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ABSTRACT

Earlier projections of labor supply and speculations about the impact on values and lifestyles on work, leisure, and work-leisure relationships are reassessed in light of current events. Previous projections were the basis for three alternative scenarios of possible work-leisure relationships. The first examined some of the implications of arguments developed by Charles Reich in "The Greening of America." The second was developed as an antithesis to the first and traced the implications of a renewed commitment to full employment and the preservation of the traditional meaning of work. The third depicted a blending of the values and life styles of the first two. Upon examination after four years time, the elements which induced a preference for the third alternative require modification based on the increasing economic activities of women, the aging of the baby-boom, and the potential resource scarcities and recession. The emerging trends appear to suggest a shift from the third scenario to the second. Projections over the next quarter century and their implications are discussed. Footnotes and tables are included. (Author/KSM)

THE FUTURE OF WORK AND LEISURE

by

Denis F. Johnston

THE FUTURE OF WORK AND LEISURE*

Denis F. Johnston**

About four years ago, this writer was asked to prepare a set of very long range projections of labor supply (extending to the year 2040) for the Commission on Population Growth and the American Future. Furthermore, he was asked to "interpret" these projections by including some speculations concerning the potential impact of our newly-emerging values and life-styles on work, leisure, and work-leisure relationships. 1/ This paper is an effort to assess these earlier projections in the light of more recent developments.

The obvious but necessary caveats can be dispensed with quickly. The projections which have been prepared here (see tables 1 and 2) are purely illustrative. They utilize the writer's earlier projections of labor force participation rates, applied to the middle series of the recently issued population projections developed by the Bureau of the Census. Projections are not predictions; these projections in particular have no official status whatsoever, and have been developed merely to sketch the broad outlines of major demographic and related labor force changes which can be anticipated over the remaining years of this century. Finally, these projections are both conservative and "surprise-free."

1/ See end of paper for footnote references.

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They are conservative insofar as they assume a gradual reduction in the magnitude of changes in the economic activity rates of both men and women over time. In other words, increasing rates of activity (especially among women) are assumed to increase more slowly in the future, while declining rates (especially among men) are also assumed to decline more slowly in future years. They are "surprise-free" simply because no projection can be otherwise.

Before turning to the illustrative projections, it may be useful to consider some of the implications of our current survival rates and longevity for the society of the year 2000. With average life expectancy now approaching 68 years for men and in excess of 75 years for women, about 95 percent of the population now under 30 years of age should still be alive and well by the year 2000. In addition, about two-thirds of those now between the ages of 30 and 60 may also be expected to witness the onset of the next century. Since people tend to retain a good many of their habits, outlooks, and values throughout their adult life, these survival proportions argue strongly for the persistence of many of our current modes of thought and behavior. One of the primary areas of human activity in which this continuity of experience and outlook may be found is the world of work. Although the content and meaning of work may continue to change radically, the need for work and the basic motivations which impel individuals toward its performance are unlikely to undergo drastic change in the foreseeable future. 2/

However, the proportion of one's lifetime that is actually spent "at work" -- i.e., in the labor force and performing a job -- is much smaller than is commonly assumed. By way of illustration, let us consider a unisex individual now aged 20 and about to enter the labor force. His/her life expectancy (as of 1973) is 53.4 years. 3/ If we accept a number of assumptions concerning that individual's future activities, we arrive at the following distribution:

Type of Activity	Hours (in thousands)	Percent Distribution
Total remaining lifetime	468	100.0
Sleep	156	33.3
Non-sleep	312	66.7
Work a/	80	17.1
Non-work	232	49.6
System maintenance b/	97	20.7
All other activities	135	28.9
Social obligations c/	17	3.6
Leisure or discretionary time	118	25.3
Pre-retirement	74	15.8
Post-retirement	44	9.4

a/ Assuming employment for an average of 40 hours per week, 48 weeks per year, for a total of 41.5 years. The latter figure is the average expected working life for men aged 20 in 1968, from Howard N. Fullerton, "A Table of Expected Working Life for Men, 1968," Monthly Labor Review, 94:6 (June 1971) pp.49-55.

b/ Comprising personal hygiene, preparation for and travel to and from work, shopping, meal preparation and consumption and related maintenance chores of a personal or domestic nature. These diverse activities are assumed to absorb an average of 5 hours per day throughout the remaining years of life.

c/ Comprising religious and community activities and related services, assumed to absorb, on average, 6 hours per week throughout the remaining years of life.

The picture which emerges from these arbitrary but fairly plausible assumptions is that today's young adult may be expected to devote only about one-sixth of his/her remaining lifetime to work (as defined

in the economic sense), while about one-fourth of that remaining lifetime may be classified as "leisure." This holds even when the individual's formative years (under age 20) are ignored and when that individual is assumed to remain fully employed, year-round, full-time, from age 20 to the early 60's. 4/ These crude estimates certainly stand in need of considerable refinement, but the perspective they provide lends strong support to our emerging concern with both leisure and work and their interrelations.

In his earlier work on this subject, the writer attempted to describe three alternative "scenarios" of possible work-leisure relationships. The first of these, the "green" scenario, examined some of the implications of the then popular and controversial argument developed by Charles A. Reich in his The Greening of America (1970). The second, or "blue" scenario, was developed as a deliberate antithesis to the first, and sought to trace the implications of a renewed committment to full employment and the preservation of the traditional meaning of work in our society. The third scenario, finally, depicted some blending of the values and life-styles of the first two, and was therefore labelled the "turquoise" scenario.

When these over-simplified constructs are re-examined four years later, the elements which induced a preference for the "turquoise" synthesis seem to require some modification and supplementation. The first of these elements is the increasing economic activity of women, together with growing concern for womens' rights and the

provision of facilities and services for child-care which would facilitate such economic participation. While these trends were clearly apparent in 1971, they have continued with increasing force since then. The second element is the aging of the "baby-boom" cohort. If we define this cohort-group as comprising the persons born between 1947 (the first year in which the number of births increased over the preceding years throughout the year) and 1961 (the year when the number of births reached a peak), we have approximately 60 million people born over a 15-year period, an increase of about 50 percent over the births of the preceding 15-year span. The survivors of this group are now between 14 and 28 years of age; most of them have already made their initial entry into the labor force. By 1980, when the same cohort group will be 19 to 33 years old, nearly all of them will have entered the labor force, and most of them may be expected to have settled into some fairly permanent kinds of work and living arrangements. It is at this stage of the life cycle that the viability of the deviant life-styles and "counter-cultural" manifestations of the late 60's will truly be tested. But the absorptive capacities of the Nation's economy will experience an equally severe test. The accelerated volume of new entrants to the labor force which began around the mid-1960's may be expected to reach a peak around 1978 or 1979, to be followed by a gradual diminution during the 1980 decade. This volume of new entrants, with their high levels of formal educational attainment and their correspondingly high levels of aspiration and career ambitions,

may be expected to generate continued competition for jobs and, as the cohort group ages, increasing demands for the kinds of advancement opportunities for which their education has prepared them. 5/

Both of the above elements were anticipated, at least approximately. The third element was not: the impact of potential resource scarcities and the current recession, which together have generated a strong upsurge among the Nation's youth in concern for the "basics" of human survival -- effective training in useful skills, technical competence, and, above all, a job.

Taken together, these emerging trends appear to suggest some shading of our "turquoise" scenario with more "blueing" and less "greening." But the importance of "leisure" as a major component of time-use, and the growing demand for measures which are designed to promote a more socially and psychologically satisfying work experience suggest that the "turquoise" scenario still represents the most likely direction of change in the future of work and leisure. In particular, we may anticipate a continued blending of "work" and "leisure" pursuits, both at the "micro" or individual household level, with shared responsibilities for both economic activities and domestic duties, and at the "macro" level, with increasing concern for the creation of meaningful work, personal growth opportunities, continuing education, and related amenities within the work-place. 6/

The salient features of the projections shown on the following tables may be summarized briefly: First, an assumed continuation of current fertility levels (as is implied by the "Series II" population projections shown here) entails a near-constant number of persons under age 16 over the next ten years, followed by a slow increase thereafter to the end of the century. 7/ Second, we may expect a dramatic turnaround in the number of young adults (16 to 24), from an average annual increase of nearly 900,000 during the past ten years to an average annual decline of over 100,000 during the next decade, followed by near-constant numbers to the end of the century. Third, a more rapid increase in the number of persons in the "central working ages" (25 to 54) is in prospect over the next decade, to be followed by more moderate but still substantial increases thereafter. Finally, the population aged 55 and over should continue to increase in number throughout the remainder of the century, but at a slowly diminishing pace. In summary, the prospects over the next quarter-century are for a slowly "aging" population, with a preponderance in the central working ages; the proportion of the population aged 25 to 54 increases from 36 percent now to 42 percent by the year 2000.

In general, the projected labor force is largely a function of the projected changes in the size and age-sex distribution of the population of working ages (16 and over). However, assumptions concerning future trends in economic activity rates (the percent of the population in the labor force) also play a significant, though minor role, particularly among women. A salient feature of these projections is the fact that the current estimated activity rates of

women 16 to 24 years old (57.4 percent in 1975) is already 3.6 percentage-points higher than the rate of 53.8 percent previously projected for the year 2000. Furthermore, the estimated participation rates for older women in 1975 are already very close to those projected for the year 2000. Also noteworthy is the slow decline in the participation rates of men in the central working ages, and the continuing rapid decline in the participation rates of older men. The earlier projection, under the general assumption of favorable demand conditions, assumed some increase in the participation rates of men aged 25 to 54 and a slowdown in the declines among older men.

A significant trend to be noted here is the decline in the "dependency ratio" (i.e., the ratio of non-workers to workers). In 1950, this ratio was 1.38; it has since declined to 1.25 (largely since 1960), and may be expected to decline further to 1.12 by the year 2000. This drop, together with the "aging" of the not-in-the-labor-force group, suggests a significant rise in discretionary income, other things equal. This, in turn, lends further support to the notion that individual households may, in the future, be able to exercise a wider range of options in regard to the "work-leisure" trade-off, and may opt for increased investment in such "non-work" activities as continuing education, cultural activities, and leisure pursuits.

Turning, finally, to Table 2, the projected growth in the number of workers with 4 years or more of college over the next 15 years (to 1990) proceeds at a somewhat slower pace than during the past

16 years, but the proportion of college graduates in the labor force who may be expected to have completed at least one year of graduate education continues to rise, from 37.9 percent of the 6.0 million college graduates around 1958 to 40.6 percent of the 13.4 million college graduates in 1974, to 44.6 percent of the 24.0 million college graduates in 1990. According to these projections, the proportion of workers with at least one year of post-graduate college education reaches 9.7 percent by 1990 -- as compared with 3.4 percent in 1958 and 6.0 percent in 1974. Over the same period, the proportion of workers who have completed 4 years or more of college increases from 8.9 percent in 1958 to 14.7 percent in 1974, and to 21.7 percent by 1990. Even if the abatement in the rates of increase in the above proportions which has been projected turns out to be reasonably accurate, the continuing increase in these proportions poses a serious challenge to the capacity of the economy to generate a corresponding expansion in the kinds of jobs for which these workers are qualified.

Footnotes

1/ Denis F. Johnston. "Illustrative Projections of the Labor Force of the United States to 2040," in Commission on Population Growth and the American Future, Research Reports, Volume II, Economic Aspects of Population Change, edited by Elliott R. Morss and Ritchie H. Reed (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972) pp. 159-187. An abbreviated version, "The future of work: three possible alternatives," was published in the Monthly Labor Review, 95:5 (May 1972) pp. 3-11.

2/ These survival proportions are derived from the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, National Center for Health Statistics, Vital Statistics of the United States, 1973, Volume II-Section 5, Life Tables. On the more general issue of the "need" for work, and the challenging distinction between "work" and "a job," see Walter S. Neff, Work and Human Behavior (New York: Atherton Press, 1968) and Irving H. Siegel and A. Harvey Belitsky, "The Changing Form and Status of Labor," Journal of Economic Issues, March 1970, pp. 78-94.

3/ From United States Life Tables, 1973, Op. Cit.

4/ The implied distinction between "work" and "leisure" is of course problematic, as is the treatment of "leisure" as a residual category after allowance for a variety of other identifiable activities. On this issue, see Joffre Dumazedier, Toward a Society of Leisure (New York: The Free Press, 1967), translated from the French by Stewart E. McClure, and Robert Strom, "Education for a Leisure Society," The Futurist, 9:2 (April 1975) pp.93-97. Also pertinent here is Sonia S. Gold, "The professional commitment of educated women," in Kurt Baier and Nicholas Rescher, eds., Values and the Future (New York: The Free Press, 1969) pp. 266-293.

5/ For further elaboration, see "Population Changes: A Challenge to Manpower Policy," in U.S. Department of Labor, 1973 Manpower Report of the President (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1974), chapter 3, pp. 59-82.

6/ On this issue, see Stanley Parker, The Future of Work and Leisure (London: MacGibbon & Kee, Ltd., and New York: Praeger, 1971). Some appreciation for the diversity of views concerning possible future forms of work can be gained from Fred Best (ed), The Future of Work (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973).

7/ In its most recent set of population projections, the Bureau of the Census has abandoned its former practice of issuing four alternative series and has decided instead to issue three. Series II has been adopted for the purpose of the illustrative projections shown here because it corresponds more nearly to the fertility levels now in evidence and to the earlier "Series E" projections which were formerly utilized.

TABLE 1. Total Population and Total Labor Force of the United States, by Age and Sex, 1950 Actual, 1975 Estimated, and 2000 Projected
(Numbers in thousands)

Age and Sex	1950 1/			1975 2/			2000 3/		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
A. TOTAL POPULATION									
All ages	152,271	75,849	76,422	213,450	104,146	109,304	262,494	127,521	134,973
Under 16 years ..	43,131	21,956	21,175	57,862	29,518	28,344	62,785	32,183	30,602
16 - 24 years ...	20,222	10,099	10,123	36,009	18,175	17,834	34,621	17,556	17,065
25 - 54 years ...	63,125	31,223	31,902	77,480	37,970	39,510	111,551	54,829	56,722
55 and over	25,793	12,571	13,222	42,099	18,483	23,616	53,537	22,953	30,584
B. TOTAL LABOR FORCE									
16 and over	63,858	45,446	18,412	94,806	57,753	37,053	123,793	75,194	48,599
16 - 24 years ...	12,440	8,045	4,395	23,720	13,477	10,243	21,365	12,184	9,181
25 - 54 years ...	40,742	29,148	11,594	56,829	35,262	21,567	84,557	52,255	32,302
55 and over	10,676	8,253	2,423	14,257	9,014	5,243	17,871	10,755	7,116
C. ACTIVITY RATES 4/									
16 and over	58.5	84.3	33.3	60.9	77.4	45.8	62.0	78.9	46.6
16 - 24 years ...	61.5	79.7	43.4	65.9	74.2	57.4	61.7	69.4	53.8
25 - 54 years ...	64.5	93.4	36.3	73.3	92.9	54.6	75.8	95.3	56.9
55 and over.....	41.4	65.6	18.3	33.9	48.8	22.2	33.4	46.8	23.3
D. NOT IN LABOR FORCE									
All ages	88,413	30,403	58,010	118,644	46,393	72,251	138,701	52,327	86,374
Under 16 years ..	43,131	21,956	21,175	57,862	29,518	28,344	62,785	32,183	30,602
16 - 24 years ...	7,782	2,054	5,728	12,289	4,698	7,591	13,256	5,372	7,884
25 - 54 years ...	22,383	2,075	20,308	20,651	2,708	17,943	26,994	2,574	24,420
55 and over	15,117	4,318	10,799	27,842	9,469	18,373	35,666	12,198	23,468
E. DEPENDENCY RATIO 5/	1.38	--	--	1.25	--	--	1.12	--	--
Percent Distributions TOTAL LABOR FORCE									
16 and over	100.0	71.2	28.8	100.0	60.9	39.1	100.0	60.7	39.3
16 - 24 years ...	19.5	12.6	6.9	25.0	14.2	10.8	17.2	9.8	7.4
25 - 54 years ...	63.8	45.6	18.2	59.9	37.2	22.7	68.3	42.2	26.1
55 and over	16.7	12.9	3.8	15.0	9.5	5.5	14.5	8.7	5.8
NOT IN LABOR FORCE									
All ages	100.0	34.4	65.6	100.0	39.1	60.9	100.0	37.7	62.3
Under 16 years ..	48.8	24.8	24.0	48.8	24.9	23.9	45.3	23.2	22.1
16 - 24 years ...	8.8	2.3	6.5	10.4	4.0	6.4	9.6	3.9	7.7
25 - 54 years ...	25.3	2.3	23.0	17.4	2.3	15.1	19.4	1.8	17.6
55 and over	17.1	4.9	12.2	23.4	8.0	15.5	25.7	8.8	16.9

Footnotes and Sources; See pg. 2.

Sources: (Table 1)

1/ 1950 population from Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-25, No. 311; labor force from 1974 Manpower Report of the President, table A-2.

2/ 1975 population from Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-25, No. 541 (Series II); labor force estimated by applying the average of the ratios of the annual average labor force (for the six age-sex groups shown) to the average seasonally adjusted labor force for January through April for the years 1970 through 1974 to the average seasonally adjusted labor force for January through April 1975.

3/ 2000 population from Bureau of the Census, Ibid.; labor force obtained by applying the labor force participation rates projected to the year 2000 (in ten-year age groupings, by sex) to the above population projections. These participation rates are taken from the writer's "Illustrative Projections of the Labor Force of the United States to 2040," Commission on Population Growth and the American Future, Research Reports, Volume II, Economic Aspects of Population Change, edited by Elliott R. Morss and Ritchie H. Reed (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), pp. 159-187.

4/ Percent of the total population in the total labor force; synonymous with "labor force participation rates."

5/ Ratio of "non-workers" (i.e., persons of all ages not in the labor force) to "workers" (i.e., persons in the total labor force.)

(Table 2)

6/ 1958 total labor force from 1974 Manpower Report of the President, table A-2; 1974 total labor force from Manpower Report of the President for 1975, table A-2; 1990 labor force from Bureau of Labor Statistics, Special Labor Force Report No. 156. The latter figures were not adjusted to reflect the recently issued population projections of the Bureau of the Census.

7/ Data on college graduates relate to the civilian labor force. 1958 is an average of Current Population Survey data for March 1957 and March 1959, published in Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-50, No. 78 and Bureau of Labor Statistics, Special Labor Force Report No. 1, respectively. 1974 data from Beverly J. McNaddy, "Educational Attainment of Workers, March 1974," Monthly Labor Review, 98:2 (February 1975) pp.64-69 and unpublished tabulations from the same source. 1990 data from BLS., SFLR. No. 160.

NOTE: Average annual amounts of change (in thousands) are calculated from figures for the terminal years specified. Average annual rates of change (in percent) are calculated from figures for the terminal years specified, using natural logarithms (the exponential function of e^x).

TABLE 2. Average Annual Amounts and Rates of Change in Population and Labor Force of the United States, Selected Periods, 1950-2000
(Numbers in thousands, rates in percent)

Item	AMOUNTS				RATES			
	1950-65	1965-75	1975-85	1985-00	1950-65	1965-75	1975-85	1985-00
A. TOTAL POPULATION (Both sexes)								
All ages	2,821	1,887	2,062	1,895	1.64	.92	.92	.76
Under 16 years	1,351	554	- 33	350	2.57	- .91	- .06	.58
16 - 24 years	467	878	- 116	- 15	1.98	2.79	- .32	- .04
25 - 54 years	381	869	1,608	1,200	.58	1.18	1.88	1.17
55 and over	622	698	603	360	2.06	1.81	1.34	.71
B. TOTAL LABOR FORCE								
MALES: Total, 16 and over	367	681	806	626	.76	1.25	1.31	.89
16 - 24 years	114	372	- 94	- 23	1.29	3.23	- .73	- .19
25 - 54 years	209	297	796	602	.68	.88	2.04	1.26
55 and over	43	12	104	47	.50	.13	1.09	.45
FEMALES								
Total, 16 and over	521	1,082	485	447	2.36	3.45	1.23	.99
16 - 24 years	100	435	- 35	- 48	1.96	5.53	- .38	- .50
25 - 54 years	278	579	394	454	2.05	3.13	1.68	1.58
55 and over	143	68	126	41	4.22	1.39	2.15	- .60

	MALES		FEMALES		MALES		FEMALES	
	1958-74	1974-90	1958-74	1974-90	1958-74	1974-90	1958-74	1974-90
C. COLLEGE GRADUATES 6/								
Total labor force, 16+	387	912	823	522	.76	1.49	2.92	1.33
With college: 4 yrs. or more 7/	286	418	176	244	4.50	3.50	6.09	3.90
With college: 5 yrs. or more 7/	135	241	63	87	4.89	4.25	7.14	4.14

Sources and footnotes: See page 2 of Table 1.

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