CHAPTER SIX

The Lure of Hard Work

What do people do when their earnings are less predictable, their jobs less secure, and their incomes potentially higher or lower than before? They work harder. Not only do they put in more hours on the job; they also work more intensively.

By official estimates, the average American is working longer hours, although there’s some dispute over exactly how many—more hours, and some researchers don’t even agree that Americans are working longer hours. Each spring the Census undertakes a large-scale survey of some 50,000 households, asking, among other things, how many weeks people worked for pay during the previous year and how many hours they usually worked per week. This isn’t a perfect measure, because some people forget how hard they worked and other people exaggerate—they may feel as though they worked longer than they actually did, or if they didn’t work very much, they might be reluctant to admit it. The vanishing boundary line between paid work and the rest of life causes additional difficulties. Where does work end? Nonetheless, this survey is the best measure we have, and because the same question is asked every year, it at least provides a rough indicator of whether work time is increasing or decreasing over time.

According to this gauge, hours of paid work are climbing. The average adult working American now puts in almost 2,000 hours a year for pay. That’s the equivalent of about two weeks more than he—or, especially, she—put in two decades ago. In 1999, the average middle-income
Nested within a family, work is a child's first introduction to the adult world. Even in the earliest years, children learn about the family's obligations and responsibilities. Work is a way of life that is passed down from one generation to the next. Through play and imitation, children learn the skills and behaviors necessary for success in the workplace. As they grow older, children begin to take on more responsibilities, and work becomes an integral part of their daily routine. In this way, work is a foundation for a child's future success and well-being.
A short article on the emerging economy ofUber-like companies.

This is not about business hours. It's about seeing a world, says Venkatesh Balakrishnan, founder of a company that makes tools for
regulating and analyzing people. "We're in the middle of an
revolution," he says. "The traditional way of thinking about
business has been turned on its head." The article is about the
dynamic new companies that are reshaping the way we live and
work.

In the context of the emerging economy of Uber-like companies, we see
how these businesses are disrupting traditional industries.

The article highlights the rise of Uber-like companies, which are
driving changes in various sectors.

The article also discusses the challenges and opportunities presented by
these companies.

Overall, the article provides insight into the impact of Uber-like
companies on society and the economy.
The Laws of Hand Work

you consider taking a month's vacation but decide against it because there's too much risk that your customer may need you in the interim, and you don't want to run even the slightest chance of losing the customer to a rival. (Sometimes the rival may be sitting in the next cubicle.) Or you think about cutting back on the number of hours you put in, but you decide not to because you don't want to be thought of as someone who's out of the loop, who's "second string." If you're not there, you may miss a critical meeting. Or you won't learn about some new piece of software that changes the entire competitive environment. Or you'll miss out on a new client.

The problem, in short, is that very often there are only two tracks, fast or slow. The emerging economy doesn't offer many gradations in between. Hourly and related workers are still with us, of course, but more of their pay turns on how hard and how well they work. For professionals, managers, and geeks and strivers of all kinds, keeping up to speed is now a necessity. Markets and technologies are changing so rapidly that you need to be totally involved in order to keep up. If you're on a slow track, you fall furthur and further behind. You may have a difficult time even getting back on the fast track. In many quick-moving fields, opting to work part-time is often seen as an automatic career-breaker. This is why relatively few professionals take advantage of options to take longer vacations, cut back on work time, utilize family-leave policies, or go off on "sub rosa"—even in so-called "people-friendly" companies. If you opt out even a little, you may be opting out for good. 20

MAKING MORE MONEY

There's a final aspect of the new economy that compels people to work harder. I'm referring to the disparity in income and wealth that has widened during the last several decades. It's easy to see why people feel compelled to work harder if they (or their spouse or partner) have lost ground relative to where they think they should be. But the kind of compulsion I'm now talking about affects people toward the top of the widening spectrum—people who stand to make a great deal more money in the new economy than someone just like them could have earned in the old one. You'd think they might work less, because they're earning so much they can afford to. Thank you.
THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY

The Picture of Dorian Gray is a novel by Oscar Wilde. It was first published in 1890 and quickly became one of Wilde's most popular works. The novel is set in late 19th-century London and follows the story of Dorian Gray, a handsome and wealthy young man who makes a pact with a decadent artist, Lord Henry Wotton. The pact grants Dorian eternal youth in return for the artist's creation of a portrait that will bear the scars of Dorian's vices.

Dorian's life is marked by a series of immoral acts, including murder, theft, and violation of societal norms. Despite these actions, Dorian remains physically beautiful and unchanged, while the portrait grows increasingly grotesque and repulsive. The novel explores themes of beauty, decay, and the consequences of moral corruption.

The Picture of Dorian Gray is considered a classic of Victorian literature and has been translated into many languages. It has been adapted into various forms of media, including plays, films, and television series. The novel's themes of seduction, corruption, and the decay of society continue to resonate with readers today.

Oscar Wilde was an Irish playwright, poet, and essayist who is known for his masterful use of wit and irony. He is also famous for his plays, which include The Importance of Being Earnest and Lady Windermere's Fan. Wilde was a member of the aesthetic movement, which advocated for the pursuit of beauty and the rejection of traditional values.
Every year since the late sixties, a random sample of college freshmen have been asked to choose their most important personal and financial objectives from among several alternatives, including "to be very well off financially" and "to develop a meaningful philosophy of life." In 1968, only 16 percent listed being "very well off financially" as very important. Over time, this goal has grown in importance. By 1976, fully 74 percent of college freshmen listed it as very important. Developing a meaningful philosophy of life, on the other hand, moved in the opposite direction. In 1968, 79 percent chose it, but it steadily dropped until, by 1976, it was selected by less than 2 percent.12

"Today's college students are not necessarily more materialistic than former generations of students. Other surveys, in fact, show record numbers of students volunteering to help in their communities. What's changed is their future economic stakes. The income ladder now extends much higher, and every step up it is connected to much bigger gains than before. So the monetary penalty for seeking a "meaningful philosophy of life" over being "well off financially" has grown. When college freshmen thought about their priorities three decades ago, the best-paid 10 percent of male students (I'll use men because women's opportunities were then so limited) named only about 70 percent more than the man in the middle of the wage ladder today. A college freshman contemplating the future would see men in the highest-paid 20 percent earning well over twice what the man in the midde makes. Meanwhile, the distance between the top 1 percent and the middle has expanded considerably.

Likewise, if today's college students seem much more interested than previous generations in preprofessional courses (business and management now top the list of majors at most universities) and in making connections that will help them land the right job after college, it's not necessarily because the students are peculiar than those before them. It's because their actions today have much weightier consequences for their future incomes. With the gap widening in a relatively small step to an upward direction is a bigger deal, as is the failure to take it. For the same reason, if today's parents are more obsessed with their children's getting into a "good" or "high" school or university, it's because the stakes have risen. These institutions are seen as pathways to high-paying jobs, and high pay has grown, relative to their market value, much higher than it used to be...

When I graduated from college in 1968, someone who aimed to become a college teacher rather than a top corporate lawyer or investment banker accepted some income, but assumed that the psychic rewards of college teaching would make up for the financial loss. As the third millennium commences, the gap between college teachers and top corporate lawyers or investment bankers has widened into a chasm. One of my former students who recently joined a New York law firm begins at an annual salary plus signing bonus that totalled far more than the yearly salary of the recently thirty-five-year-old professor to whom he had been friendly for over fifty years. Before he had his graduate professor faced similar temptations upon finishing college in 1968, he would have liked to think that the psychic rewards of teaching would have given him the fortitude to resist, but, in his case, he couldn't be sure.

If a young college graduate is interested in teaching in a public school rather than becoming a top lawyer or investment banker or dots incremental, the current structure of rewards seems to be a decli民族ism as never before. In 1968, the average salary of a public-school teacher was $932. This was but a fraction of the base received by many two-year and thir-tenyear-olds on Wall Street that same year.
among the smallest, only 37 percent chose the third statement. In Britain, where income disparities aren’t as wide as in the United States but are much wider than in Germany, 76 percent chose the third.89

WORKING HARD AND LIVING WELL

As I noted in the introduction, the British economist John Maynard Keynes, writing during the Depression, predicted that in 2050 England would be far better off economically and 26 people would work far less.90 Most likely he will be right about the former, but not about the latter.

This is not to argue that we couldn’t simplify our lives and do a great deal. The current fashionable word for it is “downshifting.” I know a number of downsifters who seem perfectly happy with their new downshifted lives. I downshifted out of a fifteen-hour-a-day job in Washington to a nine-hour-a-day job near Boston, and couldn’t be more pleased. The purpose of this chapter isn’t to argue about what people could do or should do. It’s to explain, why most people haven’t, and probably won’t, as long as things are organized the way they are.

Downshifters are in the distinct minority. I’ve come across a number of polls in the last few years in which most Americans say they want to work harder for pay. Similar polls, from longer ago, show less probability for hard work—suggesting that Americans’ preferences have shifted. A researcher looking at the long hours American families now work, as compared to decades ago, might conclude that this must be the case. But surely what most Americans say and how they act depend on the circumstances they find themselves in. Americans want to work hard given that their distant future is less predictable than they used to be, that unemployment is more serious, and that income disparities are wider. Were paid work organized and rewarded differently, they might “want” to work less.

In the most recent international survey of attitudes toward work for which data are available, only 8 percent of Americans said they would prefer fewer hours of work and less earnings, but 38 percent of Germans said they’d prefer fewer hours and less earnings, at the 70 percent of Japanese, and 29 percent of British respondents.91 It is of course possible that these differences are attributable to a unique genetic endowment that makes Americans into workaholics, or to a cultural