Introduction

This is a book about the working class in the 1980s. Theoretically it relies on and attempts to draw together insights from the sociologies of the family and the labour process, community studies, studies of masculinity and Marxist feminism, and is located somewhere in that very large area called historical materialism. It differs from community or family sociology which looks at Umit and Tula and Trevor and Raelene outside of paid work; from the new 'men's studies' which would centre on Trevor or Umit and maybe on their relations with one another; from a sociology of women which would focus on Tula and Raelene; and from industrial sociology which would concern itself mainly with Umit and Trevor at work. It attempts to look simultaneously at the parts of everyday life with which these specialities deal, or at least tries to see them in relation to one another.

The work of Game and Pringle (1983) in particular has helped social scientists become aware that 'studies of gender and studies of the labour process are incomplete unless they take each other seriously'. The Game and Pringle case studies were a major advance in that they discussed sexuality at work and work at home, whereas previous studies of work and studies of gender had tended to reproduce rather than elucidate the public/ private dichotomy. The case studies offered new and useful insights into the constructions and maintenance of masculinity at work (1983: Chapter 1) and women's oppression at home (1983: Chapter 6), but their authors seemed to imply that men's work attitudes and actions were a product mainly of their time at work, while women's attitudes to work were derived within the family-household. This characterises what has been called the application of a 'gender model' for the analysis of women's work and a 'job model' for men's work (Wajcman 1982; Feldberg and Glenn 1979). In contrast 'a sudden zest, a new appetite for the concrete' (Anderson 1983:

1

21) and a 'rich and sustained expansion' (Aronson 1985: 76) has produced a Marxist literature intent on scrutinising the the nature of the relationship between structure and subject, seeing class relations as something which people experience, create, live day to day and which uses Marxism's substantial and developing insights into women's oppression and resistance to inform its views of men's thinking and behaviour.

Central to this development is a renewed appreciation that, along with the permanency and pervasiveness of class determinations, it is their terrible intimacy which is most compelling. Where and how people are born; where and how and with whom they live; what they eat, when, where, with whom and how often; the sports they play, the newspapers they read, the channels they watch; how much sex they have, how, how soon and with whom; where and how they are educated and for how long; what their leisure activities are; how and where they travel; the size of their bedroom and its occupancy; the air they breathe; where they are employed, at what, for how long and for how much; how their children are cared for and by whom; what illnesses and accidents they have; the health care they receive; how they die and where they are buried—all of these are class determined.

Implicit in this growing literature is the view that a realistic understanding of the working class and its strategic power and weaknesses requires the study of the whole lives of its members, changing and changed by each other as they stand in structured opposition to capital, its forces and agencies; and an awareness that such an understanding will affect which political allegiances it may or may not be reasonable to form.

The working class comprises those who have no control over significant productive resources other than their ability to work for those who do. They sell this ability to others over a significant period of their lives and, when they are unable to sell it or have no more of it left to sell, must rely on the wages of others, or on the social wage which comes from the taxes paid by the working class as a whole.

This definition, of course, is that of Marx and Engels. The only definition of the working class which can be found in the entire body of Marx's writings, it occurs as a footnote to the opening paragraphs of *The Communist Manifesto*: 'By proletariat [is meant] the class of modern wage labourers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labour power in order to live.' In other places, Marx conjures with the composition of the working class, saying in the *Manifesto* that the bourgeoisie 'had converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science into its paid wage labourers'. In *Capital*, Volume One, he describes supervisors as 'a special kind of wage labourer' and calls teachers and writers 'productive workers'.

The question of who is and is not in the working class has had more ink spilt on it than than it was ever worth. The 'boundary problem', as it came to be called, was a focus of theoretical and strategic debate through the late 1970s and well into the 1980s. So technical and confused did it become that

those involved with the argument seemed to forget that social life is never static and is not given to neat compartmentalisation. The fact that 'grey' areas exist, however, does not mean that all is grey. As the philosopher Keith Graham (1989: 424) so clearly put it, 'there is a point at which someone owns the means of production in such a large measure that it is no longer necessary for them to enter into a wage-relation if they do not choose to. At that point they cease to be members of the working class.'

I will avoid this entrapment here by concentrating my attention on those people about whose class location there can be absolutely no doubt. This book is about the following people in the sense that those who work in these occupations appear in its pages: Apprentices, bartenders, blacksmiths, brick workers, builders' labourers, building workers, business machine operators, cannery workers, carpenters, cashiers, charge hands, childcare workers, cleaners, clerical workers, cooks, copper refinery workers, council workers, data processors, dough makers, electricians, factory workers, felters, fertiliser plant workers, flight attendants, gardeners, garment workers, gas fitters, grave diggers, groundspersons, hairdressers, hospital workers, jewellery makers, job delegates, laboratory workers, labourers, machine operators, machinists, maids, mail sorters, maintenance workers, market gardeners, mechanics, metal polishers, metalworkers, mill operators, miners, nurses, office workers, personal service workers, plumbers, porters, postal workers, press operators, printers, railway workers, receptionists, riggers, sandblasters, scrap metal smelters, seafarers, secretaries, shelf fillers, shop stewards, shop workers, social workers, steelworkers, stenographers, storepersons, teachers, technical workers, telephonists, tellers, ticket sellers, trade union organisers, typists, upholsterers, upholstery cutters, vehicle builders, waitresses, welders, wharfies.

There can be no doubt that, whatever else they are, the holders of these occupations by Marx's and almost anyone else's definition are working class. At the same time, the proportion of the working class that is actually in paid work at any one time has continued to decline until currently only about 40 per cent of Australia's 16 million people are in any part of the workforce at all. More people are retired than before, more are on other benefits, are unemployed or are staying on at school or entering tertiary education. Society can no longer provide jobs for all its members throughout their lifetimes. Australian capitalism is currently sacrificing years of the lives of 600 000 mainly-young people. Those who are fortunate stay on in classrooms or attend a myriad of job creation and retraining schemes, all of which make the assumption that things will 'return to normal'; what was 'normal', however, can never again exist.

In the sense that this book is about the people in the above list, and in terms of the definition provided before it, it is not about the whole working class. On the other hand, the vast majority of those who are dependent on the social wage or on the wages of others have been or will be found in occupations such as these.

The past decade has seen great social and economic change in the working class. Technological change has swept the banking, retail, health, maritime, building, manufacturing, coal and steel industries. Also changing have been the sorts of paid work that working people perform and the industries they work in. More clerks were employed in New South Wales in 1986 than tradespeople and more salespersons than plant and machine operators and drivers together. More people were employed in community services than in transport and storage and construction combined; and more were found in the wholesale and retail trades than in manufacturing. The typical union member twenty years ago was a male in a factory, port or mine. Now he or she is more likely to work in an office, hospital, shop or school.

Another fundamental change has been an increase in the number of women in paid work, both absolutely and relative to the number of men. This has been accompanied both by an increase in the amount of time women workers spend in full-time work over a lifetime and an increase in the number of part-time women workers and outworkers. The amount of time spent by a male in paid work was three and a half times greater than that spent by a woman in 1948. By 1982, the male-to-female ratio was 1.8:1. In 1970 Australia's largest trade union, the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association, had 70 per cent of its members as full-time workers. By 1980 this number had been reduced to 50 per cent. Currently, 70 per cent are casually employed.

At the same time, there has been, and increasingly will be, an expansion of the 'culture industry', both in terms of those within it and in its influence on all spheres of life. There has been a growth in jobs which require substantive training, whether or not the training is relevant to the work performed, and an increase in the proportion of workers who strive to attain or increase professional qualifications. This newly, or further, credentialled work is nonetheless work in which there is less and less room for autonomy, initiative, personal service or human relationships. Those working at the means of mental production—laboratories, universities, print media and television stations—are experiencing an increasing assertion of external control, as well as working conditions which are simultaneously increasingly technologically sophisticated, labour intensive and hierarchically structured.

Yet, while professionalisation and unionism are appearing more and more complementary as nurses, teachers and pilots strike and industrial scientists amalgamate with metalworkers, Australia's workforce of 6.1 million currently has only 2.6 million trade unionists. Australian Bureau of Statistics figures released in June 1989 show that not only has the proportion of the workforce which is unionised continued to fall since 1976, but it has fallen more and more rapidly. The rate of union membership has dropped from 51 per cent in 1976 to 49 per cent in 1982 to 46 per cent in 1986 to 42 per cent in 1988. Why?

A fundamental argument in this book is that what is so crucial for the 1990s and beyond is a sense of universality. I am not convinced that a 'politics of the body' will help someone get some new clothes. I can't see how the 'politics of pleasure' will particularly appeal to a family paying 60 per cent of its income to the bank, or how the 'politics of consumption' will assist the poor and poorly paid. For most people, there is little to celebrate (and less to celebrate with) in the choices they make. The 'politics of difference' ignores this. Capital, as it has in the past, will continue to pluralise, fragment and divide society, life, labour and self. Bundles of politics which replicate this are less than useful to most (albeit entertaining for a few).[1]

A major fault with class politics over the last twenty years has been its singularity, its particularism and its sectarianism. It is not an insistence on the importance of class that is the error; rather, some of those who so insist have forgotten or mislaid the breadth and intensity of class processes. 'Too much' class is not the problem; the problem is 'not enough'. The narrowing of working-class horizons, the over-concentration of working-class power, the sanctification of particular forms of working-class organisation and an amnesia concerning working-class history are four precise reasons for the decline of trade unions.

The limitations of some sociologies which deal with the working class in sectional or fragmented ways has, then, been matched by the tunnel vision of some Marxists who determine what the working class is *a priori*, and then spend substantial amounts of their time and others' patience trying to explain why it doesn't behave in the ways they think it should. This sometimes involves identifying varieties of 'baddies' within the working class who can be held responsible. Fingers are pointed and stern lectures are read.

This book tries to avoid that declamatory style by illustrating, in that section of the working class sketched above, some of what the actual needs and desires of people are as they express these in their daily lives. Having indicated what is wanted, the book concludes by identifying, in the struggles currently evident, a few of the actions by which working class people are transforming the world in ways of their own choosing.

1 Labouring men: Love, sex and strife

This chapter explores the complex set of interrelationships between class situation and experience, paid work, the family–household, masculinity and male heterosexuality. Why is it that Marx's insight that a labouring man is at home when he is not working and not at home when he is working, Engels' demonstration that there exist materially different gender relations for specific classes and the general statement of historical materialism on the significance of social reproduction have remained substantially unextended and uncompleted? One answer is that, since these areas have generally not been seen in their interconnections, it has been difficult to proceed far in any direction. Some who have addressed, for example, the issue of male heterosexuality, (most notably the exponents of 'men's liberation') have been less than perceptive.

'Men's liberationists' insist on telling other men to relax and be nice to one another, advice that no labouring man could take seriously and last until the end of his shift. This psychologisation of the issues has another ill effect, for the location of patriarchy solely in men's heads leads directly to the assumption that oppression is a function of the sensitivity of the oppressed such that men and women are mutually oppressive (see Nichols 1975: 216). The tendency toward a simplistic psychologisation has been countered by the development of a vigorous feminist materialism which insists that sexuality is both structured and structuring; is mediated through structures and affects them reciprocally; and, as Saunders (1983: 104) has demonstrated, is not solely or mainly a question of personal intention. This emphasis on structuration is most notable in contemporary British feminist writings on love and sex, particularly a number of those contained in the Cartledge and Ryan (1983), Snitow et al. (1983) and Friedman and Sarah (1982) collections. Connell (1983: 77) has written of two patterns of

determination within one set of practices, but in understanding that class is gendered and gender classed, attention must also be paid to the different locations of the patterns of determination, and in particular to the relationship between those locations, especially between the family-household and the paid workplace.

What follows focuses on those interrelations as they are borne, experienced and reproduced by labouring men. It is based on the personal accounts of about 40 such people, most of them published, and some of them 'collected' at my kitchen table. Theoretically it relies on and attempts to draw together insights from the sociologies of the labour process and the working class, studies of masculinity and Marxist feminism.

Hard labour, strong men

Sennett and Cobb (1977), in their path-breaking study of working-class subjectivity, demonstrated a deep appreciation of what it takes for young labourers to begin work and what remaining at work means for them. The desire of some young working-class men to work in what is conventionally regarded as 'unskilled' work, has been well documented by, amongst others, Paul Willis (1977), and some of the keenness to do manual work was caught by Studs Terkel (1975: 445) in an interview with a steelworker, Steve Dubi: 'When we were kids we thought the steel mill was it. We'd see the men coming out all dirty, black. The only thing white was the goggles over their eyes. We thought they were it, strong men. We just couldn't wait to get in there.'

Not so well represented in the literature on the working class is an appreciation of what it means for young men to start their working lives as self-perceived failures. For instance, Raphael's (1988) study on male rites of passage seems to have missed the most significant one of all—commencing wage labour. By entering the wage relation, the young man is not only proving individual worth, but is demonstrating his gender, meeting an obligation imposed on him by the fact that he is a male and seeking personal validation through the social recognition of wage earning. Starting work is a rite of passage which separates the grown-ups from the kids, provides a sense of independence and is an escape from the straitjacket of 'family time' into the reformatory of 'industrial time' (Hareven 1982: 74, 75).

But in seeking this validation in the wage relation, young labouring men have, as Hunt (1980: 128) has noted, already lost out in the race for qualifications for what could be self-developing work. According to Epstein (1972: 104) success in life 'is still a vivid notion' to working-class youth, and the majority of them see the 'climb as still ahead and the abyss ... the pit of simple failure—not all that far behind'. Life, not just games or sport, as Raphael (1988: 130) suggested, is a 'negative-sum' event for the working-class male. There are always many more losers than winners.

Whether young working-class men enter the workforce already con-

vinced of their own 'failure', or whether a sense of failure comes with work experience, an ideology of 'equal opportunity' ensures that those who remain less than equal blame mainly themselves, for the rewards of life are apparently available to everyone but observation and experience confirm that they are possessed by a few. Chamberlain (1983: 139–40, Tables 6.10, 6.11, 6.12) found this ambiguity reflected by the working-class respondents in his sample. Eighty-two per cent (79 respondents) agreed that people can move from one class to another, but only 51 per cent answered in the affirmative to the question, 'Do most people have an equal opportunity to get into the top class if they have ability and work hard?' and 77 per cent said that it was 'difficult', 'limited' or only possible 'if you win money'.

Since all young men are apparently given an 'equal go' at school, those who succeed in obtaining life's better things must do so because they deserve to, work harder, try harder, are brighter or more diligent. Not only is it the case that male workers may internalise this definition of social inferiority. They may turn to those who formulated it and have a stake in sustaining it, for reassurance that it isn't true.

The problems that the appreciation of failure brings to a male worker's life are severe. Success is determined by what he earns, what he owns, where, how and with whom he lives, and his ability to control his work environment. The measurement of money is read by businessmen and builders' labourers alike. And if 'they' are wealthy, are in power and authority because they deserve to be, because they are successful, then how do labouring men regard themselves? 'Running Ron', a leading hand carpenter, said to me on the first day of my first job: 'Son, you've got to be stupid to work here, and if you're not now, you soon will be.' How does a labouring man face the day, the week, the rest of his working life? Once in 'the pit of simple failure', how does he survive?

The onset of failure for most is perceived early in working-class schools, and with it comes a resistance on the part of some children that provokes the sorts of ridicule and discipline by teachers that will become a permanent feature of life at work, where its agents instead will be supervisory staff and middle management. The response of young men at school is, at its basis, fairly straightforward—'If you don't like me, you can all get stuffed!' 'The authority structure of the school', in Connell's words (1989: 294), 'becomes the antagonist against which one's masculinity is cut'. At school, a counter-culture of male dignity develops, defined by its opposition to school rules and expectations. Smoking, drinking, dope, sex, pornography and truancy demonstrate rejection and hostility both for the school and for the incipient successes—the 'goody-goodies', those who will go on to perform various forms of mental labour. The particular interaction of class and generation mean that a sense of territoriality, collective solidarity and toughness, as expressed in leisure styles and music, combine to form an important bridge between school and work (Tanner 1978; Willis 1977).

Even while still at school, some young working-class men attempt to redefine work by associating manual labour with the social superiority of masculinity—strength, activity, hardness, danger, difficulty, courage; and mental labour with the social inferiority of femininity—weakness, passivity, softness, timidity, domesticity. The boy who took child development at school was the class clown (Valli 1986: 37). Indeed, most non-manual work is regarded as effeminate, 'sissy', and it is performed by 'poofters' and 'wankers'. A steelworker commented to me, 'Social workers? They're just like fucking clerks. What would they know about life?' And as Ken B. remarked (in Raphael 1988: 145), 'the egghead brainy guy with good grades, the little wimpy guy with glasses, you might as well be a girl'. Men who do office work or nursing are, according to young working-class women, 'limp wristed', 'sissy', 'faggy' and 'weirdo' (Valli 1986: 66, 179). Indeed, for men, work itself, especially difficult work, as Livingstone and Luxton (1989) have pointed out, is often characterised as female and thus to be conquered ('it's a real bitch'; 'give her hell'), similar to malfunctioning machinery ('bitch', 'slut', 'whore'). Getting 'fucked over' and 'screwed around' by bosses who are 'wimps' and 'dickheads' is a normal and expected occurrence. And work, bosses and machines can all be 'cunts'.

Work made meaningless by capitalist social relations is given significance by patriarchy. The necessity to do boring, repetitive, dirty, unhealthy, poorly paid, demeaning, self-destructive, mind-numbing, soul-destroying work is turned into a virtue. In the words of a young male worker, 'It's important that you do a job that other people can't' (Hammar 1984: 62). The sacrifice and strength required to do (some) manual work provides a form of self-esteem; a job is done that not everyone is willing, able or permitted to do.

Following the election of members of the Communist Party of Australia to leadership positions in the New South Wales Builders Labourers' Federation, a few mainly communist women began to appear on building sites. One of them, Stella Nord, commented that the type of work builders' labourers performed 'contributes to their sense of maleness. They even regard themselves as superior to other men who are not working in that kind of industry.' She related an incident in which a labourer approached while she was driving a hoist: 'He said, "Jesus Christ what's this?" as though I'd come from another planet. I said, "What's wrong, haven't you ever seen women doing this before?" ... "No, it makes me feel so inadequate, it makes me feel as if my job is not what I think it is—sheilas can do the work I'm doing!"' (Burgmann 1980: 456)

Similarly, the presence of women doing steelwork is eroding the masculinist ideology that tough or dangerous jobs can only be done by men (Livingstone and Luxton 1989), and perhaps also weakening the belief that in order to be a man one must do tough or dangerous work.

Many men experience a feeling of pride in having withstood what the world does to them and a minority brag about the conditions that they put

up with at work. Difficult, uncomfortable or dangerous working conditions can be seen as challenges to masculine prowess. The unpleasantness and the brutality of the working situation is sometimes reinterpreted into a heroic exercise of manly confrontation with the task (Livingstone and Luxton 1989). As a building worker commented, 'I quickly learned to regard the permanent filth in which we worked, the plaster dust in my hair, the black fingernails and the hardened hands as part of my life, even badges of honour.' (Leighton 1981: 49) Yet the sense of self-esteem that makes up part of masculinity, the confirmation of which is avidly sought in the world of work, is just as frequently eroded there. The 'fundamental task of male development' as Raphael (1988: 192) saw it, is that men 'must move from weakness to strength, from helplessness to responsibility, from dependence to independence'. Masculinity involves being confident, dominant and self-sufficient (Holloway 1983: 136). But these are the qualities which work destroys.

'They don't treat us like men'

Lazonick (1977: 118) has commented that the subjectivity of the labourer can never be completely destroyed, for workers become and remain 'inured'. They become inured to the daily performance of tasks which are no more complicated 'than that of the donkey turning the grindstone' (Nuwer 1979: 59), but also to jobs that would not 'take you more than a fortnight to learn' (Porter 1983: 21), such that 'mentally defective workers are better employees' (Mann 1977: 26). Also resented, resisted and coped with are what Terkel (1975: 12) refers to as 'being spied on' and non-recognition. A maintenance worker remarked, 'If Jesus Christ had worked in this department nobody would ever have heard of him' (Leighton 1981: 66). One of the most common complaints of working people is that they are 'just numbers' and it is in this simple administrative act of efficiency that many workers—particularly older workers who may have experienced a different form of workplace control—feel the reality of their depersonalisation: 'You're just a number out there. Just like a prisoner. When you report off you tell them your badge number. A lot of people don't know your name. They know you by your badge number. My number is 44-065.' (Dubi 1975: 446)

Small wonder, as Hareven (1982: 82) pointed out, that those workers who felt most constrained and discontented were also those who felt a pride in themselves and their work. Perhaps, too, there are elements here of an explanation of why these workplaces should be festooned with pin ups. It is probably not the case that they are used essentially to exclude women or to create spaces in which women feel uncomfortable, as Segal (1990: 230) has suggested, if only for the reason that they are (were?) most prominent in workplaces in which women are most absent. Perhaps, instead, it is that they represent phantasmal sexual activity which is both pleasurable and

enhancing of masculinity (Livingstone and Luxton 1989) whereas in the
workplace, hope of the former is abandoned while, in a strange paradox, an
area of life perceived by sociologists (and others) as being 'masculine' is
in fact experienced by those who occupy it, as infantilising.

A vehicle builder's main complaint against the company was that it
didn't treat male workers 'like men', and that its policies were 'childish'
(Aronowitz 1973: 33). As Garson (1975: 75) pointed out, 'People are
treated like children at work. They can be moved, they can be scolded, they
can be punished.' A welder asked: 'How would you like to go up to
someone and say "I would like to go to the bathroom"? If the foreman
doesn't like you, he'll make you hold it, just ignore you.' (Stallings 1975:
152) There can be no other area of life that is so 'masculine' as the armed
services and yet the parallels between the life of a soldier and that of a
process worker are not lost on those who have been both. As Vernon Hill,
a steelworker remarked, 'They treat you like a child, like they did in the
army: do this, do that, you're not paid to think.' (Leighton 1981:131; see
also Aronowitz 1973: 33, 40)

In both types of occupation, also, a quite strict 'need to know' hierarchy
of information exists. Jobs are made as simple as possible, workers are told
only what they need to know about their particular operation and the
company fosters the impression that this is so because they are incapable
of understanding any more. Leighton (1981: 70-71) explained of his
workplace:

> There was no attempt ... to keep us in touch with their [his employers']
> affairs and the performance of the company. Perhaps it had not occurred to
> anyone that employees, who have invested their skills and labour in the
> firm, have as vital an interest as anybody in its performance; perhaps
> nobody had thought that pride in the company might have a strong bearing
> on productivity; perhaps someone thought the company balance sheet
> above the workers' heads. This last was certainly wrong of Harry, who
> once gave Eddie a lucid exposition of the relationship of gold and the dollar
> in the international monetary system.

Understanding is not sought, expected or encouraged. Even so, just to
do the job is not sufficient. The worker is also enjoined to like the work,
and if he or she doesn't, then this is evidence of a 'bad attitude' which
should be corrected. (The similarities with schooling are sharp.) As a
steelworker told Terkel (LeFevre 1975: 15), 'I got chewed out by my
foreman once. He said, "Mike, you're a good worker but you have a bad
attitude." My attitude is that I don't get excited about my job ... How are
we going to get excited when you're tired and you want to sit down?' If the
'bad attitude' persists, then the task is either to remove the workers entirely
from the work process or to 'break their spirit'. Sometimes this is done first
off to pre-empt the development of a 'bad attitude':

> When you go into Ford, first thing they try to do is break your spirit. I saw

them bring a tall guy where they needed a short guy. I saw them bring a
short guy where you have to stand on two guys' backs to do something.
Last night they brought a fifty-eight year old man to do the job I was on.
That man's my father's age. I know damn well my father couldn't do it.
(Stallings 1975: 154–5)

More usual is a constant grinding away of authority in action, which,
coupled with the general dreariness of the work, has the effect of stultifying
resistance. A steelworker on the blast furnaces at BHP Port Kembla in 1982
told me, 'the foremen are on to you all the time if you try and stand up for
yourself. It's usually just in little things, but it's so constant. Most people
give in and cop it, or they leave altogether.' Sometimes the wearing down
of resistance is accompanied by less protracted procedures. Another
foreman in a car assembly plant explained how trainee foremen were
instructed by the management to 'get somebody's goat and be cool about
it ... either make him do his job or provoke him to smack you up the side
of the head' (Aronowitz 1973: 45). It may indeed be, as Connell (1983: 29)
has suggested, that physical aggression is a claim to adulthood and
masculinity; it is also, however, a matter of survival. This is not to say that
most or even many foremen use the threat of physical violence to keep
workers in line, but it is a real enough possibility, one which was encoun-
tered at school and which must be seriously, if not continually, anticipated.

Of the contemporary commentators on men and masculinity, it is
perhaps only Phylis Chesler (1978) who has managed to show that physical
violence is constitutive of men's experience of themselves, each other and
the world they inhabit. Confronting and surviving in a world redolent with
physical violence, or coping day to day with the psychic traumas of the
more usual death by inches, seems to provoke a number of responses from
labouring men. The coping strategies described here should not be seen as
mutually exclusive: they may all be pursued by the same people at various
times, or all at once. One crucial determinant is the perception labouring
men have of their relationship to and within the family-household. This
influences the strategies which will be adopted.

One coping strategy which has been documented by Roethlisberger and
Dickson (1939), Roy (1958) and most recently by Burawoy (1979: 77–94)
concerns the amusing and enjoyable work practices constructed by workers
to break monotony and assert some individual or collective autonomy.
Such schemes vary endlessly from simple personal strategies such as that
invented by the factory worker who regularly performed his routine job
with his eyes shut (Garson 1975: 16), to 'food fighting', 'water fighting'
and practical joking, to the more complex rate-busting and 'soldiering', the
description of which is a staple feature of most human relations industrial
ethnographies.

The desire to hit back physically, another coping strategy, is generally
diffused in a number of ways. In the platelayers' section at Port Kembla's
BHP, the younger men would often spend their crib times wrestling and

boxing, fighting each other in the sun, just for fun but often quite vigorously and painfully. Sometimes physical violence is expressed outside the workplace for the simple reason that, in preparing himself to receive and inflict violence, a labouring man is also conscious that its exercise could cost him his livelihood. He fears the consequences of acting out what he has prepared himself to be:

> I want to be able to turn around to somebody and say 'Hey, fuck you!' You know? (laughs) ... 'Cause all day long I wanted to be able to tell my foreman to go fuck himself, but I can't. So I find a guy in a tavern to tell him that. And he tells me too ... He's punching me and I'm punching him because we actually want to punch somebody else. (LeFevre 1975: 17)

There is one other response to the boredom, mindlessness and humiliation of life at work, and that is to resist in an organised fashion. A steelworker explained to me the cause of his militancy: 'It's simple, really. I hate my job. The only chance I get to have a bit of fun is to fight the boss. Yeah, I really like to give them the shits. It sure helps the day go.' But resistance takes many forms. Perhaps the most common at the individual level is an attitude of complete disinterest, 'not helping out like you could if you wanted to', as a maintenance worker put it; refusing to care about work because to care about it is pointless (Leighton 1981: 68).

Labouring men know very clearly what constitutes a good working environment. Graham Connick (1984: 92), a grave digger, explained: 'I have a good boss. He gives you a job and he's not on your back all the time. He leaves you alone to get on with it.' A building worker remarked that 'experience had taught [him] that work was usually best accomplished without management, or even in spite of management' (Leighton 1981: 50). Williams' (1981) study of miners in Utah company towns in Queensland illustrated the significance of autonomy on the job as an issue around which workers organise. The most contentious issues for the Goonyella and Peak Downs miners were those related to job control. About three-quarters of the men saw a discrepancy between the amount of control they were allowed when on the job and the amount they thought they ought to have. Only 20 per cent were happy with the control they were allowed to exercise in carrying out their daily work (1981: 71). Fifty-nine per cent of the 194 issues brought before the company by the Miners' Federation at Peak Downs in 1974 were not over wages and conditions, but job control and management prerogatives (1981: 83).

Struggles around job autonomy are directly linked to questions of personal identity and worth and with the objectification of the individual worker; only 7 per cent of the Goonyella and Peak Downs miners saw supervisors as being even 'slightly more people concerned' than 'job concerned' (Williams 1981: 60, Table 3.3). Although struggle for job autonomy is collective, it is finally about protecting or enhancing degrees of autonomy within particular jobs occupied by individual workers. The

struggles are about the boundaries and definitions of discrete jobs occupied by real people, individually. Similarly, the actual act of confrontation significantly affecting the outcome of a particular struggle is critically determined face to face in a situation in which the under-resourced union officials, delegates and rank-and-filers are at a considerable disadvantage, 'a built-in disadvantage' in the words of one shop steward (Leighton 1981: 36). Just as in the school situation, machismo can be used as a weapon to 'even the score' a little.

The struggle to increase autonomy, freedom of movement, freedom from harassment and freedom from authoritarianism is conducted from a position of considerable disadvantage. Masculinism is used to 'even the score', cementing its relation with male dignity even more firmly, for dignity itself is established and maintained in what Sennett and Cobb (1977) see as essentially a zero-sum situation: 'whatever dignity a man accords his ruler he must necessarily deny himself'. E. P. Thompson, in *The Making of the English Working Class*, (1975) outlined some employers' views of early individual male workers. It was complained, for example, that miners were 'naturally turbulent, passionate, and rude in manners and character'. Employers' views of working men have changed little in the intervening 250 years but if they perceive them with fear—as unstable, irrational, violent—in an unequal conflict, it is not surprising that the men would use machismo—hard stares, vicious language, personal attacks, and threats of violence, thus becoming what they are most feared to be.

Fraternity, sexuality, virility

Tolson (1977: 31) has suggested that masculinity helps maintain rather than challenge the way in which work is organised. This is an overly simple view, for the physical and social organisation of work does have an important effect on the way in which resistance to authority relations at work is organised. Perhaps Tolson was reacting to the rather too extravagant claims concerning the politicising functions of the socialisation of labour at the point of production. But the reality that lies behind these claims is that male production workers do at least develop a sense of the interdependence of their job functions. George Grodowski (1984: 31) explained: 'there is enormous pressure placed on us to perform at the speed of the line. I don't mind letting the company down, but it's when you feel that you're letting your workmates down that causes the trouble'. This, the rule of responsibility to the collective (do your share of the work, don't bludge) is one of a few simple rules which to a greater or lesser extent apply in most workplaces. The other rules, also mostly already well learned in secondary school, are: mutual protection (look after your friends; don't dob); collective work (work together; don't compete with each other) and egalitarianism (don't act superior to your workmates; don't put them down to others and don't show off too much). 'Mate' is a moral term, not only in

the sense that it censures certain actions and attitudes, but also in the sense
that 'If you needed advice, you asked a mate; if there was a decision to
made, you discussed it with a mate; if good work were ever recognised and.
praised, it would be by a mate.' (Leighton 1981: 57)

This sense of functional interdependence, and the workplace culture
which may be built out of it, may be expressed in thoughts and feelings of
brotherhood. Dave, a steelworker, refers to his workmates as 'the brothers',
and 'comrade' and 'brother' are not unusual forms of formal address within
the male segment of the trade union movement. What is perplexing is that,
while such practices are redolent of patriarchy, they are not, as Tolson
implied, inherently pro-capitalist.

As Braverman well recognised, the degradation of workers is limited by
their humanity which, in the case of men, must also mean by the fact that
they are male. While it may sometimes be strategically useful to see class
struggle as the clash of two mighty forces locked in inevitable and world
historic conflict, that is not how it appears day by day. Conflict occurs when
other options are closed, when 'there are only two choices: you either fight
or suck arse' (Aronowitz 1973: 108). What is at stake a lot of the time is
what Sol Marks, a shop stewards' convenor at Ford Broadmeadows, called
the 'fight for dignity'. This dignity is at least partially defined against the
company and within a collective solidarity and brotherhood (Tracy 1983:
76; Mann 1977: 50). Vincent Gardiner (1984: 165) explained: 'comrade-
ship is something that comes when people support each other in times of
stress'. What these words mean, in essence, is 'sticking up for one another'
when the going becomes intolerable.

This dignity and solidarity is frequently seen as manliness. The victory
in September 1983 at the Granville Commonwealth Engineering plant in
Sydney was celebrated by a worker poet as being quintessentially about
manliness:

> And as time goes on, we can all recall
> How we stood up and fought him like men
> So if ever he tries the same thing on us
> We'll bloody well beat him again.
> (Bill Burns, Comeng Shop Steward.[1])

What is lost if a particular struggle is not successful is much more than
the particular wages or conditions which are the public face of the dispute.
To lose is to have middle management, line supervisors and foremen 'on
top of you' again. As Ford Broadmeadows shop stewards explained (Tracy
1983: 61,60), 'if we never went on strike we might have more money but
they would treat us like animals like they used to ... since we have come
back the foremen have been so nervous and polite ... it feels good'. As
industrial psychologists have put it, 'opposition serves to reinforce identify
and vice-versa'. Or, as Garson (1975: 78) saw it, ' ... it's a healthy thing to
engage in the daily battle to hold your own. It clears your head'.

Their bodies, themselves

Commentators (notably Connell) have seen the concern of men for their bodies in terms of the body's relation to violence and force. While in itself a valid view, it nonetheless remains partial. The concern of labouring men for their bodies is both simpler to understand — their bodies are what they sell in order to sustain themselves and others—and more complex — somehow their bodies must bear the weight of the creation and maintenance of social masculinity.

Tolson (1977: 53) remarked that concern with physical strength is the most basic of all male preoccupations, and it is not difficult to understand why. For labouring men, the sale of their labour power means that they sell their ability to do any work at all that the employer considers they are able to do. As Willis (1977: 100–101) intimated, what makes labour power saleable in the absence of certificates, diplomas and tickets, is its variability, its plasticity. Warren Allis (1984: 18), a poultry abattoir worker, remarked: 'I like to be working, and I'm fit and well to do anything.' A factory worker commented: 'All bosses [are] the same. All work is the same.' (Garson 1975: 9) The transaction is clear to both employer and employee: what is sold is human energy, strength, durability and 'unticketed' skill which derives from experience. The result clearly perceived by one young labourer is that, to earn money, 'you grind your life away' (King 1984: 81). There is no possibility for these workers to refuse work, in any absolute or long-term sense, because it is undignified, inhuman, too hard or beneath a certain classification, for there are no 'beneaths':

> We were the ones who had to get out in the rain to clear the drains and do all the dirty work, like cleaning out tar tanks. Not actually very important just a shovel hand doing the dirty jobs. You feel like you're at the bottom of the ladder; you can't tell anybody what to do, but everyone can tell you what to do ... You've got no say in what happens around the place, you just do what you're told. You're the labourers, the bums. (King 1984: 78, labourer, gasworks)

What is sold at the point of production is a pair of hands, a back, a set of muscles, a body. Labouring men are preoccupied with their bodies because if they malfunction the repercussions are dire. Connell (1983: 18) speculated on the relationship between men's views of themselves, their bodies and sport, defining sport as a combination of force and skill. This definition can be applied to much manual work, which is seldom only a matter of brute strength, size or muscle mass; rather, it involves knowing how to use the body in a variety of ways such as levering heavy objects, using hands while lying on the back, working in nooks and crannies and heights and depths and in odd positions (Walshok 1981: 185).

In sharp contrast to the older workers ('I'm old and tired *all* the time'— 57 year old steelworker, LeFevre 1975: 18), younger workers like Hans

Jorgensen (1984: 106), a labourer in a coal depot, end the day with 'a good feeling, you know what your body's done ... your body feels all right after you've done something hard—it's sort of like rugby ...'[2] But, as time passes, perhaps the view of this storeperson becomes more typical: 'Sometimes I feel good at the end of the day for doing a hard day's work, but often I feel lousy because it's just that—a hard day's work. I'm tired and that's it ... I don't feel like going out and jogging like the yuppies' (Peter M. in Raphael 1988: 157).

A male labourer's wages peak not very long after the commencement of the job, and will decline in relation to his physical powers, in particular his ability and desire to work overtime. Older employees report that the physiological difficulties caused by the disruptions involved in working a night shift increase with aging, as their need and willingness to perform night work lessen (Rungie 1985: 134). In the life cycle of labouring, force gives way to skill, until skill can no longer compensate for force's diminution. It is at that point, unless he is very lucky, that a man's labouring days are over. The parallels with the professional fighter or footballer are obvious. A rigger said to me: 'It's nearly over for me and I wish to Christ it was. The arthritis is really bad, my knees swell up and legs ache and I'm losing my confidence on heights. I have to get out'. He was 36. Thus it is not only that workers sell the daily use of their bodies to employers, but that employers actually consume their bodies, use them up.

Size is an important aspect of physical strength, and some manual workers are restricted in the possibilities of their work because they are too small. Busch (King 1984: 78) interviewed a sandblaster's helper who was unable to be a sandblaster, for he was 'too short, 'cause you have to be quite big to hold the hose. I was just too short because there is so much pressure.' Similarly, a mill operator explained how most of the workers in his workplace were big, and those who weren't did things other than the rest of them (Eden 1984: 46).

Tolerances of weakness vary from job to job, place to place. As a large and young 'unskilled' worker, I was usually given a week in which to 'measure up' by fellow workers, during which they were relatively helpful. If certain minimum standards were not met in that time, then it was generally suggested by workmates that the job wasn't really suitable. For older male workers who could not meet the norm through age or disability, exceptions were made, and although I have seen some vicious behaviour towards them, this was unusual. A blacksmith explained to me: 'If we didn't look after them, who would?', and it was generally expected in a work gang that most people would have to be carried sometimes, and one or two people most of the time. Some men do 'women's work' all their lives. Garson (1975:20) claimed that such a man is pitied by fellow female workers who, as they know and say, do that job because they are women, but he does it because he is not a man.

When skill can no longer compensate for declining force, workmates

must make up the difference. This is more possible if the work is sufficiently
heterogeneous and is capable of division based on size/strength criteria. In
the underground coal mines on the South Coast of New South Wales, the
older workers generally 'inherit' surface jobs, and new entrants work the
most unhealthy shift. To expend one's life energy in a factory or workshop
day after day, year after year, is to be increasingly concerned with one's
body. Will the skills acquired, the obligations created and the old/young
segmentation of work tasks be sufficient to enable one's body to last the
distance?

> Ah, well I've been a labourer and navvy all my bloody life and, well,
> you've got to keep working, you've still got to have the money to exist,
> don't you? ... In the mornings now, it's harder to breathe. I have to get
> myself up a few hours early ... When I first get up, I normally go straight to
> the toilet and sit there for three-quarters of an hour, just to get my breathing
> right again, then I go straight into the bathroom and have a wash, get all set
> up, come back to the kitchen and sit down again. Then it's another three
> quarters of an hour before I can think of starting to boil the billy and that.
> It's only been the last couple of years, I suppose, that it really got like this.
> (Colin Mehlhopt 1984: 23, labourer, fertiliser works.)[3]

Jeannette Easson, a steelworker, commented of her workmates, 'The
guys give up and stay forever. And give it their whole body. Their body
rots.' (Easson, Field and Santucci 1983: 217). Leighton (1981: 74) re-
marked of a factory in which he worked, that an ideal operator of one of its
machines, standard in most engineering works would have been 'a crippled
gibbon. What you needed was very short legs, to eliminate constant
bending, and very long arms, to allow you to reach the controls. Ordinary
humans, however, find long spells on the machine tiring and a strain on the
back, and over months or years permanent physical damage is not infre-
quent.'

The continued functioning of the body becomes an issue of job struggle,
as does its use and deployment. Some employers are not averse to using the
fear of body breakdown and the penury that results from it as a weapon in
enforcing worker compliance. Malcolm Greaves (1984: 54), a welder,
explained that when they found out that he was asthmatic, some bosses
would 'make it very tough, they'd play on it and give you all the jobs that
you shouldn't be doing'. Other men are equally concerned about the health-
destroying effects of their work, but are afraid or unable to rectify the
situation.

Yet, the very destruction of the physical site of masculinity, the body,
can be a method of attaining, demonstrating and perpetuating the socially
masculine. To paraphrase Haug (1984: 67), corporeality is the foundation
of labouring men's identity as well as of their subordination. A young
worker said, 'I like manual work ... I suppose in a way it's like feeling
grown up—a man—because you're getting dirty and you're working

around with machinery.' (King 1984: 78)

Working for the family

In the face of a lifelong engagement in the mundane world of work, many young male workers nurture the hope that something better may come along. As Ellis (1984: 41) remarked, 'If you didn't have your dreams you'd be nothing—you'd be a zombie, wouldn't you?' The fantasies are remarkably stable over time: to own a farm, a small business, to be involved in professional sports, market gardening, forms of contracting, to win the lottery (Aronowitz 1973: 39; Busch 1984: 54,81; Sennett and Cobb 1977: 225). Only 40 per cent of Chamberlain's (1983: 47, Table 3.5) sample of 110 working-class respondents said they were not interested in owning a small business, and a substantial proportion had tried. But Sennett and Cobb have suggested that reality has impinged even on such dreams. In 1870, 41 per cent of the employed white population of the United States was self-employed. By 1940 that had dropped to 18 per cent and had fallen to half that again by 1967.

The results of two occupational status studies in the United States in 1947 and 1963 reproduced in Sennett and Cobb (1977: 221-5), revealed first that rankings of occupations had changed little over the sixteen-year period and second that respondents most valued those jobs which endowed the greatest autonomy; a member of the board of a large company ranked lower than a lawyer, dentist or academic, and bankers came even further down the list; a large factory owner didn't make it into the top 30; an academic had more prestige than a mayor, a scientist more than a member of Congress. Similarly, Congalton's (1969) study of social status in Australia revealed that doctors, professors, solicitors, architects and engineers were all ranked higher than any other occupation. Daniel's (1983) study corroborated Congalton's in finding that the professions were the most valued occupations.[4]

Sennett and Cobb argued that in the professions working-class men see other men enjoying work, with a high degree of autonomy, expressing their individuality and commanding respect. They suggested that workers increasingly see the professions as avenues of escape, principally (though not solely) for their (male) children.[5] As Bruce Humphries (1984: 73) said: 'I wouldn't like to see my children labour for the rest of their life, not like I've had to ... If I had a choice I'd like them to be maybe, a lawyer, or something like that ...' (See also LeFevre 1975: 16) The sacrifices made to this end are not all hidden, nor the costs all psychic. Peter Raftopoulos (1984: 50) a porter, talked of how his life had changed in order to improve the chances of his children:

> I worked very hard doing many hours overtime and weekend work to build a house for my family. In 1970, just as I had completed my house—at the age of 45—I thought it would be better for my children, who were twelve

and sixteen, to move to the city where they could get a better education. This could help them become what I did not have the opportunity to become.

There are two forces at work here. One is the desire to 'live through one's children', the other to give meaning and dignity to what is meaningless and subhuman by choosing the indignity for the good of one's family. The latter is more often documented than the former, suggesting that it may be more frequent, but clearly, the two are not incompatible and in fact probably occur together. Frequently articulated is the viewpoint of Ellis (1984: 38): 'For thirteen years I have dedicated myself to doing this work because my family was gaining out of it, getting the money to live on, and that's why I think a lot of the job.' (see also LeFevre 1975: 22; Seidler 1985: 157) The worker's male identity is integrally tied to his capacity to bring home a 'decent' or 'living' wage (Livingstone and Luxton 1989). The result, as Tolson (1977: 68) correctly indicated, is that labouring men work for others, partly on the condition that the others, the wife and children, do not challenge the men's right to suffer on their behalf.

If he is not to fail, a working-class man must attain a steady job, education for the children, a home for the family and freedom from the threat of poverty (Kleinberg 1979, 126). As a survival strategy for males, it seems to have quite a lot going for it: meaning is given to work, some dignity is wrestled from the world of pain and, at the same time, control over property, income and what it can buy—one of the material bases of patriarchy (Secombe 1980, 63)—is assured. The circle is closed. The family-household gives meaning to the paid work which pays (a lot of) the money costs of its material reproduction. The trouble is that the strategy doesn't work. It is both internally contradictory and runs counter to some very strong tendencies which are changing the nature of the family-household, not the least of which is the more and more frequently expressed desire of fathers to spend more time with their children. Despite this desire, working fathers still spend very little time with their children—between 30 and 60 minutes on a weekday (Horin 1990a: 13).

The internal contradictions of patriarchal power based on the breadwinner who gives himself to his family through his wage are twofold. On the one hand the working-class patriarch is sacrificing himself so that his children will not be like him. This involves a denigration of the self before family household members: 'Yes, I want my kid to look at me and say, "Dad you're a nice guy, but you're a fuckin' dummy". Hell yes, I want my kid to tell me that he's not [going] to be like me ... ' (LeFevre 1975: 22)

Self-denigration is probably not a stable basis for the maintenance of patriarchal authority. The tragedy of sacrifice as love is that it is extraordinarily difficult to reciprocate—'after all, who wants to be the grateful recipient of someone else's martyrdom?' (Cartledge 1983: 169). If the children do succeed in formally educating themselves, they find it difficult to be grateful, for the sacrifice is seen as an attempt by the parents to

manipulate and control them. Not only is ingratitude a frequent response but, as Weissman (1977: 199) said of his father: 'He was proud that a son of his had made it ... but he couldn't handle feeling inferior.' It is not only that the patriarch may feel inferior at moments of interaction with his children, but it may make him wonder anew about his own life. Dubi (1975: 450) said of his son: 'Yeah, we're proud of Len ... At least he's doing something. What have I done in my 40 years of work? I led a useless life. Here I am almost 60 years old and I don't have anything to show for it ... We're a couple of dummies. We worked all our lives and we have nothing.'

If, on the other hand, the child is not successful, then the father has sacrificed himself in vain. A cleaner (Hoellen 1975: 124) explained: 'I got a boy married ... he's twenty, going on twenty-one. He was an honour student in math. I wanted him to go to IIT. He ran off and got married. A kid'll do what he wants to do. He hurt us real bad.'[6]

One final problem with dignity achieved through self-sacrifice is that it sometimes becomes inverted. The family-household, rather than being a motivation and reward for a lifetime of work, is sometimes seen as an imposition, a millstone, an impediment to some imagined better future. The son of a carpet-layer said of his father: 'He would come home in the evening and be all tied up in self-hatred and hatred towards us, whom he saw as the reason he had to go through all this shit.' (Weissman 1977: 198) And a welder (Greaves 1984: 54) said: 'I'd like to have had a bit of land, but that's gone beyond me now ... I wouldn't like to put a rope like that around my family's neck.' Supporting the family-household can both create resentments and justify, usually retrospectively, the missing of (real or imagined) opportunities.

But there is still more to the complex set of social relations subsumed by the rubric 'working for the family'. As well as suggesting inter-generational mobility as an aim and justification for work, another strand linking work, the family and sacrifice is the issue of job-related class struggle. A vehicle builder explained to Tracy (1983: 65): 'when these children grow up and come to work and find their fathers have left them the same slavery, the same rotten conditions, they won't respect them, they will curse them.' The family-household may also be an institution through which class consciousness is nurtured and transmitted. Arthur Pauly (1984: 66), a waterside worker, said of his family and trade unions: 'I've got a picture up of John Hymen, who was president of the Eight Hour Day Committee and the Victorian Trades Hall Council. He was my mother's father. So, from a family point of view, the question of unionism isn't something I'd heard from other people.' Nor is this class conscientisation only inter-generational. Keddle (1980: 32–3), in his study of 400 male manual workers in Ontario, found that the class background of the wives of the workers had a substantial effect on the men's class identification and political attitudes.

Men, militancy and the family-household

The relationship between the establishment of a long term heterosexual family-household and the behaviour of men at work is a complex and mediated one. Certainly working-class men perceive that the option to 'split' when problems of power and authority erupt on the job, is removed. 'When I was single, I could quit, just split ... Now I'm married and I got two kids' (LeFevre 1975: 16). As Len Wells, a laboratory worker explained, 'You know you've got to go there five days a week for 50 years of your life. This is the worst part of work.' (Hunt 1980: 128) 'Moving on' is a favourite option when trouble presents itself in a particular work situation. Young Mat King (1984: 78) has had 'about ten different jobs' that 'usually last a few months each'. It is a mechanism not only for staying 'out of trouble', but also for gaining that nebulous, ill-defined and, in a shrinking job market, increasingly necessary thing called 'experience'. Thomas Amuketi has a keen appreciation of its significance. He said (Amuketi 1984: 20): 'I've tried for many jobs. I even went to Rotorua at one stage, ready to shift house there. I went straight from college into the mines, and when that closed down it was the only experience I'd ever had. Often I found that was the first question ... Many jobs I could've got if I'd said to them, "Well, I've done this and I've done that" '.

But most young men of King's age know that this facility is temporary and the reduction in options that comes with the establishment of a family-household is not strange, unknown or unanticipated. Alistair Loughton (1984: 51), a labourer in a market garden, commented: 'I don't like to be tied down in one spot. At the moment I'm only young, and it's not as though I have any real responsibility, like mortgages or loans and that. I'm free. But if I had a family or anything, I'd have to stick in a job even if it was killing me slowly. I'd hate to get in that situation, but there must be a lot of people in that.'

Other options, such as personal confrontation and absenteeism, are also perceived to be reduced for family men, even by those who are still single:

> I know people that have got young families and it's real tough on them, they have to do all the overtime they can. They can't get out. They don't buy their lunch at work, they bring sandwiches all the time ... when the boss comes around, you get up slow, but they jump, because they realise what their job means to them. (King 1984: 80; see also LeFevre 1975: 17)

According to John Dale (1984: 36), a labourer in a demolition gang, a couple of months off on the dole would be something that he wouldn't mind, but he explained, with five children he 'has to be working'. He added: 'Today, I just can't afford to take a day off, can't afford to see a doctor, just in case he does put you off work. Well you can't afford to be off on a sickness benefit. I've even asked to go back to work when I've been injured.'

Ehrenreich (1983: 2–3) has observed that 'in a purely economic sense, women need men more than the other way round', but in exercising the power created by that need which in turn is generated by patriarchal capitalism, men experience what could be described as entrapment: 'There's not a married man who doesn't have bills. And the company keeps it like that so there's no way out. You're stuck for life.' (vehicle builder in Garson 1975: 91–2)

Ehrenreich (1983: 11) is surprised that men have for so long and so reliably adhered to what she called the 'breadwinner ethic'. She added: 'men still have the incentives to work and succeed at dreary and manifestly useless jobs, but not necessarily to work for others' (1983: 12). This is, as we have seen, incorrect. 'Shit work for shit money' has been carried out so reliably and for so long precisely 'for others', even when 'the others' would rather it wasn't. A good wage is not only the measure of a man's ability as a worker, but the importance of the wage is represented by his home. A male worker measures his own worth and that of his mates by an ability to provide for the family. Men who cannot support their families are pitied or scorned and feel themselves to be failures (Luxton 1980: 45, 46; Kleinberg 1979: 127).

Barrett (1980: 216) observed that it 'is not self-evident that the role of the "breadwinner" is intrinsically a desirable one' and her discussion of women's oppression and the family-household (1980: 187–216), concluded: 'The question as to who benefits from the family-household in contemporary capitalism has, then, no very clear answer.' (The nature of 'breadwinning' and its relationship to the family-household is discussed further in Chapter 3.) However, she was confident about the nature and direction of the relationship between the family-household and job-related class struggle. The family-household system 'maximises motivation to work on the part of the wage labourer and reduces the likelihood of militancy that might jeopardise the maintenance of non-labouring household members. The tendency of the family-household system is to encourage conservatism and militate against protest' (1980: 212–16)[7]. Mark Solomon (1984: 97), a scrap-metal smelter, said: 'just say that I got into a dispute at work and lost my job, well, then I've virtually lost everything. I'd lose my home and most of what I've got on time payment, they'd repossess.' And as a steelworker explained, if you lose your job, 'you lose your house, you lose your car, you lose your wife' (Livingstone and Luxton 1989). In Luxton's (1980: 66–7) view, leaving, arriving late, absenteeism or slacking directly threaten the household by threatening the wage. It is, she says, in wives' interests to try to prevent their men from taking time off. And, as a result, some see their wives as constantly nagging. Where men work, how long and for how much is affected by their family responsibilities (as we shall see in Chapter 3).

The discussion of family-household commitments thus far has explicitly developed the view that these constrain the ability of labouring men to resist or avoid management imperatives by limiting their recourse to options such

as physical aggression, time banditry and militancy. But in the case of the last-mentioned, this view is at least partial and possibly inaccurate. In Williams' (1981) study, more married men, particularly men with young children, were 'aggro' toward the company than single men, for whom the option to leave remained open (Williams 1981: 103). As a Kelvinator shop steward commented: 'If they're buying a house they're easier to organise— then they can see the point.' (Game and Pringle 1983: 40)

It is not simply the case that those with families must, in the words of Connick (1984: 94) 'stay where they are until the right thing comes up'. Such a view allocates to the family-household a determining but static role in relation to job-derived class action. The British miners' strike in 1984 vividly affirmed the significance of communities, organically interrelated households,[8] in class struggle, such that it makes sense to see one aspect of working-class action as being 'between households and capital' (Armstrong and Armstrong 1983: 11).

But the relation between the household and workplace militancy has an intimacy even beyond that suggested by 'households versus capital', one which hinges on the notion of 'manliness'. If manliness is about confidence and dominance, one way to prove it is in struggle, and not to struggle is to show that 'you're not a man'. This was driven home to me when I listened to a miner's wife scream at her soon to be retrenched husband, 'Why don't you *do* something, you useless bastard'. That man knew with a hideous clarity that he would lose both his job and his membership of this family-household.

Unreal men, sex and love

The constant humiliation which must be accepted and the upfront aggra-vation occasionally offered at work both seem quite 'unreal' to most men, however. They know there is more to them than what is expressed on the job. Tolson (1977: 71) recorded a worker saying, 'People say: "Bloody hard him, he's rough and ready", and all that. I don't think I am.' Bosses however *are*, as Norm Pattinson (1984: 15) knew from a lifetime in the mines: 'by Christ they love an argument. ... Yes, they hate to see the worker getting up. I always used to tell them, but I don't bother them now. I'm sick and tired of talking. They're a hard mob [those] bastards, hard men.'

The family-household, a place which is defined by men as not-work, and the significance of its existence separate and distinctly different from the paid workplace, was captured by a woman steelworker who commented:

> The men at Stelco whose every second word is fuck ... you meet them on
> the street with their families and a bad word would never cross their lips ...
> For them it's like having two personalities. Like Jekyll and Hyde sort of
> thing ... At work they swear, they throw their garbage on the floor. I'm
> sure they don't do that at home ... I could just see them go home and be

you know, straight and narrow, very serious with their wives. (Livingstone
and Luxton 1989)

This separate place is where a man is himself,[9] where he is worthy,
where he does not have to be aggressive, where he does not have to watch
his back. The family-household is where the labouring man knows 'that
there was somebody who was going to be on my side' (Holloway 1983:
133). It is that place in which 'the real me who cares, the real me who is
sensitive, becomes a vulnerable creature' (Sennett and Cobb 1977: 216).
According to Rubin (1985: 68, 159) 'over and over, men spoke about the
fact that a woman's friendship provides the nurturance and intimacy not
generally available in their relations with men'. When asked to explain their
inability to speak of personal matters with their mates, many acknowledged
that they couldn't share the pain and thus risk showing another man their
vulnerability.

When married men named anyone as their best friend, it was most often
their wife, 'another mother who will intuit his need, his fear, his loneliness'
(Rubin 1985: 64, 136, 139). Marriage is certainly a central goal for young
working men. Jorgensen (1984: 108) commented, 'I want to get married
sometime and I want it to be a long, long lifetime of love and that. I would
like a good wife, just a loving woman. Really, I just want to be, you know,
an average family man—a family, a house, a car and all that.' And Steve,
a factory worker, explained to Porter (1983: 76): 'Getting married was the
turning point in my life—and when we had the family. The family is more
important than work. But they go side by side.'

Game and Pringle (1983: 22–3) suggested that one of the ways that
men's sense of power and control is maintained is through the power
relation in the sexual division of labour in the household. In fact, it is not
only the sexual division of labour, but sex itself, that is depended upon to
construct and sustain male identity. In lovemaking, masculinity is asserted
and powerfully reflected back (Eichenbaum and Orbach 1984: 131), even
when, perhaps, men may wish it wasn't (see Segal 1990: 212-13). In the
face of an uncompromising labour regime, the sex act assumes a consider-
able importance. Because capital does not directly control masculine
sexuality, this is one of the few areas left to working men which they can
develop and express. As labour has been steadily degraded by capitalism,
sex has become increasingly important. In sex, male workers have in-
creasingly sought solace, release and the assertion of power. Sex is often the
one way a man's emotional control is shaken, where he can contact and
express his deeper feelings (Luxton 1980: 61; Rubin 1985: 153; see also
Weissman 1977: 191; Lippert 1977: 211).

Lippert (1977: 212) has written that sex becomes central to heterosexual
power relations when coupled with the daily necessity to escape from work
to return to work, for 'emotional involvement sustains us mentally just as
the meals we eat' (Eichenbaum and Orbach 1984: 23).[10] As Saunders (1983:
98) has indicated, this has resulted in a widespread acceptance of the

notions that men need sex in a way that women do not, and both inside and outside marriage, should pay for it (Oakley 1985: 243). According to Ehrenreich (1983: 10), 'Men need marriage more than women do' and develop intense dependency despite the power that accrues to them through a segmented and differentially rewarded labour market.

Falling in love, as Goodison (1983: 63) has revealed, is a 'stratagem for survival' and being in love is a 'process of repair to low self esteem' (Eichenbaum and Orbach 1984: 134). Getting there, however, is a process fraught with danger. Men understand that their chance to sacrifice themselves for their families depends on their standing in the larger world. That is, the issues of self-validation against other men arise prior to and remain throughout the heterosexual relationship.[11] The ability to earn money gains the man the possibility of sacrifice, but his individuality, so threatened and absent at work and so much in need of nurturance and support, must somehow win him love.

Roberts (1978: 82–3) has suggested that working-class teenagers are 'less likely to "play the market"' and that it is not unusual for working-class boys to experience 'only one serious [heterosexual] relationship'. The heterosexual marketplace is divided by class, and within class, like the labour market, by craft, skill, income, age, ethnicity and physicality. Men think women are attracted to their confidence in themselves and competence in the world. Men labouring under capitalism are acutely aware that they do not possess the things that permit individuation, that allow such self-assurance.

Observation and experience have led men to conclude that the men most sought after by women are those who are most successful. Phylis Chesler (1978: 233) has written unequivocally: 'Of course economically richer and more powerful men do command more sexual attention more easily and for a longer period of time, than economically poorer men do.' *Cosmo* columnist Patricia Bernstein (1989: 114) advised succinctly: 'I know your grandmother used to tell you "It's just as easy to fall in love with a rich man as a poor one, dear", but the fact is, it isn't ... Still, I do recommend you look for a man who's at least solvent. If, at the age of 30, he's still changing careers every six months tell him to come back and see you when he grows up.' Love is worthier when it comes from a person who is worth more. One of the less worthy, referred to by Ehrenreich and English (1979: 284) as 'the potential "losers" in the sexual free marketplace', explained of the lonely hearts columns: 'I find a lot of the ads that women put in intimidating because so many of them say that you must be professional, must love your work, must be financially secure. It just makes me want to go, "Fuck you lady".' (Sean K. in Raphael 1988: 162–3).

Given the importance of home and love in sustaining/creating 'real' identity, the finding of Pietropinto and Simenaur (1977: 204) from their study of over 4 000 American men is easy to understand. 'While men chose love over sex as what they want most from women, even more men spoke

of companionship and home life as their prime desires ... They wanted most of all a companion with whom they could be honest, so that she would accept a man with all his inadequacies and foibles.'[12] The study also revealed that nearly three-quarters of the men most wanted a long-term relationship with a woman who was concerned for their needs, sincere and affectionate (1977: 220). The authors concluded (1977: 229): 'As our study has shown, men still desire marriage as the ideal state, do not think highly of endless casual affairs, and have never really accepted the concept of recreational sex for women whom they care about.'

Sex derives great importance within the context of the family-household, through the affirmation of self-worth that it signifies. Twenty per cent of Pietropinto and Simenaur's sample thought it was *the* most important pleasure in life; and more interestingly, 23 per cent of the blue-collar workers and 30 per cent of those with less than high school graduation gave it that importance (1977: Appendix, Table 2).

That men tend to react with anger, pain, confusion and violence in the face of female sexual expression outside the relationship they inhabit has been 'explained' by the suggestion that their 'property rights' have been violated. Perhaps it is more (or at least as well) that men react this way because the self-worth demonstrated and reconstructed through sex is threatened; someone else is worthier, and thus they are diminished. Chodorow (1978: 193) has remarked on the 'primacy and exclusivity' of men's emotional relationship to women; when dignity has been achieved with such difficulty, and remains so precariously dependent upon the feelings of one person, its diminution is resisted strongly: 'If you express yourself emotionally and sexually with only one person year after year after year, if that one person becomes the exclusive repository for all your insecurities and hang-ups and need for reassurance—then dependence becomes very real indeed, and "unfaithfulness" of one partner threatens the whole world of the other.' (Miles 1973)

In addition, such an event opens up the possibility of further 'betrayal', that is the transmission to another man of knowledge of (and hence power over) the secret 'real' self exhibited and constructed only inside the zone of intimacy within the non-work sphere. Privacy, a characteristic which differentiates the world of the family-household from the world of work, means that what happens should remain locked up there just as the problems and issues of the workplace remain at work (Tolson 1977: 68). Home for the male miners studied by Hunt (1980) was a place of relaxation, and appeared in workplace conversation mainly as the place of sexual exploits, as a chance to tease their workmates and as a way of affirming masculinity. Other aspects of the family-household were mainly absent from both thought and speech.

Despite their firmly held conviction that the family-household should be a protection against the world of work, there is some evidence to suggest that men are reluctant to discuss the world of paid employment with the

women with whom they live. This may be because some men do not wish to disturb the domestic realm, to ensure that it remains as completely other to work as they can make it. 'I try not to take this home with me. I don't tell her anything about it. It'll cause her to worry. There's nothing I can do about it.' (Dubi 1975: 446) It is part of basic survival tactics to keep the two worlds apart. As Luxton (1987: 170) has explained, since work time is spent for, controlled by and at the service of bosses, it is segregated from 'real life' which is what happens in 'free' time.

This not only suggests a reluctance to disturb the domestic realm, but also a genuine fear of discussing one's powerlessness in the face of workplace problems. It may well be, too, that the work is so repetitive and socially isolated that quite literally 'nothing happens'. 'What's there to say? A car comes, I weld it; a car comes, I weld it; a car comes, I weld it. One hundred and one times an hour.' (vehicle builder in Garson 1975: 88). This man's wife said, 'He doesn't say what he does. Only if something happened like "My hair caught fire" or "Something fell in my face".' (1975: 88). A machinist told Garson 'You know, I don't think even my wife knows what I *do* there, except that I clock in and get tired. How can you explain this stuff?' Garson added that the problem is not that the work is too complicated or too simple to describe, but that there is no common imagery that makes unpaid and paid work mutually intelligible. This strategic separation also means that family matters are usually considered to be too private to be discussed at work (Leighton 1981: 58). Some of the consequences of this are addressed in later chapters.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to demonstrate that it is not simply the case, as some have suggested, that 'the consciousness formed outside the workplace is brought into the workplace' (Baxandall et al. 1976: 2). Rather, the consciousness of male labourers is crucially formed in the experience of the interaction between the family-household and workplace. As Petchesky (1978: 376) eloquently put it, 'work and the family ... are really intimately related modes that reverberate upon one another'. Paid workplaces, as represented here, are constructed to induce and reinforce feelings of stupidity, ignorance and powerlessness. In coping with this massive, sustained and pervasive onslaught on their workplace selves, labouring men develop and utilise a set of strategies: escape, game-playing, displaced violence, solidarity and organised resistance; and a set of personal attributes with which to confront the world of wages.

The coping strategies devolve around finding and ensuring nurturance, comfort and meaning from and within the family-household, which is partially sustained by the male wage. The value of the wage is fought over, sometimes maintained and occasionally increased, often using the rules of mateship and its more organised expressions. Both locations reinforce

firmly entrenched ideas of masculinity and its appropriate presentation and expression.

In addition, the relation between the two locations is mediated by the body of the male worker, not only in the maintenance of its abilities, but in the effects of its maturation. The socially defined masculinity which it carries changes too, but that connection remains as unclear as it is unstudied. Black and Coward's claim (in Pringle 1988: 84) that 'men are sustained at the centre of the stage precisely because they can be "people" and do not have to represent their masculinity to themselves' is simply not true. Working-class men sustain themselves in the knowledge that they are, before all else, men. The question of their masculinity is constantly confronting them, constantly being tested, constantly being found inadequate. Perhaps it is only the rich who can be 'people'.

In seeking to sustain masculinity, which is at least as much undermined in the workplace as it is created there, labouring men develop an intense emotional dependency on the family-household, particularly on its central figure, which in turn threatens the masculinity (re)constructed there. This dependency is recognised as being a necessary precondition for continuous engagement in the world of work, which is entered in order that the means for continual participation in it can be obtained.

Labouring men maintain a separation between the two locations, each of which is a condition of the reproduction of the other, precisely in order to be able to move from one to the other, for each place in its different ways promises dignity and self-worth and at the same time makes their attainment largely impossible. But, as we shall see, in the failure to connect them, labouring men guarantee that the conditions of their own subordination will continue.