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WORK AND OCCUPATIONS

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The study of work has been part of sociology since its beginning. Karl Marx described how capitalist relations of production transformed work from the creative matter of subsistence to the alienated activity of mass production manufacture. Max Weber also studied work: the emergence of capitalism via the culture of Calvinism, and, later, the dehumanization of work in bureaucracies. Émile Durkheim approached work as part of the study of the division of labor. In prior societies (which he referred to as having mechanical solidarity), work was an expression of one's sameness to others; in the modern societies (which Durkheim referred to as having organic solidarity), specialization led to evermore differentiated divisions of labor and job specialization. The study of work (as an extension of identity) locates most naturally in societies that are organically organized, while occupations belong to societies characterized by mechanical solidarity.

While work (and, by implication, occupations) compelled these and other sociologists' writing in the first decades of our discipline, almost no sociologist studied the cultural definition of work; none entered the factory, farm, or firm to understand how work was defined and managed by those who work. The closest thing to an ethnography of work was Frederick Engels's ([1845] 1973) *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, written when the author was 24 years old.

Engels describes how machines have simplified work and changed its social character:

The human labour, involved in both spinning and weaving, consists chiefly in piercing broken threads, as the machine does all the rest. This work requires no muscular strength, but

only flexibility of finger. Men are, therefore, not only not needed for it, but actually, by reason of the greater muscular development of the hand, less fit for it than women and children, and are, therefore naturally superceded by them. Hence, the more the use of the arms, the expenditure of strength can be transferred to steam or water power, the fewer men need be employed; and as women and children work more cheaply, and in these branches better than men, they take their places. (P. 179)

From this passage, it is clear that these revolutionary changes altered working-class family life as work replaced work previously based on skill and strength with the repetitive movement of the assembly line.

For the child workers, the conditions in the factory were horrific. Engels described narcotics use among children. The repetitive work produced physical deformity. Children were punished for minor infractions and suffered work-related injury, stunted growth and imagination, as well as the decline of home life. The culture of early industrialized work was a kids' world of full-fledged exploitation.

One of the strongest themes in the book concerns the impact of industrial life on family culture: Roles were reversed as women were forced into the workforce. These themes would be returned to 100 years hence.

This book was based on field research in the working-class slums and factories of industrial England. What is not generally remembered is that Engels, the privileged son of a factory owner, was guided into the dark neighborhoods and oppressive factories by his working-class Irish girlfriend, Mary Burns. All fieldworkers need an entry to the field!

WORK AND OCCUPATIONS IN AMERICAN SOCIOLOGY

The study of work and occupations began during the 1920s at the University of Chicago, as an aspect of the Chicago School of sociology. University of Chicago sociologists, under the tutelage and theoretical guidance of W. I. Thomas and Robert Park, applied an ecological orientation to the study of urban institutions, including work and occupations. One of first graduate students to focus on work was Everett Hughes, who earned his Ph.D. in 1927 for a study of the Chicago Real Estate Board. Hughes was especially interested in the contested steps in the process of how occupations claimed the designation of “profession.” These themes would reemerge as the subfield developed, especially during the 1950s.

A competing, yet largely mutually exclusive trend in the study of work and occupations during the formative era was “industrial sociology,” that is, a sociology applied to the problems of management. Frederick Winslow Taylor (1911), the chief intellectual figure in what was also referred to as the “human relations school of industrial management,” argued that “scientific management” would locate the control of work squarely in the hands of management, thus displacing the oppositional cultures that emerge in all work settings. One of the most famous applications of Taylor’s theories is found in Elton Mayo’s (1945) “Hawthorne Experiments,” in which workers were experimented on to measure the conditions under which their work became more efficient. These fascinating experiments, which would be unlikely to pass Institutional Review in today’s world, showed that workers’ productivity improved under several imposed changes. It is now commonly accepted that the improvements in production were the result of the selected workers becoming a mini-culture of their own. Industrial sociology has developed as an aspect of applied sociology rather than as the sociology of work and occupations per se.

The sociological study of work and occupations, outside of the research done in the service of management, is attributed to Everett Hughes. In 1952, Hughes became editor of the *American Journal of Sociology* and devoted his first issue to the study of work. Hughes ([1952] 1971) wrote in the editorial Foreword to that issue,

Why give a large part of an issue of this Journal over to such whimsies [sic] as the special culture of the few professional boxers who fly up like moths from the morass of the slums and drop back again in a little while and as the disappearing breed of small custom-furriers; to such oddities as janitors and schoolteachers? (P. 299)

By way of answer, Hughes cited the “double burden” of sociologists to analyze the processes of human behavior free of time and place, while also becoming “ethnologist of his own time and place” (p. 299). Finding variety and contrast in case studies would allow sociologists to study

similar sociological processes from the vantage points of occupations.

The study of work and occupations had begun to adopt the case studies approach. Prior to Hughes’s work in the 1950s (as researcher, graduate professor, chair of the Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago, and editor of important sociology journals), Stone (1946) studied the social construction of status and leadership in an aircraft fighter squadron; William Foote Whyte (1949) studied the social structure of the occupational worlds of the restaurant; and Oswald Hall (1948) had analyzed the subjective dimensions of medical doctors’ careers. Themes found in this research, including understanding the coordinated lines of work that constitute the social structure of a work environment, and study of the career as defined inwardly as well as by the calendar, became important themes in the study of work and occupations. Similarly, these studies showed the usefulness of examining what Hughes (1970) called “the humble and the proud,” that is, the cultures of the most highly trained professionals and the most mundane of service jobs.

The ethnographically oriented studies of work and occupations during the 1950s were dominated by Hughes and his students, while the macro, functionalist orientation otherwise dominant in American sociology was represented in Caplow’s (1954) influential text on the sociology of work, republished several times, and translated. Several texts subsequently followed Caplow’s example.

Among Hughes’s insights was an interpretation of Taylor’s understanding that in all work settings there was an ongoing struggle over who would control the productive output. For Taylor, this amounted to a problem for management. Hughes ([1952] 1971) saw it as a generic sociological principle:

Restriction of production . . . is generally defined [as] . . . the willful refusal by workers in industry to do as much work as their employer believes they can and ought to do. The latter, having hired a man’s [woman’s] time, expects some large power over its disposition. It is assumed by the employer that his will—enlightened, informed, and reasonable—should determine how hard a man should work. (P. 301)

Sociologists have continued to identify these patterns in virtually all work settings. Two examples are Donald Roy’s (1952) study of “goldbricking” (the hidden cultural processes through which workers organized their activities to restrict production in the machine shop) and Burawoy’s (1984) study of worker resistance in the assembly line world.

Becker (1952) was the first to study the occupational culture of artistic workers, which introduced the importance of worker interaction with their publics. The jazz musicians Becker studied, for example, had conflictual relationships with their audiences. Their decisions about what to play, how to play the songs, and even how to occupy the stage reflected how musicians collectively

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managed their relationships with audiences they largely disdained. Sanders (1974) examined the folk singers' performance strategies from this perspective, and Stebbins (1969) updated Becker's argument to the then contemporary jazz scene. Becker's (1982) tour de force, *Art Worlds*, continued to define art as a negotiated process between audience and producer.

The early sociology of work and occupations also included several studies of work as coordinated activity. Robert Wilson (1954) applied Whyte's perspective on teamwork in the restaurant to the operating room; and Fred Davis (1959) offered the first of many studies of the client and provider in a fleeting relationship, here between the cabbie and his fare.

Finally, sociologists of the early era began to study work, or occupational socialization, a theme that has had an important role to this day. The seminal study was by Becker et al. (1961), a participant observation study of the informal aspects of medical school education. The study of the formation of a professional identity noted, for example, how the "precynical" attitudes of the young student were invariably replaced with the "cynical" (socialized for failure) attitudes of the doctor. Becker and Geer's (1958) excerpt from that study went further, labeling this the "fate of idealism" in medical school. In the 1980s, Haas and Shaffir (1982, 1984) restudied the ideological conversion of medical training in a Canadian medical school with specific reference to Becker and Hughes's pioneering study.

By the 1950s, the study of work and occupations had gained a strong foothold in American sociology. These close-up case studies (ethnographies in the modern parlance, though not called that at the time) served as an alternative to American sociology dominated by survey research and a methodological concern with scientific rigor, what Gouldner and others referred to as "positivist grand theory." It was largely through the study of work and occupations that fieldwork, during these decades of methodological and theoretical hegemony, remained viable as a method.

The 1960s and 1970s saw the application of previously introduced themes to new subject areas. The most significant was work socialization, but now focused across the full range of occupations and sociological themes. For example, Blanch Geer and Howard Becker studied occupational socialization in a five-year research project, "Educational Experiences for Non-College Youth," which led to Geer's (1972) edited volume on trade work socialization. Sociologists studied how violence and abusive socialization integrated workers into dangerous work roles in the coal mine (Fitzpatrick 1980; Vaught and Smith 1980) and how hip seminaries socialized ministers to the political correctness of the day (Kleinman 1984). Others studied military socialization and the normalization of deviance (Bryant 1974a) and the process through which workers internalized values and norms in the skilled trades (Riemer 1977). The challenge of these studies remains in

the development of truly comparative analyses of similar social processes in different settings.

During the 1960s, the study of work and occupations became more critical and phenomenological. For example, Egon Bittner's (1967) ethnomethodological study of peacekeeping on skid row described the "practical accomplishment of police work"; Jerry Jacobs's (1969) study of a social welfare agency applied Weber's understanding of rationalization to the crushing irrationalities of bureaucratic life. Critical studies of industrial work, recalling Marxian themes of alienation and control, were developed in Eli Chinoy's (1964) study of assembly line workers. Zucher's study of Hughes's (1959, 1960, 1965) several papers on the relationship between occupations and professions captured the interest of scholars studying law, medicine, funeral directors, and others.

The study of people involved in so-called deviant occupations, such as strippers and prostitutes, became common during the 1970s (e.g., Heyl 1977), and others studied how deviant activity such as theft or drug use was integrated into nondeviant work roles. For example, Ditton (1977) showed how delivery workers in the United Kingdom learned to cheat customers. Bryant (1974b) detailed the routines of deviant use of drugs and alcohol in the military. I (Harper 1982) studied how railroad tramps cycled through identities that cast them as homeless alcoholics, masters of the complex railroad migration, and fruit harvesters in the Pacific Northwest. Habenstein's (1962) study of funeral directors showed how an occupation can be both professional and deviant.

Hochschild's (1979) study of the emotion work of airline stewardesses was the seminal study of emotion work. Subsequent studies of emotions on the job focused on how workers managed boredom, fear, anger, and love as part of the cultural mastery of work. One of the most compelling is Haas's (1977) study of techniques for mastering fear as part of the emotional socialization of high steelworkers.

Several scholars who subsequently became major contributors to the subfield first published in the 1970s. These included John Van Maanen (1973, 1976), who contributed several important books and papers on police socialization and occupational phenomenology, and Robert Faulkner (1973a, 1973b), who described the contingencies of the career of musicians in a low-prestige orchestra. Robert Bogdan (1972) studied the interactive milieu of face-to-face sales; Jack Haas and William Shaffir (1982, 1984) returned to the subject of the professional socialization of medical doctors; and Gary Fine (1985) studied trade school students learning to cook for a social class above their own.

During the 1980s, sociologists began to study the impact of increasing gender equality in the workforce. Many studies showed the problematical aspects of female socialization into previously male occupational worlds. For example, Vaught and Smith (1980) examined women's experience of degrading initiation rituals in an underground coal mine, Lembright and Riemer (1982) studied the socialization of women truckers via the apprenticeship

system, and Jurik (1988) was but one of several sociologists to study the socialization of female corrections officers. Many of these studies documented the pervasive effect of male occupational cultures that remained resistant to gender integration of previously male work worlds.

I identified, in the past 15 years (1990–2005), 93 article- or chapter-length studies of work and occupations. This compares to 65 during the 1980s, 52 during the 1970s, 20 during the 1960s, 18 during the 1950s, and a handful before that time. In fact, for the past four decades there has been, curiously, about the same number of published studies, between 50 and 60 per decade. The subject matter of the recent scholarship has reflected earlier preoccupations (the professions, with 24 studies during the 1990s and 10 in the past five years, have outnumbered all other job classifications), but the specifics of these studies have changed. Garot's (2004) ethnomethodological study of bureaucratic emotions may be at one extreme; Groce and Cooper's (1990) study of women in rock and roll bands, a study of gender and artistic division of labor, at the other. An important direction, represented by Macias's (2003) study of the role of informal networks among Mexican-American professionals, combines the study of ethnicity with job culture. Several studies of professions are located outside the United States, notably Lewis's (1997) study of female judges in Korea and Alvesson's (1998) study of gender dynamics in a Swedish advertising firm.¹

Studies of the working class (nine) were internationally and topically eclectic, including studies of the phenomenology of Icelandic fishing (Thorlindsson 1994), the work ethic of Mexican brewery workers (Firestone et al. 2005), and Dant's (2004) visual study of the garage mechanic. What were largely absent were studies on previous themes of worker resistance on the assembly line, arguably because most assembly lines had migrated to areas of the world where few sociologists plied their trade.

All seven studies of deviant work focused on prostitution, exotic dancing, or stripping for a living (this does not include the study of deviant activities in nondeviant occupations, such as Dabney and Hollinger's [1999] study of illicit prescription use among pharmacists). Indeed, one can draw many conclusions from this one-dimensional focus, but likely the most reasonable is that the area is dominated by a handful of scholars who publish on different aspects of their primary research interests.

Finally, there were two significant additions to the canon. The most important were several studies that explored work in the caring professions, including Isaksen's (2002) study of body and disgust among female caregivers, Murray's several studies of family care work (notably Murray 2000), and Perakyla's (1991) study of what she calls "hope work" by caregivers for the terminally ill. These and several similar studies have given the studies of work and occupations a place in the "caring service work" studies that are increasingly relevant.

The other new addition to the canon has been the study of welfare reform work, the experience of unemployment,

and the shift of work from the workplace to the family. These studies have demonstrated the relevance for sociologies of work that abandon the old settings of an economy that is rapidly changing.

WORK CULTURES AND SOCIAL STRUCTURES

Blue Collar Work

We now approach the sociology of work and occupations from the vantage point of job type. We define blue-collar workers as workers who make things, typically using their hands, tools, and machines. Through history these workers would have included skilled castes such as blacksmiths, who had special status and privilege in their communities because their skill was so esoteric and important.

We are interested in how craft work evolved to factory work, and what happened to the culture of work in the meantime. This historical frame of reference necessarily addresses the matter of skill. The craft workers, whether making a wooden wagon wheel (which is very hard to make) in the fourteenth century or fabricating a repair by welding steel in the twentieth century, share a grounding in human mastery that involves both the body and the mind.

On the matter of work culture, we can imagine, largely through historical novels and some fine arts records, the culture of the shop. Here, skilled craftspeople form raw materials into objects that are used by their local communities. The shop of guild members makes everything from stained glass windows and iron latches for a 100-year job building a local cathedral to the beer the workers drink. In the guild, one attains membership by being born into a guild member's family. The first stages of training are marked by the formal status as apprentice, followed by the middle stages as journeyman, and after long years of development, one becomes a master. Thus, the skill one develops in a guild or similar shop circumstance is melded into one's aging. As one gets older, the body deteriorates, but lack of strength and dexterity is balanced against increasing knowledge and ability to apply it.

The skill of modern blue-collar workers is found in the trades such as the high steelworkers studied by Applebaum (1981). In these occupations, self-esteem comes from shared mastery of dangerous work, where small mistakes lead to death. The cultures of unions and union shops, barely studied by sociologists, have declined with the precipitous drop in unionized work in the United States, where most of this sociology is written. Thus, the cultures of skilled workers have declined as work has transformed.

Thus, we turn briefly to the transformation of work via industrialization and its impact on work cultures. The story is a common sociological theme. A craftsman works on a single work process and applies a complex combination of hand, body, and intuitive knowledge to an ever-evolving set of tasks. The things a craftsperson makes are all slightly

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different, and thus they embody the mind and body of the worker. Industrialization included elements such as knowledge of metallurgy sufficient to make machines that could withstand the rigor of massive pounding and snapping and engineering skill that led to machines of previously unimagined complexity. But separating the skill in manufacturing out of the manufacturing process itself meant that the actual human actions involved in manufacture would be repetitive and endless actions connected to the unvarying rhythms of the machine, typically as manifested on the assembly line. The computer I type on was made on an assembly line. The automobile I drive home was, as well. The food I eat, whether fast food, fresh, or packaged, was at least partially processed and assembled on assembly lines.

Humans, however, do not adapt well to unvarying actions that have no intrinsic meaning. Karl Marx described the dehumanization of the industrial process as alienation/separation of the worker from the product, from other workers, and from what Marx called the worker's "species being," that is, the qualities that make a human a human.

Sociologists have entered the workplace as participants (meaning, they take the jobs and report on their experiences) and hence became observers. Others have reported on jobs they had in industrial settings prior to becoming professional sociologists. For example, Donald Roy worked in a machine shop in 1944–1945 in which one was paid "piecemeal" for what one accomplished. Roy discovered that counter to what one would expect, workers did not work as fast as they could to increase their salaries, for if they did, the time-motion experts would adjust the rate of their pay downward. Their hourly pay would not increase with greater effort; working harder would only produce harder work. So the workers found ways to restrict their production and to hide this from management. This, indeed, was work culture: workers, often implicitly, creating networks of culture in which the shared interests of workers prevailed against management (Roy 1952, 1953).

Several sociologists studied how shop settings, background cultures, and forms of work influenced the cultures of alienated, industrial work. Molstad (1986), who studied and worked in a brewery, hypothesized that workers chose boring tasks in the factory over work in which they might have greater responsibility, but less control. Molstad theorized that the uncertainty posed by more interesting work was the dominant factor. In other words, the workers Molstad studied (and worked with) preferred to be alienated rather than challenged.

Degraded work, however, does not necessarily lead to alienation, as shown by Bryant and Perkins's (1982) study of poultry butchers:

Workers must snatch live birds from cages unloaded from tractor trailer trucks and hang them, upside down, on shackles attached to moving conveyor lines. The hanging job may involve 30–40 pound turkeys. The hangers are subjected to wing battering by the dirty, squawking birds who infrequently

urinate and/or defecate on the workers handling them. As the flopping, noisy birds move down the line, they undergo an electric shock intended to relax all muscles for a thorough bleeding after the throat is cut. This step also results in additional excretory discharges from the birds. All five senses of the workers are assaulted. One hanger who was interviewed revealed that, on weekends, he took six to eight showers trying to rid himself of the stench. (P. 203)

Yet the authors noted that "poultry processing employees managed to accommodate themselves; they were pretty satisfied and sustained morale through widespread network of social interaction both on and off the job" (p. 200). They liked chicken work. They bought the results of their work in chicken sales and feasted on the product of their hard work. Why? The workers were from a regional culture in which options were limited. They were uneducated and unexposed to opportunities elsewhere. The wages in the poultry-processing factory were above average. But, most tellingly, the workers found ways to connect on and off the job to form a culture, a collective that gave their lives meaning. One worker, ill with cancer, lovingly told of how her coworkers arranged a bake sale that produced several hundreds of dollars for her (and some great cake!). The hard and unpleasant work of the poultry factory was part of a culture in which a lot of life was rather hard and unpleasant, but a life in which people stood together.

The boredom of assembly line work, that is, the challenge to make one's mind minimally engaged, that is, sufficient to the task, but otherwise available to daydreams, fantasies, and sabotage, is a central theme of working-class life. Perhaps the best article on this subject was written by Roy (1959–1960), where he describes how a stupendously monotonous job with a small coterie of "old-timers" is endured and even enjoyed. "Banana time" has come to stand for the phenomenon in which factory workers create routines of mirth and playfulness to make the time go by. But these rituals, as Roy learned, are fragile. A misstated joke, in Roy's case, wrecked havoc on his ephemeral work culture.

Many sociologists find that the circumstances of a job work against the formation of a job culture. For example, Susan Mulcahy and Robert Faulkner (1977) studied how the physical organization of machines in a shop eliminated the possibility of collective work experience, and thus work culture. Many sociologists and philosophers have addressed the matter of work alienation in the abstract, but few have studied it in the concrete. Those who have discover that in the most unlikely circumstances, workers find richness and meaning in human connection. The sad fact remains unchallenged: Alienated industrial work, begun in England in the 1830s, continues. Our factories are now largely in countries far from our shores (and thus purview), and the workers are likely to be women and children as well as adult men. The work, however, is dehumanizing because of its organization.

The Professions

The study of work and occupations has long focused on the professions. Much of what we say draws heavily on Hughes's several essays on professions and occupations. But Hughes ([1952] 1971) pointed out that the topic of professionalization was of interest to the founding figures of sociology: Comte observed that the "same engineer had kept the waterworks of Paris going before, during and after the Revolution" (p. 365). For Herbert Spencer, the professions all "elaborated, extended or elevated life . . . part of the development of society" (p. 365). And Durkheim noted the propensity of professional groups to generate social rules and to become "impermeable to attempts of outsiders to control them." Durkheim also imagined that occupational groups would provide the basis for social solidarity in an increasingly individualized world.

The earliest professional was a person who took religious vows. By the late seventeenth century, the meaning had become secularized and had come to indicate a special degree of qualification necessary for a category of occupation. Hughes defined it as "the occupation which one professes to be skilled in and to follow . . . A vocation in which professed knowledge is used in the affairs of others" (Hughes [1952] 1971: 375).

The modern professions developed during the early eras of capitalism in Europe, but they were distinctive in societies increasingly dominated by the logic and spirit of the market. Hughes summed this up by comparing the familiar theme of a capitalist world, *caveat emptor* ("let the buyer beware"), with that of the professional, *credat emptor* ("let the taker believe in us").

Hughes took a special interest in the license and mandate of the professions. The occupations claimed license to act and justified actions with mandates for special status, autonomy, and privilege. The license to touch, cut into, or dispose of bodies was granted to the medical and funeral professions. The license to instill ideas and values into the minds of children were assumed by the educational professionals. Religious professionals claim the license to judge our sins and to arrange for their forgiveness, and accounting professionals assume the license to learn and manipulate our finances. Hughes pointed out, however, that with the license to cross these boundaries comes the mandate not to use the knowledge gained by privileged access to further ones' own interests, be they prurient or legitimate. The doctor is not supposed to be ghoulish or sexually aroused by his or her work. The priest is not supposed to become titillated on hearing the sins of others. Educators are not supposed to preach their private orthodoxy (a theme that, incidentally, traces to Max Weber). Of course, professionals and professions are rife with conflict over precisely the forgotten or ignored mandates and misused license.

In exchange for providing these services, professional occupations expect to be self-regulated. They previously defined the schooling necessary to prepare for the profession and determine what tests and examinations will

certify the successful aspirant. They also fight for, and usually win, the right to judge and punish themselves. For example, only a university awards or terminates tenure. In some professions, the autonomy has eroded: For example, individuals have won the right to pit one set of professionals—lawyers—against another—medical doctors—in malpractice suits. The state has initiated the process of accreditation, which has radically diminished the independence of professions.

In essence, the concepts of license and mandate indicate that the professional asks to be trusted to act in the good faith of his or her client. This trust is effected within the reality—perceived more fully by the professional than the client—that not all problems are solvable; only some diseases may be cured and one side loses every law case.

Professional knowledge is assumed to have such depth that it can be mastered by only the brightest and the most dedicated. The knowledge is also distinctive due to its intellectual abstraction: Professionals think objectively about matters that are generally in the realm of the sacred, passionate, or personal spheres of life. This translates to many as irreverence or, ironically, as greater-than-life and creates a distance that sets the professional apart.

Of course, there are those within the professions who deal with the individual and thus use the most concrete forms of professional knowledge (the lawyer who tries cases) and others in the profession who develop professional knowledge itself (those who study law for their entire career, teach in law schools, and write philosophically and analytically about the law). As professions become more powerful, their mandate also expands: Doctors not only become more skilled and knowledgeable about treating disease, but they are called on to define the nature of health, and, by extension, the nature of the good, or most desired life. Politicians are largely recruited from lawyers, who in that role assume the responsibility to organize society legally.

The independence of thought connected to professional life was once reflected in the social independence of the professional. The archetypical professional was contracted individually for services rendered. Hughes reminds us that the original professor of the European university earned the right to teach by gaining the doctoral degree and used the university as a forum and form of validation: His fees were earned directly from students. Indeed, due to the anti-Semitism of the German university system in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Georg Simmel, one of the most important first-generation sociologists, never attained a university position in his home city of Berlin, yet his lectures (his identity was as a "free-floating intellectual") were highly popular and his earnings were lucrative.

The professional ideal type is barely recognizable in modern society. Most professions and professionals have become socially, economically, and politically powerful and are viewed as primarily serving their own interests. The term *professional* has attained a folk definition that indicates those who earn a living doing only one activity,

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such as the professional athlete, who are extravagantly paid, and who seldom demonstrate any meaningful social altruism. Even the expectation of service among professions such as the clergy and teachers and professors has eroded by scandals in the church and political maneuvering among the teaching professions. The ease with which people leave the professions, such as university teaching for more lucrative occupations, confirms the decline of professional calling in modern life and the blurring between the professions and the business world.

Finally, we continue to interpret the category of profession as socially constructed rather than as a description of intrinsic qualities of special occupations. Hughes ([1952] 1971) notes that occupational social mobility was described as early as 1933 in the United Kingdom and in 1939 in America. Professionalization as a process involves extending the educational preparation required for the profession and often the creation of special degrees to certify professional standing, establishing professional societies and licensing boards, establishing a research tradition within the profession that defines its special characteristics, and organizing politically to gain legal power.

Hughes also recognized that the category of “semiprofessional” indicated those occupations that had made a successful claim to full professional status, rather than an indication of the occupation’s intrinsic quality. Lively’s (2001) study of the professionalization of paralegals demonstrates the continuing vitality of this line of thought.

The sociological study of professions includes relationship with clients. Behind the scenes of professional routine, sociologists see the client/professional relationship as negotiated and constructed, often emerging from norms that seem inconsistent with the service ethic that is argued to characterize professional ideology. Sander’s (1994) study of how veterinarians deal with what they term “annoying customers” is one example of studies that document this phenomenon.

Professionalization and Bureaucratization

The single most powerful force affecting professionalization is bureaucratization. As noted, the professional originally was an autonomous provider of services. As these services became more available, it became necessary to regularize fees and to spread the paying of fees in such arrangements as insurance arrangements or state funding.

Bureaucratization has been an inevitable consequence because it provides the most efficient means to organize the increasingly complex process through which professional services are allocated and funded. Further, bureaucracies, such as townships, purchase professional services (such as from engineers) that are often embedded in other bureaucracies. Simply managing the interactions of complex bureaucracies becomes the specialty of yet another branch of a profession of law and civil administration. The spreading of costs through medical insurance allowed doctors to

vastly increase their fees (most are startled to realize that before World War II medical doctors and professors made equivalent salaries), but it has robbed the medical doctors of their autonomy. Doctors are often employees of bureaucracies as varied as hospitals and health maintenance organizations (Hoff 1999); while they are still well rewarded financially, their work has been routinized and can be as controlled as are the tasks of an assembly line worker (though they are not). The relationship between the client and the professional is eroded in the bureaucratized professional environment: Both parties see each other as dehumanized agents rather than as individuals.

The study of the self and the professional identity has been expressed as role closeness, neutrality, or distance in a study of classroom teachers (Khleif 1985). The matter of the professional in organizations has been examined critically in studies of proletarianization or the routinization of professional work and gender inequality within professions such as law (Podmore and Spencer 1982).

Finally, however, the matter of professional culture remains enigmatic. Lines between professions and other occupations are increasingly blurred. Society’s appreciation of professional distinctiveness is vastly diminished, even as the economic inequality that follows the professional fault line increases. The tendency of sociologists to “study down” the social ladder and ability of professions to avoid the gaze of inquiry makes case studies of professional worlds rare. The blurring between the world of commerce and the previous professions also influences this matter. Jackall’s (1988) study of corporate culture (to be distinguished by the spate of books by apologists of the corporate world) is a rare exception.

Service Occupations

We are well used to the idea that our society has moved from a productive economy to a service economy. This means, at the most simple level, that in the late twentieth century, the suddenly prosperous working class (at least in the case of unionized work, such as the steel industry of the American Northeast) priced itself out of existence in a global economy, and as their jobs moved to countries with less well-paid labor forces, the economy has restructured partly around the delivery of services. Professions, of course, deliver services, but we are speaking of service jobs as the doing of tasks or the servicing of people’s needs at the other end of the economic and social spectrum. We might speak of the service occupations as “degraded professions” in that they do not require esoteric knowledge or long periods of training; they do not assume that the practitioners internalize a sense of license or mandate.

It is in the beginning of the twenty-first century that service jobs that depend on telephone service have migrated to the cheaper labor of the less-developed world. The work cultures of the corporate “campuses” of India, where much of our phone-based service work is now performed, have

received attention in the popular press but not yet sustained sociological study.

Still, the world of service occupations close to home is sociologically varied and rich for study. At one end of the sociological spectrum are jobs in child care and elder care (Applegate 1993) and other examples of caregiving that are not strictly in the medical profession. In the United States, these are often poorly paying and carry an ambiguous social status. These workers are expected to be motivated by professional ethics but carry few if any of the rewards. The jobs of family domestics and au pair girls—family servants by another name—have special characteristics that have gained sociological attention. They are “paid in smiles” (Murray 2000) and often they compete with natural mothers for the love of their children (Murray 1998). The focus on the sociology of emotions in the cultural study of work has led to several studies of the emotional labor, and often the emotional rewards, of these semiprofessional service jobs.

However, the primary focus on the service world concentrates on the exploitation of service workers in highly rationalized work environments. This is the core of the McDonalized world: human robots delivering poor-quality products or automatic services to customers who pass by in a blur. These jobs, which do not involve selling, but rather servicing customers, are automated out of existence as grocery and other stores find ways to have customers do the work that was previously performed by this sector of the service economy.

However, the matter of selling, that is, making a pitch and trying to snag a buyer, has been much studied, going back to the beginning of the specialty. Sales involve manipulating the client’s view of her or his needs, and the most successful sales personnel do exactly that. Of course, the more expensive the product, the heavier the game and the bigger the bet. But the matter of interactive manipulation is the same, no matter the level.

Finally, there are a small number of studies of the “craft” of service work, especially in the semiskilled occupations. Lawson’s (1999) study of barbering shows the skill and interactive context in which it is played out. Bell’s (1976) study of bartending is one of a few studies of the aesthetic character of a service occupation. The one study of the small-shop mechanic (Harper 1987) uses photographs in interviews that probe the meaning of a bricoleur’s work: his skill, tools, materials, and social life that emerged from his work. The project was the first to integrate visual sociology methods to the cultural study of work.

We conclude this section with Everett Hughes:

Persons and organizations have problems; they want things done for them—for their bodies and souls, for their social and financial relations, for their cars, houses, bridges, sewage systems; they want things done to the people they consider their competitors or their enemies . . . it is in the course of interaction with one another and with the professionals that the problems of people are given definition. (Hughes 1994:72)

Seen this way, the professions and their related poor cousins, the service occupations, remain essential to the cultural study of work.

The Future of Work and Occupations

What are the most important trends in the study of work and occupations? How should the subdiscipline develop? Looking at about 400 studies published in the past 50 years, I note the persistence of the case study method. Recent years have brought new research in gendered work, work and welfare policy, and work at home. What was once a branch of American sociology has seen increasing contributions from sociologists abroad, especially from the United Kingdom and France, where Hughes and Becker remain figures of importance. The setting of the case studies was once the factory or the boardroom; now it is increasingly the global system.

This being said, there is vastly unrealized potential in the sociology of work and occupations. Sociologists have focused increasingly on the professions, with 34 of 93 article-length publications in the past 15 years, leaving the remaining two-thirds of the canon to address issues relating to proletarian work, welfare reform work, theory, service work, semiprofessional work, and deviant work. Within the professions, sociologists disproportionately study the medical field, which partly reflects the specialist journals in specialized medical areas (nursing, physiotherapy) that have encouraged the development of occupational ethnography. Many professions are glaringly missing (or nearly) from sociological scrutiny: the political world (at all levels), professional sports, the legal world (lawyers, judges, and others), the clergy, and university work cultures. The question of access is undoubtedly responsible for some of this missing research, but since sociologists successfully find their way into medical work settings, this cannot be the whole problem.

The cultures of the corporate world have also largely escaped sociological study. Robert Jackall’s (1988) study of the culture of the corporate world, penetrating and highly critical, is the single thick description of arguably the most influential form of work in the modern world. The corporate world produces its own canon of ideological and self-congratulatory books about what they describe as “corporate culture,” and the corporate world aggressively protects itself from sociological scrutiny. Jackall got access to his research sites almost by accident, and it is likely true that the firms he studied never really understood what he was doing there. The corporate world continues to suffer crises of legitimacy due to “Enron”-type scandals and will likely remain wary of ethnographic investigation.

Studies of working-class labor have moved from the factory to fishing boats, meatpacking plants, and, significantly, the world of day labor. While the broadening of topics is welcome, the final work on assembly line work has certainly not been written. The study of work in the

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factories of the Third World is indeed a gaping hole in the literature.

This brings me to my final point. The sociology of work and occupations has begun to embrace the globalized work worlds. Two studies deserve special mention. One is Collins's (2003) study of the global apparel industry. Collins shows how contemporary manufacture of thread, cloth, and clothes evolved from the paternalistic mill towns of the American Southeast, first to factories in Mexico that were tied to specific manufacturing firms and, most recently, to the "just-in-time" manufacturing strategies of firms like Liz Clairborne. Collins calls her work a "multi-sited" work ethnography and, indeed, applies her sociological lens to the corporate boardrooms of Liz Clairborne (admittedly, more could be done in that setting), to the Mexican factories, and to the international middlemen who increasingly shift orders from one factory to another; from Thailand to Hong Kong; from China to India, depending on the fraction-of-a-cent difference on an estimate. Collins has successfully married the microanalysis of work ethnography (and, in the case of Mexican workers, the ethnography of home and work in combination) with the largest patterns of industrial structure.

The globalization of work is but an aspect of the separation of work from its immediate context. The teaching profession clings to the idea that their presence in the classroom is an important aspect of their work; increasingly

sophisticated computer systems create distanced learning processes in which the teacher is disembodied and otherwise separated from the objects of their labor.

The second project that examines micro and macro aspects of globalized work (though not as thoroughly) is Brandt's (2002) study of the "trail of the tomato." Brandt has long worked as a sociologist, as well as an activist, and was able, like Collins, to do meaningful fieldwork among the migrant Mexican tomato harvesters. Her book weaves the family and work stories of these workers into a global context, which places their work systems into the work worlds of single-mother cashiers in the Canadian supermarkets where the tomatoes are eventually sold. The sinew holding these stories together is a worldwide system of food production characterized by high transportation costs, genetic engineering, and environmental irrationalities. Like Collins, Brandt reveals systems in which specific work cultures unfold.

The future study of work and occupations will depend on a continuing supply of sociologists trained in the intensive field methods tradition. Luckily there remain important graduate centers where field methods and ethnography balance the dominant methodological paradigms. Certainly, one can easily see that many of the most important questions in sociology have been approached by the subdiscipline, while, at the same time, it is clear that much remains to be done.