Sociology,

Work and Industry

THIRD EDITION

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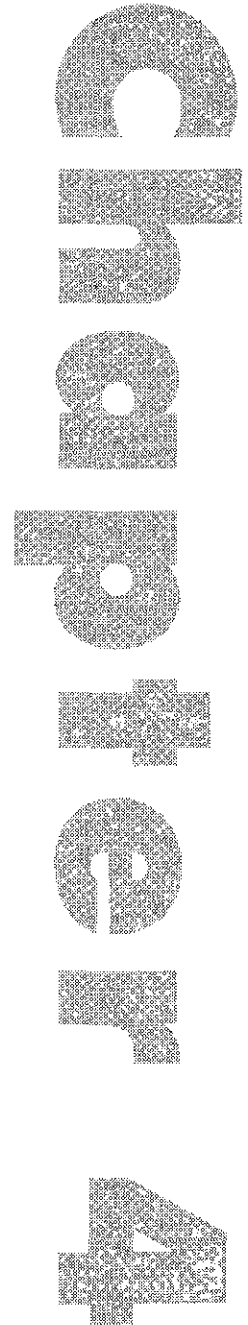
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Chapter 4

Work: meaning, opportunity and experience

Introduction

All living creatures expend some kind of effort in the process of acting upon and taking from their environment whatever they need for survival. Human beings are not different from any other animal in this general respect. They are, however, different in three important ways:

- Humans, as a species, have devised an infinitely greater variety of ways of dealing with their material situation.
- Humans are unique in the extent to which they have divided up and allocated particular tasks to individuals and groups within the general task of subsisting.
- Human beings differ from animals in the way they bring value-based conceptions of alternatives to the problem of maintaining life.

The human capacity to make choices on the basis of values means that both the methods of work which human beings adopt as well as the social organisation which accompanies them cannot be explained by reference to any clearly definable set of instincts. Human agency, choice, values and interpretations are essential factors to be appreciated in any examination of work forms and experiences.

Work is basic to the ways in which human beings deal with the problems arising from the scarcity of resources available in the environment. The scarcity of resources in the world influences the patterns of conflict and competition which arise between social groups. It follows from this that the social organisation of work will reflect the basic power relationships of any particular society. But patterns of social relationships do not relate to power structures alone. They are also closely connected to patterns of meaning. Thus the ways in which people think and feel about work will closely relate to their wider political and religious doctrines and to their general cultural orientations.

Work, meaning and culture

> ### Work
> The carrying out of tasks which enable people to *make a living* within the environment in which they find themselves.

This definition is not as simple or straightforward as it at first appears. The notion of 'making a living' implies much more than just producing enough material goods to ensure physical survival. People do not simply extract a living from the environment. In many ways work effectively transforms environments and, in the process, creates for many a level of living far in excess of basic subsistence. Not only this but the work which people do becomes closely bound up with their conception of self. In 'making a living' we are dealing simultaneously with the material and the cultural aspects of our existence.

A society, or a part of a society has its distinctive culture.

> ### Culture
> The system of meanings which are shared by members of a human grouping and which define what is good and bad, right and wrong and what are the appropriate ways for members of that grouping to think and behave.

As Williams (1981) argues, a culture is a 'signifying system' and through it a social order 'is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored'. People, as this implies, do not simply follow the culture into which they are born, but both take from it and give to it in the process of dealing with the problems of human existence. And these problems of human existence are shared by all social groups. As Bell (1977) stresses, there are recurrent existential problems which are common to all human groups:

- The meaning of death.
- The nature of obligation.
- The character of love.

All cultures offer those who live within them ways of coming to terms with these basic problems but, of course, different cultures vary in the particular way the problems are approached. And since the problems of how 'properly' to go about working and 'making a living' face all human groups, we would expect every society, through its culture, to have its distinctive way of making sense of the question of work and a distinctive set of values and priorities giving guidance on how its members should proceed with it.

It is important to recognise that the meaning which work has for people in any particular setting and at any particular time is influenced by a wide range of factors (Joyce 1987). We can nevertheless note some broad patterns of difference which have existed historically:

- The ancient Greeks regarded the most desirable and the only 'good' life as one of leisure. Work, in the sense of supplying the basic necessities of life, was a degrading activity which was to be allocated to the lowest groups within the social order and, especially, to slaves. Slavery was the social device which enabled the Greeks to maintain their view of work as something to be avoided by a full human being: what human beings 'shared with all other forms of animal life was not considered to be human' (Arendt 1959).
- The Romans tended to follow the Greek view; the Hebrews viewed work as unpleasant drudgery which could nevertheless play a role of expiating sin and recovering a degree of spiritual dignity (Tilgher 1930).
- Early Christianity also modified the relatively extreme Greek view and recognised that work might make one healthy and divert one from sinful thoughts and habits. Leading thinkers of the Catholic Church, such as Aquinas, were influenced by the Greek view but a doctrine did emerge which gave a role for work in the Christian scheme whereby it was seen as a penance arising from the fall and original sin. It also contributed to the virtue of obedience but was by no means seen as noble, rewarding or satisfying; 'its very endlessness and tedium were spiritually valuable in that it contributed to Christian resignation' (Anthony 1977).
- The Reformation and the emergence of Protestant Christianity saw work coming to be treated positively within western cultures. With Luther we see the suggestion that work can itself be a way of serving

God. The historical implications of this Protestant work ethic were fully discussed in the previous chapter and the future of it will be considered in the final chapter. What we must note here is that it established the all-important idea that one's work was a 'calling' of equivalent value to that of a religious vocation which had previously involved a turning of one's back on the mundane and a movement 'upwards' towards virtue and other-worldliness.

• With the growth of modern industrial capitalism we see the work ethic spreading further and wider.

The modern work ethic

makes work the essential prerequisite of personal and social advancement, of prestige, of virtue and of self-fulfilment.

Where not to work and membership of a 'leisured class' had once been an indicator of prestige and a 'good life' it is now associated with failure and even disgrace. Although this may not be formally underpinned by religious faith it has a religious tone to it. The ideas of a duty to work and to be dutiful in work are essentially moral and go deeper than our rational attachment to how we make a living. As Max Weber put it, 'the idea of duty in one's calling prowls about in our lives like the ghost of dead religious beliefs' (1965).

Associated with the notion that people can achieve self-fulfilment or self-actualization in their work and their careers is its opposite: work alienation. This notion, which is derived from Karl Marx's analysis of capitalist society and his view that the essence of human existence is found in people's capacity to labour and transform the material world, has been very influential in sociology. It has been widely used by those wishing to understand the dehumanising potential of industrial or capitalist organisation of work.

The basic notion underlying the concept of alienation is one of 'separation' (Schacht 1970) and, in Marx's usage, various forms of 'separation' within human experience under capitalism are indicated. The fragmenting of experience which Marx discusses is the result of the capitalist organisation of work activity and not, as it is sometimes wrongly

taken to be, an outcome of the use of any particular kind of machinery or work method.

Marx sees the worker under capitalism

- Alienated from other people.
- Alienated from the product.
- Alienated from one's own labour.
- Alienated from one's self.

Individuals are seen by Marx as alienated in various ways in capitalist society:

- They become alienated or estranged from other people as relationships become merely calculative, self-interested and untrusting.
- They become alienated from the product of their efforts since what is produced is expropriated from them and was not, anyway, conceived by the workers themselves to meet their own ends or needs.
- They are alienated or separated from their own labour in that they do not derive the satisfactions or the delight that is possible in labour since that labour is forced upon them as a means of meeting other needs and because they put themselves under the control of other people in the work situation.
- In all this, the work of individuals becomes an alien thing which oppresses them. Yet, potentially, it could be a source of human fulfilment, and here we come to the essential element of the Marxian notion of alienation – people can be alienated from themselves.

Marx's conception of human nature assumes that people realise their essential nature, as a species, through productive work which is carried out for their own purposes and not under the control and exploitation of others. What this implies – and many users of the concept of alienation forget this – is that alienation is basically an objective state. Alienation is not necessarily reflected in felt job dissatisfaction or in frustration. A

person may be very happy sitting at a desk in someone else's factory five days per week, sorting pieces of paper which mean little to them in return for a wage. Yet, in the Marxian conception of alienation, this person is alienated; they are not fulfilling themselves in the way they might be were they working under different conditions. People are alienated when they are not being what they possibly could be, and for people to become what they could be – to fulfil themselves or achieve 'self-actualization' – they must create a society which, although taking a basically different form from capitalism, is still one in which work, as a source of fulfilment in its own right, is central.

Because work is still seen as central to human self-fulfilment, the apparently radical Marxist critique of capitalist work forms can, ironically, be criticised as functioning as a conservative work ideology: 'the essential paradox of alienation is that it emerges with any meaning only as a result of an overemphasis on a work ethic and work-based values' (Anthony 1977). People can be seen as alienated from their work only when they have been subjected to an ideology of work which requires them to be devoted to it. Anthony sees alienation as a 'managerial conception' functioning within an ideology of work which, like all ideologies of work, is essentially a defence of subordination. He argues that a stress on the importance of work which goes beyond the necessary part which it must play in meeting other needs is required only when some groups require the labour of others to meet economic ends other than those of the people in whose mind the required work has to be justified. Thus Marxist stress on the problem of alienation is precisely equivalent to the stress on self-actualization in the work of the 'enlightened' management theorists discussed earlier. Both ideas, or rather how they are used, serve to close off human options. They imply that, whatever we do in the future, our work must be central to our lives, psychologically as well as materially.

Whatever the possibilities for the future may be, we have to recognise that work currently takes up a large proportion of many people's lives and that the satisfactions and deprivations which it – or the lack of it – involves are not equally shared across the social structure. We must now explore the various ways in which these experiences and meanings are patterned in modern societies. And our starting point will be at the level of the individual and how individuals vary in the way they approach and experience work.

Work orientations and worker behaviour

The key concept to be used here is that of work orientation.

Orientation to work
The meaning attached by individuals to their work which predisposes them both to think and act in particular ways with regard to that work.

The notion of orientation to work is used to investigate the various ways in which different individuals and groups approach their work and it takes as its starting point a fundamental distinction which was implicit in much of the thinking discussed above: a distinction between work meanings in which work offers intrinsic satisfactions to people and meanings which recognise only extrinsic satisfactions. From this dichotomy we can set up two extreme ideal types of work meaning and suggest a continuum along which people's actual positions can be located as suggested in Figure 4.1.

Unfortunately, this essentially binary way of looking at what work means to people has encouraged an 'either/or' type of debate. Much discussion of work attitudes and work motivation has centred upon the question of whether people generally are intrinsically or extrinsically oriented towards their work. It is therefore frequently debated whether, on the one hand, people generally go to work 'just for the money' or 'basically for company' or, on the other hand, they primarily want 'job satisfaction' or self-fulfilment. But this is simplistic and industrial sociologists have developed the concept of work orientation to go beyond this and to show how people's approach to their work typically includes mixtures of these basic inclinations whilst nevertheless containing specific leanings in one or other of these general directions. And the concept has been employed to help explain the factors, both individual and structural, which influence people's attitudes and behaviour with regard to their work.

In the social sciences, much of the thinking about attitudes and behaviour at work has derived from a concern with manual workers. Two reasons can be suggested to explain this:
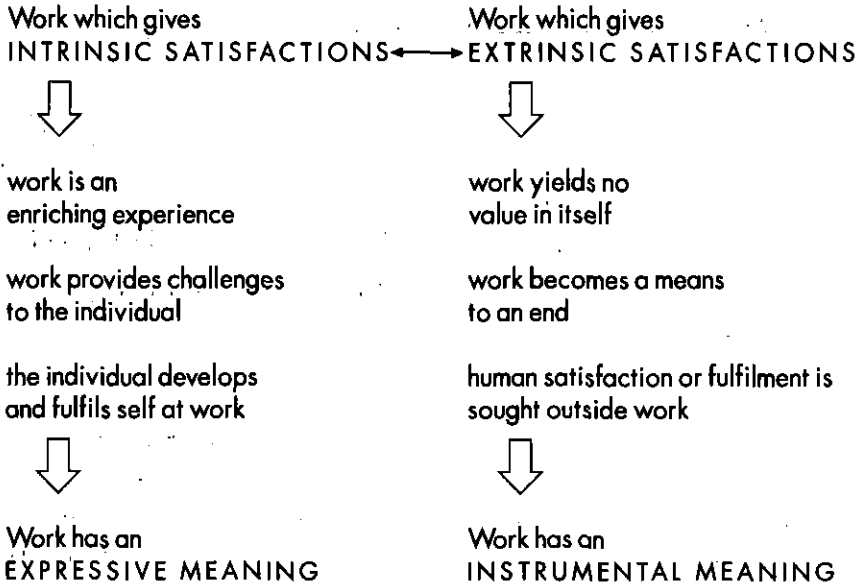
Work which gives
INTRINSIC SATISFACTIONS ⟷ EXTRINSIC SATISFACTIONS
Work which gives

⬇

work is an
enriching experience

work yields no
value in itself

work provides challenges
to the individual

work becomes a means
to an end

the individual develops
and fulfils self at work

human satisfaction or fulfilment is
sought outside work

⬇   ⬇

Work has an
EXPRESSIVE MEANING

Work has an
INSTRUMENTAL MEANING

FIGURE 4.1   Meanings of work: a continuum

- Such groups have been more accessible to investigation.
- Manual workers have been regarded as a particularly problematic group.

This second factor applies in an immediately managerial sense in that managements are always interested in ideas which might give them insight into the motivations and activities of those whose efforts they have to direct. A corresponding concern also exists at the socio-political level. The 'working class', its loyalties, aspirations and accommodations has been a focus of concern ever since its creation. Sociologists have been at the forefront of those showing this concern. In looking at the development of theoretical perspectives on the relationship between work and the individual, therefore, we inevitably find ourselves examining the changing ways in which sociologists have attempted to explain shopfloor attitudes and behaviour. My intention now is to look at the progress which has been made in this field and then attempt to build on what has been achieved in such a way that we can use one theoretical apparatus to look at work as it is experienced at various levels and in various spheres.

Traditional thinking about industrial behaviour tended to focus on the assumed 'needs' of workers, concentrating sometimes on the economic needs of the employees, as with the scientific managers, and sometimes on their so-called social needs, as with the human relations tradition. A significant breakthrough in distinctively sociological analysis was made, however, once closer attention was given to the influence of technology in the workplace. The technological implications approach discussed later in this chapter stressed the influence that technology can have on the way people act and think at work.

Although the orientations to work perspective gives a less central role to technology as an influence on work attitudes and behaviour than the technological implications approach, the importance of its insights should not be underestimated. It is vital, however, not to assume some relatively direct causal link between the technology being applied and the attitudes and behaviour of those applying it. In practice, we often find that there are differences in attitudes and behaviour between organisations which have similar technologies and that even within a given organisation changes may occur which are the result of adjustments other than to the technology itself. This can be illustrated by looking at two studies of the car industry. Turner *et al.* (1967) in their investigation of industrial relations in the car industry pointed out that the differences in strike records of different car manufacturers could not be put down to variations in technology and Guest's (1962) US case study demonstrates the possibilities of changes in conflict and general interpersonal behaviour which can be achieved by changes in managerial policy and staff.

The research study which first introduced the notion of 'orientation to work' also looked at workers in the car industry. As part of their wider study of social class in Britain in the 1960s, Goldthorpe, Lockwood *et al.* (1968) examined the attitudes and behaviour of assembly line workers in the Vauxhall plant in Luton. These workers did not appear to be deriving either intrinsic or social satisfactions from their work experience. Yet they did not express dissatisfaction with the jobs which they were doing. The possible paradox here was removed by the authors' explanation that these workers had knowingly chosen work with these deprivations, regarding such work as a means to a relatively good standard of living which could be achieved with the income made on the assembly line. The workers were said to have an *instrumental orientation* to work. The sources of this orientation were in the class, community and family backgrounds of the

employees and not in the workplace itself. The technological impli-
cations approach was strongly questioned by the finding that workers in
other technological situations investigated (a chemical plant and a batch-
production engineering plant) had similar work orientations with conse-
quently corresponding patterns of behaviour and attitude. Technology
thus appears to be less important a variable than had previously been
suggested. The motives, interests and outside-work background of the
worker had to be taken into account if not given central emphasis. These
authors accepted that technology does have an influence but argued that
this influence has to be put into the context of what it is people are
looking for in their work.

The work orientation perspective

takes the employee's own definition of the situation as an 'initial
basis for the explanation of their social behaviour and relationships'
(Goldthorpe, Lockwood *et al*. 1968).

This approach has the great strength of encouraging us to recognise the
variety of meaning that work can have for employees.

Whilst accepting that all work in industrial societies has an
instrumental basis, Goldthorpe, Lockwood *et al*. suggest that a typology
of work orientations can nevertheless be offered. These are indicated in
Figure 4.2. We see here the following orientations:

- An instrumental orientation associated with the study's affluent
  manual workers.
- A bureaucratic orientation reflecting patterns found among white-
  collar employees.
- A solidaristic orientation inferred from the authors' understanding
  of more 'traditional' working-class employment situations like
  coalmining and shipbuilding.

In the same way that the technological implications approach
represented a move towards an approach which was more sociological
than those approaches which had emphasised universal human needs,
so this move towards an analysis in the social-action tradition can be

ORIENTATION TO WORK	PRIMARY MEANING OF WORK	INVOLVEMENT IN EMPLOYING ORGANISATION	EGO-INVOLVEMENT	WORK AND NON-WORK RELATIONSHIP
INSTRUMENTAL	Means to an end. A way of earning income	Calculative	Weak. Work not a central life interest or source of self-realisation	Spheres sharply dichotomised. Work relationships not carried over into non-work activities
BUREAUCRATIC	Service to an organisation in return for career progress	'Moral' elements: some sense of obligation	Individual's position and prospects are sources of social identity	Not sharply dichotomised. Work identity and organisational status carried over
SOLIDARISTIC	Economic but with this limited by group loyalties to either mates or firm	'Moral' when identification is with firm. 'Alienative' when this is more with workmates than with employer	Strong social relationships at work are rewarding	Intimately related. High participation in work-linked formal or informal associations
PROFESSIONAL		No details given		

FIGURE 4.2 Four possible orientations to work

Source: Based on Goldthorpe, Lockwood et al. (1968): 38–41

seen as progressing towards an even more fully sociological under-standing. It recognises the importance to any appreciation of what goes on within work of both the individuals and their social context. This had not been totally ignored previously. Such an approach became central to industrial sociology, however, only with the appearance of Goldthorpe, Lockwood *et al.*'s Affluent Worker study, despite the fact that Weber himself foreshadowed such developments early in the century. The analysis provided by Goldthorpe, Lockwood *et al.* has been shown by researchers who have revisited the Luton setting to have

exaggerated the amount of choice being exercised by the 'instrumental workers'. Devine (1992a) and Grieco (1987) have pointed to pressures of avoiding unemployment and looking for better housing which were as relevant as a desire to maximise earnings. The study can also be criticised for going too far in stressing the factors which influence workers'' initial choice of job and for failing to recognise that the individual's work orientation, once in that job, is constantly liable to change as a result of both factors operating within and factors located outside the workplace. Subsequent work in this area has suggested that attention to 'prior orientation' to work has to be balanced by a greater recognition of the structural conditions in which these orientations then operate and a recognition that orientations or definitions of the situation are not necessarily fixed but are dynamic.

Changing orientations and the individual worker

By showing that the workers whom Goldthorpe and Lockwood studied in Luton acted at work and thought about their work in a particular way which was most strongly influenced by their deliberate choice to move into the car industry for extrinsic rather than intrinsic rewards, the authors tended to underplay the potential degree of influence which factors within work itself might have on work attitudes and behaviour generally. To apply the notion of orientation to work to a wider range of work situations we have to take into account several arguments which have been made by researchers subsequent to the publication of the Luton study.

Beynon and Blackburn (1972), as a consequence of their detailed study of a factory involved in the manufacture of luxury foods, argue that although employees tend, as far as possible, to select employment in keeping with their priorities in what they want from work they nevertheless make important accommodations and adjustments once in work, as their experience is influenced by such workplace factors as work processes, pay levels and power structures. Orientations are also shown to be influenced by biographical factors in the worker's life outside the factory. The authors argue that the rejection of the adequacy of explanations based on technological determinacy and systems needs should not lead us to adopt one which replaces an analysis of the work

situation with one based on prior orientations. They felt that the Luton study came 'dangerously near to being stuck the other side of the factory gates'. Wedderburn and Crompton (1972) who studied three chemical plants, make a similar point. These authors found that the workers whom they studied generally displayed the instrumental orientations to work described in the Luton study. However, they found that within specific work settings different workers displayed different attitudes and behaviour which 'emerged in response to the specific constraints imposed by the technology and the control setting'. As Bechhofer (1973) puts it, we should not ignore the influence of factors such as technology on work orientations but might most usefully regard these as non-social *conditions* of action rather than actual *sources* of action.

In a significant critique of their work, Daniel accused Goldthorpe, Lockwood *et al.* of failing to recognise the complexities of what it is workers look for in their jobs. He argues that the researchers paid too much attention to the job choice situation and thus failed to recognise that, once in work, employees display varying priorities, attitudes and interests – depending on the context in which we look at them. Daniel (1973) suggests that different attitudes will prevail, for instance, in what he calls the bargaining context from those which are indicated in the work context:

- In the *bargaining context* priority is given to the material rewards accruing from the job. The negative aspects of the job are stressed (these justifying appropriate compensation) and the management is seen as being the 'opposite side'.
- In the *work context*, where the work content itself is the focus of interest, we find that there is more concern with the quality of work experience and with the social rewards of contact and communication with others, and we find that the relationship with management is 'more characterised by a sense of common interests'.

The importance of Daniel's contribution here is considerable. It suggests that every employee is likely to have different priorities at different times and in different contexts. Definitions of the situation vary with the aspect of the situation which is of primary concern at any particular time. The employee acting to improve his or her pay packet or salary is not likely to show much interest in job satisfaction at that point in time. However,

once the individual returns to the machine or desk, the intrinsic satisfactions to be gained in that specific context may come to the fore. The study of ICI's attempt to introduce 'participation' among a semi-skilled workforce in a nylon-spinning plant illustrates this tendency. The improved quality of working experience was recognised and appreciated by the workforce yet, as the authors comment, 'this does not extend to any radical change when it comes to pay and effort-bargain. On this there are still two sides facing each other over a table in collective bargaining' (Cotgrove *et al.* 1971).

What is becoming clear is that to understand work behaviour we must recognise the importance of dynamic orientations and that, instead of relating work attitudes and behaviour in a direct way to either fixed psychological needs or technological constraints, we must recognise that individuals see things differently and act accordingly in different situations and at different times. This may seem fairly obvious but, as with so many generalisations which emerge from sociological study, this insight is not always present in our everyday thinking. We can illustrate this by looking at the common practice in industry of labelling individuals in specific ways, as 'an ambitious career woman' or as 'a poor team member', say. Let us consider several examples of the ways in which the appropriateness of such labels might change as an individual's orientation changes. These are all examples from personal experience in the engineering industry.

- An apprentice was widely regarded by supervisors as a 'poor worker' and as something of a trouble-maker. The apprentice's girlfriend became pregnant, they got married and he not only settled to his training but applied himself to his work in a way which he hoped would help him achieve eventual promotion.

- A long established foreman was regarded by managers as the epitome of the 'loyal company man'. But, like many other 'loyal company men' among his colleagues, he became increasingly angry at the erosion of supervisory authority in a period of rapid organisational and technical change. He encouraged his colleagues to unionise and present a militant opposition to the management, the ferocity of which had previously been unimaginable.

- A graduate trainee was assessed as 'having little interest in the firm'. He then found himself in a training placement which he saw as

giving him access to the type of advancement he had previously felt unlikely to occur.

- A shop steward who was perceived by managers and workers alike as especially 'militant' and anti-management effectively defeated a set of managerial proposals to which his shop was strongly opposed. After this he became, in the eyes of the management and his colleagues, one of the most 'reasonable' and co-operative of all·the stewards.

These characterisations or labels are important since they influence the way such individuals are treated by other people. The tendency is to assume that these characterisations are fixed qualities of the individuals involved. But these four cases show how changed circumstances can be associated with changed orientations which, in turn, lead to changed perceptions on the part of others and hence to changed behaviour and relationships.

Self-identity and subjectivity at work

The illustrations of people whose work orientations changed with certain work circumstances raise the question of the extent to which the human individual is an entity with some internal consistency over time. Each individual may, through their life, modify their attitudes and behaviour but it does not do justice to the integrity of individuals to view them as mere chameleon-like beings changing with each backcloth on which they are to be viewed. To help us here, we can turn to the ideas of the interactionist strand of industrial sociology and make use of the concept of *self* as it is used in that tradition. It is valuable to see each human being in terms of their *self-identity*, something which each of us develops in the light of our interactions with other human beings.

Self-identity
The conception which each individual develops of who and what they are.

As we move through different situations and circumstances and interact with different 'others' so we adjust ourselves to achieve a sense of selfhood. The life of the individual can be seen as a process. It has a certain pattern, whether this is one viewed by the observer or by the actors themselves. This process is referred to in the interactionist tradition as *career* – a vital concept in linking the subjective aspects of life with its objective circumstances.

Career

A sequence of social positions filled by a person throughout their life.

Looking at individuals' work life objectively, for instance, we see them moving through various structural 'statuses' which may be viewed as making up *occupational careers* (each occupation involves various typical stages through which a member may pass) or *organisational careers* (each organisation has a series of positions through which individuals may move in typical sequences). But individuals also have their own view of the process which their life is following, what Hughes (1937) refers to as the 'moving perspective in which the person sees his life as a whole and interprets the meaning of his various attributes, actions, and the things which happen to him'. This is the individual's *subjective career.*

Subjective career

The perceived pattern which emerges as individuals make sense of the way they move through social positions in the course of their life.

The concept of subjective career is a necessary one if we accept the proposition that 'people seek to achieve overall stability in the outward life and coherence in their inner world' (Collin 1986), a proposition which is central to the interactionist strand of the sociology of work. This further implies that if we wish to understand the work experience of individuals we have to look at their whole life career. We have to trace through their upbringing and education to appreciate what might happen

to them in their later work career. Their work experience is likely to be fundamentally influenced by the wants and expectations of work which they derive from their upbringing as well as by the skills and abilities with which their physique, intellect and social milieu has endowed them.

In explaining the postmodern strand of thinking in Chapter 2, it was noted that various theorists have pointed to the role of discourse in shaping people's subjectivities. Discourses, as we saw, are sets of concepts, statements, terms and expressions which provide a framework within which people come to understand and act towards whatever area of life any given discourse covers. If, say, a discourse is current within a work organisation which uses the expression and concept of a 'conscientious worker' then there will be a tendency for people to locate themselves and others within such ways of speaking. And in doing so, their behaviour is influenced. There has been a tendency in the sociology of work to combine this type of insight with insights from other traditions to analyse processes whereby individuals' identities are shaped at the same time as consent and control are achieved at the organisational or occupational level. Knights and Willmott (1989), for example, combine Marxian labour process concepts with Foucauldian insights to argue that subjectivity can be understood as 'a product of disciplinary mechanisms, techniques of surveillance and power-knowledge strategies'.

The concept of career is used by Grey (1994) to link a series of 'discursive and non-discursive practices' associated with accounting careers. The idea of a career 'provides a meaning and a rationale for the otherwise disillusioning grind of accountancy training'. Regulation of behaviour is thus achieved in the form of a self-discipline which follows from trainees' acceptance of a 'discourse of career'. Sturdy (1992) combines this kind of insight with interactionist notions of the individual striving to achieve a sense of self to throw light on the way the employers of the clerical workers he studied achieved the 'consent' of the workers to carry out managerial requirements. And Collinson (1992) focuses on the subjective experience of shopfloor employment and the role of gender and class elements in employees' subjectivities and how these are linked to patterns of both conformity and resistance in the workplace. He shows, for example, how 'manual workers' socially skilled and culturally embedded practices of resistance, compliance and consent' were 'heavily "saturated" with specific masculine subjectivities'.

Anxiety, emotion and sexuality at work

One outcome of the growing interest in human subjectivity within the sociology of work and work organisations is the attention beginning to be paid to the anxieties, fears and emotions which are part of the human condition. The human being, in order to survive psychologically, has to overcome 'the precariousness of identity implicit in the unpredictability of social relations' (Knights and Willmott 1985). The world is potentially an utterly ambiguous place and, without the set of meanings which is supplied by human culture, people would be unable to cope. Without a sense of order or *nomos* (which comes from culture) the individual would become 'submerged in a world of disorder, senselessness and madness' (Berger 1973). The anxiety or *existential angst*, which people can handle only with the help of culture is more than a matter of specific fears. It has to be understood 'in relation to the overall security system the individual develops' as part of their self-identity (Giddens 1991). However, the human is not a simple creature of its culture in the same way that other animals are largely creatures of their instincts. Cultures are constantly being made by people and each individual has their own interaction – their own pattern of giving to and taking from – the cultures within which they live. This means that a sense of order and self-identity is constantly in the process of being won from the social environment in which we find ourselves. Angst is an ever-present condition which we, each and every one, have to handle. The work context is one of the key arenas in which we experience and learn to handle, more or less effectively, the angst which is inherent to the human condition.

A study of managers in US corporations (Jackall 1988) seeks to demonstrate that managerial work of this kind is especially anxiety-making with managers constantly attempting to hide their daily fears, panics and anxieties behind a mask of self-control and amiability. Jackall shows his managers terrified by the unpredictability and capriciousness of their employment and work experience, a terror which they mask with a demeanour of enthusiasm. A different emphasis is to be found in a British study of managerial experience (Watson 1994a). Here anxiety is seen much more as the normal human condition but it is argued that the nature of managerial work and, especially, its expectation that managers have to exert control over others (directly or indirectly) as well as over their own lives can exacerbate this basic human condition. The fact that

managers have to face a 'double control problem' in this way leads them to seek comfort in managerial 'fads, fashions and flavour of the month' (Watson 1994d) as well as encouraging them to engage in ill-tempered behaviour, threats of violence, interpersonal rudeness as well as more benign joking behaviour. Most of the classic texts on management, Taylor's and Mayo's most notably (see Chapter 2), portray managers as rational non-sentimental beings. This has been to deny the very humanity of those holding command roles in modern bureaucracies.

The image of the bureaucratic office-holder as one who puts sentiment to one side and operates rationally is central to Weber's analysis of bureaucratic functioning. Albrow (1994) argues, however, that Weber's interest in irrationality and affectivity was 'submerged by twentieth-century rationalistic models of organisation'. Following the example of what he calls the 'other Weber', Albrow puts the case for paying much more attention to the place of emotions in organisations 'but as byproducts, interferences or even repressed potentialities and resources, but as integral and essential modalities of organisational performance'. Fineman (1994) argues similarly and points out how being in organisations 'quintessentially' involves us in worry, envy, being comfortable with something, resentment, hurt, sadness, boredom, excitement, happiness, anger and so on. He notes that even the 'dull indifference which pervades some people's work experience' is usually spoken of as 'a feeling'.

Issues of emotionality at work do not arise only because people are people and are therefore continually at the mercy of their feelings. Certain types of work formally require people to engage in what Hochschild (1985) calls *emotional labour*.

Emotional labour

A type of work activity in which the worker is required to display particular emotions in the course of providing a service.

Hochschild shows how the emotional labour required of airline flight attendants who were required continually to wear the 'mask' of a smile when in the presence of passengers took its toll of these workers – whether they were those who complied zealously with the requirement

or were those who handled it self-consciously as a form of 'acting'. There was always the danger of feelings of anger or irritation breaking through the façade of pleasure and happiness. Emotional labour is normally associated with routinised 'lower level' service work but, as Fineman (1993b) points out, skills of emotion-management are also important in the work of doctors, nurses, counsellors or social workers. Serious consequences can follow if the mask slips and there is a failure to 'look serious, understanding, controlled, cool, empathetic' with their patients or clients. Not only this but expulsion from a professional body could follow if 'inappropriate' emotions are expressed. Sexual emotions or behaviours are the most obvious issue here.

There are sexual dimensions to almost every aspect of organisational life, as Hearn and Parkin (1987) show, even if they become clearly manifest only when formal complaints are made about sexual harassment or where events occur such as the hospital 'works do' observed by these authors where open sexual acts occurred with couples making 'blatant use of the premises, both cubby holes and semi-public "back regions"'. Burrell (1984, 1992) points out how managements in organisations ranging from monasteries, prisons and ships at sea to factories and commercial organisations attempt to repress sexual relations and expel them from the organisation into the 'home'. Yet managements may also collude in a degree of expression of sexuality as part of the delivery of what is not formally seen as a kind of sexual service. This is effectively shown in Filby's (1992) research in off-course betting shops where there is an 'elision ... of emotional labour and sexuality' similar to that described by Hochschild. Filby shows how a 'minority undercurrent' of the conversations which occur between staff and between staff and customers involves 'sexy chat' – speech acts 'which themselves are experienced as pleasurable as well as sometimes discomforting and hurtful'. Sexuality is also 'embodied in gaze, deportment and clothing, and sometimes more obviously in expressive physical encounters'. In the light of certain unspoken assumptions which exist about 'what men and women are and what male punters want' there is an extent, says Filby, to which 'these moments are related to the milieux of service delivery as implicitly constructed by management, a milieux which is envisaged as an aid to business'. Put more simply, the management is more than happy for customers to receive a little light sexual amusement. And it might or it might not suit the employees who are expected to provide it.

Having examined these facets of work experience, work meaning and identity we now turn to the processes which in part precede them. In the following section we discuss the factors which influence the individual's life career up to the point at which they enter work.

Entering work

Choice and opportunity structures

A successful sociology is one which does full justice to the interplay between individual characteristics and initiatives on the one hand and structural factors and contingencies on the other. In the large existing literature on the processes leading to people's entry to work there has been a tendency for authors to stress either the individual's *choice* of occupation or the *determining* influence of external factors. Much of the literature on the so-called process of occupational choice is psychologically based and examines the way in which the individual develops and passes through a series of stages during which the self-concept grows as abilities, aptitudes and interests develop. Two very influential theories of this type are those of Ginzberg *et al.* (1951) and Super (1957), the latter giving relatively more attention to the situational factors which condition the eventual occupation which is chosen. Musgrave (1967) attempts to be more sociological by concentrating on the series of roles through which the individual passes at home, in education and early work experience. These roles provide the settings in which the individual is socialised and learns to select the work role in which he or she will eventually settle. However, the problem which arises with this approach is that the structural limitations on choice are underplayed.

In reaction to approaches which exaggerated the degree of free 'choice' which people have about the work they enter, Roberts (1975) stressed that, for many individuals, entry to work is a matter of fitting oneself into whatever jobs are available given the qualifications which one's class and educational background has enabled one to attain. Roberts argues that it is careers which tend to determine ambition rather than the other way round. Careers can be regarded as developing into patterns dictated by the *opportunity structures* to which individuals are exposed, first in education and subsequently in employment, whilst individuals' am-

bitions, in turn, can be treated as reflecting the influence of the structures through which they pass.

In an attempt to do equal justice to the extent to which there are both individual choice factors and structural circumstances working interactively, Layder, Ashton and Sung (1991) make use of the notion of *structuration* (Giddens 1984) as a model which recognises that 'structure and action are inextricably interwoven and should be given equal analytical weighting'. Their research on the transition from school to work shows that structural variables (ones over which they had no control) such as the social class of their parents, their sex and the local opportunity structure (measured by their place of residence and the level of unemployment at the time they entered the labour market) played a more significant role for people entering the middle and lower level jobs in the youth labour market than they did for those entering the higher levels. In the upper segments of the job market it was found that 'the factors which individuals perceive as being a product of their own efforts and achievements are indeed the most significant factors in determining the level at which they enter the labour market'. Individuals here had a greater ability to control their circumstances through strategic activities of job search and behaviour informed by values and attitudes. Research by Banks *et al.* (1992) reveals a similar picture and their findings trace the subtle interplay which occurs between young people's self-identities and the structural circumstances in which they grow up.

Such research indicates that if we wish to produce a model which identifies the various factors which influence how individuals approach work, we must consider both objective and subjective factors. Objectively, the individual has certain resources such as cash, skills, knowledge or physique. Subjectively, the individual has certain motives, interests and expectations such as to make a living, achieve power or gain job satisfaction. Both of these sets of factors are, in turn, strongly influenced by structural factors. These are, on the one side, the structural settings of the individual's family, class, ethnic and educational background and, on the other side, the occupational structure and the prevailing job market. All these factors are interlinked as indicated in Figure 4.3, with the structure of opportunities acting as an influence alongside the various non-work influences on the individual's approach to work.
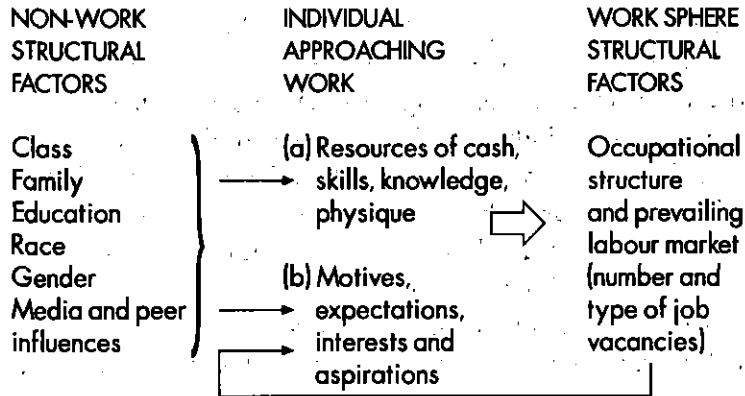
NON-WORK STRUCTURAL FACTORS	INDIVIDUAL APPROACHING WORK	WORK SPHERE STRUCTURAL FACTORS
Class Family Education Race Gender Media and peer influences	(a) Resources of cash, skills, knowledge, physique (b) Motives, expectations, interests and aspirations	Occupational structure and prevailing labour market (number and type of job vacancies)

FIGURE 4.3 Factors influencing the individual's approach to work

Class, family and educational influences

The life career of the individual is influenced to a very considerable extent by the class–family–education cluster of structural factors. The occupational structure of society which people enter when they begin to work (whether their role be in paid or unpaid work) is structured and segregated on a basis of class, status, gender and ethnic factors (Ashton *et al.* 1990). This is something we shall consider in the next chapter, which concentrates on the occupational structure, the division of labour and labour markets. But people do not enter that structure with equal opportunities. Both the resources they take with them and the aspirations which they hold will be influenced by their class, family and educational background together with the way this affects their perception of themselves as members of a particular gender or an ethnic group or as male or female.

Parental occupational and class background is likely to make a significant difference to the individual's life chances both through the material advantages which can be given (buying education or providing books and other learning aids in the home, for example) and through the encouragement or discouragement which is provided. There may be direct pressure on the child's job preferences, with the parents either encouraging or discouraging them from entering work like their own ('I would like my daughter to follow me and go into medicine', 'I do not

want to see a son of mine going down the pit') or a desire to see a child succeed where a parent failed ('I always wanted to be a lawyer and I hope to see one of my children fulfilling my dream'). Family networks can play a significant role in individuals' work opportunities, not just in cases where middle-class parents have contacts which can provide entry to careers for their children, but also where manual workers may 'sponsor' members of their own families in the organisation which employs them. Grieco (1987) shows how this can be helpful both to the employee, who gains support from family members both inside and outside work and is sustained in steady employment, and for employers, whose recruitment costs are kept low and who can look to employees' relatives to help train them and teach them to 'fit in'. Whipp (1992) in a study which shows the significant role played by family networks in the British pottery industry notes that potters frequently 'employed' their own relatives in subcontracting relationships. And in the contemporary Asian small businesses studied by Ram (1993) the employing of family members is shown to have a practical rationale in which family labour is cheaper and easier to supervise (cf. Ward 1987), and an ideological rationale in which there was a concern to develop a 'family culture' for the organisation, one intended to promote trust and to align the goals of managers and employees (though what came about in practice was a form of 'negotiated paternalism', arising as family members resisted impositions).

More generally, socialisation in the home and in society at large, especially through the images seen in the communication media, not only provides information about and evaluations of different occupations, it suggests what kind of work might be appropriate for members of each gender. The evidence for the enormous extent to which boys and girls are socialised differently, from a very early age indeed, is considerable and this is strongly tied to ideas about work roles. Child socialisation strongly colours work career aspirations with influences ranging from those of the games played in infancy through the cultural models provided by fiction and advertising to the personal observations made of existing patterns of occupational segregation. For example, little girls tend to be given nurses' uniforms rather than doctors' garb to play with, they see more male than female doctors in televised fiction and they are actually likely to meet mainly female nurses and male doctors as they grow up. Existing patterns are thus reinforced.

Formal schooling operates alongside the general cultural and family

socialisation processes with, for example, school curricula and practices influencing pupils' ideas of what kind of work is appropriate for each gender. Devine (1992b), for example, shows how the 'gendered' nature of subject choices within the education system 'accounts for the small number of women who embark on technical degree courses in pursuit of high-level careers in industry'. But the educational system plays a crucial role in linking all the non-work influences on the individual's work aspirations, expectations and capacities. If one looks at British evidence ranging from the recommendations of the Taunton Commission of 1868, through to the various reports on education of Hadow, Spens, and Norwood, and the way the Education Act of 1944 was implemented (on the tripartite basis of grammar, technical and secondary modern schools) one can see the extent to which both the organisation of institutions and the thinking of educators have concentrated on the 'process of sorting and grading' people rather than on developing and reinterpreting culture (Williams 1965).

Educational structures have been stratified in ways which match the class and occupational grades which they feed, and to a large degree, reproduce. But, according to certain theorists and researchers, the relationship between educational and work patterns does not stop at this external level of structure. Bowles and Gintis (1976), with their 'correspondence principle', point to the ways in which the internal structuring of educational institutions facilitates 'a smooth integration of youth into the labour force'. The stress here is not on the extent to which teachers, lecturers and administrators consciously and specifically prepare pupils and students for occupational roles but on the way that the structuring of relations within education closely mirrors those of work organisations. Pupils are seen as lacking control over their curriculum in a way which prepares them for the lack of control they will experience at work. As a whole, it is claimed, the relationships of authority and control 'replicate the hierarchical division of labour which dominates the workplace'. Even the ways in which certain school pupils resist authority at school is seen by Willis (1977) as a form of preparation for the way those particular individuals will need to live with their subservient roles once they enter paid employment. The research on youth career entry carried out by Banks *et al.* (1992) is taken by the researchers to 'confirm the centrality of educational career in the reproduction of social inequality'.

A variety of informal factors also comes into play during the

educational process. It is quite possible, for instance, that liking or disliking a certain teacher may influence which subjects a 14 year old opts for and this may lead to the opening-up or the closing-off of spheres of work at a later stage. A rejection of scientific subjects in mid-adolescence, for example, switches the individual out of one educational channel or career area. This kind of process, together with the type of school which the child is attending, the stream or 'sets' to which they are allocated and the perceptions which the teachers develop of the child, all influence the way the child comes to perceive themselves and their future interests. And alongside this are the 'role models' seen in both their personal life and the communication media as well as their general career knowledge and the information they receive from formal career counselling or vocational guidance.

Individual capacities and values

Although, sociologically, we tend to stress structural factors when we examine the factors which influence the life career of the individual approaching work, it is important not to ignore such factors as the preferences and the mental and physical capacities of the individual. Various work careers, especially in the manual categories, require particular physical characteristics and many of those occupations to which children may be attracted by the cultural communication media also require specific individual characteristics, such as the skills of the footballer, the physical beauty and presence of the model and the talent of the entertainer.

The values which the individual holds will also play a part in whatever occupational choice is open to them in their particular milieu. Blackburn and Mann (1979), for example, show how individuals have preferences for outdoor work or for work which provides an opportunity to 'care'. Students in higher education tend to have a relatively wide scope for choice and certain values have been noted by researchers as affecting choices of types of career by students. Rosenberg (1957), for example, showed that students indicating 'people-oriented' values were more strongly oriented towards careers in medicine, social work or personnel management. Students who valued pay and status to a greater degree looked towards business, whilst those putting values of self-expression

foremost were more inclined towards careers in journalism, art or architecture.

There is a danger with studies of this kind that it might be inferred that personal 'values' are determinants of choice. It is equally likely that the values which one would indicate by completing the social scientist's questionnaire would be those which one felt to be congruent with the career towards which the structure of opportunities and the influences of family, education and the rest were pushing or pulling one. Again, we have to be aware of the interplay between individual and structural factors. This is stressed by Banks *et al.* (1992) who also show the interplay between two aspects of individual identity:

1   A self-concept involving such matters as 'self-efficacy, self-esteem and self-confidence, as opposed to depression, poor motivation and estrangement'.
2   Social identity which includes 'various attitudes, values, beliefs and commitments in relation to society and social institutions'.

Personal values are very much influenced by the culture of a society and by the groups within it. If, for example, the non-work culture stresses values which do not coincide with those central to certain areas within the work sphere there may be considerable problems of recruitment to that sphere. An example of this would be the alleged reluctance of the 'most able' youngsters to enter industrial careers in Britain. At the individual level, however, an opportunity to fulfil one's personal values may be a significant 'reward' which one may seek in one's work. It can become part of the implicit contract which the individual makes with their employer, a concept to which we now turn.

The employment relationship and the implicit contract

As individuals move nearer to the point where they are to enter work so we can see a 'prior orientation' to work beginning to crystallise as values, wants and preferences are matched against the jobs which are available and for which they are qualified. Typically, the individual will enter an employing organisation, although the decision to set up one's own business or enter a partnership will involve very similar considerations.

Central to the orientation to work which will influence subsequent attitudes and behaviour will be the way the individual perceives the *implicit contract* which is made between the employee and the employer.

The implicit contract

The tacit agreement between an employer and the employee about what the employee will 'put in' to the job and the rewards and benefits for which this will be exchanged.

The implicit employment contract is the largely tacit agreement made between the two parties with regard to what will be given by each and what each will take from the relationship. The employee's priorities, the resources which they take to the labour market and their personal circumstances all influence what kind of bargain they can make. This model is similar to Schein's (1978) notion of a *psychological contract*. This is formed as a result of 'various kinds of symbolic and actual events' which define what the employee will

> give in the way of effort and contribution in exchange for challenging or rewarding work, acceptable working conditions, organisational rewards in the form of pay and benefits, and an organisational future in the form of a promise of promotion or other forms of career advancement.

Schein says that this contract is 'psychological' in that the 'actual terms remain implicit; they are not written down anywhere'. However, 'the mutual expectations formed between the employee and the employer function like a contract in that if either party fails to meet the expectations, serious consequences will follow – demotivation, turnover, lack of advancement, or termination'. In Figure 4.4 we see the principal elements which make up the implicit contract which, it is claimed, is at the core of every employment relationship.

Within the individual's personal priorities – conditioned as these are by personal resources brought to the labour market and by the knowledge and the reality of the jobs available – a certain degree of calculation will be involved in the taking of any job. The individual will balance the likely

EMPLOYEE with	EMPLOYER with
(a) Resources of cash, skills, knowledge, physique, etc.	(a) Capital resources
(b) Motives, expectations and interests	(b) Motives, expectations and interests
(Influenced by class, education, family, gender, race, etc.)	(Influenced by state of markets, sources of funding, etc.)

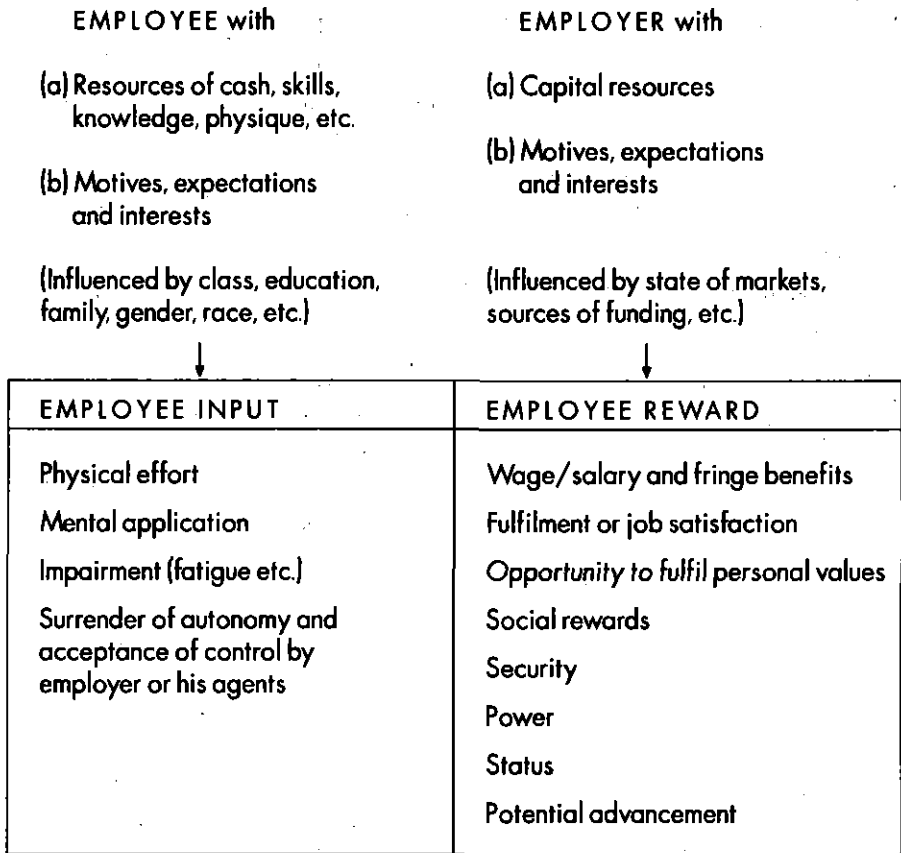| EMPLOYEE INPUT	EMPLOYEE REWARD
Physical effort	Wage/salary and fringe benefits
Mental application	Fulfilment or job satisfaction
Impairment (fatigue etc.)	*Opportunity to fulfil personal values*
Surrender of autonomy and acceptance of control by employer or his agents	Social rewards
	Security
	Power
	Status
	Potential advancement

FIGURE 4.4   The implicit contract between employer and employee

personal costs in the shape of the amount of physical and mental effort to be expended, together with the likely deprivations of fatigue and the loss of freedom involved in accepting the instructions of others, against the available rewards. For certain employees cash may be a priority, for others there may be more concern with the career advancement possible in the future, yet another person may be more interested in intrinsic job satisfaction, the status of a given job, the chance to control other people or simply the opportunity to fulfil personal values afforded by a job which, say, involves 'helping people'.

Whatever the individual's priority, the various factors indicated in Figure 4.4 will have to be balanced against each other. The schoolteacher

giving up the satisfaction to be gained in the classroom to earn a higher level of income selling goods, for example, will make particular calculations as will the individual entering a theological college to train for a calling which is likely to involve little by way of future material advantage. In each case the calculations made prior to the decision to enter into a particular type of implicit contract will orient the subsequent attitudes and behaviour of the individual once engaged in a work career within that organisation.

The implicit contract is never fixed, nor is it ever fully stable and two particular factors tend to threaten its stability – the push towards increased efficiency on the part of the employer and the tendency towards collective action and challenge on the part of the employee, as we shall see in Chapter 7. What is important to us at present is the way in which different implicit contracts are made in different types of work and, especially, at different levels within work settings. Individuals located in different positions in the hierarchical pattern of experience and condition in society are likely to make different types of implicit contract with an employer:

- Those in the higher positions in the class structure, typically in managerial or professional positions, tend to have a relatively *diffuse implicit contract* which means, as Fox (1974) shows, that they will be required to use discretion in their work and experience a high trust relationship with their superiors. The high trust which is put in this type of staff and the relatively high level of rewards (in the form of cash, status, opportunity for intrinsic satisfaction and career advancement offered) are reciprocated on the part of the employees with a willingness to comply with organisational requirements on their own initiative. The type of control to which they are submitted is characterised by Friedman (1977) as *responsible autonomy*. Organisational norms are, in the psychologist's terms, 'internalised' and individuals, in other words, control themselves (as well as their subordinates) on behalf of their superordinates.

- Those in lower class positions, typically in less skilled manual or routine clerical and service work, are more likely to experience a *restricted type of implicit contract*. The generally lower level of rewards is associated with what Fox (1974) describes as institutionalised low-trust relationships with superiors. Work tasks are much more closely
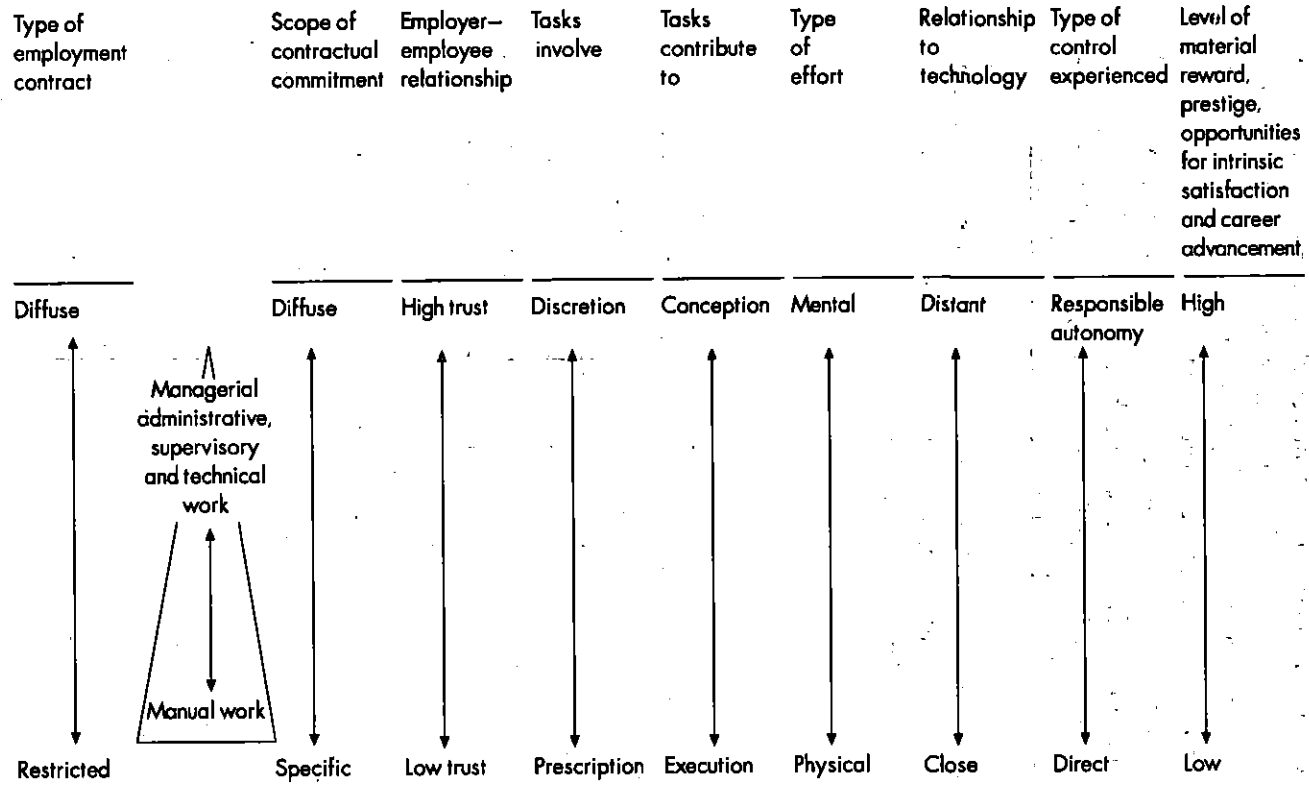
Type of employment contract		Scope of contractual commitment	Employer–employee relationship	Tasks involve	Tasks contribute to	Type of effort	Relationship to technology	Type of control experienced	Level of material reward, prestige, opportunities for intrinsic satisfaction and career advancement
Diffuse		Diffuse	High trust	Discretion	Conception	Mental	Distant	Responsible autonomy	High
	Managerial administrative, supervisory and technical work								
	Manual work								
Restricted		Specific	Low trust	Prescription	Execution	Physical	Close	Direct	Low

FIGURE 4.5 Two ideal types of relationship between individual and employing organisation (seen as two ends of various continua related to the hierarchical structure of organisation)

prescribed and these are executed (their conception occurring elsewhere) on the basis of a contractual commitment which is specific rather than diffuse. This specificity is represented by there typically being an hourly or weekly wage as opposed to an annual salary, by the much tighter specification of what is required of them and, especially, by the lack of an inducement in the form of potential career promotion. The control mechanism is traditionally that referred to by Friedman (1977) as *direct control* which removes worker responsibility and submits them to close supervision.

The broad pattern here is represented in Figure 4.5. It shows general structural tendencies within which individuals each have their own unique experience of work and satisfaction.

Work and satisfaction

The implicit contract approach emphasises the rational and generally instrumental aspects of the choices people make about work. People tend to know the limitations to which they are likely to have to adjust as they weigh up the possible satisfactions and the likely deprivations offered by the particular jobs available to them. Given this tendency, it is not surprising that surveys which involve asking people about work satisfaction frequently report a large proportion of people registering satisfaction. However, satisfaction is not a totally individualistic notion. In any given society there will be certain basic notions of what is desirable and we can expect people with different degrees of access to the means of these satisfactions at work to recognise this. Some indication of the distribution of these satisfactions can be derived if only in a very general way, by looking at the variations in response to questions about 'satisfaction' between people working in different settings.

In a review of a number of work satisfaction studies, Blauner (1960) found that professionals and businessmen claimed relatively high levels of satisfaction, that clerical workers claimed higher levels than manual workers, whilst skilled manual workers appeared more satisfied than unskilled workers or assembly-line operators. We may well observe that these accounts fall into a pattern closely relating to the social class hierarchy – itself a patterning of the way those resources most valued in

society at large are distributed. But this does not invalidate our seeking factors in the work itself which appear to relate to these differences. Blauner offers four principal areas:

- The importance of the relative prestige of the occupation.
- The degree of independence and control over the conditions of work – covering freedom from hierarchical control, freedom to move about, opportunity to vary the pace of work and allocate one's time.
- The extent to which social satisfactions to be gained from working within an integrated group are noted.
- The degree to which people who work together share non-work activities (in something approaching an occupational community).

In a later review of work satisfaction surveys, Parker (1983) notes some additional factors such as opportunities to achieve the following:

- 'Create something'.
- 'Use skill'.
- 'Work wholeheartedly'.
- Work together with people who 'know their job'.

Dissatisfactions are likely to involve formulations which simply oppose these but Parker also usefully locates the following specific factors:

- Doing repetitive work.
- Making only a small part of something.
- Doing useless tasks.
- Feeling a sense of insecurity.
- Being too closely supervised.

All the factors emerging in these studies relate to those characterised earlier as intrinsic satisfactions, that is, those relating to factors inherent in the work itself rather than the extrinsic rewards which may be obtained. However, if we look at the type of implicit contract which people at various levels in the class structure of society are able to make with employers, we may note that those likely to gain the highest intrinsic satisfactions of the type listed above are also often those most able to gain

higher material or other extrinsic rewards. Let us therefore examine the patterning of work rewards and satisfactions by work level. Having done this, we will then return to examine the patterning which may be connected with technology – a factor which indeed often relates to work level.

Different researchers have used different methods to elicit information about the nature of people's involvement in their work and hence the rewards and satisfactions which are sought or expected. Morse and Weiss (1955), for example, asked respondents whether they would continue to work if they had sufficient money to live comfortably. People in middle-class occupations pointed to the loss which would result with regard to the interest which they found in their jobs and the sense of accomplishment to which they were used. The type of loss mentioned by those in working-class jobs, however, was typically more in terms of the lack of activity with which to keep themselves occupied. Another classic study in this area is that of Friedmann and Havighurst (1954). Here the lower status workers were those most likely to stress the importance of money as the principal reward. The relationship between the nature of rewards and satisfactions and job level is also suggested by studies which have followed Dubin's method of attempting to elicit whether the individual's *central life interest* lies inside or outside the work sphere. Dubin (1956) himself, in his original study based on a large sample of industrial workers, found that three out of four individuals in this manual work had central life interests *outside* their work. Yet Orzack (1959) found that four out of five of the professional nurses whom he studied, using a procedure similar to Dubin's, indicated a central life interest *within* their work. More recent international studies using the central life interest notion, among others, suggest that there are occupational similarities in work meanings across different countries, this implying that national cultural factors might be less influential than structural matters such as the market situation of the occupational activity (MOW International Research Team 1987).

It is important to bear in mind that most of the 'data' on which these generalisations are based derive from the accounts given to researchers. The evidence is such, however, that at the very least, we can take it that those in higher level work expect more by way of intrinsic satisfactions than do those in more routine manual work. Using Daniel's (1973) distinction between satisfaction *in* work and satisfaction *with* work, we

might say that routine manual workers both find and seek satisfaction *in work* less than do those in managerial, professional or highly skilled work. But this does not mean that they are not *satisfied with* their job. The 'affluent' car workers studied by Goldthorpe, Lockwood *et al.* appeared to be *satisfied with* jobs in which they achieved little or no intrinsic job satisfaction. They did not seek or expect such satisfactions. As Mann (1973) points out in his study of workers moving with a relocated factory, the fact that the instrumentally-involved worker sets little store by intrinsic work activities is, paradoxically, all the more reason for their staying firmly attached to their job. One stays in a job in order to increase its stability and predictability, thereby lowering one's 'emotional investment' in work.

Lowering emotional involvement in work is not so easily achieved for the worker in the professional or managerial sphere. The prior orientation to work is likely to be quite different and the absence of intrinsic satisfactions may lead to a greater degree of dissatisfaction and felt deprivation than is likely among working-class employees operating in settings at first sight far more potentially depriving. A picture consistent with this point was painted of the work orientations of British managers in a study by Scase and Goffee (1989). The people they called the 'reluctant managers' were people who were 'less than fully committed to their jobs and who have great reservations about giving priority to their work, their careers and, indeed, their employing organisations'. They were warier than they had been in the past about becoming completely 'psychologically immersed in their occupations'. They were reluctant to strive for career success if this could be gained only at the 'expense of personal and family relationships'.

Similar pressures on the work of managers were observed in a study by Dopson and Stewart (1990) but they found different orientations towards these from those observed by Scase and Goffee on the part of the managers they interviewed. In large part because they felt that they had greater control and responsibility in the 'flatter' managerial hierarchies than they had experienced in the older taller ones, they felt that their jobs had become more challenging and they 'enjoyed the additional responsibilities and variety of their work'. A third study of managerial work in Britain (Watson 1994a) suggests that either of these patterns of orientation are possible in different circumstances within the broad changes occurring in work organisations. The managers closely studied in one

industrial organisation were shown to display a strong ambivalence towards their work. It was common within the firm for managers to say they felt rewarded by the opportunities presented in their immediate jobs to achieve tasks, to be 'in control' and to have the respect of the people with whom they worked. But they were increasingly 'becoming concerned about whether their energies were being directed towards the sort of overall business success' that would give them the security and involvement that they had once experienced.

The subjective experience of work, in practice, is influenced both by the prior orientation which individuals bring to that work and the changing work and organisational circumstances in which they find themselves. And the perceptions and priorities shaping the implicit contract entered into with an employer vary considerably up and down the occupational hierarchy.

Technology and work experience

When we look at the part which technology plays in the patterning of work experiences, we find that most of the existing discussions confine their attention to manual work. We may wonder why this should be, given that work of all types has its own technology in one way or another. Medical general practitioners have their medical bag, prescription pad and motor car for visiting patients and concert pianists have their pianos and musical scores. Why, then, has the relationship between working-class manual work experience and technology been the centre of attention? The answer lies partly in the general point made earlier about the tendency to treat the working class as a 'problematic' group but it specifically relates to that element of the input which the employees make in their implicit contract with the employer – the surrender of autonomy and acceptance of control by the employer or their agents.

Technology, for the majority of employees, is central to their work experience and is often something which, down to its finest detail, is chosen, is designed and its mode of use dictated by persons other than those applying it. In addition, these persons are frequently those with higher status, higher level of material rewards and, especially important, greater apparent autonomy in their own work experience than those directly applying the technology. Given cultural norms which encourage

the valuing of personal autonomy, individuality and self-expression, we can see why technology is potentially such a source of resentment, conflict and opposition and hence concern among those studying manual work in industry. We are looking at a point where one of the primary structural or cultural contradictions described in the previous chapter (where the culture values autonomy whilst the economy demands submission to control by many) comes to bear on the individual's work experience.

Industrial sociology in the 1960s paid considerable attention to investigating the ways in which workers applying different types of technology were likely both to think and to act differently. Such an approach has been labelled *technological implications*.

Technological implications thinking

The technology being used determines, or at least closely constrains, the way in which tasks are organised which, in turn, significantly influences the attitudes and behaviour of workers.

Following this approach, investigators like Woodward (1965), Blauner (1964) and Sayles (1958) argued that workers' social relationships with each other, the quality of their work experience and their propensity to engage in conflict with management would be heavily dependent on technology. To make this clearer, let us compare a situation where the technology is craft-based, like printing, with the very different technology of the car assembly line.

- *Printers* will be closely bound up with their workmates through the craft group which they will have joined as youths and, because of the nature of the tasks which they carry out, they will be relatively free to interact with their colleagues.
- *Car workers'* social experiences will be quite different. The lack of skill required by the work will mean that there is not the craft tradition and resulting cohesiveness. The fact that the workers are paced by the machines, rather than the other way round, will mean that they are less free to interact with others even if they wished to.

These differences affect the social satisfactions which can be derived from the two types of work and will have implications for the type of industrial conflict engaged in, if not the amount of such activity generally. The nature of the tasks themselves – potentially interesting and fulfilling in the craft case and typically boring and frustrating in the assembly-line case – will strongly influence the feelings, thoughts and hence prepared- ness to act in certain ways of the two groups. Other technological situations will each have their own particular determining influence. More advanced technologies, like automated process production for example, could be expected to bring about attitudes and behaviour more in line with those of the traditional craft worker and away from those of the alienated and resentful mass-production operative.

Individuals will tend to be aware of, and take into account, the general nature of the technology they are likely to use when they shape their prior orientation to work. Once in work, their subsequent attitudes and behaviour may be conditioned by more specific factors such as the extent to which the technology enables them to mix with others, the freedom it allows them to use discretion, and so on. Wedderburn and Crompton (1972) in the study cited earlier, found that, although they were studying 'a group of workers with primarily instrumental attitudes to work', there were nevertheless distinct differences of attitude and behaviour between different parts of the plants examined, and technology was taken to be the key variable in this. The degree of interest expressed in the job, the attitude to supervision and the level of grievance activity were all found to be more 'favourable', for instance, in the continuous flow plant than in the batch production plant (even though pay levels were higher in the latter area). These authors stress the importance of two factors which relate to technology:

- The structuring of the job itself.
- The way in which the relationship between the supervisors and the operators was shaped.

It is thus not the technology itself which operates on the individual. It is the opportunity which the technology allows for personal discretion and the part it plays in the power relationships between the managers and the managed.

Blauner's influential study, *Alienation and Freedom* (1964), attempted

to bring together several of the factors thought to influence work satisfactions and to relate those to work experience in different technological settings. He used the concept of alienation to bring together those factors influencing satisfaction. He termed these four 'dimensions of alienation':

- *Powerlessness*, or lack of opportunity for control.
- *Meaninglessness*, or lack of opportunity to feel a sense of purpose by linking one's job with the total production process.
- *Isolation*, or an inability to relate closely to others at work.
- *Self-estrangement*, or a lack of opportunity to achieve self-involvement or personal fulfilment at work.

Blauner used a variety of research materials to measure alienation in four types of industry: printing, textiles, car assembly and chemicals. There were four distinct types of technology here: craft, machine-tending, assembly line and process technology and Blauner found that alienation was relatively low in the craft printing industry and the process chemical industry, higher in the machine-tending textile setting and highest on the
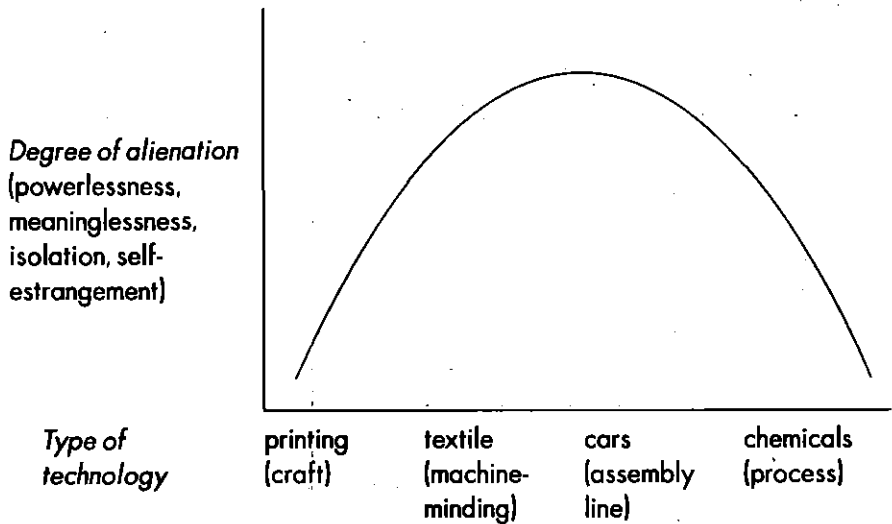

Degree of alienation (powerlessness, meaninglessness, isolation, self-estrangement)

| Type of technology | printing (craft) | textile (machine-minding) | cars (assembly line) | chemicals (process) |

FIGURE 4.6 Blauner's 'inverted U curve' relating alienation and technology
Source: Based on Blauner (1964)

car assembly line. We thus get the famous 'inverted U-curve' shown in Figure 4.6.

Critics of Blauner's thesis such as Eldridge (1971a) have suggested that it trivialises Marx's notion of alienation by conceptualising it in subjective terms; its inferences from attitude survey data can be questioned, and the representativeness of the areas surveyed can be doubted. Although the study has important points to make about the relationship between certain technical settings and sources of work satisfaction, its greatest inadequacy lies in its failure to locate technology within its *political* context. Blauner suggests that as technology becomes more automated in the future so will the opportunity for people to experience control, purpose, meaning and self-realisation at work increase. What this does not recognise is that technology is a means to the ends of those who employ labour rather than those who are employed. The 'deskilling' of work is as great a possibility arising from the employer's introduction of new technologies to increase their control over work effort as is the evolution of a workforce of autonomous skilled, integrated and satisfied control room workers and maintenance engineers. Automation is merely one way of increasing control over work process on the part of the owner or manager and its combination with other methods of achieving control such as partial automation combined with deskilling is just as feasible.

Justifications for the type of reservations expressed here can be found in a study conducted in the British chemical industry more than a decade after Blauner. Nichols and Beynon (1977) found that in six out of the seven plants of a leading British chemical company which they visited, control room operatives – the archetypal non-alienated worker of automated industry – were a minority: 'for every man who watched dials another maintained the plants, another was a lorry driver and another two humped bags or shovelled muck'. This study has, however, been criticised for selecting evidence which fitted the ideological preconceptions of the researchers and, especially, for completely ignoring the category of workers in the plant who were classified as skilled – the maintenance workers (Harris 1987).

Care has to be taken not to make generalisations about the effect of technological change on work experience on the basis of quite real differences of experience within specific and limited work settings and without recognising that any given technology is typically a mediating factor between those who control work and those whose efforts are

controlled. Since the managers of work are typically under constant pressure to maintain and increase this control we can expect their efforts to introduce technical change to be a constant influence on the 'dynamic orientations' of the employee, that is, on their ongoing definition of their situation and their preparedness to act in certain ways.

Technology, then, is a principal factor in people's work experience and their orientations to work. As was stressed in the previous chapter, technology involves a great deal more than simply the tools and machines which people use at work. What Hill (1988) called the 'technology text' pervades every aspect of work and its organisation. It is often difficult to separate the technological from the organisational. As Scarborough and Corbett (1992) observe, it is increasingly difficult because of 'the fluidity and interpenetration of technological and organisational forms' to 'know the dancer from the dance'. Hence we will return to the relationship between technological factors and work experience again and again, whether it is in the process of considering claims about the progressive deskilling of work in Chapter 6 or when looking at the implications of the increased use of information technology in Chapter 8.

Work and non-work

The relationship between the work and non-work aspects of our lives is complex and two-way. At the highest level of generality the two spheres interrelate to form a particular type of society; the industrial capitalist type examined in Chapter 3 being that with which we are concerned. This society is ever-changing, with changes at work influencing those in society at large and vice versa. As was argued in the earlier chapter, much of the impetus to social change comes from structural contradictions, many of which derive from aspects of work organisation, control and experience. The structures of work and the technology used are located in the power structures and cultural understandings of the wider society with social class, family, education and other social structural factors having a significant influence on individuals' prior orientation to work as well as on their socially conditioned predisposition to act and think in a certain way once in work. We may, however, examine a variety of further ways in which one's work and non-work experiences are interrelated.

Mobility, class and imagery

Following entry to work, one's occupation, through the income earned and the other social class correlates of the position, is a principal determinant of one's own life chances and those of one's dependants. The career structure of either the occupation or the employing organisation will offer or deny opportunity for social mobility and hence improvement in their life chances. Different approaches to mobility can be noted, however. For example, W. Watson (1964) located a particular type of aspiring middle-class employee, the *spiralist*, who moves upwards in career by moving from organisation to organisation and locality to locality. This type of person, one who occupies what Gouldner (1957) has called a *cosmopolitan* latent role, can be contrasted with what he calls a *local*, someone more inclined to seek whatever advancement is desired within the local setting.

These various categories of people, with their contrasting orientations to work and career, are recognisable in a study of the British class structure by Roberts *et al.* (1977) who clearly distinguished the spiralist middle-class workers as a group with both distinct political, social and job attitudes within the middle class as a whole. Differences of experience between people with careers in large corporations and middle-class workers in smaller firms were later pointed to by Savage *et al.* (1992) as shaping different political views. The latter are said to be adopting a more individualistic, consumerist and conservation position than the former, who retain a more corporatist or collectivist politics.

Studies like this support what research has indicated over the years: that the social class images which people have are related to the work they do. The findings support what Goldthorpe, Lockwood *et al.* (1968) found in the mid-1960s: that achievement of relatively high levels of income by some manual workers does not lead to their assimilation into the middle class in either behaviour and attitude (thus invalidating the so-called 'embourgeoisement thesis'). Devine's (1992b) return to these informants decades later found that their image of themselves was one of 'ordinary working people' who contrasted themselves with the 'idle rich'. They were cynical about party politics and although they retained a basic loyalty to the Labour party and regarded trade union membership as a necessary protection from managerial initiatives and a means of improving earnings, they were sceptical about trade unions' real commitments

and effectiveness and many had been deterred from supporting the Labour Party in the 1980s as a result of the pattern of labour movement activity in the late 1970s.

This research gives important insights into particular patterns of social imagery and political stance and Mackenzie (1975) provides an overview of the range of factors in people's work situations which are likely to influence class imagery, arguing that this in turn influences such factors as their child-rearing attitudes, political viewpoints and ways of using leisure time. He examines the following factors as conducive to either middle-class imagery or working-class imagery:

- The size of the workplace.
- The organisation of the workgroup.
- The workgroup's relation to supervisors and management.
- The degree to which the worker has control over the work process.
- The extent to which the job facilitates or prevents communication between workers.
- The rigidity of the distinction between staff and workers.
- Security of tenure.
- The progressiveness of earnings.
- Job discipline.

The recognition that people's work situation influences their wider world view has led various authors to speculate that moves towards greater automation in the workplace would help create a 'new working class'. Blauner (1964) expected the typically non-alienated workers of the automated plant to become quite different in outlook and behaviour from the traditional working class, manifesting less loyalty to the trade union, more to the employer and generally a more characteristically middle-class orientation. In his version of the new working class ushered in with advanced technology, the French writer Mallet (1975) foresees an opposite tendency with workers making use of a new sense of power and a greater knowledge of the firm to act through their unions in efforts to challenge the employer and gain greater control. However, this type of argument, in both versions, tends to infer too much direct influence of work experience on outside orientations, underestimating structural and cultural factors in the wider society. This has been shown in Gallie's (1978) study of four oil refineries, two in France and two in Britain. His

results question both the above theses, suggesting that advanced technology itself appears to have no significant effect on class attitudes and aspirations, or on attitudes to the employer and to trade unions. The study suggests that more significance has to be attached to the structure and culture of the society outside the plant, this being indicated by the distinctly more conflictual and class-conscious orientations of the French workers compared with the British (see also Gallie 1984).

Personality, home and family

An important theme in writing about modern work organisations has been the alleged tendency for their managements to create a type of person whose first loyalty in life is to the corporation. These 'organisation men', graphically described by Whyte (1961), show a willingness to fit in and co-operate with others at work; they are unwilling to challenge or disturb the order of which they are a part and their superficial suburban home life reflects the lack of initiative and their docility at work. This thesis gained wide currency and is found in similar forms in various other US works such as Wright Mills's *White Collar* (1953). However, Kohn's (1971) investigation of the personality types associated with bureaucratic employment found little support for this popular stereotype, arguing that there was no evidence that bureaucracies produced placid conformists. It was argued in fact, that the reverse tended to apply, the secure base provided by the bureaucrats' employment enabling them to consolidate their own values and 'develop a life style reflecting his personal preferences'. Nevertheless, it is clearly recognised that careers which involve long absences of the individual from the family setting and frequent geographical moves do create tensions in home life (Pahl and Pahl 1972, Tunstall 1962), this being exacerbated where both spouses work. But this is again an area where individual orientations to work are important. Rapoport and Rapoport (1976) in their study of dual-career families show that the stresses involved in this form of family life are reorganised and accepted as a 'cost' involved when such a way of life is chosen, and Sofer (1970) reports that where the managers in his sample were able to achieve a separation between their working and non-working lives, there was less mental conflict engendered by aspects of the husband's work career.

The family is the most significant setting for most people's life-cycle and here we would expect there to be a significant type of pressure on the individual's orientation to work. The arrival and different stages of children's growing up may, for instance, exert significant pressures on parents' interests in such items in their implicit contract as income level and degree of security. Child-rearing practices themselves have been related by researchers to the employment of the parent. Kohn (1969), for instance, noted the commitment to different value-systems by manual workers and non-manual workers, these affecting the extent to which they stressed conformity or self-direction in the child socialisation patterns. He argued that the restrictive nature of working-class employment reinforced the relative lack of education of the parents in its influence on the higher level of conformity encouraged in their children. Similar findings have been reported by Miller and Swanson (1958) and Aberle and Naegele (1961) and, as Mackenzie (1975) points out, this has an important influence on the class imagery of the children themselves. And this, in turn, will have significant implications for the future work life of these children as well as for their non-work attitudes and behaviour.

Gender and family

Gender differences are a principal patterning factor in all societies and in most of the activities which occur within them. In the next chapter we shall examine the extent to which the occupational structure or societal division of labour is patterned on gender lines and how patterns of discrimination occur in association with this. We shall also look specifically at the occupation of 'housework'. At this stage we are concentrating on the impact of family life on the work meanings of men and women.

In discussing these matters we have to be careful to avoid the sexually discriminatory assumptions which have influenced the sociology of work in the past and, particularly, take care to avoid the trap noted by Feldberg and Glenn (1982) whereby male participation in the labour force has been considered within a 'job model' and female participation within a 'gender model':

- Men's work is considered in a *job model* – in terms of working conditions, opportunities and problems, with non-work aspects seen

as influenced by work activities (as in the discussion of 'bureaucrats' above, for example).

• Women's relationship to employment is looked at the other way round, within a *gender model* – 'as a derivative of personal character-istics and relationships to family situations'.

As these authors say, what is needed is an integrated approach which takes into account the interaction between job and gender factors and the ways in which 'the work people do can be located within the context of their whole lives'. Such an approach is followed in a study of a post-war generation of British managers by Roper (1994) who takes as his starting point the concept of the 'organisation man', introduced in the previous section. This notion, says Roper, conjures up the image of a classless, genderless, disembodied administrator who – in contrast to the owner-manager of old – 'can exercise complete neutrality in decision-making'. Such people are anything but genderless in reality and Roper shows how the organisation man's 'extreme devotion to company and career was, after all, facilitated by the servicing work of secretaries and wives'. And this servicing work included emotional support given by wives and secretaries to help men maintain the appropriate masculine image of a character 'driven by intellect' rather than by emotion.

It is widely argued that the distinction between male and female roles in both the working and the non-working sphere of life was much less stark in pre-industrial and pre-capitalist Europe before the modern separation of home life and working life. In the feudal period the home and work spheres were generally one, with both men and women contributing to furtherance of the family's economic interests, whether these were simply a matter of economic survival in the case of the peasantry or the maintenance of superiority and honour among the nobility. But this unity of home and work and of production and consumption was eroded as the economic basis of social life changed. The steady conversion of the peasantry into wage labour meant that female tasks of bearing and suckling children could less easily be combined with the productive work which was increasingly being performed in a setting away from the home. Where women could obtain work, their vulnerabil-ity to exploitation was much greater than that of men who were, in effect, 'biologically freer'.

These general trends took place at different rates in different

industries and in different areas (Tilly and Scott 1978). In certain contexts, women employees were preferred to men and in some areas there was a pattern of employing family units (Joyce 1980). Nevertheless, the trend was towards women becoming increasingly dependent on men and, at times, when the wages of male manual workers became too low to support wives and children, these became a charge on the community. In middle-class circles, the women were not left at home as domestic drudges as were working-class women but as 'useless' domestic decorations or bearers of male property-inheritors. In the more recent stages of industrial capitalist development where middle-class homes largely lost their ability to employ servants and where working-class wages made it more possible for males to support non-employed wives and children, it more or less became the cultural norm for women to play the domestic role whilst men 'went out to work' and earned the basic family income.

Cultural support and legitimation of this pattern developed historically with the growth of certain 'patriarchal ideologies' identified, for example, by Hamilton (1978). She notes the effect of Protestant thinking in giving 'unprecedented ideological importance' to the home and the family and in establishing the ideal for women of the faithful and supportive 'proper wife'. By the nineteenth century this had evolved into a powerful 'domestic ideology' which enabled working wives and mothers to be presented as unnatural and immoral (Hall 1979). The cultural basis of the sexual division of labour was thus obscured and 'the split between men and women came to be seen as naturally ordained. Nature decreed all women were first and foremost wives and mothers'. Making a material 'fit' with this cultural trend, was the trend towards the two-child family in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the association with this of a family model in which a male breadwinner's wage was sufficient to support a family who were looked after at home by a full-time wife and mother (Lewis 1984).

When engaging in this kind of analysis it is vital to separate that which is mythical or 'culturally normal' from that which actually occurs. It is important not to use myths or people's beliefs as simplistic explanations of the way people behave. Purcell (1978) is critical of those who suggest that women have 'internalised' the 'myth of the division of labour by sex' or the 'myth of motherhood'. Women do not fully accept the idea that their employment should be valued less than their domestic role because they wholeheartedly embrace the values associated with this.

They comply with these values because they perceive no realistic alternative. Their approach to employment and the apparent acceptance of their dual workload reflects 'their enforced experience and the range of alternatives available rather than a legitimation of a deferential mode of interaction between the sexes and uncritical acceptance of the myths and the division of labour by sex and motherhood'. According to Purcell, the facts of labour market life and the cultural precedence given to mother-wife roles reinforce one another.

Women's attitudes to work and family do not simply follow labour market opportunities according to Dex (1988) who provides historical evidence to show that between the 1940s and 1965, attitudes 'changed independently of women's employment experience ... that is, attitudes appeared to change before women's employment experience had grown'. More recently, Dex argues, the structures of employment in Britain have been 'changing to accommodate to women's availability and attitudes towards work'. It is not a matter of women simply reacting to changes in demand; 'the fact that women are prepared to accept primary responsibility for child care, and then structure their employment participation around the availability of their husband to fill in the child care gaps, has its roots, in part, in attitudes'.

It might have been expected that there would be a shift towards men and women sharing domestic tasks as a result of the increased level of employment among married women and mothers and the simplification of household tasks brought about by 'labour-saving' devices. Such a belief was strongly encouraged by a study by Young and Willmott (1975) who saw the 'symmetrical family' as the pattern for the future. Subsequent research in the 1970s was consistently less optimistic about a trend towards equality in the distribution of family work tasks. A US study of 750 urban households showed, for example, that where men did contribute to domestic or child-care tasks, they tended to play their part at a time of the day when the pressure has lessened and the tasks to be done are the more pleasant ones – tasks like reading a bed-time story to the children (Berk and Berk 1979).

Later studies like those of Gershuny (1992) indicate a shift to a situation where the total amount of housework done by men and women is shared almost equally and Wheelock (1990), on the basis of a study in which the women were employed and the men were unemployed, suggests that the shifting pattern of paid work roles among men and

women is seeing a trend towards a more egalitarian approach to domestic work. However, Morris's (1988) study of the families of unemployed steelworkers suggests less of a role for the employment situation of men and women in influencing domestic activities. Morris (1988) reports her 'general impression ... that within working class culture there are strong feelings against male involvement in tasks commonly regarded to be essentially female'. Inevitably, the differing pictures emerging here are in part the outcome of different research designs. This is recognised by Warde and Hetherington (1993) who attempted in their investigation to produce evidence which could, as effectively as possible, be compared to material from the 1960s. This suggests that, with some qualification, 'gender stereotyping of specific work tasks and unequal contributions between men and women *cannot* have changed much in the last twenty years'.

Such patterns appear to apply across social class boundaries. Edgell (1980) shows that the majority of the middle-class families which he studied had a pattern of role segregation in which the wife 'typically performed a distinct range of domestic and child-rearing tasks considerably more often than the husband, and generally deferred to the husband's authority in the "more important" areas of decision-making'. The chief influence on the pattern of role allocation was not the work or the family career cycles but the husband's orientation to paid work and the wife's orientation to domestic work. Again, the importance of the meaning which individuals attach to their work roles – whether employment roles or domestic roles – is demonstrated. And this continues to apply, it would appear, when families are able to afford to employ domestic labour. The late 1980s in Britain saw a dramatic expansion in the use of waged domestic labour by high income dual-career households according to Gregson and Lowe (1994a), whose research indicates that the employment of cleaners and nannies does not create a more egalitarian pattern of role allocation between men and women. What are emerging here are 'new domestic divisions of labour which involve just women' (Gregson and Lowe 1994b).

Significant findings on gender roles have also emerged from research on those involved with small businesses. Scase and Goffee (1982) showed that wives of men who had established and were running such businesses tended to be economically, socially and psychologically subordinated to the needs of their husbands and that, without the largely

unrecognised contributions of wives, many small businesses 'would not even get off the ground'. Not only do the wives contribute unpaid time and effort to the business, but they are left to cope single-handedly with domestic work, often with limited financial resources, as their husband devotes himself to the fledgling business. When women entrepreneurs are studied, however, they do not appear to get anything like this degree of support from their spouses. Goffee and Scase (1985) say that their interviews with such women suggest that husbands rarely contribute to the running of either homes or businesses. They are nevertheless forced to be dependent on men for financial and technical assistance. This is a pattern which is socially reinforced by such experiences as those, which Vokins (1993) reports, of successful women entrepreneurs approaching banks for assistance; '"Where is your husband?" was a frequent question, as were the condescending and sexist comments like "Well, do your best dear".' Businesswomen are liable to be reminded in such ways of their subordination in the sexual division of labour, as are the women married to men in occupations varying from the church or medicine to farming, military service or fishing where wives are often incorporated into their husbands' careers (Finch 1983).

When women are in paid employment, their work orientation is still heavily influenced by the implications of their feminine gender and all that this implies for their life career. A leading study of over five-and-a-half thousand women of working age in Britain indicated that girls tend to base their educational, training and job decisions on the assumption that they will be wives and mothers (Martin and Roberts 1984). Whereas boys expect to be the primary wage-earner and to have employment as their main lifetime occupation, girls look forward to a working life 'interrupted by childbirth and childrearing, usually characterised by partial employment so as to enable them to do the domestic work involved in looking after a husband, children and a home'. Indeed, even where they worked full time, only a minority of the women in the study said that they shared housework equally with their husbands.

Studies show that economic factors are highly significant within the work orientations of women workers. But, as the implicit contract model introduced earlier would suggest, there is range of other 'rewards' pertinent to people's orientations. Sharpe (1984), for example, suggests that it was the 'social characteristics' of working which gave most meaning to the jobs of the wives and mothers she interviewed and that

this was especially the case after a period of not working. Pollert (1981) talks of the 'ray of light' provided in the factory she studied by the company of others for women with children who were experiencing the double burden of home and work. Cavendish (1982) adds to this the point that her participant observation study of factory life gave her a feeling of being 'more rooted in social life', enabling her to becoming more outgoing and socially relaxed than she had previously been. On the basis of her sharing this life, 'it seemed only sensible to get married and benefit from the economies of scale of two wage packets'. To consider role reversal would have been 'economic suicide'.

In discussing the considerable importance of women's non-work roles and obligations for their employment experience, we must not forget that work attitudes and orientations are also significantly influenced by factors in the workplace itself. McNally (1979) claims that this is often done and she stresses the importance of such factors as the nature of the work tasks, the prospects for promotion and the policies of employers with regard to recruitment and conditions of work. But she attempts to show that women do not passively accommodate the constraints which they meet through her study of temporary office workers who, she says, 'exemplify par excellence women's capacity actively to negotiate the limiting structures which confront them'. Resilience and creativity in the face of constraints is also shown by Brannen and Moss's (1988) account of the considerable lengths to which women go on returning to work after having babies to make arrangements for childcare in the face of hostile attitudes to working mothers, inadequate leave arrangement and a poor supply of childcare facilities. Finch and Mason (1993) similarly comment on the determined initiatives taken by working women who have to look after older relatives whilst staying in employment.

In spite of this evidence of the power of human agency in the face of cultural constraint, it is important, sociologically, to recognise the power of the constraints faced by women in employment. Kanter (1982) takes as one of the most significant factors influencing women's attitudes and behaviour at work the opportunity structure in which they find themselves at work. She argues that the widely observed tendency of women to be less committed, involved and aspiring than men in their work careers has less to do with their socialisation and upbringing than with the structure of opportunities which they face. She argues that what

is normally seen as a sex difference – the greater tendency for women at work to limit their aspirations, seek satisfactions outside work, dream of escape and create sociable peer groups in which interpersonal relationships take precedence – is really a 'structural' one. The point is made by observing that men tend to show the same characteristics when they are disadvantageously located in the opportunity structure.

Leisure

In stressing the significance of the institution of the family for both class and gender patterns we should not forget that it is also the setting for a great deal of people's leisure activity. In this way it has a double implication for the work and industrial sphere:

- It provides a demand for goods and services such as the family car and the family holiday.
- It provides a context in which people can go beyond their workplace and domestic task obligations and engage in activities which they enjoy.

There are many other sites for leisure.

Leisure

Those activities which people pursue for pleasure and which are not a necessary part of their business, employment or domestic management obligations.

And there are numerous different types of leisure activity, these not only varying with personal taste but also with different types of employment. The hours left free for leisure by different kinds of work and the money available to spend on leisure are factors which clearly relate work and leisure forms. However, other factors are also relevant and, to help indicate a pattern in these, Parker (1982) has suggested that we can see three types of relationship between work and leisure: extension, opposition and neutrality.

- Leisure is likely to be experienced as an *extension* of work where a relatively high degree of autonomy and intrinsic satisfaction is experienced in work. The academic's work and leisure reading may well shade one into the other and engineers may well apply their expertise to hobbies and read professional literature in their non-work time (Gerstl and Hutton 1966). Parker's research indicates that social workers tend not to see a sharp distinction between their working and non-working lives, and Evans and Bartolemé (1980) argue that for the majority of managers in their study the relationship between work and non-work was one of 'spillover', generally with the work experience influencing individuals' private lives much more than the other way round.
- Leisure is likely to have a neutral relationship to work where there is less autonomy and potential self-fulfilment. People in jobs such as those involving routine clerical work reflect their lack of involvement and passivity at work in their leisure pastimes.
- Leisure operates in *opposition* to work where the worker who is liable to be frustrated and unfulfilled at work concentrates on the fulfilling and comfortable pastimes of home and family (this privatised lifestyle fitting with the instrumental orientation to work considered earlier) or they may pursue the more gregarious and even riotous type of leisure associated with the coalminer or deep sea fisherman (Tunstall 1962).

Some writers have pointed to the opportunities which some workers may find to compensate for work experience in the exercise of skill and the obtaining of social satisfaction in activities like pigeon racing (Mott 1973). But the general likelihood of this type of compensatory effect has been strongly argued against by people such as Meissner (1971), who diagnoses what he calls 'the long arm of the job' and argues that the suppressing of the capacity for initiative in the work setting will tend to reduce the capacity for engaging in leisure activities which involve discretion, planning and co-ordination. But for many in the future, and especially the unemployed, leisure will increasingly be more significant than work as a site in which personal fulfilment and satisfaction can be sought (Seabrooke 1988; Rojek 1989).

Unemployment

The experience of being unemployed in a society in which there is a work ethic which puts considerable value on being 'in a job' and where a reasonable level of income can come for most people only from employment is likely to be both psychologically and materially distressing. Fineman (1987) writes of 'an experiential gap that can exasperate the jobless' in the face of 'the sheer force of the effect of no longer being creditworthy in a society that builds so many of its transactions, in one way or another, on cash'. Our concern here is with these subjective aspects of unemployment and we shall return in the last chapter to issues of the future of employment and of the changes which may be occurring with regard to the work ethic.

In her study of the experience of unemployment, Jahoda (1982) concentrates on what people tend to lose, in addition to a source of income, when they become unemployed. A person's job provides the following functions:

- It imposes a time structure on the day.
- It enlarges the scope of social relations beyond the often emotionally charged ones of family and neighbours.
- It gives one a feeling of purpose and achievement through task involvement in a group setting.
- It assigns social status and clarifies personal identity.
- It requires one to engage in regular activity.

These socio-psychological functions of employment are not easily replaced when unemployment is experienced. However, a *variety* of other factors also influence how unemployment is experienced. Both the financial impact and the impact on work identity and identity within the family tend to vary with the 'previous location within the labour market' (Ashton 1985). Workers who have been in routine and repetitive jobs can experience short-term unemployment as a relief, for instance, and housewives who also work full time may be able to use their domestic responsibilities to 'impose a temporal structure on their daily activities' if they become unemployed. It is working-class males who appear, from the evidence, to have the greatest difficulty in imposing a temporal structure on their day.

A considerable amount of evidence has been collected to show that there is a significant connection between the experience of unemployment and both physical and mental ill health. In reviewing the evidence gathered by a series of studies, Gallie and Vogler (1994) show that the unemployed suffer from a process of cumulative disadvantage and that their 'weak labour market position is accompanied not only by much greater financial difficulty, but by disadvantage in both health and housing'. It is widely believed that it is the fall in income which has the greatest impact on people's mental health followed by the removal of the socio-psychological factors identified by Jahoda. Burchell (1994), however, places particular stress on insecurity as a generator of psychological stress. His research showed little difference between the levels of stress among the unemployed and among those experiencing high levels of insecurity within work. He further shows that unemployed people who enter a secure job show much greater improvement in psychological well-being than those taking up insecure jobs.

The evidence from those cases where people appear to cope well with the experience of unemployment strongly indicates the importance of psychological factors and personal values. Warr (1983), for example, reports that the 'good copers' whom he studied all had financial difficulties but maintained high levels of emotional well-being. This was associated with 'considerable personal activity, driven by strongly held religious, social or political values'. Miles (1984) found that the psychological well-being of the sample of more than a hundred unemployed men he studied was better where there was involvement in such activities as voluntary work, team sport or part-time education. But he adds that the large majority of men failed to get much access to experiences which would meet socio-psychological needs; the signs of 'adaptation to unemployment' were 'very limited'. This is supported by the evidence gathered by Gershuny (1994) which shows that once they are unemployed people have far fewer opportunities of experiencing social interactions than the employed. This applies to men more than women, however.

The evidence indicates that the unemployed form, as Gallie and Marsh (1994) put it, 'a distinctive group at the bottom of the social heap'. This raises the question of whether members of this group possess or develop distinctive attitudes to work and employment in general. The studies gathered by Gallie, Marsh and Vogler (1994) show that only a

minority of the unemployed studied were not seeking work or were inflexible about what work they were willing to undertake. There is little evidence of a 'culture of dependency' developing among the unemployed. Where there is inflexibility about opportunities it tends to be among those who are held back by their circumstances – age or being a single mother (Dawes 1993). A study of redundant steelworkers carried out by Westergaard, Noble and Walker (1989) suggests that it was much less worker attitudes and behaviour that led to success or otherwise in obtaining work as the qualifications of individuals and how this related to the level of demand for particular skills in the labour market. Commitment to the work ethic among these men was high and they were typically prepared to take jobs at a skill level lower than that for which they were qualified. Young unemployed people are similarly shown to want to find jobs. Research by Banks and Ullah (1988) shows this but it also shows how continuing unemployment created a sense of discouragement and reduced efforts to find work.

What is indicated by these considerations of work and non-work is that human beings' experience of work and their activity, experience and values outside work are closely connected. The choices to be made about the role of work in the future will have to take this interrelationship fully into account. The nature of these choices will be returned to later, especially in the final chapter. For the present, the focus will move away from individuals and their experience of work as such to look more closely at the variety of structural contexts in which this experience occurs. This is only a matter of emphasis, however, and sight of the individual will by no means be lost in the coming chapters.

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