

CHAPTER FOUR C KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL TELECOMMUTING PROGRAMS

The information examined for this report provides insight into the components of successful telecommuting programs. Although not present in every case study, a number of elements occurred frequently enough to indicate that they should be considered in developing a telecommuting program. The following elements appear to be important in maximizing the potential benefits of telecommuting to all groups.

GOVERNMENTAL POLICIES AND AGENCY SUPPORT

Legislative directives, administrative actions, and agency policies helped promote telecommuting in many of the case studies. At the national level, the directions provided in the Clean Air Act Amendments, the ISTEA, funding of the telework centers in the Washington, D.C. area, Presidential actions, and other policies all supported the implementation of telecommuting programs. State activities, such as those underway in Arizona, California, Minnesota, Oregon, and Washington have also helped foster interest in telecommuting. Multifaceted programs at the regional and local levels, such as those underway in Dallas, Phoenix, and the Washington, D.C. area, have also played important roles in fostering greater use of telecommuting.

TOP MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

Support from top management in a business or agency is critical to the development and implementation of a telecommuting program. Management must be willing to provide any necessary financial support, as well as any changes in policies and procedures for telecommuting. Examples of the support from management or senior personnel are evident throughout the case studies. In some instances, such as Paddock Swimming Pool Company, the CEO was actually the first to test telecommuting. In other cases, the CEO and top management actively sponsored the pilot programs and full scale implementation.

EMPLOYEE INTEREST AND SUPPORT

While support from senior management is critical to the success of telecommuting programs, so is interest from employees. In many of the case studies, telecommuting was promoted at the staff level. In some instances, employee groups conducted background research, developed draft policies and programs, and pursued pilot tests within their agency or firm. The early involvement and support of labor unions and other employee groups was noted as important in some of the case studies. Thus, as noted by the focus groups conducted with employers in the Washington, D.C. area, both bottom-up and top-down support is needed for successful telecommuting programs (16).

TELECOMMUTING POLICIES, GUIDELINES, AND HUMAN RESOURCE SUPPORT

Clearly articulating the agency or company policies and guidelines relating to telecommuting appears to be an important aspect of successful telecommuting programs. Most, but not all of the case studies have some type of formal guidelines governing the telecommuting program. In most cases, these policies identify the expectations of both employees and management. The policies should outline the specific requirements for telecommuters, such as a home work area, work hours, communications with the main office, dress, and other items. Support from the human resource or personnel department is also important to ensure that both supervisors and employees are able to obtain assistance during the implementation of a telecommuting program, as well as on an ongoing basis.

SELECTION OF JOB TASKS

The guidelines used in many of the case studies identify the types of jobs or job tasks and functions appropriate for telecommuting. The following characteristics summarize the main factors used to help identify jobs that may be appropriate candidates for telecommuting.

- • Can work tasks be done at home or at a remote work site?
- • Can work tasks be done without on-site or face-to-face interaction with customers or co-workers?
- ! Is the equipment necessary to conduct the work tasks available at home or a remote work site?
- • Can the job objectives be identified and measured?

Certain jobs may be better suited to telecommuting than others. Examples of job tasks and functions that are good candidates for telecommuting include research, data analysis, communications, writing, and programming.

SELECTION OF TELECOMMUTERS

Once the general jobs and work tasks appropriate for telecommuting have been identified, the next step is to select the employees to participate in the program. The guidelines used at many of the case studies include criteria for identifying and selecting telecommuters. The case studies and the general literature review indicated that an employee's work habits should be considered in the selection process. Employees who complete tasks successfully and reliably, enjoy working independently, and like to assume responsibility may be good candidates. The following questions can be used to help identify potential telecommuters.

- • Do you like to work independently?

! Do you work well without supervision?

• • Do you have a home office or area where you can work at home without interruption?

SELECTION OF MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS

The selection of managers and supervisors of telecommuters appears to be as important as identifying telecommuters. Selecting supervisors should be done with care to ensure a successful program. Telecommuting may require managers to adopt new or to modify existing management styles and procedures. Employee productivity must be measured by factors other than direct oversight. The lack of interaction with an employee on a daily basis must also be considered. Making sure that both managers and employees are comfortable with the telecommuting arrangement and have established a good working relationship is important. In many of the case studies, signed agreements help establish the expectations of both supervisors and telecommuters.

ESTABLISHING REGULAR AND ONGOING COMMUNICATION METHODS

The importance of establishing regular communication methods was stressed by supervisors and telecommuters in the Texas case studies and noted in the literature. Techniques reported from all of the case studies included calling superiors at the start of work on telecommuting days, establishing regular times for phone calls, using e-mail and home pages, and making special arrangements in the case of an emergency.

ONGOING MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Most of the pilot or demonstration programs included some type of monitoring and evaluation component. These evaluations were used to gauge costs and benefits of the tests, and the results were used in determining the future of the programs. An ongoing monitoring program should be considered to ensure that a telecommuting program continues to provide the desired benefits for all groups. A monitoring program can help identify problems so that appropriate actions can be taken, and can document the benefits to all groups, which may be important in justifying the program.

EQUIPMENT AND SUPPORT

Ensuring that telecommuters have the necessary equipment to perform their jobs is another important factor with successful programs. Although extensive equipment may not be necessary, the case studies indicate that home computers, links into the office computer, a second telephone line, a fax machine, and a pager are often used by telecommuters. These items may be provided by the employee, the employer or the costs may be shared between the employee and the employer. Providing telecommuters with access to ongoing computer support services and other assistance is also important.

CHAPTER FIVE C IDENTIFICATION OF BENEFITS AND COSTS OF TELECOMMUTING PROGRAMS

This chapter examines the benefits that may be realized from telecommuting, as well as the costs that may be associated with implementing and operating telecommuting programs. Employers, employees, and society in general may all benefit from telecommuting. At the same time, some costs may be associated with telecommuting. Information on the benefits and costs associated with telecommuting obtained through the literature review and the case studies is highlighted here. Although evaluations have been conducted of many of the case studies, detailed information on the costs of developing and operating telecommuting programs is not always available.

EMPLOYER BENEFITS AND COSTS

The most common benefit cited by organizations with telecommuting programs is an increase in the productivity of their telecommuting workers. Faster completion of assignments, fewer sick and absent days, better time management, and increased morale and commitment to the company or agency were all reported by telecommuters. Other benefits realized by some companies include reduced office space needs and associated costs, enhanced ability to attract and retain high quality employees, and improved customer service. Examples of reported benefits to employers from telecommuting programs are summarized in this section.

Reduced Office Space Needs and Costs

One of the more significant potential cost savings from telecommuting for businesses and public agencies appears to be in reduced office space needs and related facilities, such as parking. For these benefits to be realized, however, telecommuting programs have to eliminate the need for existing office space or allow additional employees to occupy current spaces. Given the long-term nature of building leases and real estate ownership, savings in these areas may not be realized in the short-term. In the longer range, however, telecommuting provides a viable option to reduce or better manage office space and real estate needs. The following case studies highlight a few examples of office space cost savings or resource management as a result of telecommuting programs.

- ! Savings in office space and associated costs were reported at the Texas Employment Commission. Commission of Appeals Department, which was able to increase staff and decrease office space as a result of telecommuting (33).
- Pacific Bell reported savings of at least \$50,000 in office space costs through telecommuting (47).
- ! Georgia Power has realized reduced office space and parking requirements from their telecommuting program (36).

- • IBM has documented a 55 percent reduction in real estate at its Midwest Division, a 75 percent reduction in the Cranford, New Jersey Office, and a 10 percent reduction in the firm's offices in Canada from telecommuting programs (38).
- ! The telecommuting program at Movo Media in Los Angeles has allowed the company to add needed employees without increasing office space (41).

Increased Employee Productivity, Morale, and Commitment

One of the most frequently cited benefits by organizations with telecommuting programs is an increase in the productivity of their telecommuting workers. Faster completion of assignments and accomplishing more work due to fewer distractions, better time management, and increased morale and commitment to the organization have been reported. Although these benefits are sometimes hard to measure and quantify, the following examples from the case studies provide an indication of increases in the productivity of telecommuting workers.

- • Results from the Texas case studies include a number of examples of increased productivity from telecommuters. Supporting evidence for enhanced productivity ranged from documented improvements in the processing of caseloads at the Texas Employment Commission, Commission of Appeals Department (33) to reports from supervisors and telecommuters of increased work output.
- ! The City of San Antonio Information Services Department reported improved customer satisfaction and more timely response to customer needs from the telecommuting program. Specific examples were provided of telecommuters responding quickly to provide information needed by other departments, which helped to establish telecommuting as a seamless or transparent program (23).
- • The pilot telecommuting program at the City of Los Angeles indicated increased effectiveness of telecommuters over other workers, an annual \$6,100 cost-benefit per telecommuter to the City, and improved communication among telecommuters and their supervisors (21).
- ! The County of Los Angeles documented a 42 percent increase in productivity over time with the telecommuting program (24).
- • IBM has reported increased customer satisfaction and improved employee productivity from its telecommuting program (38).
- ! United Airlines reported an approximate 30 percent increase in the productivity of the Airlines Information Services Department in Los Angeles during the first year of the telecommuting program (45).

Decreased Sick Leave

Another benefit from telecommuting programs noted by management personnel at many of the case studies was decreased use of sick leave by telecommuting employees. Although telecommuting is not a substitute for sick leave, the ability to work from home on days when they are not feeling well enough to commute to the office helps contribute to the increased productivity of telecommuters discussed previously. Examples of agencies and businesses noting decreases in the use of sick leave by telecommuters were noted in the case studies.

Improved Ability to Attract and Retain Employees

A number of the case studies indicated that the telecommuting programs have helped retain quality employees, as well as assisted with recruiting new employees. Examples were also provided of using telecommuting to assist and retain valued employees through times of illness or special needs.

- • The manager of the City of San Antonio Information Services Department indicated the telecommuting program has allowed them to be more competitive with private sector firms seeking the same employees. The telecommuting program has helped attract new workers, as well as retaining existing staff (3).
- ! The Texas Workforce Commission representative indicated that the telecommuting program provides a unique recruiting tool and provides options to help retain existing employees (3).
- • Movo Media in Los Angeles has been able to hire skilled employees living in other cities through the telecommuting program (41).
- ! The telecommuting program allowed Paddock Swimming Pool Company to retain a key employee who married and relocated further away from the main office (42).
- • The telecommuting program at UNISYS Corporation contributed to retaining many skilled employees when the Pasadena, California office was closed and employees had to be relocated to the Mission Viejo facility (44).

Address Special Situations and Needs

Telecommuting programs have also been used to assist and retain valued employees during special situations or in response to specific needs. Examples provided in the case studies included expanding telecommuting programs to assist employees during pregnancies, illnesses, illness in the family, and other special situations. In addition, telecommuting can assist in hiring and retaining employees with special needs.

Telecommuting can also help manage responses to natural disasters or other emergency situations. The San Francisco earthquake in October 1989 provided an unusual test case for

telecommuting programs, as companies in the San Francisco Bay Area searched for ways to continue operating in spite of destroyed roadways that stranded employees at home. Telecommuting programs were also used after the 1993 Los Angeles earthquake to help manage demand on the transportation system (8, 48).

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS AND COSTS

The literature and case studies provide a good deal of information on the benefits of telecommuting to employees. Frequently cited benefits include time savings from fewer commute trips, increased productivity and job satisfaction, and better balancing of work and family responsibilities. Less well documented are the costs associated with telecommuting for employees. Examples of the costs and benefits to telecommuters are highlighted in this section.

Costs Associated with Telecommuting

The literature review and the case studies indicated a lack of uniformity related to the possible costs for telecommuters. In some of the case studies, the employer assumes all of the costs associated with telecommuting. These may include computers, modems, fax machines, additional telephone lines, and other related equipment. In other cases, the costs of needed equipment is shared between the telecommuter and the organization. In still other instances, the telecommuter is responsible for providing a computer or other items needed to successfully complete their job.

Given these differences in approaches, the cost of participating in a telecommuting program will vary. At the low end of the scale, there may be little or no costs to the employee. At the high end, a telecommuter may have to make an investment in a home computer, if he/she does not already have one, and may need to pay other related costs.

Reduction in Stress, Time, and Costs Associated with Commuting

Telecommuters in the case studies reported a number of benefits from not commuting to a central office one or two days a week or on a daily basis. Employees reported lower levels of stress and fatigue from not having to drive and deal with traffic congestion on telecommuting days. Telecommuters also reported savings in gasoline and parking costs from not having to drive to and from work every day.

Increased Productivity, Morale, Job Satisfaction, and Responsibility

Telecommuters in many of the case studies reported increased productivity from eliminating commuting time, reducing interruptions, and establishing flexible work schedules. Telecommuters reported increased motivation, job satisfaction, and loyalty to their employer, as well as greater feelings of accomplishment, responsibility, and trust.

Balancing Job and Family Responsibilities

Telecommuters noted a better balance of work and home responsibilities. Positive aspects of telecommuting on home life included spending more time with children, making meal preparations easier and dinner more enjoyable, arranging needed services or home repairs easier, and scheduling other personal appointments. Employees viewed the telecommuting programs as providing additional benefits in special situations. Examples provided included caring for sick children or relatives and individual illnesses.

COMMUNITY BENEFITS AND COSTS

Telecommuting programs may also provide benefits to the community and society as a whole. As discussed in this section, these may include reductions in energy use and pollution associated with commute trips. In addition, telecommuting programs may help enhance the economy and human capital of some areas and neighborhoods.

Travel Reduction, Air Quality Enhancement, and Energy Reduction

Telecommuting programs can benefit the transportation system by reducing commute trips. These benefits can help companies, agencies, and areas meet air quality legislative requirements and other policy directives. Since telecommuting removes work trips from congested peak-periods, telecommuting programs should have positive impacts on traffic congestion, air quality, and energy consumption. As summarized below, the experience at many of the case studies supports these benefits.

- ! The 21 telecommuters from the Texas case study sites who completed surveys averaged savings of approximately 61 kilometers per one-way trip or 122 kilometers round trip, on the days they telecommuted. Only two of the survey respondents reported making regular trips on telecommuting days. Both of these individuals made trips to and from day care. These trips were less than five kilometers compared to their normal commute trips of 52 and 61 kilometers (3).
- • The State of California Telecommuting Pilot Project, which included 22 state agencies, reported significant savings in vehicle kilometers of travel (VKT). Travel diaries kept by program participants indicated that they made virtually no work-related trips on telecommuting days. The majority of participants also reduced the number of non-work trips on telecommuting days. Overall, on days they worked at home, telecommuters reduced their peak-period trips by an average of 60 percent, their total vehicle kilometers by 80 percent, and their freeway use by 40 percent. The telecommuting program prompted many participants to seek out shopping, recreation, and other non-work destinations that were closer to their homes, both on telecommuting and non-telecommuting days (49).
- ! Travel diaries completed by telecommuters and other workers provided a model for trip and emissions reductions during the Puget Sound Telecommuting Demonstration Project. On telecommuting days, telecommuting workers averaged 30 percent fewer trips, 63 percent fewer kilometers traveled, and 44 percent fewer cold starts. These

factors resulted in a 50 to 60 percent decrease in individual vehicle emissions per telecommuting day (50).

- • Telecommuting employees at the state of Hawaii's telework center in Mililani, Oahu, saw a gasoline savings averaging 29 percent, as well as a 7.4 hour reduction in travel time per week (51). An average of 50 vehicle kilometers of travel was saved per employee for each telecommuting occasion in a telecommuting test conducted by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG). Most participating employees worked from their homes, with one employee working at a satellite center. The reduced number of work and non-work trips resulted in approximately 60 percent fewer automobile cold starts for each telecommuter in the program, along with similar decreases in emissions of organic gases, carbon monoxide, and nitric oxides. Travel energy saved averaged 80 kilowatt-hours (52).
- • Travel reductions in peak hour travel from employees using telework centers in the Seattle and Los Angeles areas have been recorded. Reductions in vehicle kilometers of travel, and resulting savings in gasoline and reductions in emissions, were reported at all the telework centers (53).

Enhance the Economy and Human Capital of Neighborhoods and Areas

Telework centers and telecommuting programs may have secondary benefits related to enhancing the local economy and providing resources for local residents. For example, one of the objectives of the Ma DOT Cambridge Telework Center was to enhance the economy and human capital in the Cambridge area. The location of telework centers may help stimulate the economy in the area. Further facilities such as the Metro Blue Line TeleVillage in Los Angeles provide resources for the local community to use. In addition, the presence of telecommuters may enhance the vitality and security of neighborhoods during the day.

telecommuting programs in the Phoenix Metropolitan area, and programs underway in California, Oregon, and Washington represent just a few examples of the types of activities that can be taken at the state level to encourage greater use of telecommuting.

- **Regional and Local Policies and Programs.** Regional agencies, MPOs, transit authorities, and local governments can play important roles in supporting telecommuting. The Dallas-Fort Worth, Phoenix, and Washington, D.C. area case studies provide just a few examples of comprehensive programs. Similar activities could be undertaken in other metropolitan areas throughout the country.
- **Labor Union Support.** Support for telecommuting activities from labor unions and other employee groups at the national level could assist in working with these organizations at the state and local levels. Initiating discussions at the national level could enhance support for telecommuting programs at public agencies and private businesses throughout the country.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

Agencies at all levels can continue to promote telecommuting through a number of methods. Public information campaigns and targeted marketing efforts can be used to communicate the benefits of telecommuting to all groups. The *Home Office 2000* contest in the Dallas/Fort Worth area represents just one example of possible information and promotional activities. Ensuring that all groups are aware of the benefits of telecommuting and continuing to promote telecommuting programs on an ongoing basis can encourage more widespread use. The following approaches provide a few examples that may be appropriate for consideration by public agencies.

- **Videos.** A few videos are currently available explaining telecommuting options and outlining the key elements to be considered in establishing telecommuting programs. Additional videos could be produced to tailor messages to specific markets. These could highlight the keys to successful programs and the benefits of telecommuting and other information.
- **Workshops or Training Courses.** The training provided by the MTA in Phoenix provides one example of this approach. Workshops, training courses, or seminars on telecommuting could be developed and offered by a wide range of groups and organizations. These courses could summarize the various approaches, identify techniques to develop a successful telecommuting program, highlight the benefits from telecommuting, and present other information. Similar to Phoenix, providing a general overview seminar for policy and management level personnel and a more detailed course for the staff members responsible for developing and implementing telecommuting programs may be appropriate.
- **Establish Peer-to-Peer Network.** It appears that management personnel in many businesses and agencies are still hesitant to pursue telecommuting programs due to

fears related to supervising employees at home. The results of the focus groups in the Washington, D.C. area highlighted the need for peer-to-peer networks to help encourage telecommuting. These networks need to be established among similar types and sizes of firms and agencies. Establishing a peer-to-peer network to provide opportunities for managers to talk to their counterparts may alleviate many of these concerns.

- **National Conferences and Symposiums.** A number of national conferences and trade shows have been held on telecommuting. Continuing these efforts can help maintain the visibility of telecommuting, allow for the sharing of experiences, and provide ongoing support for telecommuting activities. Additional conferences focusing on representatives from states, MPOs, and local jurisdictions should be considered. These conferences or workshops could address the development of national policies to support telecommuting, techniques to estimate the impact of telecommuting on the transportation system, the incorporation of telecommuting into short-range and long-range transportation plans, and the types of programs and technical assistance these organizations should provide to help encourage telecommuting programs.

- ! **Educational Outreach Programs.** States, MPOs, and other groups could develop and implement a state or regional educational outreach program. Such an effort would be aimed at the employers, employees, and general public. The studies from Phoenix and Dallas provide two examples of the types of educational outreach efforts that may be appropriate for consideration.

- **Technical Assistance.** Providing technical assistance and ongoing support to private businesses, public agencies, and groups interested in implementing telecommuting programs is an appropriate role for federal, state, regional, and local agencies. These programs could be developed and funded at the metropolitan level or the state level.

- ! **Use of Advanced Technologies.** Electronic mail, a Home Page on the World Wide Web, audio and video conferencing can all be used to provide ongoing assistance, education, and outreach efforts to promote telecommuting. Information on telecommuting is currently available through all of these methods.

PROVIDE INCENTIVES FOR TELECOMMUTING PROGRAMS

Providing financial or other incentives to companies or agencies to implement telecommuting programs represent another potential strategy. Possible incentives could include tax breaks, reductions in parking requirements, zoning bonuses, and other benefits to public and private sector groups.

ENCOURAGE TELECOMMUTING WITHIN PUBLIC SECTOR AGENCIES

Leading by example, through the implementation of telecommuting programs, represents another approach public agencies may wish to pursue to encourage more widespread use of telecommuting. The federal initiatives, as well as those underway in some state and local areas, provide examples of public agencies leading by example. More wide-spread public sector use of telecommuting programs can show a commitment that may encourage private businesses, as well as other public agencies to follow.

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Addendum to: *A Review of Family-Friendly Workplace Arrangements*
Number of Telecommuters by Agency
October 30, 1998

The telecommuting survey data reported by Federal agencies on May 29, 1998, reflected 9,094 telecommuters. The latest survey data reported on October 30, 1998 reflected an increase of 15,795, resulting in 24,889 telecommuters or 1.4% of the Federal workforce.

<u>Agency/Department</u>	<u>Telecommuters Reported</u>	
	May 29, 1998	October 30, 1998
1. Agency for International Development	15	15
2. Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System	36	36
3. Central Intelligence Agency	no data	
4. Commission on Civil Rights	0	
5. Commodity Futures Trading Commission	no data	
6. Consumer Product Safety Commission	76	76
7. Corporation for National Service	2	2
8. Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board	2	2
9. Defense Special Weapons Agency	4	4
10. Department of Agriculture	738	738
11. Department of Commerce	no data	26
12. Department of Defense	3,361	3,361
13. Department of Education	743	743
14. Department of Energy	291	291
15. Department of Health & Human Services	1,778	1,778
16. Department of Housing & Urban Development	no data	
17. Department of the Interior	no data	
18. Department of Justice	118	118
19. Department of Labor	no data	1,685

Addendum (p. 2)

<u>Agency/Department</u>	<u>Telecommuters Reported</u>	
	May 29, 1998	October 30, 1998
20. Department of State	20	20
21. Department of Transportation	no data	1,050
22. Department of the Treasury	no data	11,160
23. Department of Veterans Affairs	no data	
24. Environmental Protection Agency	1,000	1,000
25. Executive Office of the President	no data	
26. Farm Credit Administration	0	
27. Federal Communications Commission	30	30
28. Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation	no data	
29. Federal Election Commission	no data	
30. Federal Emergency Management Agency	13	13
31. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission	3	3
32. Federal Housing Finance Board	0	
33. Federal Maritime Commission	0	
34. General Accounting Office	no data	
35. General Services Administration	2	777
36. Inter-American Foundation	no data	
37. Merit Systems Protection Board	36	36
38. National Aeronautics and Space Administration	no data	292
39. National Archives and Records Administration	no data	
40. National Credit Union Administration	5	5
41. National Endowment for the Arts	0	
42. National Gallery of Art	2	2

Addendum (p. 3)

<u>Agency/Department</u>	<u>Telecommuters Reported</u>	
	May 29, 1998	October 30, 1998
43. National Labor Relations Board	135	135
44. National Science Foundation	22	22
45. National Transportation Safety Board	34	34
46. Nuclear Regulatory Commission	45	45
47. Office of Government Ethics	0	
48. Office of Personnel Management	470	470
49. On-Site Inspection Agency (OSIA)	1	1
50. Overseas Private Investment Corporation	0	
51. Peace Corps	no data	
52. Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation	84	84
53. Railroad Retirement Board	4	4
54. Securities and Exchange Commission	23	23
55. Selective Service System	no data	
56. Small Business Administration	0	138 (6-month pilot project)
57. Smithsonian Institution	no data	75-85
58. Social Security Administration	no data	439
59. Tennessee Valley Authority	no data	
60. U.S. Information Agency	no data	142
61. U.S. Soldiers' and Airmen's Home	1	1
*Office of Special Counsel	n/a	2
*National Endowment for the Humanities	n/a	1
Grand Total	9,094	24,889

* Note: These agencies did not participate in the original study.

LEVEL 1 - 118 OF 161 STORIES

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Copyright 1992 Monthly Review
Monthly Review

October, 1992

Not detailed

SECTION: Vol. 44 ; No. 5 ; Pg. 50; ISSN: 0027-0520

LENGTH: 2410 words

HEADLINE: The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure. _book
reviews

BYLINE: Moody, Kim

BODY:

The most ancient way to increase returns from the exploitation of labor, Karl Marx noted in Volume I of Capital, is to lengthen the working day. Slave owners, feudal lords, and capitalists had that device in common. But when "drawn into the whirlpool of an international market dominated by the capitalist mode of production," the employer's thirst for longer and more work days became "unbounded" and universal. Quoting the factory inspectors' reports of the time, Marx noted that even when overwork was subject to fines under the English Factory Acts, "The profit to be gained by it (over-working in violation of the Act) appears to be, to many, a greater temptation than they can resist "

Despite the prominence he gave to the working day in Capital, Marx regarded this as a primitive means of exploitation in comparison to the power of machinery to enhance both the intensity and effectiveness of labor-power and increase what he called relative (as opposed to absolute) surplus value. As wave after wave of new technology was introduced in the decades since Marx wrote Capital, this primitive method of extracting increased profits appeared to go the way of the steam-driven factory. Working hours in the developed capitalist nations dropped by almost half from 1850 to 1950, largely as a result of labor's recurrent struggles for shorter work time.

In the last twenty years or so, however, as more of the world's economic activities have been "drawn into the whirlpool of an international market," this trend has been reversed in the United States. The words of factory inspector Horner, favorably quoted by Marx, that "Moments are the elements of profit," have come to resound again--this time side by side with the mind-bending technology and "management-by-stress" labor process organization of the current era.

In her unique and important analysis of working time, *The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure Time*, Harvard economist Juliet Schor shows that in 1987 the average U.S. worker labored for wages 163 hours longer per year than in 1969. Somewhere in less than two decades a full month of labor per year had been added and the same amount of leisure deducted from our lives. Presented in a readable manner, her evidence for this is both complex and



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Schor shows that in 1987 the average U.S. worker labored for wages 141 hours longer per year than in 1969. Somewhere in less than two decades a full month's work per year had been added and the same amount of leisure deducted from it. Presented in a readable manner, the evidence for this is both complex and

compelling. What it shows is that not only are our average work weeks longer by about one hour, but that we are working over three more weeks each year. During the 1980s alone, we lost three and a half days of vacation, holiday and other paid leaves from work. Indeed, hours worked as a percentage of all paid hours, which had been falling for most of the post Second World War period, rose again in the 1980s.

As in so much else, women and men are affected differently by these trends. Men work an average of ninety-eight hours more a year, while women have seen 305 hours added to their labor market time since 1969. The large number of women in the rapidly growing number of part-time and temporary jobs could be expected to moderate the figures on the annual paid labor time of women. Yet, the increase of overtime, double or multiple job holding, and super-long hours of some professional workers off-set the impact of the "contingent" workforce. In the official figures, about 7 million people, a large proportion women, report having second or even third jobs. Schor estimates the real number to be "perhaps twice as high."

Increased workforce participation by women, however, has not resulted in a major shift of household work to men. Despite a decrease of 145 hours a year in unpaid hours of household work performed by women and an increase of sixty-eight hours by men, women went from doing slightly more than twice as much as men (1268 to 621 hours) in 1969 to only slightly less than twice as much as men (1123 to 689 hours) in 1987. Taking on a husband, it should be noted, adds about five hours to a woman's annual household work time.

While all too little has changed in the home, the compulsion to work more in the labor market has grown. Among the causes of extended work hours are employer demands, declining real wages, and what Schor calls the "insidious cycle of work and spend."

As in so much else, women and men are affected differently by these trends. Men work an average of ninety-eight hours more a year, while women have seen 305 hours added to their labor market time since 1969. The large number of women in the rapidly growing number of part-time and temporary jobs could be expected to moderate the figures on the annual paid labor time of women. Yet, the increase of overtime, double or multiple job holding, and super-long hours of some professional workers off-set the impact of the "contingent" workforce. In the official figures, about 7 million people, a large proportion women, report having second or even third jobs. Schor estimates the real number to be "perhaps twice as high."

In Schor's view, the work and spend cycle is the result of four decades of productivity growth on the one hand, and the "choice" by most Americans to take their share of this increase in greater income rather than more leisure on the other. This is, she points out, primarily a disease of the predominately white middle and upper classes--roughly the upper 40 percent of the population--who can make such choices. These are the people who have managed to earn enough discretionary income to participate fully in the great American consumer binge that has only recently gone sour.

For the majority, arguably even more than the other 60 percent Schor estimates, the economic compulsion to work longer is stronger. Put in terms of hours, the impact of falling real wages is astounding. Schor writes:

In return, for a 1970s standard of living, employers are now demanding far more hours. For the production and nonsupervisory employees who make up 80 percent of the labor force, these demands have been substantial. According to our calculations, just to reach their 1973 standard of living, they must work 245 more hours, or six-plus extra weeks a year.

Schor also presents a sharp critique of the neo-classical view that workers have choices about time and income. Labor markets are typically buyers markets in which the seller, labor, is at a permanent disadvantage. She argues instead, that workers "want what they get." That is, they are conditioned to see the productivity growth on the one hand, and the "choice" by most Americans to take their share of this increase in greater income rather than more leisure on the other.

Schor also presents a sharp criticism of the neo-classical view that workers have choices about time and income. Labor markets are typically buyers' markets in which the seller, labor, is forced to accept the terms of the market. That workers "know what they are doing" is a cruel joke. They are under the

fight for wage increases as the normal state of affairs and are under all the same pressures as middle class people to participate in the consumer society.

While Schor recognizes the role of employer compulsion, her emphasis on the roots of increased labor time is on consumerism and labor market factors. In today's world, it seems to me, more emphasis on both the worker-owner relationship in the labor process and the enormous imperative of international competition is due. In the past decade or two, these two forces have interacted to bring about far-reaching changes in the labor process and the shape of the global economy that have encouraged overwork.

Japanese corporations, for example, have won their preeminent position in so many world markets not only through state-backing, the superior use of new technology, and flexible labor-process organization (kaizen, just-in-time, a.k.a., "management-by-stress") but by lengthening work hours beyond those of any other developed capitalist nation. In 1987 Japanese workers labored for 2,168 hours a year compared to the 1,949 hours cited by Schor for U.S. workers. With a 219 hour advantage for Japanese corporations, U.S. employers are likely to remain stubborn on the issue of hours.

Page 15

The interplay between the extraction of absolute and relative surplus value is complex and, at times, reinforcing. As Schor points out, a Japanese government study recently acknowledged that despite its high growth rates, Japanese productivity is actually lower than that of most other developed industrial nations. One reason cited is that working hours are too long. While long hours may be the cause of lower productivity (relative surplus value), they are also the alternative means of recouping (through increased absolute surplus value) the disadvantage brought on by lower productivity.

Ironically, the bias toward extended work hours is built into the kaizen production system pioneered in Japan by Toyota. In this production system, overtime becomes not only a means toward greater absolute surplus value, but the means to intensify work, to "fill in the hours," as well. Here is how the U.S. management magazine Kaizen Communique described the system:

Let's suppose that a start-up department has the requirement to make 100 cars per day. Mr. Ohno originator of the Toyota production system would give the department the resources to make 90 percent of what was required. Specifically, they receive 90 percent of the manpower required, 90 percent of the space, 90 percent of the equipment, etc. The manager would have no choice but to work overtime to meet his quota. As time went on, the department team would find problems or obstacles that would be resolved or overcome through the implementation of kaizen activities...

As soon as a no overtime equilibrium was met, Mr. Ohno would come in and again remove 10 percent of the resources.

Like any superior labor process, the kaizen system is finding its way into the factories and offices of most developed nations and many of the more industrialized Third World Nations. Not only is it combined with high technology, but in countries like Mexico, Taiwan, and Korea with low wages and long hours as well. The new levels of efficiency and cost-effectiveness of this combination sets the world standard. The relentlessness of international competitiveness leads one capital after another to adopt some combination of all means to intensify work, to "fill in the hours," as well. Here is how the U.S. management magazine Kaizen Communique described the system:



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these new and old profit maximizing strategies. The lengthening of work time in dozens of nations means countless jobs lost globally as capital redistributes work across international production systems in a basically stagnant (and predominantly OECD) world market. This becomes even clearer in the emerging bloc system that now characterizes the world market. More and more, international production systems are spread within these blocs (EC, North America, Japan-East Asia) in a hierarchical system of decentralized production tied together by electronic communications and modified just-in-time delivery. The competitive advantage of integrating the quartet of low wages, high technology, kaizen, and long hours into the production systems of U.S. corporations (by outsourcing or moving more production to Mexico) is at least one of the reasons behind the North American Free Trade Agreement.

For labor in such a situation, shorter work time becomes a potential means of regulating production and employment within each of the blocs. The transfer of industrial jobs from the United States to Mexico is already well advanced in many industries. The real and potential role of working time in this cross-border redistribution of work is shown by the UAW figures cited by Schor. If no UAW members had worked overtime in 1988, some 88,000 U.S. jobs would have been saved. The UAW also estimates that during the 1980s it lost 85,000 auto jobs to new Mexican production by the Big Three and their suppliers. Even assuming the large productivity gains made in both the U.S. and Mexican auto industries, had both U.S. and Mexican auto workers been working significantly shorter hours--even the "standard" forty hours--U.S. auto workers would have lost few if any jobs, while Mexican workers would have gained far more work than they did. In fact, the regulation of production and employment within the European Community appears to have been one of the motivations behind the German-led, EC-wide push for shorter hours.

As Marx points out, the "peculiar" nature of labor-power as a commodity "implies a limit to its consumption." He argues, "the determination of what is a working-day, presents itself as the result of a struggle, a struggle between collective capital i.e., the class of capitalists, and collective labor, i.e., the working class." In spite of capital's desire to have it all, the demand for shorter work time is winnable, as the Europeans have shown, precisely because there are alternative ways to increase productivity: from new technology (still at abysmally low wages) in Mexico, German "high tech/high-skilled" production, or the high rates of hourly productivity in U.S. manufacturing in the last several years. These alternatives will be "settled for," however, only when labor makes the cost of employer resistance high enough--through militancy, new strike strategies, political clout, or some combination.

The fight for shorter work time has not remained isolated to Europe. In the emerging East Asian bloc, pulled together more by Japanese economic dominance than any institutional framework, the fight for shorter hours began with the trade union upheavals in Korea and Taiwan in the late 1980s. Now Japan's conservative auto workers union has put a 200 hour a year reduction in hours high on its list of bargaining priorities. In Mexico's auto industry, too, the government dominated unions have won reductions from the forty-eight-hour week that prevailed until recently. Most Mexican auto assembly plants, at least, now have a contractual forty-hour week.

In the context of the North American Free Trade Agreement, a coordinated campaign for shorter hours in the United States, Canada, and Mexico could



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In the context of the North American Free Trade Agreement, a coordinating campaign for shorter hours in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico will

reinforce this new trend, save jobs in all three countries, and bring some new vitality to unions in the United States. Because of the dominance of U.S. multinational corporations in most of the industries likely to be affected by accelerated economic integration, joint transborder actions by workers with the same employer can give such a campaign coherence and solidarity a practical aspect.

Oddly enough, comparative unit labor cost figures in manufacturing for the United States and its major competitor nations, show that U.S. workers should be in the best position to wage such a fight. Of the twelve competing nations studied by the Department of Labor, only U.S. unit labor costs fell from 1982 through 1990-and only the United States saw its average weekly hours grow. No doubt some of these figures are the heritage of the contract concessions and lost manufacturing jobs of the 1980s. Nevertheless, it is the basis for putting working time back on the bargaining table and into the political discourse of labor and the progressive social movements. Juliet Schor has kicked open the door to the debate on working time in the United States. Although some "old school" labor leaders may find its emphasis on the problems of consumerism threatening ("isn't that what unions are for?"), The Overworked American is rich with ammunition for those willing to take up the fight of the overworked underdogs of America against the overpaid lords of global capital.

Kim Moody is the author of An Injury to All: The Decline of American Unionism and is a writer for Labor Notes.

IAC-NUMBER: IAC 12742601

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LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: August 28, 1995

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Across the Board

July, 1992

SECTION: Vol. 29 ; No. 7-8 ; Pg. 15; ISSN: 0147-1554

LENGTH: 4577 words

HEADLINE: Do Americans work too hard? interview with Harvard professor Juliet Schor; includes related article; Cover Story

BYLINE: Vogl, A. J.

Page 17

BODY:

To many CEOs and other executives, the question will seem inane or irrelevant or out of touch.

"Work too hard? When the Japanese are gobbling up our markets?"

"What we've got to do is reinvigorate the American work ethic: Work smarter an harder"

"How can we empower employees if they're not willing to o the extra mile? How can we have total quality without total commitment?"

"The American worker has become fat and lazy, which is why we've had to become lean and mean. We'll never become world class by asking questions like that."

LENGTH: 4577

"Are you kidding?" No. At least Juliet Schor isn't kidding. She may, indeed, become the leader of a new movement simply by raising a question that, astonishingly, very few seem to have raised of late. And if it was raised it was answered as chief executives would answer it above. Schor, however, replies to the question with a resounding Yes, and she has the credentials--associate professor of economics at Harvard--to make her voice heard. More than that, however, she has a book, *The Overworked American*, which may become for the 90s what John Kenneth Galbraith's *The Affluent Society* and William H. Whyte's *The Organization Man* were to the '60s.

Through extensive reviews (including the front page in *The New York Times Sunday Book Review*), features (for one, a gushy profile in *The Wall Street Journal*), and network television and conference appearances, she has "touched a chord," as TV news anchors like to say, meaning that she's got people taking about what heretofore has been overlooked or off-limits. With the effects of a recession obstinately lingering, with workers worried about holding on to their jobs (let alone working less), with the American workforce being accused of lagging productivity, this may seem an odd time to raise that question, but raise it she has, and come up with some eye-opening answers. She talked with managing

The American worker has become fat and lazy, which is why we've had to become lean and mean. We'll never become world class by asking questions like that."



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editor Beth Enslow and me in New York City.

To cut to the conclusion of your book, you argue that Americans are overworked--indeed, severely overworked, compared with the rest of the Western world. A fair statement?

Yes. My analysis concludes that, over the past 20 years, the annual work schedule of Americans increased by about 163 hours a year, or the equivalent of an additional month of work. That's a dramatic increase, and very much in contrast to the past 100 years, which basically have seen a decline in work hours, both in the United States and in Europe.

What's so striking is how much this trajectory veers from the European experience and from our own expectations of 20 years ago, when we were talking about a 20-hour week and how technology would free us from arduous toil. Although we've had tremendous technological change and although our productivity has more than doubled since World War II, our leisure time has declined in defiance of the predictions and in defiance of common sense.

How do you account for that?

Technology does not exist in isolation; so much depends on its social, economic, and political context. Technology has led to increased productivity, which in turn has led to potential for more leisure. But that potential has not been realized. Why? Because in the U.S. economy there are very strong incentives on the part of employers against translating productivity increases into leisure time and in favor of using productivity increases to produce more output.

What I focus on in my research are two microeconomic incentives operating at the level of the individual firm. The first is the structure of salaried employment. Salaried workers are paid a fixed amount, so there is always the temptation on the part of the employer to squeeze out some extra hours. The second incentive is the way we pay fringe benefits on a per person basis. This becomes very costly to companies; fringe benefits now amount to 35 percent to 40 percent of total compensation. That is why in the recession that we appear to be slowly leaving, employers preferred laying off workers and asking remaining employees to work overtime. The smaller the workforce, the fewer workers who are entitled to benefits. Although we've had tremendous technological change and although our productivity has more than doubled since World War II, our leisure time has declined. This dynamic creates what I call the work-and-spend cycle. Productivity increases by workers are turned into increases in their income, because the other option the firm could offer--time off--is off the agenda. So the firm dispenses the income, the workers receive it, spend it, and become habituated to it. In a sense, they adjust to whatever level of income they get. As you know, one reason we have such low savings rates in the United States is that people basically spend what they get. The basically spend what they get. The next year, the same cycle occurs again. Workers may make more money, but they spend more, too. The part of employers against translating productivity increases into leisure time and in favor of using productivity increases to produce more output.

But certainly that's not a cycle that began with this latest recession.

No, but beginning in the '70s the U.S. economy got into difficulties. There were declining real wages for many workers, an increase in competition, and pressures on profit margins as productivity growth slowed. As a result, the temptation on the part of the employer to squeeze out some extra hours, the second incentive is the way we pay fringe benefits on a per person basis. This becomes very costly to companies; fringe benefits now amount to 35 percent to 40 percent of total compensation. That is why in the recession that we appear to be slowly leaving, employers preferred laying off workers and asking remaining employees to work overtime. The smaller the workforce, the fewer workers who are entitled to benefits.

Now, but beginning in the '70s the U.S. economy got into difficulties. There were declining real wages for many workers, an increase in competition, and pressures on profit margins as productivity growth slowed.

pressure to increase working hours has come from two directions--from the employer, who demands more hours to meet the increased competition, and from the employee, whose wages are falling and who needs the additional hours to remain at the accustomed income level.

And you blame capitalism for this state of affairs.

As I mentioned, capitalist economies have incentive structures that lead to long working hours--what I call "long hour jobs." American trade unions fought a long struggle for shorter hours, but sometime between the Depression and the end of World War II, the struggle ended, and the trend to longer hours resumed.

Then there's the spend aspect of work-and-spend. Consumerism is ultimately associated with the rise of the market economy, and it is regarded by most economists as a blessing. After all, isn't more always better? My reply is to ask, How much of what we consume is just keeping us on a treadmill? Yes, capitalism has brought us a higher standard of living, but at the cost of keeping us from a more relaxed and leisured way of life.

You say in your book that this trend toward diminished leisure time has gone unnoticed. At the same time, you argue that there has been a "greening of consciousness" about the issue. Aren't these views in conflict?

No. The trend went unnoticed by the economics experts, even while the media were tuned into it, reporting that people are stressed out and that we're in the midst of a leisure crunch. Corporate work-family programs were recognizing the bind, too. And the Harris Poll kept releasing figures every year that showed people's leisure time declining.

And you blame capitalism for this state of affairs.

I recently heard you cite a survey finding that 70 percent of Americans making over \$30,000 a year would be willing to give a day's pay for a day off. If it came down to making a decision, how many would actually make that choice?

It's hard to say because so much depends on the context in which decisions like that become feasible. At the moment, there are very few employers that offer people those kinds of options.

A big problem is the corporate culture, particularly for people who think in terms of careers, not just jobs. For these people, working long hours sends a signal to the employer about commitment. The reason, of course, is that their performance tends to be measured by the number of hours they show up, rather than by how well they do their job, which is how their performance should be measured. So you could install an option where people could take time off, but very few people would take it, just as few people take a parental leave option because they know they'll be penalized for using it. Usually, these options are taken by people at lower occupational levels.

Presumably, that's because they have "jobs" rather than "careers." But aren't they also the least able to take this option because of the amount of money they make?

It depends. If you are a woman who is married to someone who has a reasonable income, it might be something you could take advantage of. I've been speaking to corporate groups and at one of them a senior vice president of United Air Lines told me of a policy his company has that's called Without Pay.

It's hard to say because so much depends on the context in which decisions like that become feasible.

Because of the recession, United had excess capacity at its reservation center, and it didn't want to lay people off. So it instituted a program of total flexibility about working hours. At any time during the day, a worker can walk up to a supervisor and say, "I'm leaving now without pay." And they leave for the rest of the day, or for the next two days, or for the week. The program has been extremely well used. According to the United executive, 24 percent of total work hours are now taken without pay--which is far more than I would have expected.

Before people start using such flex programs, there is usually ambivalence and even outright opposition to them because people want to make as much money as possible. Once people begin trading money for time, however, they become habituated to their free time, and very committed to it. If there was no penalty in the workplace, I could see a bandwagon effect, with more and more people hopping aboard.

Even men?

Work-family is pitched mainly as a women's issue because the cultural taboos against men taking time off are much stronger. But if you look at surveys of men--particularly younger men--they are saying they want to spend more time with their children, and have more time outside of work. Eventually, I think that we'll see more men opt for shorter hours. But it's a tougher nut to crack because currently it's not socially acceptable.

In your book you cite a survey of CEOs, in which not one favored a reduced workweek. Has this been the reaction of other executives since your book has been published?

Actually, I've been pleasantly surprised. I spoke recently to a conference of large-company CEOs. These men were more supportive of my point of view than I would ever have imagined. There were some personal testimonials from CEOs with children who wanted to be with their children more. Other CEOs seemed somewhat disingenuous, claiming not to understand why the young people at their firms put in such long hours. Companies in services, high technology, and finance seem particularly receptive to my ideas; less so are old-line manufacturing firms or companies that have large numbers of production, as opposed to professional, workers.

What about union as opposed to nonunion companies?

I haven't seen a difference. I spoke at a conference of senior people in the travel industry, which is heavily unionized. I expected these executives to be receptive to my ideas; after all, much of what they sell is a leisure-time product. But they absolutely were not; they could only see themselves as employers.

Why were they reluctant to embrace your ideas?

They gave me the old-line argument on behalf of the work ethic--the idea that workers are basically lazy, and we want them to work harder, and our job is to get as much out of them as possible. They couldn't open their minds to the idea that shorter hours could actually be associated with higher productivity. Many managers are stuck on the idea that long equals productive. But that's not what I've seen. There were some personal testimonials from CEOs with children who wanted to be with their children more. Other CEOs seemed somewhat disingenuous, claiming not to understand why the young people at their firms put in such long hours. Companies in services, high technology, and finance seem particularly receptive to my ideas; less so are old-line manufacturing firms or companies that have large numbers of production, as opposed to professional, workers.



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what the evidence shows. A number of U.S. and foreign companies have found that when hours are shorter, workers are less apt to be fatigued, so they can sustain more intense effort. Idle or unproductive time--gossip around the water cooler, for instance--also diminishes. And, of course, morale is higher because employees appreciate that the company is giving them more time off.

Still, a positive correlation between shorter hours and higher productivity doesn't seem to have made much of an impression on American managers.

Hardly any. Instead of looking seriously at what is happening in Japan, American managers argue that we've got to work even longer hours to be more competitive with the Japanese. They don't seem to realize that there is a growing understanding in Japan that long hours are a problem. There is a phenomenon in Japan called karoshi--which, translated, means "death by overwork." Workers keel over, literally die at their desks, from the stress of putting in too many hours. Currently, Japanese manufacturing employees work more hours than workers in any other industrial nation--six weeks per year more than their U.S. counterparts.

But there are signs of a backlash: Younger Japanese are expressing unwillingness to work the way their fathers did. The Japanese Government, in fact, has set a target of 1,800 hours of work per year. I don't think it will happen very soon, but it does show an awareness of the problem. Japanese corporations are showing a similar awareness: Sony is now mandating that all its workers take a two-week vacation, because it recognized that the failure to take vacations was a problem. The basic message of my book will be increasingly compatible with Japan's changing mind-set about work. It's worth mentioning, too, that American workers are already putting in two months more per year than their Western European counterparts.

You talk of a backlash in Japan. Should American companies expect a similar backlash from workers?

The sentiment for a backlash is there, but the economic situation is far less advantageous for the employee in the United States than in Japan. Here, there are such high levels of unemployment and underemployment and so many people are in a precarious economic position. People--including formerly protected white-collar workers--are so worried about losing their jobs that it makes it difficult for them to demand more. And, as I mentioned earlier, unions have mainly given up the struggle for shorter hours. With a few notable exceptions, the impetus for change is coming from women's groups and professional associations.

A number of new management concepts are being promoted as the wave of the future--self-managed work groups, total quality management, or empowerment, and so on. Do you see potential in these concepts for freeing workers from long hours, or are they simply ways for management to get more out of workers?

To the extent that what we're seeing are replications of what's going on in Japan, the answer to your question is yes--they're basically management initiatives to get more work from workers. Real changes, changes that humanize the work environment and give workers more control, are possible, but they typically don't last.

You talk of a backlash in Japan. Should American companies expect a similar backlash from workers?

The reason is that the United States has a hierarchical work environment, and when you start to tinker with it, and give the people on the bottom something in the way of real control and power over their work environment, the danger is that they're going to ask for much more, and they're going to question the whole hierarchical nature of the workforce. They're going to question the role of management--particularly middle management. Middle management has been hostile to changes in the work environment because many of these programs wipe out the need for middle managers. From a social point of view, it would be a good thing to have an economy that devotes less total labor to managing and supervising. That's one of the big inefficiencies of the U.S. economy compared with those of Europe and Japan, and part of why our productivity performance is not as good as theirs.

But let's say power could be brought down to a lower level, and middle management was cut back, would the workers be working harder?

There's no necessary correlation between the structure of work and the pace of work. In Japan, we have seen team concepts associated with a high pace of work, and this higher pace leads to increased productivity. Typically, when you switch from existing work patterns to a Japanese-style team production, you do see higher levels of output.

After being asked the formula for success in the years ahead, a pharmaceutical company chairman was recently quoted as saying, "Half by three by two in five years"--meaning half as many people, producing three times as much, paid twice as well because they are the best. What do you say to that?

The question is how this is going to happen. This chairman is going to have half as many workers. Are they going to produce three times as much because they have better equipment, more capital, better organization of work, and perhaps a less hierarchical workforce? Or are just going to be squeezed harder? Does the chairman perhaps believe that there is a lot of excess capacity in his labor force, that the workers are lazy or spending a lot of time screwing around? A lot of American businessmen believe that, but in my view they're mistaken. What has happened in the United States in the past 10 years is that workers have been squeezed and the pace of work probably has increased. We don't have statistics, but a lot of evidence points to that conclusion.

The second thing the chairman says is that productivity is going to triple but that he's only going to pay the workers twice as much. What is happening to that increment? If it is going to pay top-management salaries or going to shareholders, I think that's a mistake. Workers would, I think, be willing to forgo some of the fruits of their productivity if they were used for reinvestment in the firm or were used for social purposes.

Ultimately, I think this guy is on the wrong track. In my view, the better you are to the workers, the more you get back from them. Management philosophies that focus on squeezing more work out of people without paying them commensurately are doomed to fail and only work in a climate of fear and intimidation. And that's what we have in this economy--not fear in a personal sense, but fear because of market conditions.

Let's talk about the future. Will workers begin to resist longer hours? The chairman perhaps believes that there is a lot of excess capacity in his labor force, that the workers are lazy or spending a lot of time screwing around? A lot of American businessmen believe that, but in my view they're mistaken. What has happened in the United States in the past 10 years is that workers have been squeezed and the pace of work probably has increased. We don't have statistics, but a lot of evidence points to that conclusion.



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Yes, despite all the economic difficulties facing people today, we will see workers say enough is enough, especially in the high-prestige occupations, such as lawyers, accountants, dentists, and upper-middle-level management, where there are smaller pools of workers.

I know a few managers who work shorter hours, even a four-day week, but find that their jobs are so demanding that they can't do what they're supposed to do in a telescoped workweek.

Certainly that's a problem in higher management jobs where there is a lot of discretion, autonomy, and responsibility. If a manager is in a situation in which the organization is paying him for four days, and although he's working efficiently and delegating appropriately, he can't manage the job in that amount of time, then it might very well be necessary to redesign the job.

There are some who say that should shorter hours come to pass, Americans won't know how to spend their leisure. Professor Tibor Scitovsky of Stanford recently wrote, "Professor Schor seems to believe that once people have leisure they can be trusted to acquire the skills to use it. There is some truth to that, but not much."

I think he's worried that people are going to watch television all the time. Well, two things can be said about that. First, I think that I, as a highly educated, upper-middle-class person with my own particular values, must be careful not to apply those values to other people. If other people want to spend their time watching television--or doing nothing at all--well, that's their business. Second, people may currently be too tired from overwork to have high-energy leisure pursuits. Third, I believe that with leisure--like anything else--you need practice to use it well, and part of the problem in this country is that because people have had such little leisure time, they haven't developed the skills to enjoy it.

Certainly that's a problem in higher management jobs where there is a lot of discretion, autonomy, and responsibility. If a manager is in a situation in which the organization is paying him for four days, and although he's working efficiently and delegating appropriately, he can't manage the job in that amount of time, then it might very well be necessary to redesign the job. Americans spend four times as much time shopping as people do in Europe. In my view, that's part of the work-and-spend cycle. Television and shopping are the default options. Japan is the other country where you have lots of television watching and consumerism. And I don't think it's an accident that these are the long-working-hour countries. We have to break the link between free time and spending money.

Let's talk about some of your recommendations to get off the treadmill that you believe we're on. First, you argue that every job should have a standard schedule of hours.

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Exactly. One of the problems we have now is that because hours in salaried



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Exactly. One of the problems we have now is that because hours in salaried

jobs are not well specified, there's no opportunity for bargaining. Because the employer usually has the upper hand, the employee typically winds up working more hours than he would like had he the opportunity to bargain the issue.

Second, we need to try to make a social determination about what we think appropriate levels of working hours are. We had a debate about that a long time ago, and the 40-hour workweek was in part a result of that debate.

I assume this would go hand in hand with your recommendation that when workers do put in extra hours, firms should pay back time with time instead of money.

Workers should be allowed to trade off income for time, to transform overtime into so-called comp time. Every extra hour worked beyond the standard schedule of hours would yield an hour of paid time off in the future, and these hours could be banked for longer vacations, part-time work at full-time pay, and so on.

By adopting this suggestion, firms would cut down on the cost of overtime?

Right, but they'd also have to expand their workforces to make up for the additional time off, which in turn would mean paying fringe benefits to more employees. So employers might very well resist this idea.

Another of your recommendations is that firms should be required by law to give people a choice between raises and free time.

I see this as another means of breaking the link between "work and spend." Here's how it would work: The company would announce the percentage pay increase it intends to give each group of employees and would calculate the equivalent hours of time off. The employee could then choose to take the increase in all pay or in all time off--or in any other split that's more appealing. The company could also offer different kinds of time off--part-time schedules, for instance, or a reduction in daily hours.

It all sounds formidably confusing

Not at all. It could be added to the existing routines of the human resources department. Employees would make decisions about work and pay in the same way they now select from a menu of health insurance benefits or choose whether they want to participate in the company savings plan.

Still another of your recommendations: eliminating the penalties for part-time work.

I'd like to see benefits prorated on a part-time basis, and part-time workers given the option of getting full benefits coverage at their own expense. I would also like to see part-time workers given access to job ladders and promotion possibilities that only full-time workers now have in many cases.

Last, but hardly least, you argue for mandatory increases in free time, such as Government-mandated four-week vacations for every person in the United States.

Right. Mandatory is probably the wrong word because I'm not going to force or a reduction in daily hours.



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Right. Mandatory is probably the wrong word because I'm not going to force

people to take vacations, but firms should be compelled to offer four-week vacations. One reason for this is that my earlier recommendations are more valuable to people who have more income than time, and I wanted to include something more egalitarian. This would put us in a world-class vacation category.

But I think most American managers would wonder: Would your proposals leave the United States in a world-class competitive category?

What matters is not how many hours a person works but how productively. I know there are economists out there who believe that competition will always force companies to do what is most profitable to them. Thus if shorter hours meant higher productivity, then they would do it, and they would do it without any urging from me. Yet one has only to look at history to dispute this view. Each time the workday was reduced, from 12 hours to 10 and then to eight, management resisted, and yet productivity rose. No doubt it would also resist lowering hours to seven or six a day. Yet I'm convinced that through a faster pace of work and higher morale, productivity would increase.

The economics of competition are not the economics of mimicry. Replicating Japanese methods, and asking workers to do more for the same amount of money, may help competitiveness in the short term, but long term it leads to lower productivity, lower morale, and higher turnover. Asking overworked Americans to work harder and longer hours is a simplistic response to productivity, and it will not make the United States more competitive.

Overworked by the Numbers

Juliet Schor's contention that Americans are overworked is drawn from her own calculations of work time over the past two decades, based on the Government's population survey of people's work in the marketplace and time-use studies from the University of Michigan that looked at what people were doing at home. Schor corrected both for business cycles and for unemployment and underemployment. Her calculations have not met with universal approval; indeed, one of her critics, John Robinson of the University of Maryland, claims that leisure time actually rose between 1965 and 1985. Schor finds his numbers flawed and his claim insupportable.

According to Schor, the average employed person in the United States now spends the equivalent of an additional month a year on the job compared with what he spent 20 years ago. Although the hours of marketplace work have increased for both men and women, there is what Schor characterizes as a gender gap in the size of the increase: For men, it's about two-and-a-half weeks; for women, seven-and-a-half weeks. These increases bridge economic, class, demographic, occupational, and industry differences.

What's behind the increase? Schor attributes this extra month to longer weekly schedules and more weeks of work. People are working more overtime, she explains, and more people, especially women, are moonlighting. She also argues that, "reversing 30 years of progress in terms of paid time off," vacation time is shrinking for Americans at the same time European workers have been getting more of it. Over the past decade, Schor says, Americans have lost three-and-a-half days of vacation time, holidays, sick pay, and other paid absences. The reasons: cost-cutting measures instituted by companies and the restructuring of the labor market. As companies have fired long-term workers

underemployment. Her calculations have not met with universal approval; indeed,



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Page 26

(those whose length of employment gives them the longest vacations), they have replaced them with temporary employees, consultants, younger employees, and part-time workers.

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SECTION: BOOK WORLD; PAGE X3

LENGTH: 894 words

HEADLINE: All Work and No Play...

SERIES: Occasional

BYLINE: Witold Rybczynski

BODY:

THE OVERWORKED AMERICAN The Unexpected Decline of Leisure By Juliet B. Schor Basic Books. 247 pp. \$ 21.

LEVEL 1 - 140 OF 161 STORIES

A 1989 poll asked Americans if they would be willing to give up part of their current incomes in return for additional free time; two-thirds of the respondents said yes -- the average amount they were willing to relinquish was 13 percent, which represents more than half a day a week. This was the first time since such surveys have been systematically conducted that a majority of people have expressed a preference for accepting reduced pay in exchange for more free time.

March 15, 1992, Sunday, Final Edition

Is this a sign of indolence? Far from it, maintains Juliet Schor, an associate professor of economics at Harvard University. In *The Overworked American*, a provocative and timely book, she suggests that if people want more free time it may simply be a sign that they have had enough -- not a sign of indolence, but of overwork.

HEADLINE: All Work and No Play...

The idea that Americans are overworked flies in the face of the conventional wisdom that holds that the old Protestant work ethic has faded, that industrial productivity is low, and that pampered Americans need to work more, not less. When the speaker of the Japanese parliament accused American workers of being lazy, there was a public outcry in the United States, not the least, I suspect, because many people secretly feared that he might be right. It is true that "Thank God It's Friday" represents the prevailing attitude towards the workplace, but if workers greet the weekend with glee, it may not be because they are shiftless, but because they are exhausted. That, at least, is Schor's argument, and she makes a persuasive case on the basis of her original research.

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Schor has found that in the last 20 years, the average number of annual hours that Americans spent at their jobs rose from 1,786 to 1,949, that is, by 163 hours. That's the equivalent of an extra month of work a year. This increase has occurred in two ways: the average person now works an extra hour each week, and more than three extra weeks a year.

Is this a sign of indolence? Far from it, maintains Juliet Schor, an associate professor of economics at Harvard University. In *The Overworked American*, a provocative and timely book, she suggests that if people want more free time it may simply be a sign that they have had enough -- not a sign of indolence, but of overwork.



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What has accounted for this increase? As lower-paid service jobs become more common, more people are moonlighting; Schor estimates that as much as 12 percent of the workforce may hold two jobs. As the cost of benefits rises, employers squeezed by the economy tend to reduce their overheads by either hiring fewer new workers and paying the extra cost of overtime (which means that their employees work longer hours), or employing casual or part-time employees (who get minimal vacation time). Since the length of vacations is usually based on seniority, early retirement also has an effect.

The greatest cause for these overall increases in work time, however, is probably the entry of women into the labor market. Twenty years ago, only about one-third of married women held paying jobs; today that figure has doubled. Not only are more women working, they are working longer hours; according to Schor whereas the average number of annual hours worked in 1969 was 1,406, 20 years later it had risen to 1,711. But that is not the whole story. Despite various improvements in domestic technology, the actual time spent on housework remains the same, and while household chores are beginning to be shared by the male partner, the majority are still done by women. And if housework is added to office or factory work, the working mother is putting in up to 80 hours a week!

The villain of the piece, at least according to Schor, who makes no attempt to hide her left-wing perspective, is capitalism itself. It is capitalism that has created both the push and pull that have encouraged longer work hours. The push is the employer's need for worker discipline and dependency, and the desire to minimize the cost of fringe benefits. The pull is consumer society itself, which encourages an ever-increasing spiral of material acquisitiveness, which manifests itself as a willingness to submit to longer work hours. THIS ANALYSIS, which treats of industrialization and capitalism synonymously, is not persuasive. If work time is so valuable, why does the consumer society devote so much energy to developing "time-wasting" entertainments, not only television, but also professional sports, recreations, movies, theme parks and so on? Schor acknowledges that the workers of the industrialized societies of Western Europe have considerably more leisure time than the United States, but does not pursue the matter. Is it merely that European labor unions are stronger, or are there cultural factors at work here? Or should one say "at play," for clearly there are national attitudes to leisure, just as there are to so many other things. For example, the American propensity for work, and for worklike hobbies and pastimes, is not mirrored in Latin countries, where the divide between work and free time is less strictly observed. How one works may be as important as how long. partner, the majority are still done by women. And if housework is added to office or factory work, the working mother is putting in up to 80 hours a week!

Nevertheless, Schor's basic point remains a valid one. In our rush to improve life we have placed all the emphasis on the acquisition of bigger, and better, and more, things. In the process, we have forgotten that the purpose of work is leisure, and that true leisure requires, above all, free time. Without that, we will be poor indeed. the push and pull that have encouraged longer work hours. the push is the employer's need for worker discipline and dependency, and the desire to minimize the cost of fringe benefits. The pull is consumer society itself, which encourages an ever-increasing spiral of material acquisitiveness, which manifests itself as a willingness to submit to longer work hours.

Witold Rybczynski is the author, most recently, of "Waiting for the Weekend," which explores the history of leisure time.

GRAPHIC: ILLUSTRATION, MARIS BISHOPS FOR TWP

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

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DeBunking

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HEADLINE: The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure. book
reviews

BYLINE: Hamermesh, Daniel S.

BODY:

The **Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure**. Juliet B. Schor. New York: Basic Books, 1991. 247 pp. ISBN 0-465-05433-1. \$ 21.00.

The author's appearance on the Today show and the book's place on the New York Times best-seller list for several weeks should make The **Overworked American** familiar to many readers. Why this attention? Do the factual and logical bases of this short volume merit it? After a brief introduction, Juliet Schor offers the "fact" that has received all the publicity: over the past 20 years the hours of market work per labor-force participant in the United States have increased. Chapter 4 alleges an additional fact: the average number of hours Americans spend on household work has not changed.

The causes of these putative phenomena are presented in Chapters 3 and 5. For the goods market, the explanation is warmed-over Veblen by way of Galbraith--the successful exploitation of consumers by capitalists whose advertising fosters a culture of spending that expands corporate profits. For the labor market, the explanation is capitalists' need to spread fixed costs of employment. Chapter 6 offers solutions, including fairly standard policies such as parental leave, and unusual ones such as requiring four-week vacations, outlawing paid overtime, offering contracts that bind workers to consume productivity growth as leisure instead of wages, and exhorting Americans to reduce their desire for goods.

Assuming for a moment the correctness of the "facts," do Schor's explanations make sense? It is impossible to prove or disprove whether wants are created or inherent. Schor's major evidence--frequent citations of newspaper stories quoting yuppies kvetching about their inability to make ends meet on incomes twice the national average--merely tells us this country has a certain number of selfish whiners. No one will be swayed by this "evidence."

If it is the capitalist system that is responsible for the alleged rat-race, why do Schor's facts apply only to the United States and some Asian countries, as she admits? Workers in such capitalist countries as France, Germany, Holland, and Australia enjoy longer vacations and work fewer hours in the market per year



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If it is the capitalist system that is responsible for the alleged problem, why do Schor's facts apply only to the United States and some Asian countries? Page 8 as she admits? Workers in such countries as France, Germany, Holland, and Australia enjoy longer vacations and work fewer hours in the market place

than American workers, yet they face the same barrage of advertising we do. Nor can the current absence of effective unions be the cause. Unions represented only a tiny fraction of U.S. workers during the time of most rapid decline in leisure hours; and in European countries they vary greatly in importance. International differences in hours of work are a fascinating, largely unexplored issue that, if applied to Schor's subject, completely undermines her logical argument.

As Schor acknowledges, her evidence on the alleged constancy of household work is quite weak, consisting of citations of a Columbia doctoral dissertation and her own extrapolation from the Michigan Time Use Studies. The latter enters changes in the means of workers' characteristics in the CPS from 1970 to 1988 into cross-section regressions estimated using 1975 and 1981 time diaries. This approach can capture changes in household technology only between 1975 and 1981, and is subject to challenge. Though there are problems with their data, Juster and Stafford's research using a longer period (1965-81) suggests the decline in housework done by women far exceeds the small rise in that done by men. Data for other countries corroborate this finding.

Schor's definition of household work ignores secular changes in the meaning of the concept by including home maintenance, gardening, chores, and cooking as work. Puttering around the house, gardening, and gourmet cooking are now partly leisure activities. Even if the time Americans spend on such activities has not increased (and the data on this subject are not satisfactory), these pastimes increasingly reflect leisure, not work.

Schor's finding that market hours of labor-force participants increased between the 1960s and late 1980s is inconsistent with a great deal of other research, including very careful unpublished CPS-based studies by Pencavel and Topel. The reasons for the differences across studies are not clear, and the absence of documentation here and in Schor's journal articles detailing her work makes comparisons impossible. Nevertheless, the simple fact that labor force participation increased from 60% in 1969 to 66% in 1991 puts the heavier burden of demonstrating a decline in market hours per adult, the most important outcome on her opponents. We can be fairly sure, as most observers no doubt already were, that any decline in annual hours of market work per adult over the past 20 years has at most been tiny.

The popular success of this book is easy to explain: the book-reading, upper-level, media-watching public consists of people who are educated, participate in the labor market, and have been working harder than they used to (unsurprisingly, given large increases in the returns to their work). Schor's story strikes home to them and offers them a scapegoat (the "system") for their inability to "have it all"--to enjoy simultaneously the goods and leisure that they believe they deserve.

Some of the policies Schor proposes for solving this "problem," such as abolishing overtime premium pay, are based on faulty analysis and would actually exacerbate it. But even though the causative analysis is wrong, and the alleged facts poorly demonstrated, Schor usefully points out that the United States is unique among Western economies in its emphasis on market work. She correctly notes that breaking the cycle of work by imposing such civilized policies as parental leave, longer (mandatory) vacations, and even Australian-style sabbaticals is unlikely to reduce output by so much as to outweigh the value of



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Daniel S. Hamermesh
Professor of Economics, Michigan State University, and Research Associate,
National Bureau of Economic Research

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January 15, 1995

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HEADLINE: The myth of the overworked American

BYLINE: Roberts, Kristin; Rupert, Peter

BODY:

A perennial debate that has become even more sharply contested in recent months concerns the size and scope of government participation in markets. Free-market proponents believe that unfettered economic competition delivers the greatest prosperity level for the citizenry. Opponents challenge the record of private enterprise to improve the standard of living of individuals from all walks of life. A specific claim is that U.S. workers are increasingly being faced with the unpleasant option of either working ever harder--and enjoying life ever less--or consuming less and watching their material comforts diminish.

The presumption of declining leisure without compensating increases in the standard of living has served as a platform for proposed government-sponsored interventions into labor markets. Although the details and effectiveness of any given program can be debated, declining leisure opportunities, if true, quite likely spell a downward trend in the well-being of working men and women, and trouble for the proponents of a laissez-faire approach to economic policy.

The central message of this Economic Commentary is that the presumption of declining leisure is in fact a fallacy. Previous studies purporting to have uncovered such a fact have not adequately disentangled time spent in home production --activities such as meal preparation, laundry, home maintenance, or child care--from time spent enjoying leisure activities. (1) By carefully examining how nonmarket time is divided into home production and leisure, we document a trend that has far-reaching consequences for labor policy initiatives: Although the average worker is spending more time working for pay than in the past, this change has not come at the expense of leisure. It represents, instead, a shift from time spent in home production to time spent in market activities.

Such a change may come as little surprise. The proliferation of labor-saving home appliances and service-sector conveniences has dramatically affected most of our lives. As we argue here, it should also alter the way we think about the "overworked American" and any resulting policy prescriptions.

Our analysis finds that while hours of market work and home work have remained fairly constant for men since the mid-1970s, market hours have been rising and home production hours have been declining for women, as shown in figure 1. (Figure 1 omitted) The latter trend also holds true for couples when



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both are employed in the market full time. Possible reasons include an increase in market versus nonmarket productivity or labor-saving technological advancements in the home. The substitution of one type of work for another in response to a change in relative productivities contributes to making the household better off.

Home Production Models

Despite important research in the area of household production in the mid-1960s and early 1970s, economists modeling individual behavior, especially in macroeconomics, have largely omitted hours of work in the home (that which produces consumption goods).⁽²⁾ This omission apparently stems from a lack of data on hours of home labor, on capital goods in the home (microwaves, power tools, etc.), and on the output of such work. Some recent literature, however, has shown that models including a home production sector are better able to account for several aspects of aggregate economic time series and that there is some support for the substitution hypothesis.⁽³⁾

In other words, there are many ways to produce consumption goods using varying amounts of home and market time, and the amount of time spent in an activity is sensitive to changing economic conditions. Consider, for example, dinner. A family can "produce" dinner by combining capital equipment and time to produce the final product, a meal. But this can be done in many ways. We can combine our car with the time it takes to drive to a restaurant, order food, and eat. Or, we can combine our car with the time it takes to stop at the store, purchase frozen food, and then heat it in a microwave.

At the other extreme, we could combine a hoe, some dirt, and seeds to grow and then harvest our own food. Those who are "too busy" doing market work tend to minimize the time spent producing goods themselves by eating out, buying a microwave, or hiring cleaning and landscaping services.

Such home production models of household behavior can deliver vastly different results compared to models without home production, a fact that is relevant for policy analysis. Consider, for example, the effect of an increase in the labor tax rate on an individual who is working in the market and paying for child care. She may decide to decrease her market work (since each additional hour now earns less) and boost hours of home production. The more willing she is to substitute home- for market-produced consumption, the larger will be the change in her market hours. That is, higher taxes may lead her to work fewer market hours (or stop altogether) and provide her own child care.

The Data and Empirical Findings

To investigate the importance of properly controlling for home production, we arbitrarily sort households into two types: married couples with wives working in the market full time and those with wives out of the market labor force (neither working in the market nor looking for market work). We use the Michigan Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) data set, which interviews individuals and families over time, to examine the mean number of weekly work hours from 1976 to 1988, the last year for which data are available (see table 1).⁽⁴⁾ (Table 1 omitted)

In 1976, for example, in households where the wife is out of the market labor



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Economic Commentary (Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland) January 15, 1999

In 1976, for example, in households where the wife is out of the market labor

force, 44.6 total hours are spent in market work per week, while home work equals 38.4 hours, giving a total of 83 weekly work hours.⁽⁵⁾ In families where both individuals work in the market full time (more than 35 hours per week), market work is 83.2 hours, home work falls to 26.2 hours, and total work is 109.4 hours.

Obviously, this does not imply that when both members of a couple work, they neglect their home. As mentioned above, they may be able to substitute less time-intensive methods to produce the final good. For example, if a person's market wage rises, he may choose to stop working on his old car and either hire someone to do the repairs or buy a new vehicle. If we were observing only market work, we might mistakenly infer that his total hours of work rise and leisure then falls. However, once home production enters into the picture, this interpretation may no longer hold true. He could substitute two hours more of market work and reduce the time spent working on his old car by four hours, so that his total hours of work would actually fall.

Consider the differences in hours worked in 1988 versus 1976. In households where wives are out of the market labor force, we detect little change in weekly market hours in 1988 (down 0.4 hours) or in home hours (down 0.2 hours). In two-worker households, there is virtually no change in total weekly hours, but time has shifted from home to market work: Hours of market work increased by three per week from 1976 levels, while home labor fell by three hours per week. Figure 2 presents a year-by-year breakdown of total, market, and home work for various types of households (Figure 2 omitted). As mentioned above, for households with two full-time workers, there has been little change in the total amount of work. While market work has been increasing, home work has been declining at a nearly offsetting pace.

One explanation of this latter trend is an increase in the relative productivity of market- versus home-produced goods, leading to a change in the ratio of home to market hours. Other possible factors contributing to the substitution from home to market work are technological change in home production, including labor-saving innovations, more readily available child-care options, and the decline in family size over this period. However, once home production enters into the picture, this interpretation may no longer hold true. He could substitute two hours more of market work and reduce the time spent working on his old car by four hours, so that his total hours of work would actually fall.

Table 1 also shows that in 1988, the total weekly work of a household where both persons are working full time, 109.5 hours, is much greater than that of a household where the wife is out of the labor force, 82.4 hours. Home work, on the other hand, is lower: 23.2 hours for two-worker households compared with 38.2 hours in single-earner households. That is, the reduction in home hours accounts for only about half of the gain in total hours between the two types of households. The remaining difference evidently comes out of leisure time. In two-worker households, there is virtually no change in total weekly hours, but time has shifted from home to market work: Hours of market work increased by three per week from 1976 levels, while home labor fell by three hours per week.

This same pattern holds true for earlier years, but total hours of home work do not decline as much, perhaps reflecting the better substitution possibilities in 1988 compared to 1976, such as higher wages or labor-saving home appliances. These results highlight the fact that there is substitution between market and home work, but it is not one-for-one. While market work has been increasing, home work has been declining at a nearly offsetting pace.

Interestingly, men do not appear to change their behavior much in response to a change in their spouse's market labor force status, as shown in figure 3.⁽⁶⁾ (Figure 3 omitted) Men work roughly 50 hours per week for both types of households. Table 1 shows that in 1976, for households where wives are out of the labor force, 44.6 total hours are spent in market work per week, while home work equals 38.4 hours, giving a total of 83 weekly work hours.



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1. See, for example, Juliet B. Schor, *The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure*, New York: Basic Books, 1992.

2. See Gary S. Becker, "A Theory of the Allocation of Time," *Economic Journal*, vol. 75 (September 1965), pp. 493-517; and Reuben Gronau, "The Intrafamily Allocation of Time: The Value of the Housewives' Time," *American Economic Review*, vol. 63, no. 4 (September 1973), pp. 634-51.

3. See Jess Benhabib, Richard Rogerson, and Randall Wright, "Homework in Macroeconomics: Household Production and Aggregate Fluctuations," *Journal of Political Economy*, vol. 99, no. 6 (December 1991), pp. 1166-87, for the former; and Peter Rupert, Richard Rogerson, and Randall Wright, "Estimating Substitution Elasticities in Household Production Models," *Economic Theory*, forthcoming.

4. We begin in 1976 (although the PSID begins in 1968) to maintain consistent questions throughout all years because some questions were not asked prior to 1976.

5. Market work refers to annual hours of work on all jobs, including overtime. To make the numbers easier to interpret, we simply divided annual hours of work by 52 to get weekly hours. Therefore, it is irrelevant whether the change comes from increased hours per week or more weeks per year.

6. We have not looked at the behavior of women as men change their labor force status because the sample is quite small when we restrict it to men not in the labor force.

See Gary S. Becker, "A Theory of the Allocation of Time," *Economic Journal*, vol. 75 (September 1965), pp. 493-517; and Reuben Gronau, "The Intrafamily Allocation of Time: The Value of the Housewives' Time," *American Economic Review*, vol. 63, no. 4 (September 1973), pp. 634-51.

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HEADLINE: The Overworked American. _book reviews

BYLINE: Kinsley, Michael

BODY:

Lazy? Hey buster, are you calling American workers lazy??

Page

That's what he said, all right. Japanese officials want to portray this recent remark by Yoshio Sakurachi, speaker of the Japanese parliament, as the maundering of a senile nonentity. But it apparently reflects the views of the Japanese public. According to a New York Times/CBS poll, 66 percent of Japanese think Americans are lazy and only 13 percent think we're "hardworking." (Polling-now there's a great American export.)

The view that Americans are lazy is widespread in America, too. In this very journal, last week's Diarist was brooding on the subject, and praising Asian Americans for showing "that hard work is still rewarded here, in a country that needs more hard work."

SECTION: Whatever ails the American economy, though, it cannot be blamed on laziness. Americans work astonishingly hard, compared with both our own recent past and most of our trade competitors. Juliet B. Schor, an associate professor of economics at Harvard, dishes the grim figures in her intriguing new book, *The Overworked American* (Basic Books). The average working American puts in 163 more hours a year than twenty years ago. That's the equivalent of an extra month of work. Men are working on average two-and-a-half weeks longer, women seven-and-a-half weeks longer. The pattern is consistent across various occupations and income levels. More women are working. More teenagers are working (53.7 percent). Average American work time is way up even if you include those whose work time is zero (retirees, students, the unemployed, etc.).

Commuting time is up, too-by an average of twenty-three hours (almost three working days) a year. Paid vacation time is down by 3.5 days a year. Despite the huge increase in the number of working wives, time spent on household chores has not declined. Women do a bit less, men do a bit more, the total is constant. Decades of technological advances from indoor plumbing through vacuum cleaners to food processors have simply illustrated Parkinson's Law: "With all these labor-saving innovations, no labor has been saved. Instead, housework expanded to fill the available time." (The one exception: microwave ovens.) Schor blames excessive American standards of cleanliness.



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From their peak in the pits of the Industrial Revolution, working hours declined steadily until the 1940s. Everyone assumed this would continue. During the Depression, the Senate actually passed a bill mandating a thirty-hour work week to relieve unemployment. As late as the 1950s sociologists heartached over what Americans would do with all their leisure time. But the "leisure crisis" has turned out to be the exact opposite: people and society are frazzling from the stress of overwork.

Schor's take on all this is a bit odd. She sees the essential villain as consumerism, spurred by the capitalist system's ever receding mirage of material bliss. Convinced that the next purchase will satisfy us, we work harder to buy it, only to want something else. We are on a treadmill, "imprisoned in capitalism's squirrel cage," caught in an "insidious cycle of work and spend." Noting primly that "there are numerous examples of societies in which things have played a highly circumscribed role," Schor also observes that money can't buy happiness: the percentage of Americans reporting to pollsters that they were very happy peaked in 1957.

Schor's solution? A conscious social decision—implemented in a variety of government policies—to accept a lower standard of living in exchange for more leisure time. I wonder how many Americans would actually be interested in such a deal. Although Schor seems quite left-wing, her best allies here might be social-issue conservatives, eager for more women to stay home and tend to their families. How many of them will admit, though, as Schor frankly does, that their social engineering project implies a lower gross national product?

Make of Schor's vision what you will (and I don't dismiss it out of hand), you needn't agree about the evils of materialism in order to explain the increase in American working hours. As a new study by the congressional joint Economic Committee ("Families on a Treadmill") points out, even in strictly material terms Americans are running ever faster just to stay in the same place.

The study compares two-parent families with children in 1979 and 1989. For most, the wife's real hourly pay rose only slightly and the husband's actually declined. Except for the top fifth, any increase in total family income came from working longer hours, not from better pay for hours worked. If you're working harder to afford the same lifestyle, your standard of living has declined, even if the official standard of living statistics don't reflect that.

Working harder is not the answer for the American economy. We are already working harder, and it's getting us nowhere. Yes, the Japanese still put in more hours a year than we do, on average. Schor figures they outwork us by six weeks a year. She paints a convincingly gruesome picture of a society where "thousands of workers have become victims of karoshi, or death by overwork. Otherwise perfectly healthy, they keel over at their desks. . . . (West Germans, on the other hand, work an average of eight weeks a year less than we do.) But longer hours cannot explain Japan's economic performance. That's because Japan's work hours have been decreasing, America's have been increasing, and even so their economy has been growing far faster than ours.

Since 1975 Japan's output per person has increased by almost half while America's has increased by a mere 12 percent. This Japanese achievement is not the result of working longer hours—Japanese work fewer hours than they did in material terms, Americans are running ever faster just to stay in the same place.



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Since 1975 Japan's output per worker has increased by almost half while America's has increased by a much smaller amount. This Japanese achievement is not the result of working longer hours—Japan's average hours are less than they did in

1975. It is mainly the result of Japan's high rates of savings and investment including the social investment in education.

Thus Juliet Schor may be right for the wrong reason. America's desire for immediate and unending consumer gratification may or may not be leading us to work too hard, but it's definitely leading us to save and invest too little. Unless we curb our present appetites, we won't see the gains in productivity that could allow us to have more things and more time as well in the future.

~~But meanwhile, just don't call us lazy.~~

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Page 3

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HEADLINE: The Overworked American. _book reviews

BYLINE: von Hoffman, Nicholas

BODY:

The **Overworked American**. Juliet Schor. Basic, \$ 23. To listen to the caged experts the television networks keep in inventory to explicate the truth, the only butt-hustling hard-chargers on the face of the planet are the Japanese. Americans are lectured on their softness, sloth, and indolence. But Harvard economist Juliet Schor doesn't think that sounds quite right. Her book confirms that, in America, the 40-hour work week is an institution that disappeared into history about the time those old-fashioned, tailfinned automobiles were being driven onto the used car lots. It is an exasperating anomaly that in a time of painful unemployment, millions of Americans are overworked, though not always overpaid.

Schor's computations show that the work week and work year have been lengthening for a generation, confirming what many of us know from our own lives and those of our friends: A lot of people are close to working until they drop. "In return for a seventies' standard of living, employers are now demanding far more hours," Schor writes. For the production and nonsupervisory employees who make up 80 percent of the labor force, these demands have been substantial. According to our calculations, just to reach their 1970 standard of living, they must work 245 more hours, or six-plus extra weeks a year." If you count taking care of the house and children, many women may be using cosmetics not to look pretty, but to cover up the fatigue lines. There is a life of little or no leisure, a surprising end to the century that social scientists had forecast would see the coming of a leisure glut. In the fifties and sixties, some wondered what Americans would do with their time in the decades to come. Now we know: They work.

So far so good with Schor, but after ably stating the facts, her analytical engine develops some serious vibrations, if it does not altogether disintegrate. She deserves praise for breaking off the chains of her profession, which too often sees people as one-dimensional caricatures, a practice that renders her calling not only dismal, but often nearly useless. She uses culture, history, and motivations beyond that of the cash nexus—a rare breadth among economists—to make her argument. She unapologetically injects moral values into her discussion, thereby also separating herself from many of her colleagues who make it a point of pride to withhold opinions about the rights and wrongs of things.



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calling not only leisure, but also, in the case of the moderns, leisure and motivations beyond that of the ancient Romans. Schor maintains that the moderns make her argument for leisure, but she does not make it a point of pride to witness the moderns' leisure and the ancient Romans' leisure.

The Overworked American is a book so serious and sincere, so self-evidently written to help, one is reluctant to criticize it.

Nonetheless....

The book is all over the lot. Several chunks of it are given over to a discussion of leisure in ancient Rome and medieval Europe, where Schor maintains people had more free time. Yet the rise of capitalism, she says, has stripped this from modern society. She would have us believe that the ancient Romans, unlike us moderns, chose leisure over an overworked, exhausted, materialism. Yes indeed, ancient Rome had many more play days than we have today, but, slavery aside, leisure was more a burden than a blessing. The Roman people, housed in vast neighborhoods of five- and six-story, fire-prone tenements without running water or indoor plumbing, were almost as combustible in their leisure as in their habitations. With little or no work, the idle plebeian swarm, kept only half-pacified by government bread-and-circus welfare programs, were forever on the verge of mob action. Roman citizens used that leisure time Schor speaks of for rioting.

"The lives of ordinary people in the Middle Ages or ancient Greece and Rome, may not have been easy, or even pleasant, but they certainly were leisurely," Schor writes. The same could be said of the lives of today's inner-city African-American youths.

Schor makes these comparisons with the past in order to indict capitalism for a structural bias in favor of work over play or free time. She is not a happy capitalist camper. Perhaps she is right, but "capitalism" is one of those vague expressions like "human nature," which Schor also uses, that leave her argument open to a sea of interpretations.

Suffice it to say, her anticapitalist excursions belong in another book, because in this one they detract from her presentation and bait the reader into arguing with her, as when she declares that Henry Ford's introduction of the moving assembly line was intended to discipline labor. Without detracting from Ford's achievement, one can say that the flow-through manufacturing approach was a long time in development in other businesses, where the best organization of work was also part of the story of industrial invention.

She then attacks Ford for paying assembly-line workers five dollars a day, or 40 to 60 percent more than other manufacturers did in 1914. The extra money compelled them to be punctual, energetic, and obedient, Schor writes, as though Henry had pulled a fast one on society by this trick-imagine, paying people more money to work longer hours.

Schor writes. The same could be said of the lives of today's inner-city African-American youths. She gets back on firmer ground when she asserts that businesses are in a position to demand longer hours from their employees with or without raising their salaries during times of less than full employment. Pointing out that government statistics minimize apparent unemployment, thereby reducing pressures to do something about it, she heads toward a fertile field of inquiry but stops short of exploring it for us. Instead, Schor chooses to rail at the consumer society in all its manifestations, and I do mean all. By her reckoning, home appliances have saved no labor or toil because her figures tell her that women do the same amount of housework now-about 50 hours a week-as they did at the turn of the century. Speaking of everything from the vacuum cleaner to the dishwasher, Schor declares, "All this expensive laborsaving technology was an



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object failure.... Only one major appliance has been shown to save significant amounts of time (the microwave oven). Some actually increase housework (freezers and washing machines)."

Only a professor of economics could print such nonsense. Go down any street and tell the inhabitants to get rid of their washing machines but keep their microwaves, and see what happens. The crux of this argument is that Americans wash themselves, their clothes, and their houses too often, thereby negating the benefits from these machines: "Laundry provides the best example of how technology failed to reduce the labor time. . . . The escalation for standards of laundering has been a long process, stretching back to colonial times. In those days, washing would be done once a month at most and, in many families, much less—perhaps four times per year. Nearly everyone wore dirty clothes nearly all the time. Slowly the frequency of washing rose. When the electric washer was introduced (1925), many Americans enjoyed a clean set of clothes (or at least a fresh shirt or blouse) every Saturday night. By the fifties and sixties we washed after one wearing." Our choice, according to the professor, is between head lice and exhaustion. The dismal science has now discovered the leisure-cootie curve. As you move up the graph toward more leisure, you move down toward cooties. At long last, we now know who or what lived in Karl Marx's beard.

What the professor advocates is trading more leisure for less money. The money isn't doing anything for us, she insists. "We do know that the increasing consumption of the last 40 years has not made us happier. The percentage of the population who reported being very happy' peaked in 1957, according to two national polls." If such stuff is to pass for evidence, the intellectual rigor once associated with the name of Harvard University is a thing of the past. Moreover, the opinion that material goods only serve to make us unhappy and unworthy is one usually held by people relatively rich in the self-same goods. Methinks I hear the voice of the comfortable, Volvo-riding society of Cambridge, Massachusetts, talking here. Any reasonably stout definition of individual liberty will allow each person to decide whether to absent himself from "the insidious cycle of work and spend."

But, "writes Schor, plunging ever forward, couldn't one just as well gain happiness by reducing desires? This is the Zen' path to happiness. It warns that hedonistic pleasures are shallow and addictive. It asks for renunciation, not necessarily of material goods, but of materialism." Without being snotty about it, it's hard to know what to make of such sentiments. Schor, a trained social scientist, is way over her head, apparently unfamiliar with what philosophy from the pre-Socratics on has made of these questions. It is embarrassing to the reader who is on her side, who sympathizes with what she believes, but who is saddened by her lack of preparation.

The book ends with a discussion of ways to lessen the hours of work. Heaven knows, that would be a blessing for many, especially all those folks working two jobs. But she doesn't talk about them. She seems to think that most people breaking their backs 10 or 12 hours a day on the job are materialistic piggy-wiggies.

Not that everybody putting in long days at the office is working rather than simply taking up space. If bluecollar, labor union featherbedding has mostly been stamped out, white-collar featherbedding in government and private sector corporations seemingly goes on, even in recessionary times, though perhaps on a



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Not that everybody putting in a long day is simply turning up grace. If business has been stamped out, while corporations seem to be working on a diminished scale.

diminished scale.

Regardless of that, Schor pushes for a cutback in working time, although she knows "there would be hard-core resisters. This country has plenty of workaholics-people for whom work is an escape, an obsession, or, if they have nothing better to do, the default option, and who will not be interested in my proposal. There are others for whom money is everything, who will avail themselves of almost any opportunity to make a few more bucks. Or those who will sell their souls to the highest-paying job they can find-regardless of its working hours, stress level, effect on their family life, or social implications." Do you catch a whiff of the notion that work is a form of sickness, mental illness, or moral turpitude?

Again, the view is from Cambridge, Massachusetts, not Knox County, Maine, where I live and where people sell, not their souls, but their labor for food, shelter, and clothing. This book's snobby, impractical, out-of-touch passages validate the dismissive criticisms made about university professors. Of course, Cambridge has been putting on superior spiritual airs since the time of Brook Farm, but Juliet Schor seems to have little knowledge of her country. Hers seems to be the indignation of the sheltered life.

Business managers in charge of organizations doing things of extraordinary complexity may find Schor's idea of how to shorten the working week difficult to put into effect. One is baffled trying to figure how one would run an airplane or diesel engine factory with her versions of flex-time. Perhaps Harvard's Department of Economics can be run according to Zen, but one doubts it can be run well.

In the end, one puts this book down wondering if it will count toward getting the author tenure-a lifetime job specially suited for resisting the temptation to sell one's soul or succumb to the obsessive-addictive seduction of long, stress-filled days on the job.

-Nicholas von Hoffman

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Again, the view is from Cambridge, Massachusetts, not Knox County, Maine, where I live and where people sell, not their souls, but their labor for food, shelter, and clothing. This book's snobby, impractical, out-of-touch passages validate the dismissive criticisms made about university professors. Of course, Cambridge has been putting on superior spiritual airs since the time of Brook Farm, but Juliet Schor seems to have little knowledge of her country. Hers seems to be the indignation of the sheltered life.

IAC-CLASS: Magazine

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: August 22, 1995

Business managers in charge of organizations doing things of extraordinary complexity may find Schor's idea of how to shorten the working week difficult to put into effect. One is baffled trying to figure how one would run an airplane or diesel engine factory with her versions of flex-time. Perhaps Harvard's Department of Economics can be run according to Zen, but one doubts it can be run well.

In the end, one puts this book down wondering if it will count toward getting the author tenure-a lifetime job specially suited for resisting the temptation to sell one's soul or succumb to the obsessive-addictive seduction of long, stress-filled days on the job.



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IAC-CLASS: Magazine

LEVEL 1 - 158 OF 161 STORIES

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Los Angeles Times

January 19, 1992, Sunday, Home Edition

SECTION: Opinion; Part M; Page 2; Column 1; Opinion Desk

LENGTH: 1025 words

HEADLINE: BOOK MARK;

IF YOU THINK YOU'RE WORKING MORE AND MORE HOURS, YOU'RE RIGHT

BYLINE: By Juliet B. Schor, Juliet B. Schor is an associate professor of economics at Harvard University and a research associate at the United Nation's World Institute for Development Economics Research.

BODY:

Sociologists in the '50s predicted that by 1990 we would be able to retire at 38 years old, or work only six months a year. Today, Americans' work time is longer than it was 40 years ago, the author contends.

In the last 20 years, the amount of time Americans have spent at their jobs has risen steadily. Each year, the change is small, amounting to about nine hours, or slightly more than one additional day of work. In any given year, such a small increment has probably been imperceptible. But the accumulated increase over two decades is substantial. Working hours are already longer than they were 40 years ago. If current trends continue, by the end of the century Americans will be spending as much time at their jobs as they did back in the 1920s.

The decline in Americans' leisure time is in sharp contrast to the potential provided by the growth of productivity. Productivity measures the goods and services that result from each hour worked. When productivity rises, a worker can either produce the current output in less time, or remain at work the same number of hours and produce more. Every time productivity increases, we are presented with the possibility of either more free time or more money. That's the productivity dividend.

Since 1948, productivity has failed to rise in only five years. The level of productivity of the U.S. worker has more than doubled. In other words, we could now produce our 1948 standard of living (measured in terms of marketed goods and services) in less than half the time it took in that year. We actually could have chosen the four-hour day. Or a working year of six months. Or, every worker in the United States could now be taking every other year off from work -- with pay. Incredible as it may sound, this is just the simple arithmetic of productivity growth in operation.

But between 1948 and the present we did not use any of the productivity dividend to reduce hours. How did this happen? Why has leisure been such a conspicuous casualty of prosperity? In part, the answer lies in the difference between the markets for consumer products and free time.

Consider the former, the legendary American market. It is a veritable provided by the growth of productivity. Productivity measures the goods and services that result from each hour worked. When productivity rises, a worker can either produce the current output in less time, or remain at work the same number of hours and produce more. Every time productivity increases, we are presented with the possibility of either more free time or more money. That's the productivity dividend.



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consumer's paradise, offering a dazzling array of products varying in style, design, quality, price and country of origin. Marketing experts and advertisers spend vast sums of money to make these choices appealing -- even irresistible. And they have been successful. In cross-country comparisons, Americans have been found to spend more time shopping than anyone else. They also spend a higher fraction of the money they earn. And with the explosion of consumer debt, many are now spending what they haven't earned.

On the other hand, the "market" for free time hardly even exists in America. With few exceptions, employers (the sellers) don't offer the chance to trade off income gains for a shorter work day or the occasional sabbatical. They just pass on income, in the form of annual pay raises or bonuses, or, if granting increased vacation or personal days, usually do so unilaterally. Employees rarely have the chance to exercise an actual choice about how they will spend their productivity dividend.

Almost as paradoxical as the rise of work time itself is the fact that it occurred on the heels of widespread predictions that work was disappearing. By the late 1950s, the problem of excessive working hours had been solved -- at least in the minds of the experts. The four-day week was thought to "loom on the immediate horizon."

What the experts didn't realize was that key incentive structures of capitalist economies contain biases toward long working hours. As a result of these incentives, the development of capitalism led to the growth of "long hour jobs." The eventual recovery of leisure came about because trade unions and social reformers waged a protracted struggle for shorter hours. Some time between the Depression and the end of World War II, that struggle collapsed. As the inevitable pressures toward long hours reasserted themselves, U.S. workers experienced a new decline that now, at the century's end, has created a crisis of leisure time.

A wide body of opinion holds that before capitalism, work and leisure were less distinct concepts than they are today. In historian Keith Thomas' words, "the recreational activities of the Middle Ages recall the old primitive confusion as to where work ended and leisure began." Indeed, the terms leisure and free time were not even in common usage in mid-19th-Century England. According to a widely held interpretation, it was the rise of capitalism that created today's sharp and identifiable distinction between work and leisure. (It is important not to overstate this, for even in medieval times, of course, the notion of labor as a chore was present.)

In a sense, the historians' characterization of precapitalist societies may teach us most about our own dreams and imaginations. It is hard to avoid at least a touch of nostalgia for a world in which work was more integrated into family and social life, recreation less commercialized and time more an easy background than a scarce commodity frenetically spent. And from this vision of the past, we are drawn to think about our future. Will the ranks of those who consider themselves "time poor" continue to grow? Or will we find it possible to reclaim the sense of work, time and leisure we have lost?

The past 40 years should provide a warning. They have brought us nothing in the way of leisure time and a saner pace of life. The bias of the system is strongly toward the status quo. But time poverty is straining the social fabric.

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Los Angeles Times, January 19, 1992

Continued growth threatens environmental balance, and gender equality requires new work patterns. By understanding how we came to be caught up in the cycle of work-and-spend, perhaps we can regain a reasonable balance between work and leisure.

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BOOK REVIEW: "The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure," by Juliet B. Schor, is reviewed on Page 1 of the Book Review section.

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January 19, 1992, Sunday, Home Edition

SECTION: Book Review; Page 1; Book Review Desk

LENGTH: 1114 words

HEADLINE: BURNING THE MIDNIGHT OIL;

THE OVERWORKED AMERICAN: THE UNEXPECTED DECLINE OF LEISURE, BY JULIET B. SCHOR
(BASIC BOOKS: \$21; 247 PP.)

BYLINE: By John Rothchild, Rothchild's most recent book is Going for Broke: How Robert Campeau Bankrupted the Retail Industry (Simon & Schuster).

BODY:

For years, I've been telling my children that Americans have gotten lazy and complacent, and can no longer compete with industrious foreigners. I hoped this would get them to do their homework. It didn't, and now it appears I was wrong to begin with. According to Juliet Schor, an associate professor at Harvard, Americans haven't gotten lazy and complacent at all. If anything, we've been working ourselves to exhaustion.

The conclusion of this first comprehensive study of our work habits to be done in recent history is that the average U.S. working stiff puts in nearly three more weeks at the office per year than he/she did in 1970. Factory workers spend a full two months longer on the job than their European counterparts do.

These numbers run entirely counter to the popular view, which says: We've been goofing off too much, and that's why our civilization has gone into decline and the French can buy up New York real estate, while we can no longer afford a cup of coffee in Paris.

Perhaps this delusion of national lassitude comes from the fact that we surround ourselves with leisure-time paraphernalia (boats, treadmills, Nautilus machines, golf carts, ski gear, health-club memberships) which -- judging from my own experience -- is rarely used. Owning this equipment may convince us that we're more fun-loving than we really are, when in fact we have little time and less energy left for recreation, since we're down at the office working overtime to pay the stuff off.

Economist Thorstein Veblen theorized that the leisure class was devoted to conspicuous consumption. What he didn't anticipate in the case of the United States was that so many conspicuous consumers who aspired to the leisure class would be holding down two jobs to cover their credit-card bills from all their conspicuous purchases.

The conclusion of this first comprehensive study of our work habits to be done in recent history is that the average U.S. working stiff puts in nearly three more weeks at the office per year than he/she did in 1970. Factory workers spend a full two months longer on the job than their European counterparts do. By Schor's reckoning, we've steadily been adding nine hours of work per person per year since the late 1940s. One important factor in this heap-of-toil is that millions of women who previously were engaged in unpaid domestic servitude and not counted as workers are now receiving paychecks. "In exactly



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Los Angeles Times, January 19, 1992

the same way that we use up too much clean air and water because it has no price, the housewife's time was squandered," the author says.

Housework, she claims, still is as time-consuming as before, in spite of the popularity of labor-saving devices such as industrial vacuum cleaners and pre-stuffed butterball turkeys. Today, women do most of the domestic chores before 8 a.m. or after 5 p.m., and on weekends. Men, apparently, now share in 40% of the housework, and also are spending more time than ever at the office.

Back in the 1940s, when there were fewer labor-saving devices, people's work hours actually were diminishing, and experts were predicting that the 30-hour work week would soon replace the old-fashioned 40-hour work week. There was widespread concern among psychologists that Americans were not prepared to handle the abundance of leisure that soon would be ours, and plans were afoot to train the population to appreciate art and music and adopt other methods of killing time.

Some prediction that turned out to be. If Schor is correct, we've already replaced the old-fashioned 40-hour week with the 50-hour week, and our free time is a vanishing resource. It's the Germans who got the 35-hour week and the French who got the nationally mandated five-week vacation every summer, when Paris empties out completely. Yet somehow we've ignored the European example entirely in our national mania to keep up with the Japanese.

The question of why we persist in keeping up with the Japanese, who lead the world in fish poisoning and executive burnout, when we ought to be imitating the more sensible Europeans, is beyond the scope of this book. But clearly it's something we should consider. After all, the Europeans have been improving their standard of living while avoiding the office -- which is exactly what was supposed to happen to us. Unlike us, the Europeans are not obsessed with keeping up with the Japanese.

Americans have a history of trying to keep up with the wrong people that goes back at least as far as the 1960s, when we tried to keep up with the Russians, which we now know was a fool's errand, since they have no jobs and only one Pizza Hut.

Schor suggests that the Europeans may be better than we are at managing their money as well as their time, and have struck a sensible balance in which leisurely lunches are more important than automatic garage-door openers and VCRs.

The most unfortunate aspect of our overworked society is that while some people put in more hours on the job, others have no jobs at all. Increasingly, we are becoming a nation of workaholics and idlers. This development can be blamed in part on employers who prefer paying overtime to an exhausted few to hiring additional employees for whom medical insurance and other benefits must be provided. It is a vicious double paradox in which the workaholic has plenty of money but no time to enjoy it, whereas the non-worker has plenty of time and no money.

In the 1920s and earlier, Schor reminds us, the issue of time versus money was debated in union halls and in corporate boardrooms across the country, and U.S. workers were known to lobby or even to go on strike for shorter hours. In contemporary society, this is unheard of. We've abandoned the campaign for

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shorter hours, presumably because the Japanese aren't working shorter hours, and our unions would never go on strike to demand less work.

As for how to reverse this 30-year trend that has some people wandering the streets and others trapped in the office, Schor has a modest proposal which merits consideration: a time-share system in which the overworked would give up some of their excess hours to the unemployed. This, she suggests, would create a fairer, happier and more productive society with no exhausting overtime. Employees at all levels would be given a choice between pay raises or more paid vacations.

If corporations and mom-and-pop enterprises won't adopt such plans voluntarily, Schor hopes that the government will pass laws to make them mandatory: Take time off, or else!

But like so many other ambitious social-engineering schemes, this one is unlikely to succeed without the support of the people. In a spirit of self-sacrifice, I for one am willing to give up my next book review in return for a paid holiday of playing contract bridge. As a wise man once observed: "Nobody on his deathbed ever says he wishes he'd spent more time at the office."

Los Angeles Times, January 19, 1992

BOOKMARK: For an excerpt from "The Overworked American," see the Opinion section, Page 2.

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