CHAPTER VIII
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study was undertaken as a modest attempt to contribute to the understanding of the social background of the industrial workers in Bangladesh, their commitment to industrial work and acceptance of the industrial way of life. The theoretical backdrop of the present study was provided by the widely-held proposition among social scientists that, the introduction of the modern factory system entails a sharp social and cultural differentiation in the traditional social systems of the developing societies and hence, the recruits to industry in such societies may find it difficult to conform to the demands generated by the industrial system. The study also examines the related proposition that industrial workers in developing countries are less committed to industry than their counterparts in industrially advanced countries.

I am aware that the two factories selected for this study can not be claimed to represent the industrial system in Bangladesh. I, however, hope that the observations and conclusions offered here will help interested scholars and practitioners in the process of understanding the "Bangladesh industrial worker".
Workers' social characteristics:

This study shows that industrial workers are neither too young nor too old. The majority of them fall in the age group of 25 to 40 years. However, a look at their age at the time of entering industrial employment shows that most of the workers entered the factory at a young age. Most of them are married, having on the average four children. But only a few of the workers have earning wives and children. Most of the workers are migrants from rural areas and most of them are living in factory areas away from their family members. It seems that, the fact of living with or away from the family members depends significantly on the housing facilities available to workers.

The majority of the workers come from families pursuing agriculture or other rural occupations. However, though the experience of factory work is new to most of the workers, some of them have had the experience of urban employment before entering the present factory. Interestingly enough, an overwhelming majority of the workers are literate and most have had a moderate education. Most of the workers maintain a marginal living with their income. Very few of them can save money for the future. Although not many workers have extra sources of income, there is a tendency among most of them to raise their economic position by pursuing additional sources of income.
Recruitment and commitment of the workers:— Although I could not obtain enough information to compare the factory workforce with the general population of the country in terms of their social characteristics, my data lead me to hazard the proposition that industry in Bangladesh is socially selective in recruiting workers. The factories employ, typically younger, more educated workers with some amount of previous work experience. Also, the factories seem to attract more people from the surrounding districts than people from distant areas. In this sense, geographical mobility of the workers seems to be restricted to short distances. This relatively low geographical mobility among workers for factory employment may be partly the result of the absence of formal selection procedures in recruitment. Most of the workers are still recruited through the use of informal channels of communication wherein social ties like kinship, friendship and neighbourhood play a major role. Workers, on their part, do not plan their careers in advance. Poverty and scarcity of jobs leave very little scope for them to select jobs.

However, those who enter factory jobs tend to show a relatively high degree of commitment to industry. My six-item index of commitment shows that the majority of the workers are either highly or moderately committed to
industrial occupation. They have a definite preference for industrial occupation over other occupations. Given a choice, they would prefer jobs in the factory or urban occupations for their livelihood. The majority of them intend to retain their factory jobs. Although a significant proportion of the workers are still in temporary jobs, they have held on to such jobs long enough to feel committed to industrial employment. They also regard their status as at least to the status of comparable urban and rural occupations. They also nurse a high degree of occupational aspiration for themselves as well as for their children. Although most of the migrant workers still have links with their villages, such links are not vital to their social and economic existence. Not many workers have permanent property links with the village. A significant proportion of the migrant workers go to their native places to meet periodical social obligations. It seems that, if adequate housing facilities are provided to them, they will substantially reduce their links with the villages.

An examination of the influence of socio-personal factors on workers' commitment shows that factors like age, rural-urban background, residential status, occupational background, length of service, nature of employment, family attachment and
education have a significant influence on workers' commitment to industrial occupation. However, factors like marital status and dependency load seem to be unrelated to workers' commitment. Typically, workers with higher age, urban origin, non-agricultural background, relatively longer industrial experience, permanent job status are more committed than others. Similarly, workers living with their family members are more committed than those who are living away from their family members. Again, workers with permanent residential status in the city are more committed than those living temporarily in cities and the village-based workers. It is noteworthy that literacy and education have a negative bearing on workers' commitment to industrial occupation. Illiterate and less educated workers seem to be more committed than the literate and more educated workers. This may be because of the fact that, in a society like Bangladesh literate and educated people may find other urban jobs with higher status and greater comfort in comparison with factory jobs and accordingly, show a greater inclination for the other jobs.

**Work situation and conditions of employment:** This study reveals that the majority of the workers like their particular jobs and most of them find their jobs either equally or more
interesting as compared with other occupations at comparable social levels. Almost all the workers in the sample get along well with their co-workers. This friendly relationship among workers on the shop floor is also extended to their extra-factory activities. Most of the workers meet their co-workers outside the factory and help each other in different respects. Workers also like their supervisors. Supervisors' friendly and co-operative behaviour is stated to be the main reason in this respect. However, relatively more workers have a negative attitude towards their management. Management's indifferent attitude in solving workers' problems and corrupt practices (as viewed by workers) seem to be the main factors contributing to such negative attitude towards the management. On the whole, workers feel that management does not give enough importance to workers' grievances.

An analysis of the workers' expectation from the factory employment reveals that workers generally look for more wages, better promotional opportunities, job security, and better housing and other facilities. They give lower priority to aspects like working conditions, freedom in work, supervision and the work group. This shows that workers generally hold an instrumental orientation to their work. The analysis of workers' satisfaction with the various job aspects shows that,
workers' are generally satisfied with working conditions, freedom in work and supervision. They are also more or less satisfied with matters such as opportunity for advancement and job security. But they are grossly dissatisfied with their wages, and housing and other facilities provided by the factory. The majority of the workers are highly satisfied with their co-workers. This friendly and cordial relationship among the workers within and outside the factory seems to be one of the main reasons for workers' adjustment to the factory system.

Trade Unionism among workers: The analysis of workers' interest and involvement in trade union activities shows that most of the workers are trade union members and the majority of the members seem to like their union on the ground that they feel their union is the only instrument to fight for their rights and demands. They also take their union as the main agency to check malpractices among the managements. Their membership and perception about the usefulness of trade unions show that workers have a relatively high degree of interest in union. But this does not seem to generate their active participation in union activities. Though members pay their union subscription regularly, they are less particular in joining activities like attending meetings, organising workers.
Lack of time, doubt about the usefulness of such activities, inter-union rivalry and alleged corruption among union leaders are stated to be the main reasons for their relatively low involvement in union activities.

Workers' community involvement: The study of workers' community involvement shows a somewhat confusing picture in their commitment to industrial way of life. This study shows that workers, on the whole, show a relatively high degree of interest in community affairs in the sense that they express high concern over the problems of their community of residence. They seem to have accepted the values of urban life. This can be seen from their friendly association with community people, interest in discussing community problems, reading newspapers, aspiration for higher education and better economic prospects. While they accept the modern industrial values, most workers also retain some of the traditional values. They offer regular prayer. Most of them are religious minded. Some of them from informal associations comparable to the ones which are seen in traditional village societies. Although most of the workers have knowledge about and are members of some voluntary associations (regional, cultural, religious association) yet, a significant proportion of them do not participate in such associations. Lack of time happens to be one of the main
reasons for such non-participation.

However, the analysis of their (major) leisure time activities shows that a great majority of the workers generally pass their leisure time at home, by doing household works or other economic activities, or just by taking rest, sleeping, listening to radio, gossiping, offering prayers, reading books (including religious books), novels, etc. Most of their leisure time seems to be devoted to home and the family. It seems, they participate in other community activities only when they fulfil their obligations to the family and the home. This, rather suggests a relatively low degree of community involvement among the workers. Lack of time and opportunities, the nature of their household and family obligations seem to be the main constraints to their community involvement.

Considering all the aspects of the workers' extra-factory life, it seems safe to say that while they are more or less adjusted to the urban way of life, yet they have to go a long way to be fully absorbed into the urban-industrial society.

Implications for further Research

Owing to several constraints stated in the first chapter, I could not conduct this study according to the plan. To have a better idea about industrial workers' real situation in the country there is a need
need to cover more industries both in the public and the private sectors and large as well as small industries. More over, an extensively more intensive study (in case of small sample) would have helped me to better understand industrial workers' real situation in the country. But because of time and financial constraints this study could not fulfil this objective. Further more, for reasons stated earlier I could not use behavioural indices of commitment, like absenteeism, labour turnover, measures taken by factories for indiscipline on the part of workers, etc., which would have given more clear insight into the problem of workers' commitment to industry. In view of these drawbacks, the objectives of the study could be achieved to a limited extent. Inspite of all the drawbacks, I hope, this study will provide some useful information about and insights into the issues relating to industrial workers as well as the process of industrialisation in countries like Bangladesh.

Some Concluding Thoughts

Apart from undertaking the study for my Ph.D. thesis, I was interested in the Bangladesh industrial worker as a citizen. The questions I had in mind were: What is the industrial
workers' social, economic and political position vis-à-vis the rest of the society? What are his problems, hopes, aspirations, frustrations? To what extent does he possess the attributes generally associated with an ideal industrial worker in an industrially developed society? To what extent can we hold him responsible for the slow pace of industrialization in the country? To what extent does he represent the country's traditional culture? To what extent do the industrial workers constitute a "Working Class"? These were some of the questions that formed my general quest for understanding the industrial workers' situation in Bangladesh. This could have been better done by a large number of unstructured and intensive interviews covering various technologies, skills, regions and social strata.

I had, however, to plan in present study under limitations of time, resources and, overall, lack of experience in research. On scanning the relevant literature, I came to the conclusion that the commitment theory would be the most appropriate point of departure in this study. But, as I have stated in detail in the first chapter, I was left with extremely limited choice with regard to co-operation from employers and access to behavioural data. Hence, I had to use mostly attitudinal data. I used the conventional model of commitment, i.e., acceptance of industrial
occupation on a permanent basis, attitude to work, supervision, management, trade union, and acceptance of and satisfaction with the urban way of life.

The findings of this study are similar to those of Indian scholars. Like in India, there is considerable commitment among the workers so far as the permanent acceptance of and involvement in industrial occupation is concerned. On the other hand, my data suggest a relatively low commitment in respect of workers' satisfaction with the management and their involvement in the trade union and the urban community.

The term commitment, it seems, needs to be defined more carefully on some of the conventional measures. For instance, can we say that a worker who shows negative attitude to management is relatively less committed? Does a low degree of involvement in the union or in the community indicate low commitment if we find him (worker) busy in utilising his leisure time for some economic gains?

There are no simple answers to these questions. However, a worker's negative attitude towards the management or his low participation in union or community affairs may not necessarily imply his low commitment to industry. In fact, his dissatisfaction with the management may imply high commitment. As he
becomes a part of the industrial system, he is likely to place more demands on the management. If the management fails to comply with his demands, he is likely to be dissatisfied with it. Again, his low participation in union activities cannot always be taken as the basis for his low commitment. Low participation in union is common all over the world. Even workers in highly industrialized societies are reported to be less involved in union affairs. Moreover, if low participation is due to the union's inaction or corruption, it is not necessarily an indicator of low commitment. Similarly, a worker may be preoccupied with activities involving his familial and economic obligations that he may hardly spare time to participate in all the community affairs. Thus, his low participation in the community does not necessarily mean his low commitment to industry. Besides being an integral part of the total industrial system, a committed worker is also supposed to be rational in his judgement, hopes and aspirations. He is supposed to have a well defined conception of what is good and what is bad in his work and life.

Unfortunately, researchers on industrial workers, so far, have attached little significance to these aspects of commitment. Commitment needs to be defined more precisely in a
broader perspective. It should be viewed and studied in the context of the events and processes in the larger society. Commitment of any group (such as workers) should be studied in relation to the culture of commitment among other sections of the society (such as managers, bureaucrats, entrepreneurs). There is, therefore, a need for a well defined concept as well as an effective method to study commitment (Sheth, 1971, 1977; Sangupta, 1975). Recent efforts in this direction by Holmstrom (1976) and Uma Ramaswamy (1979) should provide valuable leadership to scholars interested in this field of sociological research.