
Book Review

Rifkin, Jeremy. (1995). *The End of Work: The Decline of the Global Labor Force and the Dawn of the Post-Market Era*. 350 Pages. Hard cover (ISBN 0-87477-779-8).

Wilson, W. J. (1996). *When Work Disappears: The Work of the New Urban Poor*. 322 Pages. Hard cover. (ISBN 0-394-57935-6).

Economic transformations of the United States labor market have been particularly devastating to certain segments of the working population. Thousands have been displaced as the result of the shifting nature of labor. This has important implications for leisure studies as issues concerning increasing amounts of discretionary time are sure to arise. Rifkin, a political economist who specializes in urban and environmental issues, and Wilson, a sociologist who is known for his works concerning the urban underclass, describe these shifting transformations, the subsequent restructuring of labor, and the effects of these phenomena on labor, primarily on the African-American labor sector. Both authors provide policy recommendations as to how negative economic changes might have a lessened impact on this community.

The authors begin by summarizing the devastation that occurs when work is not available in a community. Rifkin suggests that as automation becomes more sophisticated all sectors of the current labor force are in danger of displacement. He introduces the concept of a "workless world" in which millions will be permanently displaced from the economic labor process due to entire segments of the labor force being shrunk, restructured, or eliminated. Rifkin provides a summary of the current technological revolution and describes how labor-saving mechanisms, initially created to increase productivity and create leisure time, have contributed to the reduction of wages and the threatening of livelihoods. He discusses the efforts of previous economic transformations and emphasizes that though these were devastating to certain segments of the labor force, other sectors of the economy were able to open and absorb the displaced workers. In the face of advancing automation, Rifkin argues, all sectors of the labor force are struggling for continued existence.

Building on Rifkin's ideas, Wilson (1980, 1987) argues that the disappearance of work and the consequences thereof are largely responsible for the blight experienced by the residents of present-day inner-cities. Due primarily to economic transformations in the labor sector, the current epidemic of joblessness has had devastating effects on the family, education, crime and deviance, and race relations, as well as employment opportunities. Wilson begins by discussing the effects of low social organization on the urban poor. Social organization is the "extent to which the residents of a neighborhood

are able to maintain effective social control and realize their common goals" (p. 20). This occurs through the existence of social networks, the collective supervision and responsibility of residents, and through formal and informal institutions. Wilson states that the higher the level of unemployment in a community, the lower the level of social control. He uses this concept to illustrate the consequences of joblessness. In communities largely composed of the working poor, individuals are able to retain some semblance of social organization which is manifested in various obligations, expectations, and significant familial relationships between members of that community. In areas where work has disappeared, the residents must face new problems such as crime and violence, which tend to undermine social organization. These communities, now faced with both unemployment and weak social organization, continue to fall behind the rest of society.

Rifkin and Wilson offer different illustrations of worker displacement; however, the population being examined is the same. The workers in Rifkin's example are composed of rural African-Americans in the pre-industrial south. Wilson takes us further through time as we examine the second displacement of this population in the post-industrial north. Rifkin's discussion focuses on the devastation associated with economic transformation whereby machines replace human tasks in the economic process. He offers an example of the rural African-American population in the south and their economic displacement due to the introduction of the mechanized cotton picker in 1944. This new form of mechanized labor, coupled with the lure of manufacturing cities in the North, resulted in the migration of more than 5 million African-Americans between 1940 and 1970.

Wilson reviews his previous work concerning economic transformations of the US labor market. As African-Americans were migrating North in search of employment, a second automation wave began taking place and the manufacturing sector took the hardest blow. This resulted in the second displacement of African-American workers and contributed to the creation of an underclass. Wilson asserts that in an economic climate characterized by a slack labor market, disadvantaged minorities suffer disproportionately. Urban minorities have been particularly vulnerable to structural changes such as the shift from goods-producing industries, the increasing polarization of the labor market into low- and high-wage sectors, technological innovations, and the relocation of manufacturing industries out of the central cities. These events, coupled with occupation mismatch, the exodus of the Black middle and working classes, and the migration of the poor into the inner-cities, reinforce lack of economic opportunity.

Both authors note that the consequences of this displacement are severe. Rifkin suggests that the plight of displaced African-American workers is a harbinger of what lies ahead for all laborers as automation continues its climb up the hierarchy of labor. This occurs as technological and organizational changes taking place in the market greatly reduce the number of workers needed to produce goods and services. He states that all three sectors of the economy—agriculture, manufacturing, and service—are experiencing technological displacement. Technological breakthroughs in agricul-

ture, which include farm mechanization and bio-technologies, could replace the farmer and eventually result in the economic collapse of many nations whose economies are based on agriculture exportation. Rifkin proposes that millions of workers in the blue-collar economy will also find themselves marginalized by new labor-and time-saving machines. Traditionally the service sector has absorbed displaced laborers. Rifkin predicts, however, that not even these occupations will be safe from advancing technology as automation accelerates productivity to the degree to which human labor becomes redundant.

Both Wilson and Rifkin predict further bifurcation of the workforce due to the massive restructuring of the economy. Rifkin's classes will consist of the elite "Symbolic Analysts" who control the development and the maintenance of technology such as computer technicians, scientists, and consultants, and the permanently displaced workers who have little hope of obtaining and securing adequate employment in the high-tech economy. Wilson envisions a growing underclass in which people are permanently and completely cut off from mainstream society. This effects of the underclass will be felt by all, as surrounding areas will experience the decline in their own social and economic fortunes.

The authors provide recommendations in an attempt to proactively deal with potential mass technological displacement. Rifkin proposes two specific courses of action that should be implemented in an attempt to bypass economic devastation for a large portion of the workforce. First, productivity gains from labor- and time-saving devices should be dispersed throughout the economy in the form of a reduced work week and steady increases in salaries and wages. Second, a greater emphasis must be placed on the non-market, or service, economy where workers can obtain new roles and responsibilities outside the labor arena.

This social economy will be based on volunteerism and communal growth as opposed to acquisition and profit (the goals of the current capitalistic system). Third, sector organizations are community-oriented and include organizations such as schools and colleges, fraternal orders, conservation and environmental protection groups, theaters, art galleries, museums, civic associations, and civilian security patrols. The emphasis is on development and ensuring that individuals in a community have access to resources and opportunities. These organizations will take on the responsibilities previously fulfilled by the private market such as regulation, development, and production. Rifkin also suggests there will be a heightened demand for leisure by members of the symbolic analyst sector. These high-class workers will require more entertainment as the expectations associated with their employment continue to rise. This carries the potential for the leisure service industry, a segment of the nonmarket economy, to focus on the needs of the upper-class and could assist individuals as they integrate into this nonmarket economy.

Wilson provides several recommendations concerning policy strategies that attempt to aid disadvantaged citizens in the U.S. Short-term solutions include revising current programs or creating new programs to decrease

joblessness among disadvantaged groups. These jobs would be tailored for unskilled (public-sector infrastructure maintenance jobs) and semi-skilled (road construction and maintenance) workers. Although wages would not be high, universal health insurance, a child care program, and earned income tax credit would enable workers to live decently and avoid joblessness and the problems associated with it.

Long-term solutions include strengthening the relationship between education, employment, and family and strengthening the relationship between the city and the suburbs. A system of national performance standards in the public schools and family policies to reinforce such a learning system could help facilitate the transition from school to work. Commitment from the corporate sector to recruit and train successful students will provide further incentives for high academic performance. City and suburban cooperation should be emphasized as these areas are often interdependent. The more central cities are plagued by unemployment, dysfunctional schools, and crime, the greater the chance of surrounding areas experiencing a decline in their own social and economic fortunes. Integration is beneficial to both. Consequences of the problems in the inner-cities are not restricted to that geographical area, but affect the quality of life in the larger community as well.

Rifkin's review of economic transformations is enlightening. However, the scope of his ideas warrant further data collection than the provided content analysis of *The New York Times*. Also lacking is his failure to provide a detailed model as to how the United States economy is to move from a market economy to a nonmarket economy. Wilson also presents a strong argument with appropriate policy recommendations. However, he does not address the current capitalistic system and its constant need for a large source of available labor. Not unlike Rifkin, Wilson does not provide a detailed model as to how the United States capitalist economy is to survive without surplus labor.

These works have significant implications for leisure studies in several aspects. Here, the concept of leisure is couched in structural terms and, when workers are displaced, there is an increase in discretionary time. Wilson holds that idle time may lead to the creation of a high-risk environment which, according to Wilson, is characterized by joblessness, poor educational facilities, and little or no access to opportunity. Further, being absent from the work force destroys self-efficacy, leading to an atmosphere of despair in jobless communities. Wilson offers a perspective that should provide insight to researchers and practitioners involved in the design of leisure-based programs to ameliorate urban problems exacerbated by the lack of work. Of the two books, it holds the most potential for informing leisure research and field practice.

On a theoretical note, the books also provide perspective on Gunter and Gunter's (1980) analysis of alienated and anomic forms of leisure. Anomic leisure is characterized by a general lack of structure in which individuals experience an abundance of unoccupied time. This unlimited leisure is

unsatisfying to many. A second relevant typology provided by the Gunters is alienated leisure. This type of leisure is imbedded within a structural frame. The abundance of time is not a result of too little structure, but of an extremely constraining environment. Alienated leisure is often due to strong societal factors from which an individual cannot disengage, such as the absence of employment or the necessity of early retirement.

Both the concept of anomic and alienated leisure have important implications for societal transformation, particularly pertaining to the underclass. Economic restructuring, a structural phenomenon, has created an environment in which certain individuals become obsolete and are no longer viable members of the labor force. Due to the lack of employment, individuals are unable to move from this societal position and are "condemned to leisure." This lack of structure could eventually result in a jobless society and the creation of a permanent underclass.

Both books hold significant implications for leisure studies. While leisure is not the central focus of either work, they provide social and structural context for understanding the prospects for leisure opportunities among both advantaged (Rifkin's Symbolic Analysts who will require entertainment as a means of escape from the pressure of their highly technical environments) and disadvantaged (Wilson's underclass who will experience total separation from mainstream society) groups. These books are highly recommended as they emphasize the differing consequences of social and economic restructuring for two distinct population segments.

Important tools for use in urban sociology and political economy courses, these books are also useful supplementary materials for graduate leisure studies courses emphasizing work-leisure relationships and the interrelationship of race, class and leisure.

References

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