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Roy F. Baumeister: <u>Meanings of Life</u>.
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Work holds a central place in modern life, and no account of life's meaning would be complete without a careful consideration of the meaning of work. American adults probably spend more of their waking time working than doing anything else, especially if one counts the hours spent getting dressed for work, commuting, lying awake nights worrying about work, and so forth.

What is work? Physics defines work in terms of exertion: force exerted across a distance. Psychologically, work is exertion that is not sustained by an immediate reward of physical pleasure but rather by an internal discipline—and often by external incentives. It is exertion that the mind or body does not really, naturally, inherently want to make but that is accepted as necessary. Still, people do internalize and accept the need for work, and so work is in most cases only possible with the active compliance of the self. Ultimately, you have to get *yourself* out of bed and to the office in the morning. They can't force you to get up if you absolutely refuse.

Work is thus a matter of marshaling one's will and initiative in the service of extrinsic motivations. Work means getting oneself to do things, a lot of things, that one would not really want to do. Work is done primarily for the external rewards. This is not to say that people don't love their work or get satisfaction from it. Many do, although many others do not. But these satisfactions came along later. They were not the reason work was invented. Unlike music, windsurfing, alcohol consumption, and television, work is not an activity that was designed and created for the sheer pleasure of the experience. Work is prolonged self-control and exertion in the service of external obligations and inducements. Work is primarily guided by goals, not fulfillments.

Why Must We Work?

It is important to understand the source of the need to work. Most people throughout history have had to work, whether at home, on the farm, or at another workplace. An unfortunate few suffered the disgrace and deprivation of

unemployment, and a fortunate few enjoyed the privilege of a leisured life. But for most, the necessity of work has been simply an inevitable fact of life.

Work originates in the need to acquire food and other aids to survival. Nearly all animals find it necessary to engage in the search for food on a regular, if not constant, basis. Some also engage in building and maintaining shelter for themselves. Human beings need food and shelter, and the obtaining of these is the basis of the need to work.

Work is thus naturally and extrinsically motivated. Work began as a means of satisfying these natural needs and wants. Apart from the influence of culture, if people could obtain food and shelter and their other desires without work, they would probably not work.

Thus, nature has endowed the human being, not with the need to work, but with needs and desires that in most cases can only be satisfied by the results of work. It is important to keep this natural basis for work in mind. Whatever meanings culture may superimpose on work, the basic need to work is rooted in natural motivations.

Culture has wrought extensive changes in work, however, transforming work to the point where its foundations in obtaining food and shelter are scarcely noticeable. At least, it is clear that work is done for the sake of many benefits that are not biological necessities. Minimal food and shelter are no longer enough. People want good food and attractive housing, filled with many comforts and pleasures and securities. In many cases work is oriented toward nonmaterial rewards as well, such as prestige.

Indeed, the transformation of work by culture sometimes reaches the point at which biological needs are often merely obstacles to one's work rather than the basic cause of working. Workaholics, for instance, work to the limit of their physical capabilities; food and rest are annoying interruptions to work, rather than the purpose of work (see Machlowitz, 1980).

Thus, the need to work can be summarized as follows. It is rooted in natural motivations, although not in a natural motivation to work but rather in natural needs for survival and desires for pleasure, security, and comfort. Work thus originates as a means for achieving ends that are biologically innate. But culture has overlaid work activities with considerable meaning, and in many cases the natural motivations behind work cease to be recognized by the workers.

The Social Problem of Work

For a society to survive and prosper, its members must do a substantial amount of work. It is not necessary that everyone work, but there is a certain amount of work that must get done. The tasks are there, and somebody must be found to do them, or else the social system will fall apart (and people may starve). Moreover, as long as work remains extrinsically motivated, people will be reluctant to work. The problem for society, then, is how to get people to work.

Much of this work is not organized in grandly meaningful units but rather exists in simple, short-term tasks that need to be done frequently. Work is banal. Much of it is repetitious and positively boring. Even today's most interesting jobs have a certain amount of tedium, and there have always been many tasks that are thoroughly unexciting.

In short, society needs to get people to do a large number of dull things that they don't particularly want to do. Work requires exertion and sacrifice, and somehow society has to induce people to make these exertions and sacrifices.

One apparently universal solution to the social problem of work is to have a system of incentives to encourage work. These incentives sustain the nature of work as extrinsically motivated. Ranging from whips to money, societies have used a variety of rewards and punishments to induce people to work.

Incentive systems are generally plagued by problems of equity and exploitation. Some people work harder than others but receive fewer rewards. It is probably not possible to set up a system that all will perceive as thoroughly fair. Indeed, people's tendency to sustain illusions may cause them to overestimate the quality and quantity of their own work, so even if rewards were precisely fair, people would still feel they deserve more than they get. Meanwhile, certain people will take advantage of the work of others or of the economic system, which will be seen as unfair exploitation by those not benefiting.

The social problem of the incentive system is thus one of justification. Society needs to persuade its members that the system of incentives is sufficiently fair and legitimate that they should accept it. They don't have to regard it as perfect—society can tolerate complaining, after all—but they have to accept it sufficiently that they continue to work, so that the work gets done.

Apart from incentives, society can encourage work by endowing it with meaning. People will accept exertion and sacrifice for the sake of important values. Thus, society's problem is again one of finding justification (and legitimation). If society can surround work with an adequate structure of values, the work will get done.

Value and justification constitute one of the main needs for meaning, and so this is the principal problem area for understanding how work fits into life's meaning. Meanwhile, work is capable of satisfying several of the other needs for meaning. Work nearly always provides some forms of efficacy, and certainly highly skilled work offers broad opportunities for efficacy. Work is also characterized by many purposes, although often these are merely short-term, low-level goals like getting the ditch dug or the papers filed. (The tendency for work to offer more short-term than long-term goals is a reflection of the banality of work.)

Self-worth is often involved in work, although the criteria and implications vary enormously. At one extreme, ancient societies held work in disrepute, and to work was a sign of low self-worth. Work was for slaves, peasants, and other low-status individuals. People of quality did not work, as a matter of principle. Hard work was simply incompatible with prestige, honor, or social status (Anthony, 1977; Rodgers, 1978). These attitudes persisted in some form for a long

time, especially in Europe. In the 19th century, European visitors to America were still quite surprised and confused to find no leisured aristocracy. It struck them as very odd that everyone worked.

America's values represent the opposite extreme, in which work is a positive source of self-worth. People who do not work are often disdained, disparaged, and even denounced. Oppressed groups and minorities have clamored for greater opportunities to work. Success in work is one of the most important bases for prestige, esteem, and respect.

Thus, work typically satisfies the needs for efficacy and purpose, and it contributes some bases for self-worth (although these have varied widely). The only need for meaning that work often fails to satisfy is value. From society's perspective, work is often deficient in justification.

The central problem for society, then, is to endow work with value. Society wants people to make the sacrifices and exertions necessary for getting the tasks accomplished, and this requires legitimizing the work itself or justifying the system of incentives.

Three Meanings of Work

There can be no single, simple answer to the question of work's role in the meaning of life. Work does not have the same meaning for everyone. The meanings of work can be broadly sorted into three categories, as analyzed in a recent study of American life in the 1980s (Bellah et al., 1985). These categories can be labeled as *job*, *calling*, and *career*. Work as a job refers to working for the sake of the paycheck, without great personal involvement or satisfaction. Work as calling is done out of a sense of personal obligation, duty, or destiny. A calling may arise from a sense of responsibility for the greater good of society, or it may be based in a sense of obligation to one's own potential and fulfillment. Lastly, work as career is motivated by the desire for success and recognition.

These three meanings of work should not be regarded as rigid categories with no overlap, for certainly some individuals may combine elements of two or perhaps even all three of them. Still, they are important as prototypes for very different ways of understanding work and its relation to the meaningful themes in a person's life. Let us examine them individually.

Work as Job

People who regard work merely as a job generally do not rely on it as the most important or meaningful theme in their lives. The job is an instrumental activity—that is, something done principally for the sake of something else. The person works for the income and for the things that the income makes possible, whether these include a car, independence, an attractive dwelling, a family, or whatever.

The view of work as a job is probably the most common approach among the lower classes, although it is probably more common than one suspects among white-collar workers, too. Less well-educated people seek and find less satisfaction in their work than do more well-educated people (Veroff et al., 1981).

An engaging portrait of job-oriented work was furnished by Michael Burawoy (1979), a young sociologist who began working as a machine operator in an Illinois engine factory while doing his Ph.D. dissertation for the University of Chicago.

In Burawoy's account, the workers derived little pleasure or satisfaction from their manufacturing activities, but they were engrossed in their work as a kind of game. Over the years, the factory management had set up a system of incentives that enabled workers to increase their earnings up to a certain amount by producing more parts; beyond that limit, however, further productivity was not rewarded. Workers were fully absorbed in the game of ensuring that they produced just the right amount of work to ensure maximum earnings, without exceeding the limit. The system had been perfected so as to be considered reasonably fair by everyone involved, to avoid the problems of "rate busting" and the like that often ruin piecework incentive systems, and in general to function with a minimum amount of friction between workers and management. The social problem of justifying the incentive system for work had been solved, at least within this factory.

The transformation of work into a game helped overcome the banality and tedium of work and made it quite bearable. As a result, people worked hard despite a complete lack of intrinsic motivation to do the work. Instead of watching the clock and wishing it were time to go home, the worker monitored his or her progress in the game, possibly calculating financial implications of the minor successes and failures. The unfulfilling nature of the tasks themselves was concealed, because the worker could enjoy satisfaction from succeeding at the game. In short, management had found an effective way to ensure a well-motivated, productive effort from workers without having to provide interesting, fulfilling, or personally valued work.

Having had this illustration of the "job" meaning of work, let us consider what kind of role this meaning of work plays in supplying meaning to life. The emphasis on succeeding at the game probably produced an orientation toward efficacy, and when one succeeded, important and desirable feelings of skill and satisfaction resulted (Burawoy, 1979, e.g., p. 64). Within the shop, skill at the game also provided a basis for relative self-worth, and experts at the game were respected and esteemed by others. Thus, although the workers seemed indifferent to the work itself (and, indeed, the problem of quality control was a pervasive one from management's perspective, for quality was irrelevant to the game from the workers' perspective), some degrees of self-worth were available in the activity.

Of course, not all forms of work are amenable to such reorganization into games. The "job" approach to work can then be empty, banal, and oppressive.

A study of working-class life by Lillian Rubin described the common experience of blue-collar work as "bitterness, alienation, resignation, and boredom" (Rubin, 1976, p. 159), and it concluded that the workers must keep themselves numb to get through each working day while avoiding the question "Is this what life is all about?" (Rubin, 1976, p. 158).

Obviously, some occupations (such as surgery or professional baseball) furnish considerable opportunity to exercise skills. Others foster an expectation of high efficacy that is disappointed; for example, teachers may expect students to cooperate and succeed, and social or mental health workers may expect to be able to help and cure people, and when these expectations of efficacy are not met the person becomes vulnerable to burnout (Cherniss, 1980). Some researchers have argued that opportunities for finding efficacy in work have declined substantially (see esp. Braverman, 1974).

Working-class jobs in particular may often fail to offer much efficacy to the worker, for even the alternative satisfactions and consolations of the other meanings of work are missing. As a result, efficacy-based hobbies may be especially common among the working class. Rubin (1976) has suggested that many such individuals maintain projects such as repairing cars and trucks, home improvements, and woodworking because these furnish a sense of efficacy that is missing at work. Still, efficacy is a vitally attractive feature of jobs when it is there. Over and over, Rubin's respondents described their jobs with reference to being good at what they did and being recognized as good at their work (thus implicating both efficacy and self-worth).

Self-worth may also arise simply from the fact of holding a job. Low-income jobs are often erratic in nature and the people who occupy them are not always favorably inclined toward stable routines, and so success at finding and holding a job may be a mark of prestige among certain classes (see Miller, 1981; Rubin, 1976). This is a combination of efficacy and self-worth again, and again it is irrelevant to the type of work or the product or service it creates. All that matters is the fact of having a job and doing well enough to keep it. Obviously, skilled jobs are more fertile sources of efficacy and self-worth than unskilled jobs, but even the latter do provide some.

Holding a steady job can thus be an important basis for self-worth. Some evidence in support of this was provided in Rubin's (1976) research. The failure of a family man to bring home an adequate paycheck was generally treated, especially among the lower classes where the "job" attitude prevails, as a convincing demonstration of deficient masculinity. Our society equates masculinity with being a good provider, and hence it is unmanly to fail to provide—or even to fail to provide enough, such as when one's income is too low to handle the bills and needs that are considered appropriate by and for the rest of the family. Thus, holding a steady job was for a family man a vital protection against the loss of a central basis of self-worth.[1] Beyond the mere fact of having a job, self-worth may often be tied to the amount of money one makes.

Regarding the other needs for meaning, the job is typically full of short-

term goals (as nearly all kinds of work are), but there may not be much in the way of long-term goals. And there appears to be little need of a major value base to justify the work. The job is a vital means to provide food, shelter, and other amenities, and those needs are sufficient to motivate one to work; no culturally created source of justification is needed. The need to work, in the "job" approach, is mainly rooted in natural, not cultural, motivations, although of course culture may make superficial changes.

Work as Career

The "career" definition of work is mainly concerned with the record of success, achievement, and status. The careerist's approach to work is not a passionate attachment to the work itself, nor does it center on the products and services that are created by the work, nor does it resemble the "job" approach in which work is regarded as a means to other ends. Rather, the career approach emphasizes the feedback about the self that comes in response to work. For the careerist, work is a means of creating, defining, expressing, proving, and glorifying the self.

The bureaucratic career is perhaps the single predominant model of modern work. This is due in large part to the modern conditions of employment in large companies or other institutions. The career of a government bureaucrat or of an employee in a large corporation is typically a record of promotions and salary increases. The career of a musician, novelist, athlete, scientist, or lawyer is typically a record of specific accomplishments, as well as the prizes and honors that recognize them.

Work as career falls into the category of motivations that are neither extrinsic nor intrinsic. Extrinsic feedback and rewards do not reduce motivation when they carry important messages about the self (Rosenfeld et al., 1980). Such messages and implications are the central concern of the career approach to work. As a result, careerists are often highly motivated.

In some cases, career-oriented workers are capable of remarkable degrees of exertion. They make major sacrifices, including leisure time, social life, and family obligation, for the sake of furthering their careers. Again, though, these long hours and other seeming signs of passionate dedication are not a reflection of a love of the work itself or even of a commitment to the product or service. Rather, these exertions and sacrifices are based on a competitive drive to succeed, to be recognized as effective and talented and valuable, and to obtain the prestige and status that mark successful careers. The career-oriented worker is certainly not indifferent to the nature of the work, and he or she does prefer that the work be at least moderately interesting or pleasant or have some positive social value. But these advantages are secondary.

In many professions, the greatest exertions and sacrifices are demanded of young men and women who have begun their careers but are subject to a major up-or-out decision. In prestigious law firms, for example, the best graduates from

the top law schools are hired as associates, and after a half dozen years they are either promoted to partner or they leave the firm. Each year's small group understands that, despite their high qualifications, only a few of them will receive the coveted promotions to partnership, so competition becomes intense, often including many long hours of hard work. Similar patterns exist in various other professions, including public accounting and university teaching.

Some of the extremes of competitive effort generated by such career constraints and pressures can be seen in the accounts reported by Stewart (1984). During the government's antitrust case against IBM, the lawyers in IBM's law firm all worked enormous amounts, all of which were carefully recorded (because IBM paid the firm by the hour). Free evenings or weekends were rare, while eighteen-hour days were common. Most of these lawyers did without vacations, and some even had to postpone surgery because of the demands of the case. In such an environment, a young associate hoping for promotion cannot simply work a lot of eleven-hour days and hope that that is enough. Herculean efforts are de rigueur. One associate set a company record by billing IBM for 24 hours' work in a single day. Another associate, desperate that he was losing the competition for promotion, staged a comeback by working around the clock during a day in which he also flew from the New York office to California and worked on the airplane. The difference in the time zones enabled him to bill IBM for twenty-seven hours' work during a single day.

Work as career can be a powerful source of meaning in life. Indeed, in some cases the individual can receive so much meaning from his or her career that there is little need for other sources of meaning in life, and as a result the person ceases to maintain much in the way of outside activities. Such individuals have been labeled workaholics, and typically they seem to have minimal time or interest for anything except work (Machlowitz, 1980).

The career's ability to supply meaning to life derives in part from its ability to satisfy the needs for meaning. Career work provides short-term goals (like nearly all work) and long-term goals (unlike many "job" forms of work). The long-term goals in career work are typically ambitions, such as reaching certain levels of status, power, prestige, or achievement. The specifics of these goals may be defined by the status structure of the institution for which the person works— e.g., partnership or tenure, promotion to vice-president or dean or director.

Self-worth is a central focus of the career. Indeed, a career is one of the most effective bases for satisfying this need for meaning. The many gradations of status and achievement provide much more precise definitions of self-worth than are available in other approaches to work. Success at climbing the ladder of success may also furnish feelings of efficacy, and efficacy may also be involved in the mastery of the skills and abilities necessary for discharging the duties of the profession and obtaining recognition. Self-worth and efficacy are thus very closely linked in the career approach, probably more so than in the job approach.

It is noteworthy, though, that the efficacy and skills most relevant to the

career mentality are not necessarily the ones relevant to performing one's job duties. It is skill at impression management, rather than skill at some task, that is crucial. In a study of managers, Jackall (1988) observed that above a certain level, competence is assumed to be roughly equal among all managers and executives, and so it ceases to be a main factor in promotion. Instead, career success comes to depend on images, reputations, and personal allegiances. The homogeneity—some might call it conformity—among upper-level managers is an understandable response to the importance of maintaining the proper image.

Value and fulfillment are the main categories of needs for meaning that are not necessarily supplied in the career approach to work. It is not essential that a career provide fulfillment, simply because the structure of goals is so elaborate that the need for purpose is satisfied through goals instead of fulfillments. It is possible to interpret one's work as oriented toward goals, and the individual may seek fulfillments outside of work (if at all), such as in family life.

But modern life has enabled careers to supply value and fulfillment by means of the self. As argued in the previous chapter, modern culture has elaborated the self into a value base and a locus of fulfillment. The career is based on advancing and defining the individual self. The pursuit of self-interest has been transformed by modern values from mere greed and conceitedness into a semi-sacred obligation and a fulfilling duty. In that context, the career blossoms as a source of meaning in life. A number of recent observers, including pollster Daniel Yankelovich, have concluded that these attitudes are already strong and still rising. Whereas in the 1950s Americans viewed work as a means of obtaining material rewards, now many see work as the quintessential place to express and cultivate the self (Harris & Trotter, 1989). Yankelovich concludes that work has recently become "the center of excitement in American lives" (quoted by Harris & Trotter, 1989, p. 33).

Specifically, once the self is accepted as a value base, then the advancement of self through career channels becomes justified and legitimated as a highly desirable, valued activity. The career imports its justification and legitimacy from the self. To fail to pursue one's career to the utmost is regarded almost as an offense against proper values. This was a main theme of the extraordinary movie Brazil, which dealt with an existential examination of life in a modern bureaucracy. None of the characters could believe or accept that the protagonist was not very interested in being promoted as far and as fast as possible. He was content with his quiet life in an easy job, enjoying his vivid personal fantasies and dreams and getting through unchallenging days at the office. Everyone was trying to help him climb the ladder or reproving him for his lack of ambition. Someone who is comfortable with life as it is, and who is disinclined to accept promotion, evokes the disbelief, the concern, and soon the disapproval of others.

The next chapter will show that the family is also accepted as a value base in modern society (as in ancient society), and the family likewise exports value to the career of the provider. In the familiar and conventional family of Middle

America, the family obtained its money, its goods, and its prestige and social status from the adult male's career, and if he failed to maximize his career achievements he was seen to be betraying a second value base, namely the family. It was positively wrong for a man to lack ambition and to fail to climb the career ladder as high as possible, for he was shortchanging his family.

The previous chapter also argued that modern ideas have elaborated the self into a model of fulfillment, by equating high personal esteem with fulfillment. Fame and recognition by others, along with the private sense of superiority, constitute one appealing model of the fulfilled life in modern Western society (Braudy, 1986). The career is probably the most widely recognized way to achieve this form of fulfillment. The assumption is that your work will elevate you to a position of eminence that will elicit respect, admiration, and acclaim from others, as well as allowing you to feel self-respect and self-esteem. Many people hold some mythical view of career success that promises personal fulfillment. They imagine that reaching certain goals will be automatically accompanied by living happily ever after (Levinson, 1978). Thus, the career can indeed offer a model of fulfillment.

In short, then, work as career often amounts to an absorbing and important source of meaning in life. The career supplies a hierarchy of goals, opportunities for developing a sense of efficacy, and an unsurpassed set of clear and precise criteria for establishing self-worth. It can also satisfy the need for value, in connection with the modern elaboration of self into a value base. A modern career can take on the aspect of a justified, legitimate obligation whose discharge offers the promise of personal fulfillment. The career can thus satisfy all the needs for meaning.

Work as Calling

To the modern mind, the calling is less familiar than the job or the career as a meaning of work (Bellah et al., 1985). The notion of calling means that the person feels called upon to do a particular kind of work. That is, something about you marks you out for certain work. Probably it is best to understand the concept of calling as encompassing both external and internal sources of the call. The original concept seems to have referred to externally originating calls, specifically calls from God. A preacher, for example, might feel that God wanted him to do God's work in a certain place or a certain way. Others have felt called by their society, especially in times of crisis. In past wars, for example, men felt it was their duty to volunteer for military service even though military work appealed to them neither as a job nor as a career.

Internal calls are linked to the notion of self-actualization, for they assume that the person's own inner nature dictated the choice of a certain line of work. A calling might arise from the belief that one has a special talent and that one ought to cultivate that talent. This notion of an inner calling was developed by the Romantics and Victorians in connection with artistic work. A novelist, for

example, might feel called to the profession of writing by the unwritten novels dormant in his or her psyche. Callings of this sort are probably the closest thing to truly intrinsic motivation that one finds in the world of work.

A vivid example of an artistic calling was provided in Maugham's famous novel based loosely on Gauguin's life, *The Moon and Sixpence*. The protagonist abruptly abandons a comfortable middle-class career as a stockbroker and vanishes to London. Everyone assumes that he has run off with a woman. A family friend traces him to Paris and is surprised to find him living alone in a cheap, dirty apartment. When confronted, he readily admits that he has violated the normal expectations for proper behavior, but he shows no remorse. The friend finally asks about the illicit lover, and he laughs. There is no illicit lover. He ran off because he had an irresistible inner need to paint pictures. This inner calling overrode all sense of security, career, obligation to family, and everything else. The friend asks if the man has any experience, any training, any assurance of his own talent, but he replies simply, "I've got to paint." Moreover, to him, the sacrifice of career and family seems justified by the importance of his painting, and indeed the book quietly and gradually vindicates this view. Thus, the inner calling was portrayed as having a value base strong enough to overcome very important and powerful values of conventional society.

The strong link to a major value base is perhaps the most important aspect of a calling. Thus, unlike other meanings of work, the calling is inherently a very effective means of satisfying the need for value. The work is endowed with a powerful sense of being right and good and necessary, and many risks, costs, hardships, and sacrifices are justified. A familiar illustration of the latter may be the work of missionaries. These individuals felt called by God to spread Christianity to other societies. The missionary calling required the individual to give up the comfortable, familiar life in a known, civilized society and in the community of friends, to embark on a highly uncertain and dangerous journey followed by many years of difficult work among suspicious, even hostile foreigners, lacking many of the comforts and social contacts to which one had become accustomed. As a job, missionary work must have seemed relatively unappealing, and as a career it offered relatively poor prospects. But people accepted the drawbacks because of the powerful values associated with that calling.

Callings may also promise fulfillment. The notion of a calling typically implies that some unusual talent or unique quality of the individual marked him or her out as specially suited for this line of work. To pursue the calling is thus to cultivate and use one's qualities to best advantage. Your calling is your destiny, and that is the road to fulfillment. This aspect is true regardless whether the source of the calling is external or internal.

Although religious and artistic vocations are the prototypes of callings, another example of a calling is that of a housewife and mother. Our society has placed a great deal of value on these roles, especially motherhood, which has been regarded as so sacred that it seems sacrilegious to say anything negative

about it (see Margolis, 1984). A useful picture of this role was furnished by Lopata (1971). Western society has assumed that women are prepared by God or by nature for this vocation, often to the extent that little training or preparation is thought to be needed—a fact that often left the young housewife or mother feeling uncertain, anxious, and inadequate. Everyone assumes that the ability to be a housewife or mother "comes naturally" (pp. 144–145). In other words, it has long been assumed that all women have a calling to be wives and mothers.

The housewives in Lopata's study enjoyed the feeling of making decisions, of taking care of others, and of being their own boss. Those aspects of the role gave the women a sense of efficacy. Chances to gain efficacy were also built into many aspects of the housewife's duties. For example, many cake mixes were intentionally produced without all the necessary ingredients, so that a woman would have to add some things herself and thus feel that she had left her personal stamp on the resulting cake (Lopata, 1971, p. 173; see also Margolis, 1984).

Self-worth was implicit in living up to the image of the ideal housewife. This ideal holds that every woman should marry and rear children. One unfortunate result of this idealized image was women's acute sense of being obsolete and useless when their children had grown up and left home. The housewife role had other costs for self-worth. Although being a mother is a positive source of self-worth, being a housewife is a negative one, so much so that most housewives did not like to describe themselves as housewives.

Most important, the housewife role was presented as fulfilling. Although numerous problems and frustrations and disappointments were noted, there were important references to "deeper satisfactions" such as seeing the children grow (Lopata, 1971).

Thus, callings emphasize the two needs for meaning that are most problematic in modern life: value and fulfillment. One might suppose that callings would be especially popular and common in the modern world. But they are not. The reason they are not common may be that relatively few lines of work actually offer such opportunities; also, of course, the original religious context for callings is no longer so common, and few people count on God to make a career choice for them.

Callings may often be combined with career attitudes, furnishing an especially potent combination for satisfying the person's needs for meaning in life. Someone may feel, for example, that his God-given talent and motivation constitute a calling to professional sports, and so he may embark on an athletic career. Such a career offers the careerist glorification of self through achievement. It also provides the calling's sense of fulfilling one's potential and furthering the sacred cause of the team, the nation, or of sport itself. When the high ideals falter occasionally, the career's value base of the self can pick up the slack and maintain high motivation as the individual strives for personal glory. At other times, however, the person can regard his athletic efforts as selfless and

self-sacrificing devotion to the noble goals of helping others, contributing to the collective effort, and shedding light on the human condition by exploring the boundaries of human physical capability.

The combination of career and calling seems to characterize the attraction of many forms of professional work today. Special talents and interests mark people out for medicine, law, scientific research, and similar occupations. These people's work lives presumably show a substantial mixture of calling (with its sense of higher value or mission and its promise of fulfillment) and career (with its concern over achievement, recognition, and promotion). When a person's life combines both of these meanings of work, the work will inevitably be a major and thorough source of meaning for him or her. For such an individual, work may be sufficient to satisfy all the needs for meaning.

Summary

The three meanings of work are not rigidly separate. They have very different implications for the person's motivation for work and for the types of meaning that the person derives from work.

Work is, almost by definition, associated with extrinsic motivation, but the three meanings of work are not identical on this. As a meaning of work, the job is oriented almost exclusively toward extrinsic motivation. Careers are based on feedback about the self, which lies in the gray area that is neither intrinsic nor extrinsic motivation. Callings may sometimes involve intrinsic motivation and other times extrinsic motivation. At high levels of meaning, the person may embrace the calling intrinsically, but the daily tasks may be unappealing.

Probably all forms of work offer short-term goals. Careers and callings offer highly meaningful, long-term goals as well. Likewise, efficacy is available in all the meanings of work, although some forms of work (such as highly skilled work) offer more chances to feel a sense of efficacy than others.

The job may offer self-worth insofar as one gains prestige from having a job, and some recognition of one's skills may also confer self-worth. The career, however, is the quintessential source of individual self-worth; indeed, the accumulation of respect, recognition, and esteem is often the defining feature of the career. Callings are more likely to offer collectively based self-worth. One may derive esteem and prestige from participating in a noble endeavor, whether it is curing the sick, converting heathens to the true faith, or creating art.

Work tends to have a shortage of value and justification. In the job approach, little value may be seen, and justification is only a matter of whether the pay is fair. Callings are typically linked to some powerful value base, and so this sort of work may be experienced as highly legitimate and justified. Careers lack value unless one accepts the self as a value base. The high value placed on the self in modern society endows career approaches with a powerful source of value. As a result, people are often quite willing to work very hard to further their careers.