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Folks, Homer

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*Man and His Work: Conflict and Change.* By George Ritzer. New York:  
Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1972.

This text constitutes an effort to "summarize and categorize the vast number of ethnographic studies of occupations." Toward this end the author has developed what he sees as the underlying consistencies and uniformities within this literature into a heuristic framework for the sociology of occupations. The result of this effort is a readable 413 pages consisting of an extensive and useful introduction to the field; discussions of what are referred to as differentiated forms of conflict and resolution for eleven subcategorical "types" of occupations, as well as those unique to Blacks and women in the work world; a summary of the more consistent findings within the literature; and a working bibliography of more than 700 entries.

The value of this work stems from the fact that the author ignores the safety of scholarly equivocation and presents 73 propositional statements about occupational phenomena. These, he feels, provide a guide to a more firmly based subdiscipline in that they facilitate an empirically grounded knowledge system that would stem from, and eventually supplant, the informed speculative analyses of ethnographic research which now prevails. In this endeavor the author has not only presented a challenge to the dominant methodological bias, but has objectified that challenge with an explicit substantive program that is itself open to the rigors of scholarly and scientific scrutiny. A second value, which to some may be a debit, lies in the work's revelation of the complexities and difficulties inherent in secondary analysis. Though clearly unintended, this consequence is not surprising due to the diversity of the material itself.

A major theme of the book is based upon the proposition that all occupations can be located along a professional continuum (Proposition 1). The relative positioning of various occupations in turn is dependent upon the degree to which an occupation possesses six characteristics: general systematic knowledge, authority over clients, community rather than self-interest, self-control of the occupation, public and legal legitimacy, and a distinctive culture. Further, it is stated that this arrangement of occupations along a professional continuum is useful because it allows us "...to study how and why an occupation moves up or

down the scale" (p.49), thereby contributing to a focus upon social change in occupations. These assertions appear to be problematic for the stated objectives despite the author's intentions.

First, there is no theoretical definition for the concept profession, nor does the discussion imply one. The analyses further muddy the issue by interchangeably discussing professions and professionals, and by including within these discussions such diverse occupations and occupationalist "forms" as medicine, law, military generals, welfare 'agencies', C.P.A.'s, engineers, etc. This in turn creates a number of operational difficulties.

As most occupations are not professions, but desire to be, they probably never will be (Proposition 6). This exclusion category (non-professional) is as important as the inclusive one (professional) even though we are left theoretically uninformed as to the nature of either. Similarly, there is a difficulty involving the placement of occupations which are little more than temporally located role systems upon a scalar continuum which is composed of six essentially organizational characteristics.

In partial answer to these difficulties, the work is purported to be in a "processualist" framework as opposed to a functionalist one and hence is concerned with questions of more or less, rather than the more structuralist questions of inclusion and exclusion. Consequently, such typological distinctions (i.e., definitions) are, for these purposes, irrelevant. But, in the subsequent analyses of the various occupational "levels" (p.6), "types" (p.7), or "categories" (p.6), this position does not remain consistent. For example, each occupational category is viewed as exhibiting unique and intrinsically different forms of conflict and stress. Occupational conflict, then, is viewed categorically while its proposed consequent, change, is to be understood in terms of whether or not an occupation has become professional. In the end no such change towards or away from the professional "ideal" is enumerated in the work, while the near impossibility of such change is a central point in the discussion of semi-professions as well as the substance of Proposition 6.

While a central objective of the work was to explicate the apparent consistencies of processual social change within occupations, the content of the discussions of conflict relative to various occupational types tended, except in the case of professions, to be concerned with individual worker modalities of conflict resolution and/or stress reduction. That is, occupational subcategories, as unique loci of objective conditions, produce categorically specific conflicts for the workers and result in occupationally unique forms of dealing with problems. In sum, what the reader is lead to anticipate is a discussion of occupational change in terms of the professional continuum. Instead a very broad and extensive insight into interpersonal adjustment and mechanisms of social stability, characteristic of different occupational realities, is revealed.

In addition to these broader difficulties there are some specific inconsistencies and contradictions which I will point out in order of their appearance.

First, despite the title, the book is neither about man (i.e., the

metaphysical concept) nor work. This is a clear allusion to Hughes' seminal work, concretely entitled Men and Their Work, which is about occupations for lack of a better term. But even here some confusion exists. The author utilizes Halls' definition:

An occupation is the social role performed by adult members of society that directly and/or indirectly yields social and financial consequences and that constitutes a major focus in the life of an adult.

However, the applicability of this definition begins to fail at the lower levels of the occupational hierarchy and, I might add, at the very top - the elites. Relative to these lower levels the more appropriate and often used terms, work and worker, are used, but nowhere does one find a definition of work as a sociological phenomenon nor a discussion of how it differs from occupation. Further, to fit the above definition of occupation to those role systems associated with the assembly line or the steering wheel of a truck would necessitate a consideration of the actor's roles outside his work, or, as our dualistic mentality has driven us to label, his leisure. Clearly, "leisure time" for workers is taken up by other roles through which they "...[obtain] social and financial consequences and that constitute ...major foci in their lives ." However, only two and a half pages are devoted to a discussion of "leisure," as the opposite of work, and excludes consideration of moonlighting, gambling, avocations, and voluntary associations as central forms for some in obtaining social and financial benefit. Finally, it is here that a mention of elites (presumed to refer to those with inherited upper class status) is found but only as the historical possessors of leisure. But, while there is a clear implication that leisure is quite different from occupational and work activities, one would again be hard pressed to define leisure among elites differently from the definition for occupations used here.

In conclusion, Man and His Work is no more inadequate than the field itself and the material that constitutes a major portion of its literature. It is, however, better than most works in many respects and certainly an addition to the field as it attempts to consolidate the knowledge about occupations. By being positively aggressive within the boundaries of the literature itself, the author has provided for the teacher and student an instrument of potentially exciting sociological inquiry - an entanglement of conceptual vines which reveals a truer picture of the condition of sociological knowledge than many undergraduate texts. And for the scholar and researcher it brings together, in a clearly stimulating way, a summation of a vast and diverse body of knowledge that should clearly be a stimulus to work in the field.

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Doing Fieldwork: Warnings and Advice. By Rosalie H. Wax.  
Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971.

Sociologists, especially quantitative sociologists, would do well to read Doing Fieldwork: Warnings and Advice by anthropologist Rosalie H. Wax of the