

— Chapter 1 —

Time and Work: Changes and Challenges

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TIME IS A basic human concern. It orders the lives of all individuals and groups. Time differentiation is a basic component of social structure and of the cultural value system: time designations structure human effort, experience, and expectations, and cultural values are embedded in them (Durkheim 1902/1947; Merton 1984; Sorokin and Merton 1937).

Throughout history claims on people's time have come from formal and informal authorities—from the state, from the church, from the firm and corporation, and from the family. The “natural” pace of life, in earlier times determined by the rising and setting of the sun, has given way to an ordering by church bells, bugles, factory whistles, and alarm clocks, all sending messages to engage in or cease various activities. Technology—from the invention of the incandescent light to the computer chip—has extended the possibility of work beyond the daylight hours and through time zones (Melbin 1987). Time frames are internalized in individuals' psyches, structured as time frames are by social conditioning and cultural perspectives.

Social scientists, historians, philosophers, and of course writers of fiction—particularly science fiction—have considered the issue of time in various ways through the ages and some have jostled our imaginations. Historical memory is located in identified periods—for example, the Reformation, the Hundred Years war, the Enlightenment, the Great Depression—and “progress” has been defined as a

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movement through time. Individuals born in different generations may view the same experiences through different lenses (Mannheim 1952). Today time boundaries and their significance are often contested (Jameson 1994; Scott 1988; Fukuyama 1992; Veyne 1984; Ermath 1991; Braudel 1982–84/1992), and thus we are drawn to analyze time structures in new and different ways.

In modern societies, time designations are often contested both by scholars and by ordinary actors in daily life. In fact, the time demands of people's work lives and their private lives have become a persistent topic of debate and negotiation, the subject of books and conferences and private discussion.

What has fueled these debates and discussions? One source of concern is a perception by many of a speedup in the pace of work and an increase in hours worked. The anxiety over an intensification of work has been fueled by corporate restructurings such as downsizing and has been supported by feelings of economic insecurity on the part of employees who have survived layoffs. Such intensification and insecurity constituted a "dark side" to the booming American economy of the 1990s and are reflected in part today by an increase in workloads for formerly privileged white-collar workers (Kalleberg and Epstein 2001). Some writers (see Fraser 2001) have even used the metaphor of the sweatshop to describe the deterioration of white-collar work that has accompanied the greater time pressures resulting from corporate restructuring. The intensification of white- as well as blue-collar work has been facilitated by technological developments that have enabled employers to become increasingly sophisticated in their ability to monitor and control the amount of time workers spend at work and their activities at the workplace.

Associated with increases in work hours are the growing demands of family obligations, a trend due largely to continued increases in female labor-force participation and in the number of dual-career families. These perceptions of a time squeeze on families have been given voice by a highly articulate and visible segment of the public, leading scholars and laypersons to question the legitimacy of time demands at work, the sacrifice of other values to the ever-faster production of goods and services, and the resulting burden placed on the family and the health of citizens.

As Jerry Jacobs and Kathleen Gerson point out in chapter 2, time pressure is experienced by vast numbers of people, not only

professionals and managers whose hours at work have increased and workers at lower strata who often have to work two or more jobs to make a decent living, but also those in the workforce who are not working longer hours than they did a decade ago. Jacobs and Gerson point out that the sources of the pressure is that families now typically comprise a husband and wife who are each bound by the demands of their jobs, unlike their own fathers and mothers; typically their fathers worked outside the home but their mothers stayed home. Children's schedules, too, have become more demanding, especially in middle-class families (see Lareau 2003), and parents today are expected to participate in their school, sports, and social-enrichment activities. The belief of many that the home is no longer "a haven in a heartless world" (Lasch 1977; Hochschild 1997) reflects the reality that the family as a unit may have little time that is not programmed with a variety of activities. This perception of time demands as oppressive has attracted a good deal of attention in academic research and in the popular press.

Work restructuring and greater economic insecurity have also given rise to debates about the reasons for and implications of the growth in temporary work arrangements (see, for example, Kalleberg, Reskin, and Hudson 2000). Employers and workers can no longer assume that their employment relations are permanent but rather must assume that they are contingent and depend primarily on how long employers need their employees. Concerns about the quality of jobs associated with temporary work as well as with the need for individuals to obtain flexible or nonstandard work schedules (such as part-time work, shift work, and weekend and evening work) have come to occupy a prominent place in debates about the regulation of working time and the evolving nature of employment relations.

These changes underscore the importance of reconsidering time at work as we begin the twenty-first century. The authors of the essays collected consider various aspects of time evaluation, time pressures, and time realities. These essays address not only the current crises but also reconsider more basic issues related to the creation and implementation of time norms as one of the central control systems in social life. Many scholars have investigated the processes involved in the social and political construction of time, particularly the domination of workers' time by employers. On the

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other hand, relatively few theorists have considered the elemental place of time norms in structuring social behavior and attitudes and in maintaining the boundaries of gender, race, and class.

Time norms are part of the formal rule system that governs our everyday lives. What we should be doing at any time of the day is barely a matter of personal option once we have chosen to go to school, to have a job, or to have children. And the simple fact of being a man or woman, or of being a young, middle-aged, or older person carries time prescriptions that become internalized so that people think about the scheduling of their lives according to culturally set values.

This book brings together the work of social scientists whose research and writing address a variety of issues raised by the connections between time and work. The authors examine ways in which time interacts with other factors such as professional and gender roles, and the organization and control of work. They focus on the ways in which time is ordered in the workplace, the implications of this ordering for other domains of society, and the conditions under which it is manipulated or controlled. The book includes essays that also suggest alternative ways of framing the concepts whereby time is understood, for example, by deconstructing concepts such as the workweek, part-time work, and work-family conflict and looking at how various assessment systems motivate or undercut work efforts.

The essays also question certain assumptions embedded in current views about the use of time at work and the economics of productivity. They emphasize the manipulation of time as a social-control mechanism that not only keeps individuals' noses to the grindstone at their jobs by measuring their output per minute, hour, or day but also reinforces the boundaries that define the sexual division of labor through the assignment of different time priorities for men and women, the division between skilled and unskilled labor based on measurements of activity, and experiences of autonomy and control at work. These writers address the human costs and social consequences of the timing of work and social life, and they document the realities of the ways in which people are asked to use their time, and the consequences that flow from various kinds of work arrangements. What, for example, asks Harriet Presser, are the effects of overtime work, night and split shifts, and mandatory overtime on individuals' mental health and marital stability?

Time measurement is another issue we explore with regard to its cultural and political overtones. As many sociologists have pointed out, individuals and groups determine how time is measured. Whether a social group measures performance at work or in other spheres of life by the minute, hour, day, or project may valorize work or may make it drudgery. And once set in place, systems of time control become institutionalized. When time clocks are installed and key-strokes per minute are calculated by the computer or billable hours become the measure of assessment of work effort, individuals have little autonomy with regard to the use of their work time.

This volume also explores individuals' agency in interpreting the meaning of time in their workplaces and in adapting to or transforming their work experience. Individuals may conform or rebel when confronted with time disciplines. They may mobilize with others to control the pace of work and beat the system with clever ploys, or they may act independently yet be co-opted as when they "make out"—a process that Michael Burawoy (1979) describes in *Manufacturing Consent* (reproducing the work of Donald Roy) to denote the "games" workers play to achieve levels of production that earn incentive pay.

Thus, we are suggesting that the sociology of time incorporates both the cultural and structural elements related to time in society (Coser and Coser 1963; Nowotny 1992). As we noted above, far from accepting time as an absolute, humans have defined, altered, and stretched it (Zerubavel 1981; Adam 1995). People attribute spiritual as well as practical meanings to time, and hierarchies of control and power are reflected in its distribution.

Although the chapters focus on the use and meaning of time in the workplace, they also have wider relevance for other sectors of social life. Indeed, the analyses show how conceptions regarding time measurement at work are embedded in larger structures and interact with other parts of the social system. Some of these papers propose to dispel myths about time, some offer a different angle of vision that makes us question widely accepted categorizations, and some inform us about the ways in which time is used as a social mechanism.

We have grouped the chapters loosely in three, somewhat overlapping, sections. The first section contains three chapters that address debates about changes in the hours that people work and the scheduling of these hours, and the impacts of these changes on

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workers and their families. The chapters in the second section discuss how issues of time are related to the organization and control of work. Time is a key component of managerial strategies that, for example, encourage employees to work hard and that emphasize, alternately, long or short planning horizons. The third group of chapters examines how ideologies of time, or “time norms,” influence the conceptualization and consequences of gender and work.

Here we offer an overview of the issues and chapters included in each of these sections.

CHANGES IN WORKING TIME AND TIMING AND CONSEQUENCES FOR INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES

How hard do people actually work? In this “good-time” culture in which TV ads bombard us with images of people on the beach, drinking Coke or beer, or going on cruises, television does not show many individuals burning the midnight oil on a work project unless they are nerds who will be saved by the sponsor’s product, such as a cell phone company or Federal Express. Only mad scientists in films offer a picture of the work-obsessed individuals who today are well represented in professional and technical workplaces. Yet we all know individuals (perhaps they are we?) who engage in work heroics such as working in marathon sessions on a computer project or a film, writing a book, or building something. What drives them? Some are seeking fame or fortune. Others, having internalized the “Protestant Ethic,” work hard as a way of life, or they may feel that it is a professional obligation to work very hard. Some are not interested in leisure-time activities. Or, perhaps they are escaping the humdrum or stress of family life (Hochschild 1997).

Are most people working harder and longer than ever before? Is there less free time to devote to family and leisure activities? Jacobs and Gerson summarize the key findings from their project on changes in paid working time and its consequences for work and family in the United States. They briefly review the debate over trends in working time: whereas Juliet Schor (1991) argues that working time has increased at the expense of leisure, John Robinson and Geoffrey Godbey (1999) respond that leisure time

has actually expanded. Jacobs and Gerson argue that no single trend, neither the growth of leisure nor the rising time demands of work, can be said to characterize the whole U.S. economy. Instead, social changes in the organization of work and family life have affected different groups of workers and those living in different family situations in disparate ways. To support their argument, they show the following:

The length of the work week (rather than the work year) is the key to understanding pressures on working families.

Average working time has remained relatively constant over the last several decades, but the dispersion of the time different workers spend on the job has increased: some are working very long hours, while others face shortened workweeks.

Differences in working time are linked to sharp and growing educational disparities, with well-educated workers more likely to put in very long work weeks.

The dramatic shift from single- to dual-income households has created a marked increase in the joint paid working time of couples and a decrease in the time that neither spouse is working, thus creating a “leisure pinch” for many American families.

Couples in the United States tend to face significantly longer work weeks than their European counterparts.

A significant proportion of American workers, and especially those who have very long work weeks, would prefer to work less.

Jacobs and Gerson’s analysis points to the need to abandon the search for one overarching trend in favor of theoretical explanations that examine how economic transformations have created varied time constraints and dilemmas for workers and their families. It also suggests that most Americans do not wish to avoid family life through work, but rather are seeking a reasonable, if elusive, balance between paid work and family pursuits.

Although most research on working time has focused on how many hours people work, a growing number of studies have emphasized the importance of considering the timing of those

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hours. The latter focus is represented by the other two chapters in this section, which address the question of people's work schedules. These authors suggest that the timing of work—not so much the number of hours one works—is important for the quality of family and personal life: working forty hours on a nine-to-five, Monday-through-Friday schedule has very different implications for one's health and the ability to participate in family activities than working forty hours on the night shift or irregularly during the month. Particularly salient for an individual's health and quality of family relations is the degree to which workers are able to control their work schedules.

Harriet Presser's chapter draws on her research and new book on the "24/7 economy" (Presser 2003). She discusses recent national data on nonstandard work schedules such as evening and night shifts and varying and rotating hours in the United States. She notes that in the late 1990s, less than a third of employed Americans worked a "standard workweek," defined as thirty-five to forty hours a week. Only slightly more than half regularly worked a fixed daytime schedule, on all five weekdays, for a specific number of hours. She argues that the expansion of nonstandard work schedules results from at least three interrelated factors: a changing economy, especially the growth of the service sector; demographic changes such as the postponement of marriage and the rise in real family income that has accompanied dual-earner households, developments that have increased the demand for entertainment and recreation during late hours and weekends; and new technologies such as computers, cell phones, and faxes, which have made it possible for people to work on a twenty-four–seven basis. She then highlights some of the social implications of the growth of nonstandard work schedules, such as their often negative impact on a variety of aspects of family life. Presser finally identifies key elements of a research agenda that is needed to understand better the advantages and costs of nonstandard work schedules.

Of particular importance for understanding the consequences of working nonstandard schedules is the individual's degree of control over when he or she works. Workers who can control when they work have more flexibility and thus tend to experience fewer of the negative effects associated with working nonstandard schedules. Rudy Fenwick and Mark Tausig (chapter 4) examine the conse-

quences of various types of shift work and schedule flexibility on the physical and mental health of workers as well as their families and social lives outside work. They begin by reviewing and evaluating previous research into these subjects along two distinct paths. The first is an epidemiological literature that focuses on the physiological adjustment problems faced by workers on nonstandard shifts, particularly those working nights or rotating shifts. Workers on these shifts have been found to be at increased risk of having various health problems because of disruptions to their circadian rhythms and sleeping and eating patterns. A second research path has investigated the social and psychological adjustment problems of shift work for workers. These problems are seen as especially acute for workers in particular types of families and family roles—for example, single mothers and dual-career parents—because of increased difficulties of coordinating work and family roles and activities. On the other hand, coordination between work and family is enhanced and stress is reduced when workers have some choice or flexibility about when to start and end their shifts. Furthermore, as Fenwick and Tausig suggest, the effects of scheduling flexibility on reducing worker stress go beyond coordination. Flexibility gives workers some control over their work time, and this control in itself is beneficial. Thus, flexibility and control over one's time can be conceptualized as a dimension of "job control" that is similar in its positive effects on workers to the effects of control over one's work content—for both social life and health. Using this broader conceptualization of flexibility they then compare its effects on worker stress (as measured by health and family outcomes) to the effects of actual clock times worked, using illustrative data such as the 1977 Quality of Employment Survey and the 1997 National Study of the Changing Workforce. These data also enable them to look at changes in work schedules and their effects on worker stress over the past quarter century.

TIME AND THE ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Time is central to a number of features of the employment relationship and the organization and control of work. Power relations at work inevitably have a temporal component, and social scientists

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have long recognized that control over the use of time underlies the organization of production practices and power relations in the workplace (see the reviews in Blyton, Hassard, Hill, and Starkey 1989 and Hassard 1990). The realization that time is a potentially valuable resource—Benjamin Franklin long ago noted that time is money—led managers to try to maximize the amount of work expected of their employees in a given unit of work time by means of the so-called “scientific management” of work procedures and the design of work organizations to elicit as much labor as possible for given units of labor power. Workers have often resisted this, and questions about who controls the amount of time workers spend at work have been central to labor-management struggles concerning the definition and length of the workday.

The writers in this section broaden the concepts defining our experience with time and the organization and control of work. They question accepted categories that are time-linked. They probe the ways in which time categories alter people’s sense of themselves and whether they feel comfortable or uncomfortable with it. Further, they examine the consequences of managerial strategies designed around notions of time.

Allen Bluedorn and Stephen Ferris (chapter 5) propose the concept “temporal depth” to describe a perspective people have when contemplating past events or when proposing activities and plans for the future. When managers are able to plan ahead, their notion of “the future” is calculated according to cultural views of what is the proper, relevant time period. For example, managers in Japanese firms typically have been able to think long-term, unlike American managers, who are more often subjected to short-run pressures generated by investors who keep a close eye on quarterly stock market returns. Moreover, managers’ time perspectives are also affected by the age of their organization; managers in firms with a long history may plan for a longer future than firms created recently. People in old organizations, Bluedorn and Ferris note, see themselves as part of an ongoing and continuous historical process, so the decisions they make about the future may be different than those made by persons who see themselves as creatures of the moment. Thus the calculus about the pay-off for investments may have different meanings for individuals in organizations of different ages. Bluedorn and Ferris demonstrate that temporal depth “matters”: they find that

after they controlled for organizational size, age, and the dimensions of the organizational environment, temporal depth was significantly related to measures of organizational performance such as capital expenditures and one financial performance ratio, earnings per share.

As in the rest of life, organizational time is measured not only in years, but by quarters, months, weeks, days, hours, and minutes. Depending on the organization, each measure carries value beyond that of money. Prestige, satisfaction, and commitment are also associated with the performance of activity (work) within the parameters of a time period.

Individuals and groups determine how time is measured and the value attached to its pace. One of the newest forms of measurement—one that is loaded with symbolism and has the consequence of controlling people at work—is the billable hour. Now used by law firms and consulting firms to charge clients for service and also to evaluate the productivity of their staffs, the billable hour has become fraught with meaning. The number of billable hours a person accrues and whether or not the number is above, at, or below the norm has a lot to do with whether a person is defined as being on a partnership track, doing excellent work, and being committed to the work organization. Many observers (Galanter and Palay 1991; Epstein et al. 1995; Yakura 2001) have illustrated how billable hours become a proxy for excellence and commitment. The commodification of time may have many and far-reaching unintended consequences (see Yakura 2001).

The commodification of time in another domain is the theme of Benjamin Stewart's (chapter 6) discussion of the urban bicycle messenger industry, an industry that produces the commodity—speed. He shows that the low-tech bicycle offers considerable advantages over other forms of delivery and is actually the fastest mode of transportation in congested urban areas. Bicycle messengers are continually urged to go faster in order to deliver their packages. This need for speed, coupled with the congestion and other difficulties characteristic of the urban environment, lead to physical and emotional stresses on the messengers. One way stress is reduced—and messengers maintain their interest in their work—is by game-like activities such as riding bicycles without brakes and trying to figure out the optimal ways to reach a destination. In addition, messenger

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racers (known as “alley cats”) provide a way that messengers can obtain recognition for their speed-riding skills. These races contribute to the establishment of a bicycle messenger culture that illustrates vividly how work behaviors may spill over into nonwork activities.

While most of the studies on work intensification have sought to identify trends and assess their consequences, relatively few have attempted to explain the causes of these trends. This is the focus of Ofer Sharone’s (chapter 7) research on high-tech software engineers in a large American technology firm, which seeks to explain the causes of the increase in work hours that has been documented by Jacobs and Gerson, among others. He shows how workers in this industry, although theoretically free to work at their own pace, tend to extend their work hours, putting in fifty-to-seventy-hour weeks. Building on the work of Michael Burawoy (1979) and Gideon Kunda (1992), which demonstrated that some workers exceed management standards because of competition with their own performances, or because of a culture that places a high valence on exacting standards, Sharone shows how a culture of excellence and a structure of comparative performance create the individual “choice” to work very hard. The pattern he observes of “competitive self-management” has established itself in many organizational settings. His in-depth interviews suggest that the rapidly spreading management practice of assigning employees relative performance “scores” along a bell-shaped curve—a normal distribution curve—is an important cause of long work hours. He claims that the practice of curved grading generates intense anxiety among the engineers regarding their relative professional status, which in turn drives them to self-impose long work hours. Like the study by Mary Blair-Loy (chapter 10), Sharone concludes that the seemingly independent “choices” of individuals to work hard emanate from highly structured cultural mandates and social norms. Both these scholars observe how people often base their feelings of self-esteem on fulfilling socially structured evaluation systems.

Time boundaries of age have multiple consequences in today’s economy. This is illustrated by David Collinson and Margaret Collinson’s (chapter 8) examination of the multiple consequences of age and gender boundaries in a downsizing economy. Drawing on their research in the financial services sector in Britain, they explore some of the ways that temporality and power intersect

within organizational and managerial practices. They first look at restructuring and the layoffs that result in management grades, noting these have created much shorter tenures within the organization. They note the concentration of layoffs (the “delaying” of management) among people over the age of forty, with the result that managers over fifty are becoming a rarity in many sectors. This has consequence for the rising significance of a management youth culture in which attributes of youth are privileged, celebrated, and valorized and attributes of higher age are devalored. They then examine work intensification for all levels of employees. Flatter hierarchies and leaner management in terms of numbers result in the need for managerial survivors to work longer hours and have an almost “permanent” presence within the organization. This time-related mandate of work intensification reinforces the masculine culture within management. Finally, the authors consider the issue of a balance between work and home obligations, exploring the industry under analysis to see what kinds of managerial survival strategies are employed to meet the requirements of the work environment.

TIME NORMS, GENDER, AND WORK

Time norms have consequences for role behaviors during specific time periods. It is obvious that people assume their roles as managers, teachers, or factory workers when they go to the workplace at a particular time of day. Work “starts” at a time set by tradition or rules, and people become workers when they set foot in the door of the office or factory, often behaving differently than they would if they were acting as a coach for their child’s soccer team or helping to fix a car as a neighbor. Similarly, when work ends, and they leave their places of work and go home, they assume their “nonwork” roles. Of course, people in some occupations or at various levels of the work hierarchy may take work home, carrying papers in their briefcases, or staying on call through their cell phones or pagers. Thus, time boundaries may activate social roles and terminate them, although there is considerable opportunity for spillover effects. In these instances time boundaries and activation of roles are highly articulated.

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Time norms not only set boundaries around work activity but also, when they interact with factors related to gender, age, and race, contribute to keeping people in their place socially and even literally. When German women are required to be at home because their children's school day ends at one P.M. this has an impact on their ability to pursue demanding work in the economy; when older people are reminded that they are blocking the ascent of talented young people in a university and should retire, they may feel forced to do so while they still have contributions to make; when African Americans must work late but cannot find adequate transportation home because taxi drivers do not wish to go into black neighborhoods, this may limit their work opportunities. These examples illustrate how time boundaries enforce various social statuses.

The three chapters in this section examine how time norms influence conceptions of gender and consequences such as overwork and the ability of people to cross boundaries that define what is appropriate for men and women.

Peter Levin's chapter on commodity traders presents a microcosm of time-related social boundaries that make gender very salient in a work situation (chapter 9). He demonstrates how, in the commodities exchange he studied, behavior repertoires become activated or deactivated depending on the pace of work. There, women and men traders, engaged in high-demand work that requires constant alertness, worked side by side and behaved very much the same. The setting was dominated by a male culture in which ribald humor and off-color comments peppered discourse, and women engaged in similar behavior and were treated rather alike. During busy times references to gender were framed in language that conceptualized the trading floor as gender-neutral even as it privileged a particular form of dominant masculinity. When things slowed down, the dynamic changed. Levin's contribution to our understanding of time-activating sequences is his noticing that when the pace eased up on the trading floor, many men referred to the women in their midst in gender-related terms, commenting on their sexual attributes and highlighting sex difference. The change of pace allowed men to consider women as sex objects rather than as coworkers doing the same tasks.

Time norms enforce gender distinctions in other ways. Time priorities and gender are always linked. What men and women do at

various time of the day is guided by expectations and controls, as we shall discuss later. But even cultural views about what people ought to be able to do within a time period have their consequences.

Holding social statuses defined as being disharmonious may make individuals feel anxious. Today, as the media focus on problems women may encounter combining jobs and motherhood, women become anxious about time management. The power of conceptualization of time allocation has been suggested by Jeffrey Thompson and J. Stuart Bunderson (2001) in a paper questioning the concept of work-family conflict. They point out that some individuals with a large number of time demands may feel stressed while others with the same amount may feel productively busy. Certainly whether we like what we are doing and whether people close to us think we are doing the “right” thing has something to do with this. Today, women in particular, but also families in which both parents are in the workforce are said to face stress through role overload because of the conflict between the time demands of work and family. In the workplace, the media, and the academy attention is directed at the proper “balance” of time allotted to carrying out the obligations and responsibilities created by work and family roles. However, little attention is paid to the success stories of families in which men and women manage work and family obligations successfully (Barnett and Baruch 1985; Moen 2003). Certainly the work-family conflict model has become a hot-button topic, especially for women, as evidenced by the many conferences devoted to this issue and magazine articles that suggest that women who work are invariably under stress.

Curiously, the notion of work-family conflict is a relatively new one. It was not generated simply by women’s entry into the paid labor market—women were there long before the term was used to describe the problem. Were our great-grandmothers faulted, or did we feel sympathy for them when they worked on the family farm, cooked for the farm hands, raised chickens, and took care of babies? We regarded what they did as natural. Only when women began to take on high-profile work assignments for high pay did the idea that work and family are inevitably in conflict become a matter of public attention. If what we do is self-affirming and consistent or supportive of our identities then we will not experience conflict but may see our lives as multifaceted and rich.

Although some time norms are informally drawn or seem to arise automatically from work situations, others are highly specified. Required hours of work, such as the eight-hour day and the five-day workweek, determine formal boundaries, and often in addition reinforce a standard by which a worker is deemed to be a good worker and to be doing his or her fair share of the work. Organizations have, therefore, a standard by which “overtime” or “part-time” may be determined. Furthermore, individuals are often evaluated according to whether they work over or under the standard. Thus they may be called overachievers, or workaholics or, at the other end of the continuum, shirkers, lacking ambition, or off-track in their careers. These issues are of deep concern today as the standard workweek for some categories of workers, such as managers and professionals, has been steadily increasing. Yet as more and more women are coming into the work place, these time demands may conflict with family roles and also the needs of children. For women more than men, part-time work schedules offer the opportunity both to work productively although at a decelerated pace and to spend time with children. It often costs them career advancement, however (Epstein et al. 1999).

The matter of how hard people work is to some extent gendered: generally it is men rather than women who represent the overachievers and workaholics who put in the long hours. Of course, some women also fit this profile, although there are not believed to be many of them. Women who are overachievers in their unpaid work at home are regarded as engaging in appropriate activity, but men are regarded as strange if they are invested in home-based work to the exclusion of compensated work. Thus we see that individuals’ choices are hardly a product only of their own personalities and history but rather are heavily affected by social values and norms.

Mary Blair-Loy notes the competition between devotion to work and to motherhood for many women who have successful careers in finance. She discusses how the seemingly independent “choices” of individuals to work hard emanate from highly structured cultural mandates and social norms (which she calls schemas) that inspire, organize, and justify work dedication, whether in the home or at the workplace. Although women who work as homemakers often view

their choice as “natural,” it is often the case that they have left the paid workforce to work uncompensated at home. She maintains that the cultural facets of structure help define people’s moral identities and their desires about how to spend their waking hours. The pressures on mothers to reduce work hours and spend more on mothering follow a cultural prescription that may not bring them fulfillment but that does reduce their guilt. Mothers who do not reduce their work hours conform to a work-devotion schema, but have to tolerate their own feelings of guilt, which may contribute to their sense of work-family conflict.

Blair-Loy’s analysis questions scholars’ implicit equation of long work hours with “overwork” as well as the assumptions, embedded in the terms “work-life balance” and “work-life conflict,” that work is *not* one’s life and that long work hours sap one’s life. She illustrates some of the conditions under which these assumptions do and do not hold true for the case of women finance executives, whose schema demands long work hours, allegiance, and single-minded dedication while promising them financial rewards, social status, warm collegial relationships, interesting work, intensity, and even transcendence. Respondents do not experience long work hours as “overwork” as long as their faith in the work-devotion schema remains strong. Immersion in work allows them to transcend ordinary time and exalts them to an almost timeless realm of purpose and meaning. To say that these women lack “work-life balance” is beside the point; work *is*, in large part, their life. Yet about half of Blair-Loy’s sample members have lost their faith in the schema and have come to resent the time their careers demand. For them, work ceases to provide “an adrenaline flow” of meaning and becomes grueling. Whether or not respondents retain faith in this schema is associated with whether they have reached very senior positions or have languished at mid-senior levels. A robust faith in the work-devotion schema is likely both a cause and a consequence of career advancement.

Cynthia Fuchs Epstein (chapter 11) explores how the link between time norms in society and gender roles makes it difficult for individuals to cross the occupational and social boundaries associated with their sex. She points out that professional women with heavy work schedules and men oriented to sharing child care in the

home each face social disapproval for spending “too much” time at activities not regarded as their primary obligation. Even women who work part-time find they elicit disapproval from their fellow workers; and men who take off time during the workday to engage in child care find that their loyalty and competence is challenged by their superiors at work and by stay-at-home mothers in their communities. Epstein analyzes the ordering of time priorities and flexibility in deviating from cultural norms, and notes how time norms control an individual’s ability to privately negotiate time allocations and solve time conflicts in innovative ways.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of time and its relationship to work and the workplace has a long history and no doubt will inspire thoughtful consideration in the future. The essays extend our thinking about some issues that have been inspired by the social conditions of our day—the acceleration of demands at work and in the home, the control and evaluation of work effort, and the appropriateness of the work activity and social supports for it. In doing so they identify basic issues such as the ways we think about the value of work performed at particular places and times of the day, and by individuals who belong to particular groups or social categories. The essays also focus on the power of particular concepts or metaphors (such as work-family conflict) as we plan and evaluate the scholarship on time that appears in professional journals and in the popular media. These chapters thus offer new ways to think about time as a variable in analyzing the workplace and its impact on and interaction with other cultural and structural factors in society.

The chapters also have implications for public policy designed to regulate time at work and its consequences. In particular, policies designed to give workers greater control over the scheduling of their work are likely to alleviate some of the pressures associated with work intensification.

As noted, these essays certainly will not be the last word on the areas where they direct our attention. Nevertheless, these writers inform us of some of the central theoretical and policy-relevant issues raised by the intersection of time and work—issues that are

likely to grow in importance as the twenty-first century progresses—and contribute to the lively and ongoing discussion.

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