

S O C I O L O G Y

WORK

Perspectives, Analyses, and Issues

Richard H. Hall





Sociology of Work

PERSPECTIVES, ANALYSES, AND ISSUES

Richard H. Hall

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK, ALBANY

With contributions by Robert T. Buttram

A. B. FREEMAN SCHOOL OF BUSINESS,
TULANE UNIVERSITY



PINE FORGE PRESS

Thousand Oaks • London • New Delhi

Copyright © 1994 by Pine Forge Press

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

For information, address:



PINE FORGE PRESS

A Sage Publications Company
2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91320

Copy Editor: Steve Summerlight

Production Editor: Megan M. McCue

Designer: Lisa S. Mirski

Typesetter: Danielle Dillahunt

Cover: Paula Shuhert

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Hall, Richard H., 1934-

Sociology of work: perspectives, analyses, and issues/ Richard H. Hall; with contributions by Robert T. Buttram.

p. cm. — (Pine Forge Press social science library)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-8039-9003-0 (pb : acid-free paper)

1. Industrial sociology. I. Buttram, Robert T. II. Title.

III. Series.

HD6955.H3 1994

306.3'6—dc20

93-27788

CIP



This book is printed on acid-free paper that meets Environmental Protection Agency standards for recycled paper.

94 95 96 97 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



Sociology of Work

THE PINE FORGE PRESS SOCIAL SCIENCE LIBRARY

The McDonaldization of Society: An Investigation Into the Changing Character of Contemporary Social Life by *George Ritzer*

Sociological Snapshots: Seeing Social Structure and Change in Everyday Life by *Jack Levin*

What Is Society? Reflections on Freedom, Order, and Change by *Earl Babbie*

The Production of Reality: Essays and Readings in Social Psychology by *Peter Kollock and Jodi O'Brien*

Adventures in Social Research: Data Analysis Using SPSS® by *Earl Babbie and Fred Halley*

Crime and Everyday Life: Insights and Implications for Society by *Marcus Felson*

Sociology of Work: Perspectives, Analyses, Issues by *Richard H. Hall*

Aging: Concepts and Controversies by *Harry R. Moody, Jr.*

Worlds of Difference: Inequality in the Aging Experience by *Eleanor Palo Stoller and Rose Campbell Gibson*

Forthcoming

Sociology for a New Century *A Pine Forge Press Series* edited by *Charles Ragin, Wendy Griswold, and Larry Griffin*

- **Social Psychology and Social Institutions** by *Denise D. and William T. Bielby*
 - **The Social Ecology of Natural Resources and Development** by *Stephen G. Bunker*
 - **How Societies Change** by *Daniel Chirot*
 - **Ethnic Dynamics in the Modern World: Continuity and Transformation** by *Stephen Cornell*
 - **Sociology of Childhood** by *William A. Corsaro*
 - **Cultures and Societies in a Changing World** by *Wendy Griswold*
 - **Crime and Disrepute: Comparative Perspectives** by *John Hagan*
 - **Racism and the Modern World: Sociological Perspectives** by *Wilmot James*
 - **Religion in the Global Village** by *Lester Kurtz*
 - **Waves of Democracy** by *John Markoff*
 - **Organizations in a World Economy** by *Walter W. Powell*
 - **Constructing Social Research** by *Charles C. Ragin*
 - **Women, Men, and Work** by *Barbara Reskin and Irene Padavic*
 - **Cities in a World Economy** by *Saskia Sassen*
-

■ *This book is dedicated to my students*

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Richard H. Hall is Distinguished Service Professor of Sociology and former Dean, College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, at the State University of New York at Albany. Former editor of *Work and Occupations* and a respected scholar in the field of organizations, his other works include *Organizations: Structures, Processes, and Outcomes* (5th ed.).

Robert T. Buttram currently studies organizational behavior at the A. B. Freeman School of Business, Tulane University, New Orleans, where he serves as instructor and research assistant. He holds a master's degree in social psychology from Purdue University and a bachelor's of science in psychology from Ball State University.

ABOUT THE PUBLISHER

Pine Forge Press is a new educational publisher, dedicated to publishing innovative books and software throughout the social sciences. On this and any other of our publications, we welcome your comments and suggestions.

Please call or write us at:

Pine Forge Press

A Sage Publications Company

2455 Teller Road

Thousand Oaks, CA 91320

(805) 499-0721

Internet: sdr@pfp.sagepub.com



Preface

In the United States and in other post-industrial societies (as sociologist Daniel Bell named them), few realms of human activity are more central to human existence than the work we, and others, do. Not only do most of us spend the majority of our time first preparing for work and then working, but the very meaning of our existences as well as the identities that we attach to ourselves are inextricably linked to our work. How many of us, for example, after meeting someone for the first time, seek to establish an identity for that person by asking “what do you do?” or “what’s your major?” or some other work-related question? And how do our impressions of others change once we know their occupations and we interpret them through our own socially constructed view of the world?

The work of others is equally important to our lives. Even for the most independent among us, the way we live is dependent on the labor of thousands, even millions of others, not just in the workforce of our own society, but from many quarters of the globe. To cite one common example, think about the considerable workforce and the complex, interconnected tasks that are involved in bringing us a television program that we turn on and ordinarily take for granted. Actors, actresses, and stand-ins; directors and producers; camera crews and sound technicians; writers and editors; make-up artists and drama coaches; publicists and agents; lawyers and financiers all comprise a mere fraction of the complex labor network involved. Beyond the people creating and marketing the program, consider the other groups involved in bringing it to our attention. Who manufactured the various parts of our television set and where were the parts made? (Probably several

countries). Where were the components of our television assembled and by whom? (Perhaps a different workforce in another country). Who was involved in shipping the television to its location of purchase? What people and organizations were involved in getting the program's electronic signal delivered to the set? Regardless of our stations or inclinations in life, our lives are inextricably bound to the activities and roles of the world's labor force.

The Sociological Perspective

Sociology assumes a constantly changing, reciprocal relationship between individuals and the society we have created. Sociological research into the nature of work, therefore, addresses a number of fundamental questions related to the ways in which individuals view and shape their labor and how the institution of work, in turn, shapes us and other aspects of our social lives. A random selection of a few of those questions include: Why do some organizations (be they schools, offices, or factories) create more value with less material resources at their disposal than others? Why are most physicians and dentists in Russia today women, whereas these medical professions are occupied primarily by men in the United States? Why, contrary to the principles of economics, do women earn less than men for the same work in almost all of the world's societies? Why does a high school or college diploma get a person a better job than someone with the same amount of education but no diploma? Why is the work in a society unequally distributed among its members along boundaries marked by gender, race, and social class? Are these inequalities changing and if so, how and in what directions? Under what conditions (if any) does the division of household work within a family become equally shared between couples? Are jobs becoming more routinized and less satisfying for the people who perform them or is the opposite taking place in our society? The process of finding reliable answers to these and other such questions is what makes the sociology of work so fascinating.

Problems in Teaching the Undergraduate Course

Research into such questions (produced by sociologists as well as labor economists, industrial psychologists, historians, anthropologists, and others) produces a vast and disparate literature and therein lies a dilemma in teaching the subject effectively to undergraduate students. On the one hand, most sociologists would like to teach a first course that fairly represents and introduces the field as a whole. But because the sociology of work is so broad and the types of questions asked are at such different levels of analysis, the textbooks currently available to support such an approach tend to be descriptive surveys of the various subfields and therefore have an unfortunate tendency to leave students with a forgettable assortment of facts about seemingly random topics. At the other end of the teaching spectrum, undergraduate students can get more explanatory power and acquaintance with theory from a sociology of work course by reading a variety of excellent research monographs such as Rosabeth Kanter's *Men and Women of the Corporation*, Arlie Hoschild's *The Managed Heart* or Robert Jackall's *Moral Mazes*. But this approach has its limitations as well. Undergraduates often have a difficult time mastering such works thoroughly and relating the ideas to the course as a whole. My own teaching experience suggests that assigning one or two of these monographs is highly worthwhile, but I still feel the need to accompany them with a text that provides my students with an effective foundation for the course as a whole. I want my students to have a view of the entire field (vast and jumbled though it may be), what the important perspectives are, and how these various "lenses" can often be profitably used in combination with one another to analyze and interpret.

Rationale for This Text

The content of this book is rooted in an earlier book, *Dimensions of Work*, that I wrote a number of years ago, but has been entirely

rewritten with the needs of the undergraduate sociology of work course in mind. I have specifically written this text so that instructors can adopt flexibly its use and steer their course in the direction of their choice. The book provides a current, clear, and representative account of the many important studies comprising the sociology of work field. At the same time, the book is sufficiently short and economically priced so that it can be used in addition to a variety of other monographs in the field. Moreover, the text is not merely descriptive; the various chapters of the book provide different dimensions or “lenses” that students can use to interpret and analyze the work issues that interest them most.

Chapter 3, for example, looks at work from the individual’s perspective: how do people create meaning in their work and derive satisfaction from their jobs? Chapter 4 looks at the classic relationship between social status and work, and the various explanations for this relationship. Chapter 5 provides another interesting way to see how society values different forms of work by looking at job content and labor market perspectives. The next three chapters study age, gender, race, ethnicity, and religion and ways in which these socially constructed variables shape the structure of work and how we experience it. The final group of chapters on the organizational dimension of work, power, and work and family issues provide additional lenses at the macroscopic level that examine how work is structured and experienced. A concluding chapter explores the relationship between the book’s various perspectives on work and the global, social forces that affect it as well as the workplaces and work issues that students are likely to experience early in our next century.

Sociological Interpretations of Work and Workplace Issues

In my experience, one of the most difficult teaching assignments in an undergraduate course is making the literature of the field (which is highly abstract and dry) meaningful to students.

Throughout this book, I have tried to do this in the same way I do in my teaching, by turning the literature back onto students' personal experience of work and the concerns they have about their futures. To amplify this quality in my text, Robert T. Buttram from the A. B. Freeman School of Business at Tulane University has written special application essays at the end of each chapter. These are excellent extended examples illustrating how the dimensions or "lenses" in each of the chapters can be used to enrich our understanding of a work or workplace issue that concerns us all.

Acknowledgments

I want to thank a group of people who have made major contributions to this project. As noted, the applications at the end of each chapter were written by Robert T. Buttram of the A. B. Freeman School of Business, Tulane University. I thank him sincerely for his work. In addition, I hope that you find simple and direct writing in these chapters. My manuscript editor Becky Smith has gone over each page and clarified matters or forced me to clarify them. She has been completely helpful and supportive. Susan McKie and Chiara Huddleston of Pine Forge Press have been particularly helpful in the evolution of this book from first draft to finished chapters. I also owe particular thanks to Michelle "Missy" Tillapaugh for her willingness to pitch in at a moment's notice on some project that had nothing to do with her role as Secretary to the Dean. She has been great. Steve Rutter of Pine Forge Press has been the rudder for this entire operation. He has pushed and prodded and nudged and shoved toward revision and completion. He has always done it in a gracious and supportive way. I am grateful to him.

Finally, I want to thank my wife Sherry for her good cheer and support. I try very hard not to take my work home, but she can tell when I am worried and frustrated. She makes me the opposite.

Richard H. Hall



Contents

Preface / xvii

1 The Nature of Work / 1

Definitions of Work / 2

Work in the United States and Beyond / 4

Occupation, Job, and Career / 6

Work Activities / 8

The Labor Force / 9

 Labor Force Statistics / 10

 Nontraditional Workers / 12

Labor Markets / 13

 Complexity of Labor Markets / 14

Work in Historical Context / 16

Unemployment / 19

 Frictional and Structural

 Unemployment / 20

 Consequences of Unemployment / 22

Underemployment / 23

 The Deskilling Argument / 24

 Evidence of Deskilling / 25

The Many Aspects of Work / 29

• APPLICATION / 30

What the Unemployed Know About Work / 30

• SUGGESTED READINGS / 32

2 Varieties of Work / 34

Professional Work / 35

Professional Attributes / 44

The Power Perspective / 46

Development and Maintenance
of Power / 47

Internal Threats to
Professional Power / 48

External Threats to
Professional Power / 50

Gender and Professional Power / 53

Managerial Work / 53

What Managers Do / 54

Management Classifications / 56

Line Versus Staff Work / 56

Management Levels / 57

Proprietors / 58

Top Management and Social Class / 59

White-Collar Work / 60

Clerical Work / 60

The Feminization of Clerical Work / 61

The Deskilling of Clerical Work / 62

Sales Work / 63

Blue-Collar Work / 65

Foremen and First-Line Supervisors / 66

Skilled Workers / 68

Semiskilled Workers / 69

Unskilled Workers / 72

Other Work / 73

Service Work / 73

Farm Work / 76

Housework / 78

Work in the Underground Economy / 81

Conclusions / 82

• **APPLICATION / 83**

Growing Pains in the Service Sector / 83

• **SUGGESTED READINGS / 85**

3 The Individual Experience of Work / 87

Motivations for Work / 88

“Humanistic” Theories of Motivation / 88

Expectancy Theory / 89

Learning About Work / 91

Socialization of Work Values and Roles / 92

Reciprocity / 93

Career Stages / 95

Reactions to Work / 97

Overt Responses to Work / 97

Job Satisfaction / 99

Determinants of Job Satisfaction / 100

The Fit Hypothesis / 102

Job Satisfaction and Autonomy / 103

Work Commitment and Centrality / 106

Development of Work Commitment / 107

Individual Influences / 107

Organizational Characteristics / 108

Equity, Expectancy, and Commitment / 109

Alienation / 111

Structural Alienation / 112

The Subjective Experience / 112

Sources of Alienation / 113

Environmental Determinants / 114

The Role of Technology / 115

Some Additional Negative Reactions / 118

Individuals and Work:

The Broader Context / 118

Conclusions / 119

• **APPLICATION / 120**

The Meaning of Work / 120

• **SUGGESTED READINGS / 123**

4 Status and Occupation: The Vertical Dimension / 124

The Basic Relationship:

Work and Social Status / 125

Measures of Occupational Status
and Prestige / 125

Alternative Measures of
Occupational Status / 127

The Role of Education / 131

Why Do Occupations Vary
on the Vertical Dimension? / 137

The Functional Model / 138

Differential Rewards / 138

Supporting Evidence / 140

The Conflict Model / 142

Class Distribution of Power and Wealth / 142

Supporting Evidence / 144

The Structural Approach / 146

Merging the Functional and

Conflict Approaches / 146

Patterns of Inequality / 147

How Are People Placed
on the Vertical Dimension? / 150

Continuities and Comparisons / 150

Factors in Status Attainment / 152

Social and Individual Factors / 152

Environmental Factors / 156

The Structural Approach and
the Placement of Individuals / 157

Industries / 157

Organizations / 158

Conclusions / 160

• **APPLICATION / 161**

Downward Mobility / 161

• **SUGGESTED READINGS / 164**

5 Labor-Market Sectors: The Horizontal Dimension / 165

The Nature of the

Horizontal Dimension / 166

The Situs Approach / 166

The Job-Content Approach / 168

The *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* / 169

Underlying Dimensions of the DOT / 175

Shortcomings of the DOT / 180

The Labor-Market-Sector Approach / 182

Dual Labor Markets / 182

Industrial Sectors / 183

A Final Consideration / 188

Conclusions / 190

• APPLICATION / 191

“Pulsating Organizations” / 191

• SUGGESTED READINGS / 193

6 Gender and Work / 194

Women in the Labor Force / 195

Factors Affecting Women's Labor Force
Participation / 197

Socialization / 197

Marriage and Family / 200

Family Finances / 200

Geographic Mobility / 201

Family Roles / 202

Fertility / 203

Demand for Labor / 204

Women's Experience of Work / 205

Orientations and Attitudes Toward
Labor Force Participation / 205