to be familiar in order to undertake more advanced research. Parvin Ghorayshi has done extensive research on work and industrial relations. This book is a continuation of her research interests. The multidisciplinary content and emphasis on sociological works make this reference volume useful to both specialists and non-specialists alike.

DAN A. CHEKKI
University of Winnipeg

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LIST OF JOURNALS USED

- Acta Sociologica
- American Journal of Sociology
- Canadian Journal of African Studies
- Canadian Public Policy
- Canadian Public Administration
- Economic and Industrial Democracy
- Group and Organizational Studies
- Harvard Business Review
- Industrial and Labor Relations Review
- Industrial Relations
- International Journal of Comparative Studies
- International Labour Review
- International Migration Review
- International Social Science Journal
- International Sociology
- Labor History
- Occupational Health
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Organization Studies
- Radical America
- Relations Industriels
- Review of Radical Political Economy
- Science and Technology and Human Values
- Signs
- Sociological Perspective
- Social Science Quarterly
- Studies in Comparative International Development
- The British Journal of Sociology
- The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology
- The Journal of Developing Areas
- The Sociological Quarterly
- Work and Occupations

INTRODUCTION

This volume on the sociology of work appears when, perhaps more than ever before, problems of work are at the forefront of public consciousness and debate, as well as academic theorizing and research. The question of work has gained a central place in the political and economic debate, especially in the industrialized countries. Structural and technological changes both at national and international levels have raised questions about the structures and processes of our society: What is work? Why and how is it divided up, organized and rewarded? Could it be different?

Over the last decade, the sociology of work has dealt with the most sensitive and important problems of social life. Considerable changes in both the real world of work and the academic analysis on the nature of work have occurred, and this increasingly complex field of study has been covered by many theories and research, gradually building up an impressive body of knowledge. Furthermore, the growth of new intellectual approaches has provided fresh answers to the old questions, and raised novel issues as legitimate areas of investigation. The traditional sociology of work and occupations, written in the 1950's and '60's, began to collapse at the same time these changes were taking place. The old concepts were unable to cope with the growing changes. Clearly, earlier studies on the world of work need to be updated, and more clearly still, they need to be updated in ways that take into account a number of complex social and economic developments, as well as the multi-disciplinary nature of the issue under study.

Growing specialization in sociology, as in other academic disciplines, has produced a variety of sub-areas of study. Thus the area of work has been further divided as scholars have concentrated more closely on issues such as labor history, industrial relations, organizational behavior, occupational change, women's studies, technology and society, quality of work, industrial democracy, alienation, unemployment and occupational health and safety, to mention only some of the more central topics. Such specialization has been essential for the development of the discipline, but it has impeded

our ability to develop a broad understanding of the nature of work in contemporary societies.

The sociology of work, like most sociological sub-areas, crosses into related disciplines. In order to understand the complexity of the problems faced in industrial life, we must draw upon diverse literature. The unique feature of this volume is that it brings together some of the most significant achievements from different traditions. It presents students of work with examples of how different disciplinary approaches and different research methods can be used to shed light on the complex nature of work, not just in departments of sociology. This task, however, is not an easy one, since one has to choose from many topics.

In this book, we include those studies that have been relatively well explored by social scientists and give the reader an insight into the complexity of the problems faced in industrial life. Because of the broad scope of the presentation, our coverage of the literature is far from exhaustive. Instead, we selectively discuss the primary literature in such a way that it will highlight the present themes, debates, problems and issues in the sociology of work and industry. The entries were chosen because they make an important contribution to the direction of the sociological observation of work, and are essential for understanding the real world of work today. Special attention is paid to lines of study that reveal new aspects of social processes in industry, and challenge the conventional wisdom of the established lines of thought.

Of course, the need to integrate many different perspectives and approaches into a comprehensive whole poses enormous difficulties. The sociology of work has been affected by the polarization of theoretical positions and research methods, which has resulted in many divergent views on the substance of the world of work. We attempt to make it clear that there is no one best theory to deal with the experience of work, and no universal methodology for its successful exploration.

This volume is intended to be inter-disciplinary with an international dimension. It provides a variety of perspectives for studying the historical, economic, political, social and ideological nature of work. Although the emphasis is on the experience of work in industrialized countries, the entries make it clear that,

in today's world, it is impossible to grasp the complexity of work in any single country in isolation from other societies. By adopting this approach, we hope to bring out the interdependence between nations, as well as the similarities and differences that exist among various places and societies regarding work relations and work place activities.

We sought books, articles and reports that, together, would address a broad range of issues, and bring a variety of perspectives to bear on work in contemporary societies--with a focus on western industrialized countries. We were committed to a conception of the book which would not only place work in its social context, but would also provide a dynamic, rather than static, picture--hence the historical and comparative dimension of many of the entries.

This critical annotated bibliography, by relying on primary sources and drawing upon diverse disciplines, provides an introduction to the field of work, and could serve as a research and reference tool for students, researchers, academics, librarians, managers, occupational health professionals, labor activists, unions, and the general public, at all levels, in various sub-areas of the sociology of work. It will help them find their way into the literature on work in pursuit of answers to their questions.

We begin our examination of work by understanding the ideology behind working and the way work is influenced and perceived. It involves much more than employment and income. The type of work individuals perform has a profound impact on their life chances, and it remains a critical factor in defining their existence. This section explores the concept of work, workers' attitudes towards their jobs, and the meaning people attach to their work from various points of view and cultural ideals. The entries provide a fascinating account of the ideas that have been used to legitimize work. We adopt a cross-cultural frame of reference and place work in the context of social relationships and symbolic values. The items looked at bring out the systematic relationship between culture, social and economic institutions, and work.

The following section, **understanding the global context**, brings out the effects of wider economic and social influences on the interaction among workers,

employers, unions and the state. It shows there is a wide recognition that a fundamental transformation is taking place in the economic structure on a world scale. We are witnessing a major shift towards the internationalization of capital under the sway of Transnational Corporations and the enhanced mobility of capital and labor, facilitated by modern communication technology. Such a shift implies a transition away from the classic international division of labor towards a restructured world economy, wherein the Third World is increasingly providing sites for industries which manufacture goods for sale on the world economy.

The fact is that the integration of the world economy has eroded the significance of national boundaries, and weakened the ability of either governments or unions, in a single country, to insulate themselves from external influences. The movement towards globalization of production and the creation of a global market poses new questions for our understanding of work in today's society.

In the two sections on work relations and work experiences, it is essentially the social character of work that we seek to describe and explain, bearing in mind that the social pattern of work must be understood in the widest possible sense to include how work is patterned and organized, awarded and evaluated, and controlled. The focus is on work place relations and how they are formally and informally structured, how people relate, and in what way.

The entries bring out the issues of central importance to the labor process debate--power and class--and are concerned with the politics of occupations. They discuss, at some length, the issue of occupational control, skill, and the transformation of the labor process. The intention is simply to understand what goes on at work--the whole complex mesh of the social work process: What are the limits of various forms of organizations, in whose interest are they, and under what circumstances are claims for occupational control likely to be effective? It becomes very clear, in different places and at different times, that workers are neither a homogeneous class united in opposition to management, nor a mass of individuals eager for their own reasons to co-operate, even in limited way, with their bosses.

This leads to a discussion about the nature and characteristics of the labor force, and its future trends. The entries offer a discussion about the ways in which the new occupations associated with the new technology, and the new international division of labor, are likely to emerge. The experiences of various countries are presented to grasp the universal nature of the labor force transformation, as well as the differences. The entries bring out the major labor market changes and trends, the rise of the female labor force participation, the increase in service sector jobs, the occupations associated with the new technology, the growth of two-income families, the growing importance of part-time work, the increasing share of employment in the service sector of the economy, the importance of public sectors, etc. Also discussed are the sociological consequences of this transformation of employment on the nature of work, its class structure, and international labor migration.

After the section on the nature and organization of work, we focus on the divisions and cleavages among workers. The entries on the segmentation of the labor market show that there are persistent and important objective divisions among them. These objective divisions have played a major role in forestalling the efforts of workers to build a unified movement. The key to labor market differentiation is said to lie in the practices and structures beyond the strictly economic sphere, which are found in but not created by, the social relations of production. This case has been argued most forcefully and thoroughly with regard to sexual differentiation in the labor market. A number of other divisions of labor--racial, ethnic--can be regarded as broadly analogous, although less deeply rooted.

The essays presented provide a range of insights into the empirical reality of labor markets and the complexity of different employment situations. At the same time, they show a concern with theoretical relevance, leading the reader to enter into several of the important debates which have been taking place, often without sufficient reference to one another, around the central question of how sociology can best capture the differentiations of the various groups of working people.

No discussion on the division of labor can ignore the significance of gender as the most important factor in dividing workers. The rapid increase in the size of

the female labor force has been one of the most significant features of industrialized countries. The literature on this topic spans many disciplines and draws attention to the ways in which the position of women workers is determined by the sexual division of labor, and by women's role in reproductive, domestic and productive work, as a whole. The entries in this section are about the types of work women do and their position in the changing labor market, about how and why women come to be in jobs typically regarded as semi or unskilled, and about women workers' consciousness as workers and as women. These entries look at the interplay between gender and class, the impact of the new technology on women, and women's position in the new international division of labor. They reveal the complexity of the work women do, and bring out the differences and similarities in women's work experiences cross-culturally.

Chapter three shows that the new technology has already had an impact on our lives, and that there is hardly any need to provide any explanation of why the topic is significant. However, there is a growing concern and debate about the implications of technological change for work. Fears of a major displacement of labor, and also of de-skilling, have aroused considerable discussion and anxiety. Some argue that the dominant effect of the new technology will be to de-skill the work force, destroy the craft occupations, and fragment jobs into meaningless elements which can be performed by unskilled operators, controlled by large-scale bureaucracies run in the interest of international capital. Others suggest that it will be the automated machinery and systems which will take over all the routine tasks. Thus, the impact of the new technology will be to require a more highly educated and trained work force to perform complex tasks which need a high level of the human decision-making skill. Such jobs will therefore give autonomy and variety to the worker. The debate is, in other words, about whether the new technology is likely to lead to proletarianization or professionalization.

Not only is there a dispute about the long-term effects of the new technology on skill levels; there is also, closely bound up with this issue, the question of how jobs of the future will be organized. What might the internal organization of the office and the factory of the future look like? To what extent will the new