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Volume 6 Issue 1: Editorial

Sarah Attfield, University of Technology Sydney

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This issue marks the beginning of a new chapter for the *Journal of Working-Class Studies* as we move the Journal to a new platform hosted by the University of Wyoming. Thanks to the work of Digital Scholarship Librarian Chealsye Bowley and the broader team there, we are now bedded into the Open Journals System. This move will improve a number of aspects of the Journal, particularly around searchability and each article now has its own Digital Object Identifier (DOI), which is a unique identifier that will make the articles easy to find on the internet (regardless of which website they may be linked to). With this move we have also formalised the copyright declarations for each article, confirming that authors retain copyright of their work, but that these are also broadly available via the Creative Commons licence that ensures access without commercial gain.

We would like to thank the Working-Class Studies Association past President, Scott Henkel for initiating this move, and the WCSA executive and others who have been part of the negotiations, and thank the wonderful librarians at the University of Wyoming for sharing their skills and facilitating the move. We remain committed to the open access and editorially independent nature of this Journal, and this new home will help us to maintain this commitment. We also remain committed to accessibility, with the 'new home', as before, deliberately minimalist - to allow for accessibility by people on a variety of internet connections, digital set ups, various stages of decay/decaying IT, but also for screen readers, colour sensitivities and physical accessibility requirements.

There are a wide range of topics among the papers included in this un-themed issue, all of which show the variety of writing and scholarship within the field of working-class studies. The issue opens with Karen Bell and Gnisha Bevan's study of the attitudes of working-class interview subjects towards the Green New Deal. In 'The Failure of Lifestyle Environmentalism and the Promise of the Green New Deal for Working-Class People' they argue that working-class people *are* concerned with the environment and the impacts of climate change, but are often unsure of the particulars of the various versions of Green New Deals as presented by politicians.

Amanda M. McDougald Scott follows with 'Benefits for Child Care Workers: How the State Could Help through a Medicaid Waiver', which is an analysis of conditions faced by child care workers in the US, and a lack of decent health care for many child care workers due to inadequate health insurance. McDougald Scott presents some recommendations for improvements based on her research into the sector and knowledge of State legislation, and demonstrates the importance for health benefits for the wellbeing of child care workers. This article throws light on the large inequities in health care provision in the United States.

In 'The (Un)Making of a Worker Poet: The Case of Md Mukul Hossine and Migrant Worker Writings in Singapore' Luka Lei Zhang discusses the Singaporean migrant worker poet Md Mukul Hossine and outlines the ways that Mukul's initial success as a poet in Singapore created complications for him as a working-class man. Zhang reveals the potential obstacles and damage faced by working-class migrant poets navigating the neo-liberal publishing world and the colonial power structures of publishing and establishment literary scenes.

The research and in instructional impact of books written by and about the experiences of working-class academics is explored by Jim Vander Putten in 'What's Worth Knowing? Research and Instructional Impacts of Books on Working-Class Academics'. Vander Putten looks at how and where such books are being read and used in undergraduate courses in the US and considers why books on class experience are not being set as course materials at the same volume as books on race and gender.

Jim Donnelly's personal essay follows – 'Giving Away the Game – Scattershot Notes on Social Class and Other Afflictions'. It offers an entertaining journey through some of his thoughts on being working class and the contradictions of aspiration for working-class people.

The final article is also a personal essay. Julie Kitzenberger's 'A Carpenter's Rainbow' is a touching tribute to her carpenter father and includes some images of his highly-skilled carpentry work. This short essay illustrates the importance of telling stories of working-class people and their work.

This issue also includes five books reviews, collated by book review editor Christie Launius. The books under review also span a wide range of topics; deindustrialisation in Scotland, union organising, a memoir of 1960s activism, autoethnographies of working-class women and a novel centred around temporary workers. Books for our readers to seek out!

We close this editorial by acknowledging that we are still living in 'COVID times', and that working-class people around the world are still suffering from the effects of the pandemic. We have seen the devastation in India as the virus ran through the population and the lack of vaccinations for many countries outside of the global north. Working-class people are still the ones working in occupations that leave them vulnerable to contracting the virus or losing their jobs when cities/regions are locked down. At the time of finalising this issue, we are again in lockdown here in Sydney.

We hope that the work that the scholars, activists, writers and artists continue to undertake as part of their commitment to working-class people will help to create awareness and lead to positive change for working-class people around the world. While the content in this issue was not necessarily directly influenced by the current situation, its context certainly was. As those of us with work feel the pressure to continue to muddle through with the fatigue of 'unprecedented times', those without work are in a position where stability sometimes seems unimaginable. In solidarity, together, we give each other comfort and hope.

Please, reader, know that no matter your circumstances you are not alone. If you're in need of help, please reach out. A great place to start is https://checkpointorg.com/global/

The Failure of Lifestyle Environmentalism and the Promise of the Green New Deal for Working-Class People

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Abstract

There is an urgent need to address a range of environmental issues, including climate change, but the policies enacted to date have usually done nothing to address class inequities and have often led to increased working-class disadvantage. The causes of the climate and other environmental crises have often been located in problematic individual lifestyles, with little recognition of the time, economic and health constraints that make it difficult for working-class people to adopt green lifestyles. The Green New Deal (GND) presented an alternative policy paradigm that argued for environmental policies that, rather than increasing the pressure on disadvantaged groups, would have co-benefits for working-class people, low-income groups and communities of colour. However, the policy did not lead to electoral success for the political leaders that proposed it, in the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK), due to opposition representations of it as costly and threatening to working-class jobs. We interviewed 40 working-class people in the UK to find out how much they knew about the Green New Deal, what they thought about it as an environmental policy and how they felt about environmentalism, more generally. Our research indicates that there was a general lack of knowledge about GND, but great enthusiasm about it once explained, albeit with reservations about its implementation and limitations. The GND has huge potential to benefit the lives of working-class people but, we conclude, more, and better, outreach is needed for people to understand its potential to improve their lives.

Key words

Environmental justice, environmental inequity, policy justice, sustainability, climate change

Introduction

There is a growing literature on the social impacts and inequality outcomes of climate change mitigation policies and other environmental policies (e.g. Bell, 2021; Bell 2020; Hallegatte & Rozenberg, 2017; Klinsky et al., 2016; Marcu & Vangenechten, 2018; Petrini et al. 2017). It is apparent that the needs of working-class people have often not been considered when developing these policies (Bell, 2020) with harmful consequences for their health, incomes and wellbeing (Bell, 2020). Climate policies can have negative impacts on people in different structural positions. For example, policies that support solar energy and bio-fuels might have impacts on food justice through the conversion of agricultural land, reducing the amount of food that can be produced and, thereby, potentially increasing global food prices (Scott & Smith, 2017). In the UK, subsidies for low-carbon technologies are often funded through increases in household electricity bills, disproportionally impacting on low-income groups (Oppenheim, 2016). Even the socially positive aspects of decarbonisation may not reach all

social groups. For example, many green jobs have not been available to working-class people (Mason, 2009; Stevis, 2013).

The 2015 Paris Agreement established an unprecedented international accord to hold average global warming to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change - UNFCCC, 2015). To meet the Paris Agreement targets, global carbon dioxide (CO_2) and other greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions need to be rapidly reduced and at least halved by 2050 (compared with 1990 levels) (IPCC, 2018). High Income Countries will need to do more, with reductions required of between 80% and 95% by 2050. This means that climate policy, in particular, is going to impact on all of us and it is essential that it does not further harm those who are already living in relatively precarious and difficult situations, i.e. many working-class people.

Climate change mitigation policies, and other environmental policies, have various types of co-impacts, both positive (co-benefits) and negative (adverse side effects) (Markkanen & Anger-Kraavi, 2019). Ideally, environmental policy would create many co-benefits and minimise the adverse impacts. Furthermore, to decarbonize effectively and rapidly, climate policies must avoid public resistance to transition policies. The introduction of increased fuel taxes and tolls as a climate mitigation strategy has already sparked social protests by working-class people in a number of European countries, most notably the Gilets Jaunes in France (Bennett, 2018; Reid, 2018).

Therefore, environmental policies should be evaluated, not only for their efficacy in alleviating an environmental problem in a particular place, but also for their impact on inequality and whether they will reduce or worsen the inequities already faced by working-class people. While there is a huge potential to develop climate and other environmental policy that provides co-benefits for working-class people, prior environmental policies have often failed to do this (Bell, 2020). In general, they have tended to fail, and make life more difficult for, working-class people. There are many examples of this 'policy injustice', including with regard to street cleaning services (Hastings 2007, 2009; Hastings et al. 2014; Bramley et al. 2012); pollution policy (Bell, 2020); energy policy (McCauley et al. 2013; Sovacool and Dworkin 2015; Jenkins 2018); waste policy (Bell 2020; Bell and Sweeting, 2013) and green jobs (Mason, 2009; Stevis, 2013), among other environmental policies. A first step in rectifying this injustice is to find out how working-class people view the policies on offer.

The UNFCCC (2019) has stated that, to meet the Paris Agreement targets, the needs, perspectives and ideas of all must be included in order to build solutions that are effective, just and sustainable. Yet, though citizen perspectives are considered to be important, their views on climate policy are still largely unheard by policy makers (Biddau et al., 2016) and this is particularly so in the case of working-class people and other disadvantaged social groups (Bell, 2021; Gay-Antaki, 2020; Phadke et al., 2015). Climate change responses have tended to be top-down, expert based and institutional (Copland, 2019; Kythreotis et al., 2019). Therefore, this research project asked working-class people what they think about the Green New Deal as an environmental policy and how this compared with some former policies, what we have termed here 'lifestyle environmentalism'.

Lifestyle environmentalism and Green New Deal as opposing policy paradigms

It has been noted that, over the past 40 years, environmental policy has often focused on the micro level (e.g. Jaeger, 2018; Johnston 2008; Maniates 2001; Szasz 2007). Individuals have been encouraged to modify their lifestyle and habits, while policies targeting environmental degradation at the point of production have been relatively few and far between. This has been described as the 'individualization' of environmentalism. Some suggest that this individualization has occurred in the interests of capital, with individual consumers, rather than producers, pinpointed as the source of environmental degradation and targeted as a focus for policy. Over time, we have seen that:

> …scrutinizing industrial emissions gave way to enjoining individuals to measure and reduce their 'carbon footprints;' in place of restricting chemical inputs to agriculture, we gained the option to buy organic and local; rather than reduce postconsumer waste at its source, that waste was commodified, and we were volunteered to sort it (Jaeger, 2018, p. 396).

In contrast, the Green New Deal is a policy paradigm that locates the solutions to environmental degradation in governmental policy and investment. The 'Green New Deal' as a concept is highly contested but all versions centre on the idea of a government-led, society-wide effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and shift rapidly to a less carbon intensive economy (Chatsky, 2020). The name, Green New Deal, refers back to the New Deal, a set of policies and projects initiated in the United States by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in response to the Great Depression.

A number of recent texts have been published on why we need a Green New Deal and what it could look like (e.g. Aronoff et al., 2019; Klein, 2019; Pettifor, 2019). Since 2007, there have been campaigns for a Green New Deal around the world, including the Sunrise Movement in the United States, the pact for a Green New Deal in Canada, the Green New Deal for Europe initiative; policy on a Green New Deal from the Green Party of England and Wales; and the campaign for Labour for a Green New Deal in the UK Labour Party. For example, the UK Green New Deal plan has been described as '…an economic cure for the triple crisis of inequality, climate breakdown and failed finance' (Elliott et al., 2019, p. 3). The Decarbonisation and Economic Strategy Bill (2019) was introduced to the UK parliament prior to the 2019 general election. Set down by Caroline Lucas MP and Clive Lewis MP, it was, in effect, the Green New Deal Bill. The targets were to '…reduce emissions, restore nature, reduce inequality and increase well-being' (Elliot et al., 2019, p.9).

In March 2019, Labour Party members launched 'Labour for a Green New Deal' as a grassroots campaign. Their aim was to get the party to adopt a radical Green New Deal as policy. It proposed a region-specific green jobs guarantee, an expansion of public ownership, democratic control of industry, and mass investment in public transport and other infrastructure (Taylor, 2019). A commitment to a Green New Deal was then passed at the Labour Party annual conference in September. This included setting a target to decarbonise by 2030 which was not then government policy (Harvey, 20190; Blakely, 2019).

The GND idea was also supported by a number of leading Democratic candidates for the 2020 presidential election in the United States (Cawthorne, 2019). In the United States Congress, there have been a pair of resolutions, House Resolution 109 and S. Res. 59, sponsored by Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) and Sen. Ed Markey (D-MA) (e.g. Ocasio-Cortez 2019). The resolutions presented to the US Congress do not specifically mention taxes, fossil fuel subsidies or changes to economic growth strategies, but do indicate a limited degree of nature-

based solutions through changes to agricultural practices (Congress Bill H.Res.109, 2019). Ocasio-Cortez has advocated 70% taxes on the wealthy to fund these investments (Choi, 2019). There has been consistently high support among Democrats for the proposal with Republicans generally tending to oppose (Gustafson et al. 2019). Biden's Climate Plan has incorporated some of the ideas of the GND, including funding for climate jobs, and considerations of equity and environmental justice (Weeden, 2021).

From 2008, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and other departments of the UN have also put forward a Global Green New Deal to create jobs in green industries (e.g. Barbier, 2009; UNDESA, 2009). In September, 2019, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) produced a report on Financing the Green New Deal (UNCTAD, 2019). It recommended granting debt relief and restructuring debt repayment in order to allow developing countries to pay for green policies.

In April 2020, the European Parliament called for inclusion of the European Green Deal in the recovery programme from the Covid-19 pandemic (European Parliament, 2020). This programme has been critiqued for inadequate and inappropriate financing (e.g. Gabor, 2020). An alternative proposal, the Green New Deal for Europe, includes a commitment to '…redress Europe's colonial past, providing reparations to communities that suffer from centuries of European pollution and ensuring that we do not outsource extraction to the global South' (Green New Deal for Europe, 2020, np).

In terms of public support for the GND, a You Gov Blue poll of US voters in March 2019 found that 59 percent supported it (Data for Progress, 2019). However, another poll by The *Washington Post* and the Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) (2019) found that 3 out of 4 United States citizens had heard little or nothing about the GND. Those who were most familiar with the plan were more likely to oppose it, with 6 out of 10 of those who had heard 'a good amount', opposing it. Among all adults, just 20 percent supported it and few wanted to be taxed to pay for it. Some of the negative views may have been influenced by former President Trump's negative discourse about GND and its potential cost (see, e.g., Friedman, 2019). There has not been similar polling in the UK, but the Labour Party's own survey found that, prior to the last election, at least two thirds of voters in their heartland marginal seats wanted radical government action on climate change (Labour Party, 2019). A number of UK campaign groups have more recently demanded that the government put protecting the environment at the heart of any post-Covid-19 economic stimulus package (BBC, 2021).

The Green New Deal has stimulated debate and contention with regard to the multiple interpretations and their differing underpinning values. There are controversies over different versions, especially in relation to the elimination of nuclear power, 100% renewable energy, and a jobs guarantee. Aronoff et al. (2019) for example, advocate a jobs guarantee because, as they point out, such jobs would be low carbon, socially useful work and there is no shortage of this kind of work to be done. Many people now do voluntary work with youth groups, in older people's homes, at food banks so, as they say 'we don't need to make work – we need to pay for it' (p.74). At the moment, this work cannot be done profitably and so, they argue, 'Eventually, doing meaningful, socially useful work will require a break with capitalism' (p.74). By contrast, Edward Barbier, who developed the 'Global Green New Deal' proposal for the United Nations Environment Programme in 2009, opposes a large-scale government jobs programme on the grounds that the government would be doing what the private sector and industry should be doing. He, instead, advocates carbon pricing, such as a carbon tax or

cap-and-trade system, to encourage private sector innovation and investments in clean energy (Lavelle, 2019).

From the right, GND is criticised for its cost implications and attaching other issues to it that are not seen to be relevant to climate change (Chatzky, 2020). Critiques from the left argue that the GND is no more than 'greenwashing' as it fails to tackle the real cause of the climate emergency - limitless growth and over consumption, driven by capitalism (e.g. Dyne and Grey, 2019). It has also been critiqued from the left in terms of particular versions lacking a commitment to real change, with minimal genuine financial commitments (e.g. the critique of the European Green Deal by Gabor, 2020; Varoufakis and Adler, 2020). It is argued that reforms within capitalism will be ineffective and an anti-capitalist position should be adopted which provides for levels of consumption based on social need (e.g. Graham, 2019).

There are particularly divisions around the question of 'economic growth'. The benefits of increased consumption are highlighted in the Green New Deal Group's original 2008 report:

> Any (Green New Deal) public spending should be targeted so that domestic companies benefit, and then the wages generated create further spending on consumer goods and services… (Green New Deal Group, 2008: 27).

This is unpalatable to those who stress the that the environment has been undermined by incessant economic growth. The likelihood of 'green-growth' as an effective strategy to transition to sustainability has been seriously questioned in a number of previous studies (e.g. Parrique et al., 2019; Sandberg et al., 2019; Hickel. and Kallis, 2020). However, degrowth can be politically difficult and Global South countries usually continue to look to economic growth as a mechanism for sustainable development (Stafford et al., 2020). The UK proposal for a GND (Elliott et al., 2019), the Green New Deal for Europe (2019) and the concepts of Doughnut Economics (Raworth, 2017) allow scope for particular types of economic growth without it being a key policy objective. Some are 'agnostic about economic growth' as advocated in the concept of 'doughnut economics' (Raworth, 2017), which aims to protect the environment and meet the needs of the worst off.

It has also been alleged that the GND, as proposed by the US Democrats and UK Labour Party, is '… a new form of colonialism' (Rehman, 2019, np.). It is argued, 'Britain is planning to go green through a new phase of resource and wealth extraction of countries in the global south' (Rehman, 2019, np.). Rehman states that this 'green colonialism' will continue to be organised around entrenched economic interests, who have already done so much damage to people and the environment in the pursuit of profit. They will just shift their focus from oil, gas and coal to the extraction of lithium, cobalt and nickel from the Global South.

Similarly, Kolinjivadi (2019, np) argues for a decolonial GND that should '… prioritise restructuring global trade relations and reversing the enormous imbalances of cultural, economic and political power between Western governments and the global South… As part of this transformation, it should also make provisions for reparations for colonial injustices'. In the same vein, Aronoff et al. (2019, p.18) argue that 'An *effective* Green New Deal is also a *radical* Green New Deal' (emphasis in the original). They advocate for 'millions of people' to be 'organizing, striking and marching, shaping politics and the economy from below' to achieve this. They critique the 'faux Green New Deal' (i.e. not the radical programme necessary) for using tax incentives and prices signals focussed solely on clean energy, where a radical GND would use public investment and also address other environmental and social

issues. The faux GND '…posits microeconomics as the solution to the climate crisis when what we really need is a new political economy' (p. 24).

A radical GND, therefore, has the potential to improve working-class lives in the High-Income Countries of the Global North, as well as the Global South. The research project engaged working-class interviewees in conversations about this possibility, gaining new insights into the potential and path to develop co-benefits from environmental policy.

Methodology

In this study we have used 'working-class' in the 'gradational' sense of the term, that is, linked to stratification based on people's occupations, educational qualifications, social status and power. Our operationalisation of the term, therefore, considers wealth and income, but also 'recognition', status, valuing and intergenerational aspects. The intergeneration aspects are considered important because employment and income in the UK are still very much determined by that of our parents (Social Mobility Commission 2017) (for more discussion on this, see Bell, 2020, chapter 2). The methodology combined a literature review (stage 1), followed by interviews (stage 2). For stage 1, a narrative literature review was chosen to provide the level of interpretation and critique necessary to deepen understanding (Greenhaulgh et al., 2018). It included analysis of papers in an iterative manner, drawing also on the authors' previous work in this area. Sources included databases (citation indexes, general searches, and subject specific searches), reference lists, library searches, grey literature and internet search engines (Google, Google Scholar). Both natural language and controlled vocabulary were used to detect material from formal and informal sources. As well as providing context, the literature review informed the interview questions and the analysis of the interview data.

In stage 2, we undertook 40 semi-structured interviews, of approximately 30-60 minutes duration, using informant-directed techniques (Peterson et al.,1994). The time period during which we carried out this stage was from July to October 2020, during the Covid-19 related lockdown. Therefore, we conducted the interviews over the phone or via the internet, as the participant preferred. The questions were in relation to knowledge and experience of the GND, if any; thoughts on environmentalism generally; and attitudes towards GND and lifestyle environmental policy initiatives.

All the interviewees were working-class according to at least one definition and brought up in working-class homes in non-professional families who had had no further education. Sixteen of the interviewees identified as Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME)[1]; twenty as female; ten were members of environmental organisations; twelve had been to university; and their ages were more or less evenly spread across a range from 20 to 80. They were based in cities (15), towns (15) and rural areas (10) across England and Wales. They have all been given pseudonyms here to protect their identities. We used the following non-probability sampling strategies to select the interviewees: 'purposive sampling' (Patton, 1990; Mason, 2002), using participants who had particularly relevant knowledge and experience; 'snowball sampling' (Gilbert, 2001), using networks to gain access to information-rich participants; 'opportunistic sampling' (Miles & Huberman, 1994), making the most of opportunities to meld the sample around the unfolding context; and 'maximum variation sampling' (Miles & Huberman, 1994),

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[1] The term, Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) is used here, in line with most UK policy language, though we acknowledge and accept the limitations of this (see, e.g. Okolosie et al., 2015).

selecting participants who had the maximum diversity of experiences. The participants were identified via community, employment and educational networks and approached individually by email or phone. They were selected according to whether they contributed to diversity in the sample in terms of age, disability, location, ethnicity, gender and engagement (or not) in environmentalism. Although qualitative research does not require a large sample because the aim is not to make statements about prevalence and incidence against a target population, we aimed to interview as many people as possible in order to access a range of experience and knowledge. We continued until we reached 'saturation' in terms of a sufficient appreciation of patterns and themes.

We used the technique of 'framework analysis' to analyse the data, as described by Ritchie and Lewis (2003). The process involved a number of distinct, though interconnected, stages: familiarisation with the data, identifying themes, indexing, charting and interpreting. We used a cross-sectional 'code and retrieve' (Mason, 2002) method to organise the data into the themes. We also used Krueger and Casey's (2000) seven established criteria for interpreting coded data, considering: the meaning of words; the context in which words are used; internal consistency; frequency and extensiveness of comments; specificity of comments; intensity of comments; and big ideas (how the data relates to the bigger picture). The interview quotes below have been selected to illustrate key points. Ellipses have been used in their presentation to remove material that was not relevant to the topic being discussed. The meaning of the comment, taken in its context, has been retained.

In the research design, conduct and analysis, we also drew on our own experience as working-class (first author) and mixed-class BAME (second author) environmentalists with, between us, decades of prior involvement and activism with environmental social movements.

Throughout the research and analysis, we have taken an 'intersectional' (Crenshaw, 1989) approach, rejecting essentialist perspectives in which all members of a particular social group, here working-class people are assumed to share a common, intrinsic set of characteristics or beliefs reflective of that group. The project recognises diversities that exist among working-class people.

Interviews

A common theme among our interviewees was that they were not convinced by environmental and climate policies which put the responsibility for change on themselves. They expressed concerns about how environmentalism often put pressure on them personally without addressing the responsibility of corporations. For example, Shanti said:

> I mean, even every day, we're micro managing our recycling, and yet… , I mean, the rubbish doesn't necessarily get recycled - it's just dumped somewhere… and we're trying to micro manage our homes by reducing, the type of, you know, plastics that are used and so forth. But you can't get away from it. Cos, you know, this government is still allowing the production of those types of plastics that can't be recycled, and are causing more damage. (Shanti interview, 27/07/20)

A number of the research participants expressed a frustration with the expectation that they were meant to spend their time, energy and finances on meeting the demands of environmental policy – recycling, buying green products, waiting for unreliable buses, paying carbon taxes etc. As other studies have highlighted (e.g. Bell, 2020; Bell, 2021), these additional burdens to

their, already limited time, income and health, were not welcomed and could alienate them from environmental policy.

> We – I say we, I can't speak for all of Wigan, but we're focused on working to pay our bills sort of thing…[the environment] …falls down your list, the more you struggle, doesn't it really? If you're aware of it, you might agree with it but you've got bigger fish to fry in your own life maybe. I'll speak for myself, we're not uncomfortable, but we live hand to mouth with no cushion sort of thing. (Luke interview, 21/08/20)

> Bristol has currently got a clean air plan that they're proposing which will limit diesel vehicles, will put high charges on coaches and delivery trucks, which will then be obviously passed straight on to the consumer. So it's still business as usual, it's just everybody's costs go up and people won't be able to travel and go about their daily business as much. (Paul interview, 17/07/20)

> I think it needs to now be coming from the government and the businesses and the companies that are producing all of this plastic... It needs to be coming from them now because, me as a consumer, it's much cheaper to go to Tesco and buy, say, a bag of pasta that's wrapped in plastic than it is to go to one of these shops that obviously do zero waste, bring your own thing. It ends up costing more to do that. (Jade interview, 27/08/20)

The participants found the discourses attached to these lifestyle policies did not resonate with them. They felt excluded and threatened by this emphasis, as they describe here:

> Well, I mean, this view is shared by a number of people into green politics and stuff … that there's too many people on the planet, especially in the third world, who are taking up too many resources. And it's not too far of a hop skip and a jump from that to advocating um, eugenics. (Dennis interview, 04/09/20)

> I'm quite new to climate activism…I genuinely didn't want to get involved simply because …it is very white, very middle class and everyone's vegan, everyone buys organic and it's just like, who can afford that? I couldn't do any of that stuff. (Kate interview, 02/09/20)

Some of the participants also mentioned that the environmental policy that was being rolled out often depended on exploitation and were constrained by the profit system. They seemed to understand the situation in a much more politically defined way than the lifestyle policies were attuned to.

> And a lot of the things they're advocating, quite frankly, are leading to super-exploitations in other parts of the world. It's not that the solutions aren't there, the solutions have been there for decades, …. the question is, does, does capitalism, does the profit system wish to pick those things up? And the answer to that is, unless there's sufficient return, the answer to that is no. (Dave interview, 02/08/20)

> …those big companies, because we know, that they lobby strongly, whether governments here, or in the US, they lobby strongly….If those policies do not……maximise profit for themselves, then they do not, they are not pro… mostly it's

> about profit profit. profit, and those people who are thinking about profit, it's today not tomorrow. So that's where the difficulty is. (Hama interview, 09/08/20)

The research suggested, then, that these working-class interviewees rejected lifestyle environmental policy but would embrace a more radical alternative. However, many of the participants had received little information about the Green New Deal. Some had not heard of it at all. The interviewees who had been involved in promoting the GND in the UK confirmed that most of the people they spoke to about it (in 2019) had not heard of the policy. For example, Amaya mentioned that, while campaigning in the national elections:

> Like, when we spoke to people, … you know, 'what concerns you?', I couldn't get over how few people had even heard of the idea of a Green New Deal, never mind talking about policies on climate change. (Amaya interview, 30/10/2020)

When explained to them, the interviewees in our study mainly responded positively to the idea. Those that had heard of it, had come across it mainly via the election campaigns in the United States and the United Kingdom. We were told, for example:

> Was that [the policy of] Jeremy Corbyn at the last election? It was about creating an economy around green energy and things, solar and stuff like that if I remember correctly? Yes, it was Bernie, the Green New Deal as well?... It just makes perfect sense. (Luke interview, 21/08/20)

> Well, I know about it from American politics as I understand it. It's translated over here more recently. I could be wrong but I heard about it first in the context of America with Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and some of the other younger Democrats proposing this as a way to increase and create jobs and economic prosperity in a more sustainable way. …I do think it's a good idea. I think it's really important. (Liz interview, 21/08/20)

These working-class interviewees perceived that the GND offered many benefits in terms of jobs, better transport, better home insulation, and increased wellbeing. For example, one interviewee said on the topic of public investment in public transport and jobs:

> In East Anglia, … you can't exist where I live without a car. It just doesn't happen. You can't get anywhere for employment…if you live in one of the villages and you don't drive, you're not working. I don't know why that wouldn't be a good idea to try and create jobs for people whilst at the same time working towards something that's environmentally sustainable. (Liz interview, 21/08/20)

They particularly liked the way this policy paradigm moved the onus away from individuals and towards governments and companies; away from behaviour change and towards policy:

> I think that's such an important shift in how we discuss the climate movement. Just by realising that responsibility lies with the leaders of this country, to make corporations and big businesses accountable for what they put out into the environment... And I think that's kind of been, in a way, why environmentalism hasn't been appealing to a lot of people because they feel almost as if they're being blamed and criticised. (Amaya interview, 30/10/2020)

One of the interviewees that had been very involved in GND explained why she felt so enthusiastic about it and how she had been involved, as follows:

> Finally, after decades of searching, we have a policy that talks about collective change, that talks about government and corporate responsibility and not about the individual. I think that's really, really important…My organizing around that was in working class communities and the industrialized towns and coastal areas where we went in and talked to ex-miners, workers from nuclear power plants, shop owners, schools. (Kate interview, 02/09/20)

Outreach is important for the GND, given the history of working-class exclusion from mainstream environmentalism in the US and UK (Bell, 2020; 2021). A strategy of meeting people where they are located seems to have worked, according to research participants who had been local GND organisers. For example, Kate explained that the GND meetings addressed people's everyday concerns, including about the transition to sustainability. She said:

> We didn't go in and talk about climate policy. We went in to talk about what affects them in their communities today. …One of the examples of that which I found really inspiring and really pushed me to do the work more was in Morecambe, where we had a round table event of over 200 people … and we're able to say this is how many jobs it [the GND] would bring into Morecambe, this is how much money it would bring, this is how much it would reduce your family bills every year when we insulate council homes and how many jobs the insulation project would create. Then you could just see the energy and the passion in the room for communities wanting to come together and campaign for something that would make their lives better. (Kate interview, 02/09/20)

Those research participants who had been involved in promoting GND from below explained that though '…we did about 11 events all around the country and no one had heard of the Green New Deal' ...(Kate interview, 02/09/20), they managed to engage communities by inviting them to talk about jobs, local economy, changes to public transport and education, rather than the conventional green agenda. They also ensured that local people were respected as having expert knowledge by inviting local speakers and treating all the speakers equally. They explained the importance of listening to local people and what they wanted to do, rather than trying to persuade them what was needed. Kate, for example, said 'That, for me, is why the Green New Deal is so important and the organizing around the Green New Deal is so important, so we're not just looking at it as a policy drop. It's something that comes from people'. (Kate interview, 02/09/20)

However, as with the literature on this topic, our research participants did voice some potential concerns about the policy. One of the main drawbacks that the research participants were concerned about was the cost to themselves, either directly, through accessing the technology, or through increased taxes to pay for the green transition, as illustrated in Gabrielle's comment here:

> It sounds like it should be a good idea. Yes, I'd go along with it. I guess the issue would be cost to the public and what they'd have to fork out to get all this new technology. …because with the electric cars, you're also going to need to find the sockets to plug your car into… Yes, and of course, they'll have to cut the costs. Well, the cost of an electric car. (Gabrielle interview, 15/08/20)

However, other participants felt it important to make this investment. When they heard that some people objected to GND because of the potential cost, they said:

> You can't afford not to, can you? It's staring you in the face, isn't it? We'll end up doing this eventually but will we end up doing it too late, sort of thing… We're eternally in debt anyway, so what's a bit more debt to keep us from ending up under the water. (Luke interview, 21/08/20)

> We should spend [public money] it on what instead? Public money, that's for the public for the longer term…[They should stop spending on] the military, maybe-- I don't know… I understand why, obviously, we need military, but it just seems like one of those things in the 21st century that you just put less money in. (Liz interview, 21/08/20)

Some of the interview participants were also concerned that the proposed benefits may not materialise for working-class people. For example, Tiara said:

> What's a green job? Who would be doing it?... if there's gonna be something like that, and things available, it needs to be done in a way that people can access those jobs… And I just feel like it needs to be in a different way so that people who have never done that world of work are encouraged to do it… You know, they'll advertise an environmental job, I know most people wouldn't even try to apply. (interview Tiara, 07/09/20)

A few of the participants looked at the limitations of GND, seeing it as solely transitioning jobs, rather then as the wider desire to reduce inequality and increase wellbeing that is inherent in some versions. For example, Yasmin said:

> I haven't paid it lots of attention. … it doesn't excite me. That's not to say some of the key demands are…you know, 'let's invest more of our energy into our economy around green jobs', you know, 'let's transition the types of employment that people have'. I guess my wish for the world is a bit bigger than that … I'm, like, 'how about we completely reframe our economy, and our relationship to work and our relationship to each other?'. So, I don't think it's a bad thing, but it hasn't excited or inspired me… I think I want more. (interview Yasmin, 28/08/20)

What participants particularly valued about GND, as opposed to other environmental policies, is that it seemed to have more of an ethos of global solidarity and equity alongside localism and respect for working-class people and other marginalised groups, as these comments illustrate:

> The Green New Deal Policies, a lot of it does actually address how we can't just shift the burden onto, you know, far away countries… Because quite a lot of policies actually, when you look beneath the surface, a lot of sustainable policies just kind of shift the burden to another place. And, it's actually quite radical, for the Green New Deal to have kind of confronted that head on. (Amaya interview, 30/10/2020)

> For people to be gainfully employed locally would actually allow them, because I think people when they're poor, they're, they actually don't give a stuff about green issues - worrying about how they're going to eat. (interview Barbara, 12/08/20)

I've met a lot of really empowering BAME women who have been at the heart of that [GND] movement, and who aren't just tokenised for a photo opportunity, but are literally like, they have a seat at the table and they're working hard to actively centre, to be centred, and for their ideas to be heard. Which, yeah, it was such a breath of fresh air… That's why I'm part of it I guess. (Amaya interview, 30/10/2020)

Overall, then, the working-class interviewees were positive about the possibilities of a Green New Deal, although with some cautiousness about what it might mean, in stark contrast to their views on lifestyle environmentalism which they found annoying and off-putting.

Conclusion

This study endorses the literature which indicates that lifestyle environmentalism does not enthuse or inspire working-class people and has often made their lives more difficult. It also supports the literature in terms of indicating that knowledge and understanding of GND is minimal among working-class people. Similar reservations to those of academics were also voiced in relation to GND, in terms of 'I want more'. However, depending on the version of the GND, these working-class people were broadly supportive. Proponents of the GND did not, however, lead to election triumphs in terms of the candidature for the US elections and the UK general election, although in both cases, this may have had more to do with lack of internal party support for those candidates, rather than the views of the working-class public.

Environmental and climate policy has the potential to deliver enormous co-benefits in terms of equity, solidarity and anti-oppressive practice. The Green New Deal as presented by Ocasio-Cortez and Saunders in the US and Corbyn, Lucas and McDonald in the UK, could be the policy paradigm that would deliver those benefits. The working-class people we interviewed found many positive aspects to this policy in terms of better services, more job opportunities, warmer homes, better public transport, challenging the harmful companies, international solidarity, and a bottom-up development model. However, they often knew little or nothing about the policy and the election messages on this topic had not reached them or they had been misinformed. Therefore, more needs to be done to build awareness about this policy paradigm and to involve working-class people in its development. Without including working-class people in the development and communication of this policy, there may be sub-optimal interventions that have lower impact, effectiveness, public support and value for money. Given the differential impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic across race, class and several other disadvantaged groups (IFS, 2020), it is also an important time to embed inclusive climate and environmental policy in Covid-19 recovery plans. The public have seen that it is important to spend public money in a crisis and so concerns expressed, pre-Covid, about costs may now be dwindling. Working-class people have borne the brunt of the pandemic and now is the time to rebuild a new sustainable economy that works for them.

Author Bios

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working-class background, she is also author of *Working-Class Environmentalism: An Agenda for a Just and Fair Transition to Sustainability* (Palgrave, 2020).

Gnisha Bevan co- developed and co-leads the Black Seeds Environmental Justice Network which seeks to recognise and support environmentalists of colour. She was the UK Festival of Nature Community Manager 2021 and she works as a consultant advisor on a range of environmental and social justice projects. She is also currently studying for an MSc degree in Sustainable Development in Practice at the University of the West of England, Bristol. She is an education specialist and has worked on a number of international projects, including collaborating with the Rwandan Education Board, international development partners and the voluntary sector to improve the quality of education in Rwanda

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Benefits for Child Care Workers: How the State Could Help through a Medicaid Waiver

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Abstract

Child care is expensive, and many parents struggle to afford care; furthermore, even though child care costs are high, child care providers in the United States (US) are not making a living wage. Child care professionals (ages 0-5 in child care homes or centers) earn less income than Kindergarten teachers, pre-K teachers, non-farm animal caretakers, and the US estimate of *all* workers' annual median salary (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020a, 2020b). Workers in comparable professions are also usually offered benefits for their labor, which child care professionals are not (Kwon, 2019; National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team, 2020; Otten et al., 2019; Whitebook, McLean, Austin, & Edwards, 2018). This often necessitates use of public assistance. Because many child care workers are not provided access to health insurance or other health-related benefits through their employers, they must seek access to health care in other ways. Additionally, turnover rates among child care workers are high, and wages and benefits are a large part of the reason why child care professionals leave their jobs (McDougald Scott, 2021a). This policy analysis (a) reviewed the current struggle (as of May 2021) that child care workers in the United States (in general) and South Carolina (in particular) experience compared with employees in other fields; and (b) explore options (particularly a Medicaid waiver option) that might improve the situation. South Carolina (SC) is one of the 13 states that have not expanded Medicaid; most of the 13 states are in Southern United States (US) region, which makes an extrapolation of SC research reasonable. Lessons learned from SC childcare data should reflect closely what may be found in other non-expansion states, but research from the literature review will not be SC-specific. Relevant peer-reviewed, government documents, state and national data, and grey literature were reviewed and analyzed. There have been ongoing efforts (although insufficient even in more successful efforts) with mixed results to improve the pay for child care workers for decades. Progress for earning a living wage will require a systems overhaul for early education, but child care providers cannot wait for workforce environmental improvements. Action must be taken now to augment the shortage of healthcare access for child care providers. In SC, Medicaid helps some child care workers receive access to health care, but expansion through Medicaid waiver 1115 would include many more child care workers who do not currently have access.

Keywords

Childcare workers, child care, Medicaid, health insurance, health care, low-income workers

Child care is expensive, and many parents struggle to afford care; moreover, even though child care costs are high, child care providers in the United States (US) are not making a living wage (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020a; Economic Policy Institute, 2019; Glasmeier, 2021; Whitebook, Phillips, & Howes, 2014). Child care worker pay improvement has been an issue that child care advocates have been working on for decades, producing mixed results, and often the complex structure of the child care system is cited as the reason for inability to improve pay (Whitebook et al., 2018; Whitebook et al., 2014). High child care provider turnover rates

(estimated at 13% in 2012), which negatively impact the quality of care and are hard on children and families, are mostly attributed to low wages (Institute of Medicine & National Research Council, 2015; S. Thomason et al., 2018; Whitebook et al., 2018). Therefore, the confluence of low wages for child care workers and inability to improve wages creates a societal problem for both the workforce who utilizes child care *and* those who provide caregiving services. As an economic imperative (Gould, Austin, & Whitebook, 2017; McDougald Scott, 2018), something must be done to improve the financial and environmental situation for child care providers. If wages cannot be improved within the current system, it is time to look for another solution.

Women's—especially women of color's—work has been historically undervalued and underpaid, with a particular misperception of child caregiving labor as being unskilled and of little value (McLean, Austin, Whitebook, & Olson, 2021; Michel, 1999; Smith, 2004). Women in Western culture (including the US) have been assigned the role of caregivers for children for decades, with the predominant view that only women with less money and resources have to work for money (Michel, 1999). In more conservative areas of the country, such as in the Southern US, maintenance of this view seems to be more prevalent. Therefore, paid caregiving work has also been seen as less desirable. For example, McDougald Scott (2021a) found that child care professionals felt that their communities and society treated them as if they were of a '*lower class*' in society or seen as a '*servant*.' As many of the women who have historically done caregiving work have not been formally educated in caregiving, it leads to the assumption that child care work is not skilled, and primarily consists of '*babysitting*.'

Child care as a resource and service, as well as policy surrounding child care, has long been fraught with concern about (a) what a woman's duty and role is with regards to children (b) who child care is serving and why (Michel, 1999). During the Progressive and the New Deal eras of the United States, social assistance became available for many populations (low income, mentally ill, orphans, elderly, disabled), but no provisions were made for child care (Michel, 1999). Interestingly, it is seen as the government's responsibility to furnish public education for all, but providing quality child care for working parents has not been seen as equally important, regardless of the fact that the early years are the most important foundational years for brain growth (Michel, 1999; Zhao, Xu, & He, 2019). Furthermore, child care should be seen as an economic imperative, for children, families, and employers as McDougald Scott (2018) outlines.[2]

Throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century, there has been a push for child care to be available for mothers (historically speaking) so that they will not be dependent on the government for income, yet the cost of child care itself is a burden on families (Malik, 2019; Michel, 1999). The burden of cost on families is essentially subsidized by the low wages paid to the workforce (Malik, 2019).

Due to the insufficient, unreliable, or unsuccessful efforts to increase the base pay for child care workers, as well as a resistance to or inability of child care owners to provide benefits to employees, a renewed examination is needed of ways to influence policy makers to implement change. One strategy is to focus on qualitative studies of lived experiences of child care workers dealing with low wages and lack of access to benefits and the extent to which such stories have been shared with policy makers in order to convince them to take action on improvement in the early childhood workforce environment (which includes pay and benefits).

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[2] https://www.instituteforchildsuccess.org/child-care-an-economic-imperative-for-greenville/

Even though there are both long- and short-term solutions to ameliorate the problem of low wages and no benefits enumerated in several sources, in many cases, it has been tough to gain traction for action through federal and state legislative bodies. This policy analysis expands upon some of the short-term solutions that have been offered, and continue to be necessary for policy and systems change. More long-term solutions for problems faced by the child care workforce would require an overhaul of the early childhood education and care system.

To understand the issue of how low wages and lack of benefits affects child care workers, this policy analysis reviewed the current (as of early 2021) struggle that child care workers in the US (in general) and SC (in particular) experience compared with employees in other fields. Options that might improve the situation (particularly a Medicaid waiver option) were also explored. An analysis of current and past solutions was reviewed, and recommendations for future action are offered.

This policy analysis (a) reviewed the current struggle that child care workers in the US (in general) and SC (in particular) experience compared with employees in other fields; (b) explored options (particularly Medicaid expansion options) that might improve the situation. South Carolina is one of the 12 states that has not expanded Medicaid; most of the 12 states are in Southern US region, which makes an extrapolation of SC research reasonable. Lessons learned from SC childcare data should reflect closely what may be found in other non-expansion states, but research was not limited to SC.

A Note on Terminology

Child care workers should be seen and respected as the invaluable people that they are, and sometimes the term 'workers' sounds too impersonal to adequately convey the emotional labor and bonding with children and families that is required of and provided by these professionals. For the purposes of this article, the terms 'child care worker,' 'child care provider,' 'child care teaching staff,' or 'early childhood educators' are used somewhat interchangeably. Distinctions between child care workers and pre-K or Kindergarten teachers (who are all early childhood educators) will be made as needed. Also as appropriate, distinctions may be made between teachers, directors, or administrative staff.

Financial Challenges Facing Child Care Providers

Child care workers are paid low wages (or no wages in the cases of many stay-at-home parents or other relative caregivers) (McDougald Scott, 2018; McDougald Scott, Rusnak, & Carolan, 2019; Paschall, 2019). Nationally, the confluence of low wages relative to other fields and a frequent lack of benefits for child care providers create stress on this workforce. South Carolina child care workers make a median annual salary of $19,480 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020b); compared to the average US child care worker, who makes $24,230 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020c). Both of these salaries are less than 138% of the federal poverty level (FPL) ($24,040 for a family of two, $36,570 for a family of four) (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2021). Keeping child care workers in the workforce is an important component of sustaining the US economy (Economic Policy Institute, 2016; McDougald Scott, 2018; O'Donnell, 2015), and given the professional training expected and required in order to do the job well, these low wages are not doing much to retain them.

Education

Nationwide, educational requirements vary according to the type of child care facility by which a child care worker is employed, age of children served, and the state in which a child care

worker is employed (Whitebook et al., 2018).   Professional recommendations based on extensive research by the Institute of Medicine and National Research Council (2015) indicate that lead caregivers or teachers for all ages birth through eight years should attain a minimum of a bachelor's degree, but the emphasis should be on knowledge and competencies relevant to working in the early childhood field.   The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) also recommends a minimum of a bachelor's degree for lead pre-K teachers, and specifies a minimum of a Child Development Associate (CDA) degree as a quality benchmark for pre-K assistants (Friedman-Krauss et al., 2019).

These qualifications require higher education and training, which can lead to student loan debt. One study of child care workers reported that of the 42% of the child care teaching staff sample who owed student debt, 52% owed $25,000 or more; of the child care directors in the same sample, 32% reported having student loan debt, of which 64% owed $50,000 or more (Whitebook et al., 2018). Student debt was more closely associated with employees having attained a bachelor's degree or higher: 74% of teaching staff and 95% of directors reported having student debt (Whitebook et al., 2018).   As for training, best practices for child care workers encourage continuing education or professional development for child care workers and pre-K teachers, which requires time off work and tuition for the coursework (Institute of Medicine & National Research Council, 2015; Whitebook et al., 2018).   All of this adds to the financial stress of child care workers.

Due to varying requirements and complex systems, there are not always clear expectations or pay scales that inform child care providers what income they can expect, and there is variation between child care providers based on age, even when providers have the same credentials (Institute of Medicine, 2012; Institute of Medicine & National Research Council, 2015; Russell, Lyons, & Lowman, 2001; Whitebook et al., 2018).   Reports indicate that providers with higher education attainment are assigned to care for older children, while younger children are assigned providers with lower educational attainment (see Figure 1) (National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team, 2020; Rao & Chen, 2018).   Caregivers who only work with infants and toddlers generally make less than those who only work with children ages three to five—even when they hold the same credentials (Rao & Chen, 2018).

Variation in pay according to the age of the child may be due to assumptions that younger children do not require the same level of expertise as older children, but infant and toddler caretakers need the same level of skill and education as preschool caretakers, and specialized child development training is necessary to obtain quality early childhood outcomes (Institute of Medicine & National Research Council, 2015; Whitebook et al., 2018).   Further, providers who are making less pay may also have lower educational attainment, but they are required to have the same skills as their co-workers with higher educational attainment (Rao & Chen, 2018; Whitebook et al., 2018; Whitebook et al., 2014).   This pay disparity according to the age of the child is a disservice not only to the child care providers, but the children and families they serve.   Evidence has shown that cognitive development of children from 20 weeks gestation until age 2 years is critical to functioning later in life (Zhao et al., 2019).   This suggests that specialized, and maybe more training and expertise should be required of child care professionals who work with the youngest children—and they should be compensated for this appropriately.

The minimum South Carolina Department of Social Services (DSS) licensing requirement for child care providers (centers, faith-based, or family child care home) is that their teachers have obtained a high school diploma or GED, as well as six months working as a teacher or caregiver in a licensed or approved child care facility (Rao & Chen, 2018).   Lead pre-K teachers in SC

are required to have a minimum of an associate degree, although a bachelor's degree is preferred (Friedman-Krauss et al., 2019). Ideally, to teach or care for the same age range of children, everyone should have the same educational requirements. Given that this is not currently the case, creating pay scales for child care, including pre-K, should reward education and years of experience—regardless of the age of the child taught.
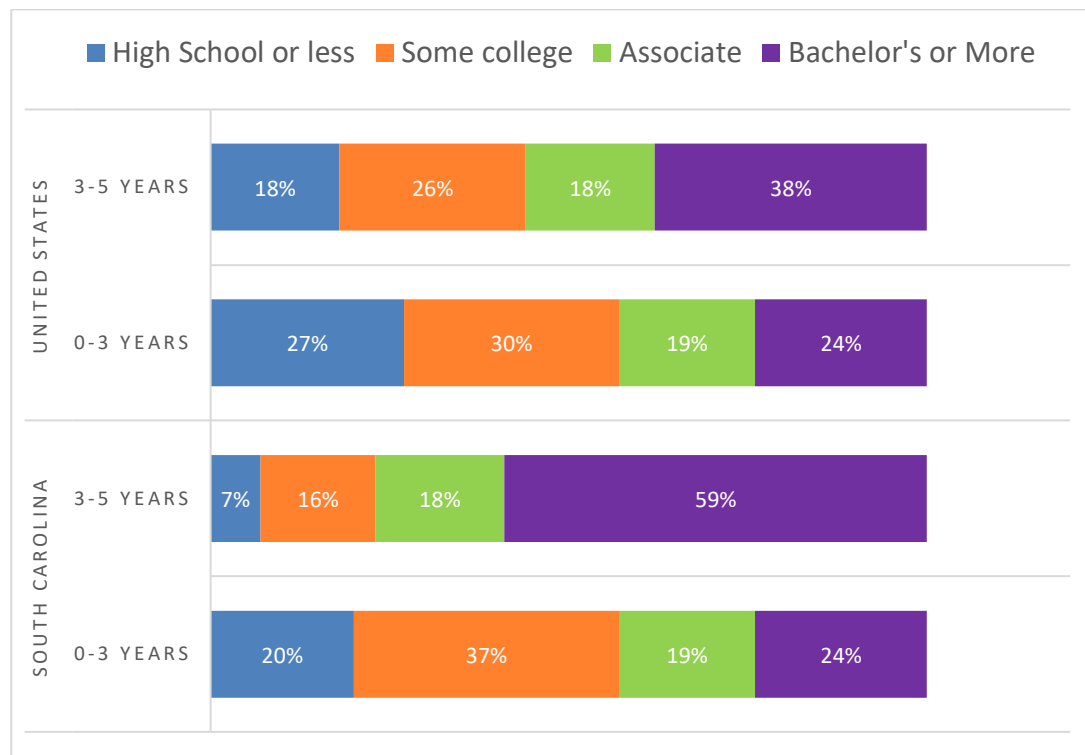

Figure 1. Child Care provider education attainment by age of children served. SC data from South Carolina Department of Social Services, Rao and Chen (2018), US data from National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team (2020).

Disparity between Similar Professions

Child care workers (ages 0-5 in child care homes or centers) earn less income than Kindergarten teachers, pre-K teachers, non-farm animal caretakers, and the US estimate of *all* workers' annual median salary, as shown in Figure 2 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020a, 2020b).

Pre-K, Kindergarten, and child care teaching staff for children between the ages of three to five years should have similar educational requirements and expectations, although as previously stated, these requirements and expectations vary by state. Almost half of US states (23) require at least a bachelor's degree for pre-K lead teachers (Whitebook et al., 2018). Because pre-K has varying availability between states, in places where pre-K is not available in the school system, child care centers or homes may provide care and instruction for the same age group. Although this is the case, as Figure 2 indicates, pre-K teachers are often paid more than child care workers. Pre-K teachers and similarly-credentialed child care workers caring for the same age children should be paid at the same level.

Kindergarten teachers nationwide are required to have a bachelor's degree; depending upon the state in which they teach, some Kindergarten teachers are required to obtain a teaching certificate (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019c; Teacher.org, 2019). As the data in Figure 2 indicate, pre-K teachers in SC earn an annual median wage of $22,990, which is more than child care workers ($19,480) and far less than Kindergarten teachers ($53,770). Pre-K teachers in both child care and school settings consistently earn less money than Kindergarten teachers, even though best practices dictate, and many states require, that lead pre-K teachers hold bachelor's degrees (Friedman-Krauss et al., 2019).

Non-farm animal caretakers' charges involve a vulnerable population that needs to be cleaned up after, entertained, trained, fed, and kept safe much like young children; thus, this population is useful for wage comparison. Calculated using annual median incomes, non-farm animal caregivers in SC make about $2,630 more than child care providers, and in the US the difference is $550 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020a, 2020b). Although the median income for non-farm animal caregivers is not estimated to be much more than child care providers, non-farm animal caregivers both in SC and the US make more.

Figure 2. Median incomes for child care providers versus comparable occupations. SC data from Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020b); US data from Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020a).
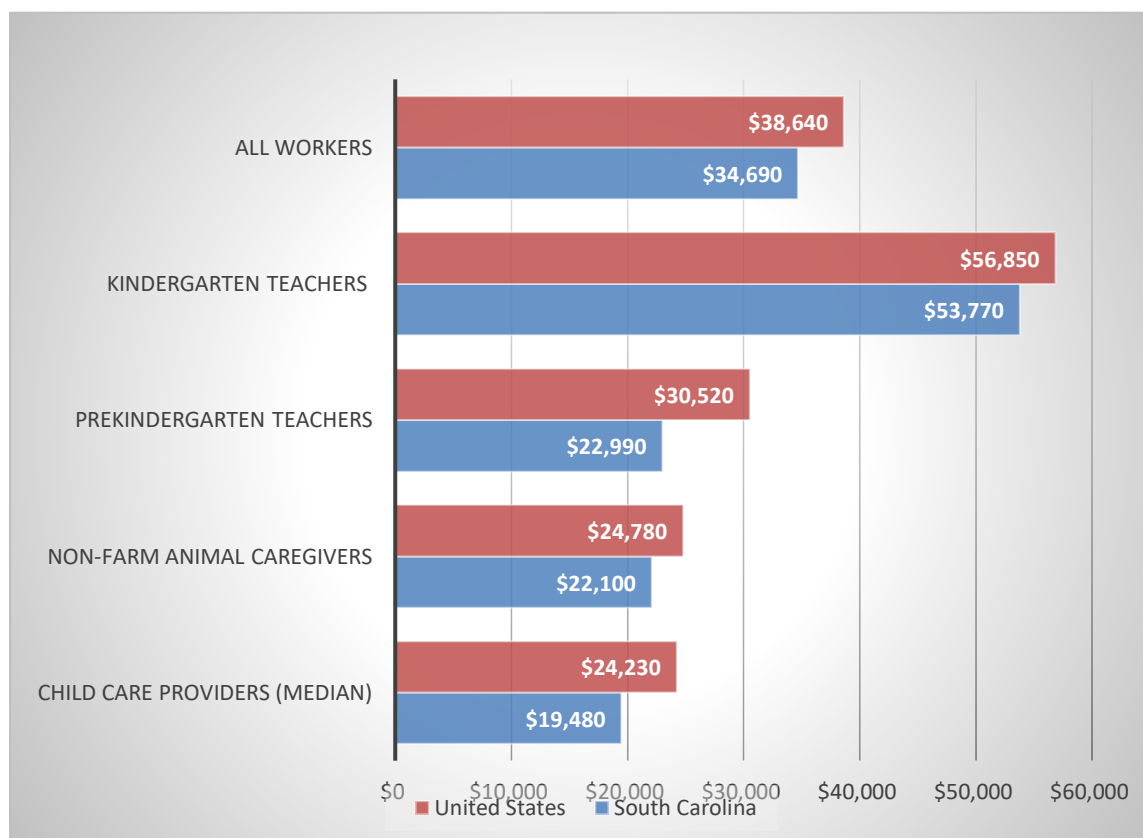
Taking into account the history and political development of child care mentioned above, it should not be surprising that child care workers make less money than comparable professions. Women's work, especially the work of women of color, is under-paid and under-valued (McLean et al., 2021; Michel, 1999; Smith, 2004). Pre-K and Kindergarten teachers work for the school system, which is generally accepted as a right to which all children in the US are entitled, while child care is not seen in the same way (Michel, 1999). Child care workers who

have earned bachelors' degrees may go into the early childhood education field and discover that they will make more money, and also earn benefits, by leaving child care and working in the school system (McDougald Scott, 2021a; Whitebook & Sakai, 2003). This does not bode well for the children served by child care or the quality of child care as a whole.

Public Assistance

Another difference between child care providers and comparable workers is that child care providers are usually offered no benefits for their labor (Kwon, 2019; National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team, 2020; Otten et al., 2019; Whitebook et al., 2018), which often necessitates use of public assistance. Over a period from 2014 to 2016, 53% of child care workers in the US utilized one of four major public support and health care programs: the Federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC); Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP); Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) (Whitebook et al., 2018). Compared to 21% of the US workforce *overall* accessing public assistance, the utilization rate of a single sector of the workforce—child care providers—is stark (Whitebook et al., 2018). Furthermore, research from the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) shows an *increase* in child care providers' public assistance utilization rates from previous years as a result of expanded Medicaid eligibility in many states (Whitebook et al., 2018). The CSCEE identified Medicaid expansion as a strategy which particularly benefits early childhood providers; since Medicaid was expanded in 33 states, about one-third of child care workers and their families access health insurance through Medicaid (Whitebook et al., 2018).

Insurance

The 2018 SC Department of Social Services (DSS) child care workforce study sample indicated that only about 28% of child care workers were covered by private health insurance provided from their employer or workplace (see Figure 3) (Rao & Chen, 2018). Twenty-eight percent of the DSS study sample did not answer the health insurance question, and are not included in Figure 3 or the following calculations (Rao & Chen, 2018).
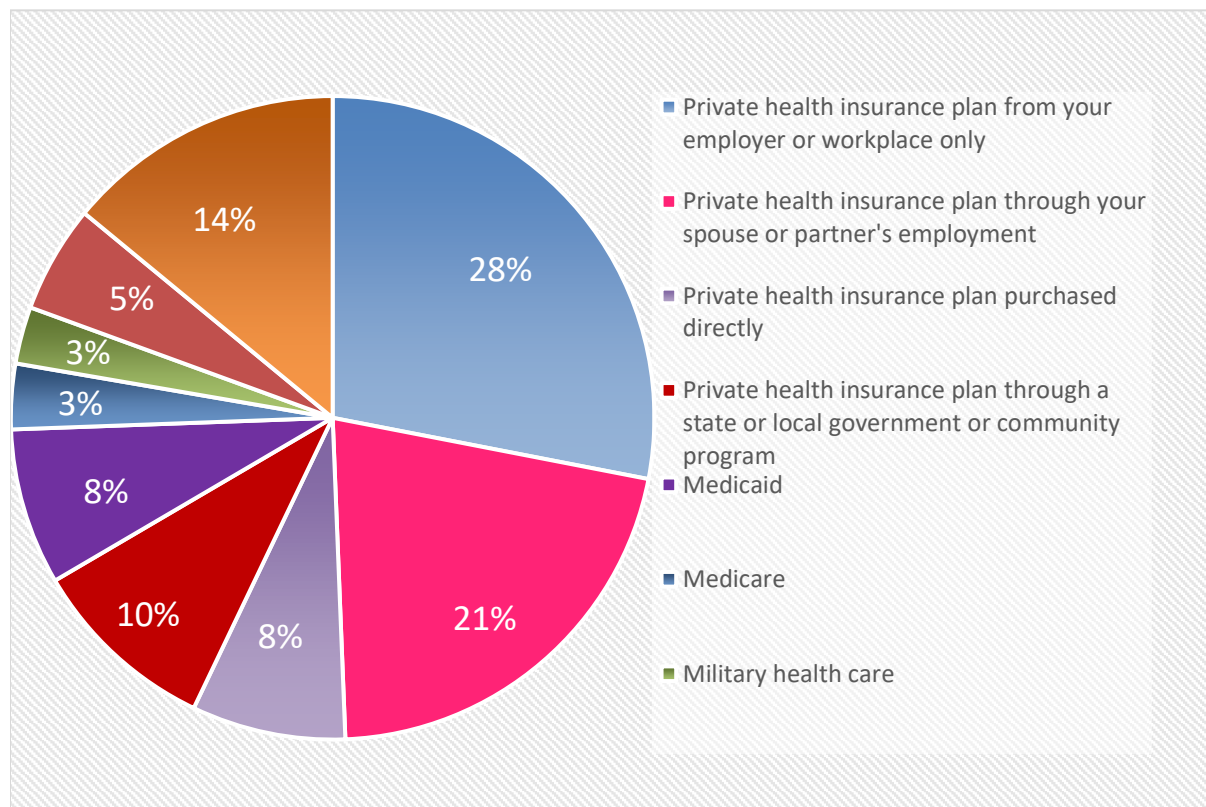
Figure 3. South Carolina insurance coverage status for child care providers. Data from (Rao & Chen, 2018).

The remaining child care providers were responsible for either being on their spouse's health insurance (21%), purchasing their own health insurance (8%), or being un-insured (14%) (Rao & Chen, 2018); those who are un- or under-insured must pay for health care out of their own pockets, that creates additional pecuniary hardship. South Carolina is not a Medicaid expansion state, but if the 14% of caregivers who do not have coverage of any type were added to the 8% of child care workers currently enrolled in Medicaid, that would mean that at least 22% of workers could be covered.

Preliminary data for the US child care workforce from the National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) study indicates that 16% of child care workers did not have health care coverage of any type (National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team, 2020). Child care workers who were able to secure health insurance obtained it through their partner or spouse (24.5%), enrolled in a healthcare exchange (5.5%), directly with a health insurance company (1.3%), high-deductible plans through their employers (13.8%), Medicaid (15.7%), Medicare (5.9%), or military-related sources (12.4%) (National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team, 2020). Of the small number of child care workers who are offered paid sick leave, many are afraid to take it (Kwon, 2019; National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team (National Opinion Research Center), 2012; Otten et al., 2019; Whitebook et al., 2018). This means that at least 31.8% of our child care workers across the country do not have adequate access to healthcare (National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team, 2020).

Health

Health is an essential component to maintaining the workforce. For decades, researchers have indicated that workforce quality translates to caregiving quality (Institute of Medicine, 2012; Otten et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2001; Whitebook et al., 2018; Whitebook et al., 2014). Recent studies have shown that early childhood workers, including child care givers, suffer poorer mental and physical health outcomes than women of similar socioeconomic standing in other professions (or women who do not work) (Linnan et al., 2017; Otten et al., 2019; Whitaker, Becker, Herman, & Gooze, 2013).

The Otten et al. (2019) mixed method study of early childhood education (ECE) workers reported evidence of poor health in both physical and mental capacities among this population. For example, food insecurity was found in 42% of the sample, compared to US food insecurity rates of 11.8% (Otten et al., 2019). Societal stress was also reported, as child care workers felt that parents and society as a whole does not respect them or their profession (Otten et al., 2019). Further, even in centers where child care providers were afforded sick leave, they reported feeling that they were unable to take advantage of sick leave due to short staffing (Otten et al., 2019). These factors perhaps help explain the study's finding that this sample reported depression scores that were double the US prevalence for women in similar income brackets (Otten et al., 2019). All of these factors contribute to an overall low morale, including poor physical and mental health.

Providing benefits for child care workers would be a great step forward in making them feel more appreciated and well-compensated. In addition, those within child care workers' care and co-workers would also benefit from not being exposed to illness brought in by workers who cannot take time off or access healthcare. Benefits that would help improve physical and mental health could include paid sick leave, pools of substitutes so that workers can take paid leave, and health insurance. The state of SC (as well as other non-expansion states) could start working towards improving the workforce environment and quality of child care overall by expanding Medicaid or using a Medicaid waiver for child care workers.

Medicaid Expansion

Medicaid expansion is a policy that increases healthcare coverage for individuals who are at the 138% federal poverty level (FPL) (or higher for some populations) instead of the 2013 rate of 61% FPL (Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, 2015). As of February 4, 2021, 39 states (including DC) have expanded Medicaid (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2021b); see Figure 4 for a map of the US highlighting expansion and non-expansion states.

The rates of uninsured have gone down for both expansion and non-expansion states, which can be in part attributed to the Affordable Care Act (ACA), as well as the lower unemployment rate, which is explained in more detail below (Antonisse, Garfield, Rudowitz, & Guth, 2019; Shartzer, 2018; USC Institute for Families in Society, 2018).

South Carolina child care providers' median annual salary of $19,480 does not qualify for Medicaid in a non-expansion state (Health Reform: Beyond the Basics, 2019; Kaiser Family Foundation, 2019b, 2021b; U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2019b). Family status of child care workers varies, but in SC, single child care workers without children (and also without special needs) are ineligible for Medicaid (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2021b;

South Carolina Healthy Connections Medicaid, 2019). Raising eligibility for Medicaid for child care workers to 200% FPL ($25,760) would allow coverage of single, childless child care workers (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2021).

Status of State Action on the Medicaid Expansion Decision

Figure 4. Map of US states that have expanded, adopted but not implemented, or not expanded Medicaid as of February 4, 2021. Data from Kaiser Family Foundation (2021b).

Literature and Data Review

Method

Literature Search

Relevant peer-reviewed, government documents, state and national data, and grey literature were reviewed and analyzed to: 1) review the current struggle that child care workers in the US (in general) and SC (in particular) experience compared with employees in other fields; 2) explore options that might improve pay or benefits; 3) review existing literature describing everyday life as a child care worker, particularly as it relates to the experience of living with low wages and a lack of employment benefits; 4) review existing literature describing how wages and benefits dictate job stability or switches between different child care facility types; and 5) look for evidence of what or whether child care workers have shared in testimonies about everyday life with policy makers. Search terms included (but were not limited to) 'child care teacher work life,' 'child care worker everyday life,' and 'child care worker stories.' Academic and non-academic databases used for the search were Nexis Uni, Google Scholar, Google (for gray literature), PubMed, PsycINFO, Academic Search Complete, and CINAHL

Plus with Full Text. Included studies were English only, US-based, and did not include a date range.

Backward reference searching [3] was also used to find additional literature not originally found within traditional literature search methods. Other methods of information gathering included Google alert subscriptions to 'early childhood' and 'child care,' as well as daily email updates from the Kaiser Family Foundation. The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment was also consulted for additional references.

Data Sources

Several publicly available sources for data on childcare workers, as well as literature about policies and the impact of low wage and lack of benefits were searched. Using data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c, 2020a, 2020b), Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2017, 2018, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c, 2019d, 2019e), Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) (Linnan et al., 2017; S. Thomason et al., 2018; Whitebook et al., 2018; Whitebook et al., 2014), Economic Policy Institute (2019), Institute for Child Success *South Carolina Early Childcare Data Report* (McDougald Scott et al., 2019), Kaiser Family Foundation (Hinton, Musumeci, Rudowitz, Antonisse, & Hall, 2019; Kaiser Family Foundation, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c, 2019d, 2019e, 2021a, 2021b), National Survey of Early Care and Education (National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team, 2020; National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team (National Opinion Research Center), 2012), SC Department of Social Services *Workforce Study* (Rao & Chen, 2018), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2019b, 2021), USC Institute for Families in Society (2018), and other publicly available data related to the compensation status of child care workers in SC and the US were analyzed.

Results

Current Policies to Improve Access to Healthcare

The Affordable Care Act

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, otherwise known as the Affordable Care Act and the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010, Affordable Care Act, ACA, or 'Obamacare,' was signed into law in 2010 by President Obama (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2019a). This analysis will refer to the Affordable Care Act as the ACA. The intent of the law was to increase access to coverage by expanding Medicaid, providing health insurance marketplaces (also known as exchanges), reduce the number of uninsured persons, and overall make health insurance more affordable and accessible for Americans (RAND Corporation, 2019a, 2019b; U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2019a).

There are many controversial elements to the ACA, primarily due to political partisanship, but the data support that although flawed, the ACA has improved access to healthcare in the US (Antonisse et al., 2019; Manchikanti, Helm Ii, Benyamin, & Hirsch, 2017; RAND Corporation, 2019b). Although the ACA has improved access to healthcare, many child care workers remain un- or underinsured, especially in non-expansion states (National Survey of Early Care and

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[3] The method of pulling relevant sources from article reference lists and database search suggestions (Florida Atlantic University Libraries, 2021).

Education Project Team, 2020; Rao & Chen, 2018; Whitebook et al., 2018).   In the aforementioned *2018 SC Early Childhood Educator Workforce Study*, only 30% of early childhood educators (ECEs) reported receiving insurance through their place of employment; furthermore, 8% of ECEs reported being covered by Medicaid, 14% were uninsured, and 28% of study participants did not answer the question about the type of health insurance they had (Rao & Chen, 2018). Nationally, the numbers indicate an improvement in Medicaid enrollment for child care workers: pre-expansion (2009-2013) was 21%, while post-expansion (2014-2016) was 30% (Whitebook et al., 2018).

Medicaid Expansion

Medicaid expansion began for many states on January 1, 2014, although several states expanded before and have expanded since that date (Antonisse et al., 2019; Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, 2015; Kaiser Family Foundation, 2021b; McMorrow, Kenney, Long, & Goin, 2016). Although SC has not expanded Medicaid, the state has benefitted from slight improvements in reducing the uninsured rate and increasing Medicaid enrollment. See Table 1 for a clear layout of the comparison between South Carolina's 2013 (which was before the ACA expansion in many states) and 2019 Health Insurance Coverage of adults living in poverty 19-64 under 100% and 200% FPL (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2021a).

Table 1.

South Carolina Medicaid Enrollment and Uninsured: 2013 vs. 2019

Adults living in poverty ages 19-64	Medicaid status	2013	2019
100% FPL	enrolled	31%	36.2%
	uninsured	43%	31.6%
200% FPL	enrolled	23%	27%
	uninsured	39%	28.7%

Note. Data in this table are from the Kaiser Family Foundation (2021a).

The improvements in enrollment and uninsured shown in Table 1 (between 2013 and 2019) are likely due to several factors. First, the ACA required SC to increase its FPL levels for several groups who were already approved by the State, therefore expanding Medicaid access to some South Carolinians regardless of SC's decision not to expand (South Carolina Healthy Connections Medicaid, 2014). Second, in 2013, SC agreed to some of the recommended enrollment strategies from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid to increase open enrollment through the national health exchange, healthcare.gov (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2019b). In the US as a whole, expansion states have shown more progress than non-expansion states in reducing uninsured rates and increasing Medicaid enrollment (Antonisse et al., 2019; Shartzer, 2018).

Medicaid Expansion Improves Health Outcomes.

Several studies have indicated improved health outcomes among populations who live in Medicaid expansion versus non-expansion states (Antonisse et al., 2019; Lee, Shi, & Liang, 2018; Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2019; Rudowitz, 2018; Sommers, Maylone, Blendon, Orav, & Epstein, 2017), and one study found the same results from expansion state data *before* the ACA (McMorrow et al., 2016). Such improved outcomes were demonstrated from studies, analyses, and reports published by governments, policy organizations, and research institutions, utilizing various research methodologies[4] (Antonisse et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2018; McMorrow et al., 2016; Pope, 2013; Pore, 2012; Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2019; Rudowitz, 2018; Sommers et al., 2017; Tipirneni et al., 2019). Health-related outcomes found to be positively affected in Medicaid-expansion states included:

- life expectancy in years
- decreases in uncompensated costs
- lower rates of hospital closures
- access to care
- primary care utilization
- quality of care
- utilization of services
- affordability of care
- patients seeking care earlier
- unemployment rate
- average number of persons participating in SNAP
- average number of monthly SNAP benefits per person
- emergency department visits
- expenses saved on exchange/insurance premiums
- increased access to behavioral health services and primary care appointments
- increased spending for opioid treatment
- larger decreases in one-year mortality from end-stage renal disease
- reduction in out-of-pocket spending
- financial security among the low-income population
- percentage of adults who reported not having a personal doctor
- percentage of adults who reported not seeing a doctor in the past 12 months because of cost.

Medicaid Expansion and Work.

Antonisse et al. (2019)'s extensive literature review on Medicaid expansion indicated that there is a growing body of literature reporting an improvement in employment and the labor market among states that expanded. These improvements were not due to work requirements; furthermore, most current Medicaid recipients are already working (Antonisse et al., 2019; Garfield, Rudowitz, & Orgera, 2019). An example of improvements in employment that may be attributed to expansion was found within studies of people with disabilities: in Medicaid expansion states, employment among the disabled population has increased compared to non-expansion states (Hall, Shartzer, Kurth, & Thomas, 2018). This is particularly timely

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[4] Cross-sectional studies, literature reviews, difference in differences, and mixed methods were among the methodologies used.

information due to the number of states actively trying to implement work and community engagement requirements for Medicaid enrollees (Hinton et al., 2019; Kaiser Family Foundation, 2019c).   Further, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2019) reported that participants of Michigan and Ohio-based Medicaid coverage studies who had healthcare access through Medicaid expansion have found work to be easier. Closer examination of those studies found that Ohio participants also indicated that Medicaid expansion had made it easier to look for work (Kasich & Sears, 2018), and the Michigan study participants reported that Medicaid expansion had helped them perform better at work, as well as get a better job (Tipirneni et al., 2019).[5]

One dissenting study was found regarding work and Medicaid expansion. A pre-ACA study (2000-2013) of expansion versus non-expansion states indicated that high school graduate women were seven percentage points less likely to be employed than similar women in states that had not expanded Medicaid (Bradley & Sabik, 2018). These same results were not observed among men. Bradley and Sabik (2018) discuss several plausible reasons for the effects found in their study, which are all within the pre-ACA context: low-income women are less likely to be covered by employer-provided health insurance, more vulnerable to loss of insurance due to changes in marital status or family coverage, more likely to be uninsured – reported as 40% in 2013 for this population, higher premiums than men pre-ACA, and prevention from purchasing insurance due to pre-existing conditions (including pregnancy). It would be interesting to replicate this study's findings with 2014-2020 data, but the rest of the studies included in this analysis – including a robust literature review (Antonisse et al., 2019)— in addition to considering the context given for the Bradley and Sabik (2018) study findings, the author has confidence in the findings that employment is improved among low-income populations (including women) by expanding Medicaid access.

Medicaid Expansion Improves Health Care Coverage for Low Wage Workers.

Multiple states reported that expansion of Medicaid helps to cover low wage workers (including child care workers) who do not receive health insurance through their workplace— some even before expansion coverage began in many states on January 1, 2014 (Families USA & States News Service, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d, 2014e, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2015d; Families USA & Targeted News Service, 2014, 2015; Mahan, Families USA, & States News Service, 2014; McMorrow et al., 2016; Michael in Norfolk, 2018; Pettus & Associated Press State & Local Wire, 2013; Pope, 2013; Pore, 2012; Potempa, 2002; Robertson, 2019; Senate Finance, March 15, 2001, Thursday; Stewart, 2014). States that have released such reports include:

- Alabama (Families USA & States News Service, 2014a)
- Alaska (Potempa, 2002)
- Arkansas (Families USA & States News Service, 2015a)
- Colorado (Pope, 2013)
- Kansas (Families USA & States News Service, 2015b)

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[5] It is important to note that Michigan and Ohio are both expansion states, and by contrast, the majority of Southern US states did not expand Medicaid. Data indicates that many Southerners who are enrolled in Medicaid are less likely to work than Medicaid enrollees in other regions of the US (Garfield et al., 2019); however, states who did not expand Medicaid have lower thresholds for eligibility, meaning that workers with low wages who qualify for Medicaid in expansion states may not qualify for Medicaid in non-expansion states.

- Kentucky (Families USA & Targeted News Service, 2015)
- Minnesota (Families USA & States News Service, 2015c)
- Mississippi (Pettus & Associated Press State & Local Wire, 2013)
- Missouri (Families USA & States News Service, 2014c)
- North Carolina (Robertson, 2019)
- Ohio (Families USA & States News Service, 2015d)
- Pennsylvania (Families USA & States News Service, 2014b)
- Utah (Stewart, 2014)
- Tennessee (Families USA & States News Service, 2014d)
- Virginia (Families USA & States News Service, 2014e; Michael in Norfolk, 2018)
- West Virginia (Pore, 2012)
- Wyoming (Families USA & Targeted News Service, 2014).

Reporting improvement in coverage alone, data indicated an increase among low wage workers due to Medicaid expansion (Antonisse et al., 2019; Flint, 2014; Shartzer, 2018). In some cases, states who have implemented waivers, such as work requirements for receiving Medicaid, gains in coverage were compromised (Antonisse et al., 2019).

Medicaid Waiver 1115

What is Medicaid Waiver 1115?

Medicaid waiver 1115, the 'Research and Demonstration' waiver, allows for states to experiment with policies that may affect the low income population who is eligible for Medicaid (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2019a). Uses of this waiver have shifted based upon partisan priorities. For example, the waivers encouraged by some have targeted expanding or including access to Medicaid, while different leadership favored limiting access through such avenues as work and community engagement requirements (Hinton et al., 2019). Other current uses of the waiver include eligibility and enrollment restrictions; benefit restrictions, copays, healthy behaviors; behavioral health (most popular); delivery system reform; managed long-term services and supports; and 'other' targeted waivers (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2019c). With the new Biden administration, change is expected to be more inclusive for Medicaid access (Keith, 2021).

No states have specifically expanded for child care workers, but Oklahoma included nonprofit employees and other special populations in their 1115 waiver (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2019c; Oklahoma Health Care Authority, 2018a). Because many child care workers are employed by non-profit centers, the expansion to non-profit individuals who are not covered by employee-provided insurance could benefit from this type of expansion.

Why did Oklahoma use the waiver for special populations?

In 1995, the Oklahoma Health Care Authority began administrating Oklahoma's Medicaid program, and submitted its 'SoonerCare' 1115 waiver, which was approved to begin January 1, 1996 (Oklahoma Health Care Authority, 2005, 2013). The initial 1115 waiver was designed to develop and implement managed care delivery systems, as a response to state-supported research into what should and could be done to alleviate rising Medicaid enrollment and costs

(Oklahoma Health Care Authority, 2005). Over time, Oklahoma has expanded access to several groups who were not in the initial waiver (Oklahoma Health Care Authority, 2005), and among the included groups were non-profit employees (Oklahoma Health Care Authority, 2013).[6]

Although non-profit employees are entitled to this insurance plan, there seem to have been no attempts, and there are no planned efforts to enroll non-profit employees (Oklahoma Health Care Authority, 2018b; M. Thomason, 2019).[7] Thus, there are also no data to indicate the impact of waiver inclusion for non-profit employees (Oklahoma Health Care Authority, 2018b).

Medicaid Expansion would Benefit South Carolina Child Care Providers.

South Carolina child care providers' median annual salary of $19,480 does not qualify for Medicaid in a non-expansion state, but would qualify for Medicaid in an expansion state if the child care worker has a two-or-more-person household (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020b; Economic Policy Institute, 2019; Health Reform: Beyond the Basics, 2019; U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2019b). The maximum annual income for SC Medicaid eligibility is $11,671 (67% FPL) for single parents of one child (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2021b; U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2021), and standard Medicaid expansion would raise that eligibility to 138% FPL, which would be $24,040 for a single mother with one child (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2021b; U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2021). This means that $190 a year ($16 a month) keeps them from getting assistance on their access to healthcare. Both single parents with one child and single child care workers with no children would need Medicaid expansion to be at 200% FPL to qualify, which is $25,760 (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2021).

Family status of child care workers varies, but for the child care worker who is unmarried and has no children, it is worth noting that single persons (without special needs) without children in SC are ineligible for Medicaid (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2019b; Kaiser Family Foundation, 2021b). Therefore, some child care workers with children may already be eligible for Medicaid, due to the size of their household and income, but expansion of Medicaid would cover the low-income workers who cannot be covered under the current SC policy.

Current Policies Designed to Improve Child Care Wages

Improving child care wages requires a complex mix of efforts, due to the nature of how child care is funded (Gould et al., 2017; S. Thomason et al., 2018; Whitebook et al., 2018). Since

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[6]Although non-profit workers were always non-explicitly covered under SoonerCare, the expansion to non-profit employees within organizations staffed by 500 or fewer employees, and up to and including 100% FPL occurred through an amendment effective January 1, 2010 (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2019c; Leavitt Partners, 2013; Oklahoma Health Care Authority, 2013, 2018a, 2018b, 2019; M. Thomason, 2019).

[7] In conversation with Melinda Thomason, the Senior Director for Stakeholder Engagement at the Oklahoma Health Care Authority, it was revealed that there had been an emphasis on enrolling traditional Chamber of Commerce businesses and their employees into Insure Oklahoma, rather than non-profit organizations (M. Thomason, 2019).

child care is not funded directly through federal or state funds, the cost of child care is already high, and wages already make up a considerable portion of child care expenditures, it is difficult for centers to raise prices to cover wage increases as may be typical in other industries (Gould et al., 2017; S. Thomason et al., 2018; Whitebook et al., 2018). Furthermore, as previously stated, an increase in wages or benefits with the child care system as it currently is would incur greater cost to parents, many of whom cannot afford this increase (Malik, 2019). Public funding increases and child care systems improvements are necessary to improve the pay for child care workers (Gould et al., 2017; S. Thomason et al., 2018; Whitebook et al., 2018). Efforts to expand pay include local and federal advocacy; research (and publications); and programs such as Child Care and Development Block Grants (CCDBG), T.E.A.C.H., and WAGE$. Renewed federal efforts to improve child care systems, including pay, quality, affordability, and more, have been introduced in Congress via the Child Care for Working Families Act of 2019 (Child Care for Working Families Act of 2019, 2019).

Local and federal advocacy and research efforts come from many organizations such as the Center for American Progress (2017), Child Care Aware (2019), the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (2019) and its state chapters (SCAEYC in South Carolina), the Institute for Child Success (ICS) (2019), the CSCCE (2019), New America (2019), the First Five Years Fund (2019), and more[8]. Although there are many interested parties who have been working on increasing pay for child care workers, success has been limited and not as effective as would be desired. Currently, there are efforts underway to increase the federal minimum wage to $15 (Keith, 2021; The White House, 2021), which could cause additional problems for the child care industry due to the cost of running child care centers (National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance, 2015). True societal and systems change is needed to make progress in raising pay for child care workers—and a broader understanding of what child care workers do each day is needed to bolster the societal will to back up the increased investment in child care wages and benefits (McDougald Scott, 2021a).[9]

Child Care and Development Block Grants

Child Care and Development Block Grants (CCDBG grants), first enacted in 1990, provide federal money to states to fund child care vouchers for low-income families and improvements to quality and overall child care systems (First Five Years Fund, 2021; Office of Child Care, 2019). Guidelines accompanying the CCDBGs indicate that funds should be used to help with teacher compensation, but are not required to be used in that way. The money set aside for compensation improvement is limited due to the local market rates and costs of centers who receive these grants—which are by statute centers who serve low-income parents (Office of Child Care, 2019; Whitebook et al., 2014).

Teacher Education and Compensation Helps

Teacher Education and Compensation Helps, best known as T.E.A.C.H., is a national model, overseen in South Carolina by the Center for Child Care Career Development (CCCCD) (South Carolina Center for Child Care Career Development, 2019a). Nationally, 23 states are using the T.E.A.C.H. model (T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood National Center, 2019b). T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® South Carolina provides financial support for members of the

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[8] The author appreciates everyone's research and advocacy efforts on this front, but an exhaustive list is out of scope for this paper.
[9] See McDougald Scott (2021a, 2021b) for more on this.

early childhood workforce completing higher degrees. Support is available for teachers, directors, center owners, and family/group individuals working in child care to complete coursework in early childhood education (South Carolina Center for Child Care Career Development, 2019b).

This program covers between 60 and 85% of tuition costs, and participating centers are required to pay at least 10% of the credential scholarship (potentially up to 25% for associate and bachelor's level teachers), with individuals covering the final 10-20%. Teachers utilizing scholarships are required to maintain their employment at the center while working on their degree, and associate and bachelor's candidates are required to maintain employment at their sponsoring center for at least one year past their contract date (South Carolina Center for Child Care Career Development, 2019b).

Although T.E.A.C.H. is a program that provides support for continuing education among those states that use it, this should not be seen as an increase in pay. The time out of the classroom and additional money coming out of teachers' take-home pay could be seen as a short-term sacrifice for a long-term gain if pay scales are set up such that the child care provider (the teacher in this situation) will receive a pay increase when the coursework is completed. Even the long-term gain in wages for child care workers may not be a living wage.

WAGE$

WAGE$ is a program designed to provide salary supplements to early child care educators (Child Care Services Association, 2021). The money usually takes the form of stipends for furthering early childhood education or supplements for teachers who have attained educational or longevity benchmarks (T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood National Center, 2019a; Whitebook et al., 2014). WAGE$ reports a 11% average turnover rate (compared to the 13% national average), $861 average six-month supplement, and 7,374 supplement recipients in 2018-2019 (T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood National Center, 2019a). These stipends and supplements are welcome, but limited and susceptible to changing political desires (Whitebook et al., 2014).

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (2021) was signed into law on March 11, 2021. This bill provides critical support for child care (and others) due to the devastation COVID-19 has caused for the child care workforce. It provides funds for: (a) new child care providers to open; (b) centers that closed due to COVID; (c) personnel, benefits, and insurance premium pay; (d) costs for employee recruitment and retention; (e) rent and insurance related to rent or mortgage; (f) personal protective equipment and all supplies related to cleaning; (g) training and personal development for employees related to health, and safety; (h) purchases or updates of COVID-related equipment; (i) goods and services to maintain or resume child care services; (j) mental health supports for children and employees; and (k) additional Head Start funding for the above expenses. It also provides child tax credits, that will help families with costs associated with caring for children. This American Rescue Plan Act may help to persuade legislators of the importance of child care to our economy and lead them to make more permanent provisions for bolstering the child care field.

However, the provisions in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (2021) are not permanent, as many of them are set to expire on September 30, 2021. Therefore, advocacy efforts to make relevant improvements from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (2021) permanent, as well as for provisions of the American Families Act, American Families Plan, and Senator Murray's Child Care for Working Families Act (detailed below) should continue.

The Biden Administration is also currently working to develop proposals to expand enrollment and eligibility through the federal exchange on HealthCare.gov (Keith, 2021), and strides towards this were made in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (2021). In the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (2021), relief from high premiums and expanded access to enrollment in health exchanges were added, so that no one who purchases insurance on the health exchange will pay more than 8.5% of their income ($138 per month for SC child care median income). However, as noted previously, these adjustments are temporary (Huetteman, 2021). These actions will improve the low wages and access to health care for child care workers, however payment of $138 per month is still a lot of money out-of-pocket of someone who makes $19,480 a year (or $1,623 per month). Access to Medicaid would be a better solution, which would make it possible for child care workers to earn the median wage if the limit were raised to 200% FPL ($25,760 for a single person (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2021)).

American Families Act of 2021 and American Families Plan

The American Families Act of 2021 (2021), introduced on February 8, 2021, would make the fully-refundable tax credits from the American Rescue Plan Act permanent, and also establishes monthly payments of these tax credits, supporting families throughout the year. This Act upholds a central piece of the Biden Administration's American Families Plan (and American Jobs Plan), which is designed to expand upon and make more permanent the work of the American Rescue Plan Act (The White House, 2021).

One of the provisions of the American Families Plan is to provide high-quality, universal three- and four-year old preschool. Within the plan to expand preschool, teachers will be compensated at a minimum of $15, with pay scales and benefits comparable to Kindergarten teachers. The minimum wage increase raises point of concern as to whether the child care industry will be able to afford this additional expense. A reduction in turnover may help defray some of these costs of an increase, but it would take some time for child care centers to realize this savings. Passing the cost on to the parents will likely be the solution if this is the requirement, and that would make child care even more of a cost burden for families.

The American Families Plan also provides support for teachers who are pursuing their relevant degrees and credentials—and expanding the existing scholarships and supports for teachers to early childhood educators. These promising plans are currently being negotiated between the White House and Congress (Kim, DeBonsis, & Stein, 2021). The success of these proposals' passage into law is to be determined, and special attention will be paid to see what remains in them and how they are implemented.

Child Care for Working Families Act

The Child Care for Working Families Act was (re-)introduced both in the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate on April 22, 2021 and referred to the House Committee

on Education and Labor and Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, respectively (Child Care for Working Families Act H.R. 2817, 2021; Child Care for Working Families Act S. 1360, 2021). If enacted, strides would be made towards improving the state of child care and early childhood in the US . Relevant to this analysis, it would improve child care workforce compensation and training by requiring at least a living wage, as well as comparable pay with elementary school teachers of similar training and credentials (Child Care for Working Families Act H.R. 2817, 2021; Child Care for Working Families Act S. 1360, 2021). How this Act could help implement the measures of the American Families Plan is yet to be determined at the time of this article's publication.

Discussion and Recommendations

The systems that surround child care are complex, which is often the reason cited for low pay for child care workers. However, the pay and lack of benefits provided for many child care workers in SC, as well as nationally, is deeply problematic. Child care workers make less money than their similarly-qualified peers working in early childhood education, as well as less than the workforce as a whole, and are afforded fewer benefits. Raising pay is a complex solution requiring an overhaul of the early childhood education system, which will take a larger-scale plan of action and public support to implement (see McDougald Scott (2021a) or McDougald Scott (2021b) for more details). The current political climate (2021) includes a new Presidential Administration interested in improving access to child care, increasing the minimum wage to $15 an hour, and other benefits such as paid leave that would improve the working environment for child care professionals. However, the proposals set forth in the American Families Act are currently being contested in an extremely partisan environment, and it remains to be seen which parts—if any—will be passed (Kim et al., 2021). In the shorter-term, perhaps emphasis could be placed on improving benefits and workforce environments.

Healthcare for child care workers is a necessity, and current healthcare policy does not adequately cover workers who earn low wages, particularly in US states that did not expand Medicaid. While many people who are enrolled in Medicaid currently work, additional requirements and barriers to access to Medicaid only creates further burden on low wage earners who are trying to get by each day (Garfield et al., 2019). In fact, the child care crisis is keeping women out of the workforce, causing them to cut back on hours worked, or leave the workforce—a situation that has been exacerbated by COVID-19 (Dockterman, 2021; Kashen, Glynn, & Novello, 2020; Schochet, 2019).

Child care and healthcare are in conflict due to the fact that child care workers earn low wages, but do not qualify for stringent Medicaid requirements—especially in non-expansion states. As this review has demonstrated, healthcare is a requirement for child care workers to provide quality child care, and the current conditions do not provide for quality outcomes. Child care professionals who lack access to healthcare risk their own health, which also affects the health of those around them, an issue that was elevated as a concern during COVID-19. During COVID-19, child care workers reported feeling that their health was overlooked by society as their own health was reliant upon the children and families in their care following public health and safety guidelines (McDougald Scott, 2021a). Lack of attention to health on the part of children and families in their care risks the health (and potentially lives) of the child care workers, and furthermore could lead to further transmission of COVID-19. Lack of access to healthcare endangers the health of both child care professionals and society.

Child care workers are in poor health in comparison to other professionals of similar socioeconomic standing and women who do not work (Linnan et al., 2017; Otten et al., 2019; Whitaker et al., 2013). Because child care workers are not afforded benefits, which is in direct conflict with taking care of their overall wellbeing as they care for our children, high turnover rates and increased cost for healthcare due to the lack of preventive care are persistent outcomes for this population. Providing access to Medicaid one temporary fix to supplement child care income, but federal support for child care is the ultimate solution.

Discussion of Proposed Solutions

Medicaid Expansion for All

Although Medicaid expansion for all may be the best solution to benefit all workers in SC and other non-expansion states, it is not currently a politically viable option. However, putting Medicaid expansion on the ballot as a referendum in SC might succeed. Recently, a Winthrop poll indicated that 73% of South Carolinians would be supportive of expanding Medicaid (Bohatch, 2020). The difficulty is that the majority of the General Assembly, as well as the SC governor, continue to oppose Medicaid expansion, and they collectively may continue to block legislative efforts to put it on the ballot (Bohatch, 2020). As recently as 2018, Medicaid expansion was included as a platform issue in the SC governor's race, but was flatly rejected by voters as evidenced by re-election of the Republican incumbent who supported the previous popular governor who had vowed to never expand Medicaid in SC (ABC News Radio, 2013; Floyd, 2019; Sausser, 2017). However, it might be possible for South Carolina citizens to call for Medicaid expansion to be on the ballot (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2012). Further research and work are needed for citizens to put Medicaid Expansion on the ballot in SC. Other Southern and conservative-leaning states, including Florida, Mississippi, and South Dakota, have active campaigns to include Medicaid expansion on their voter ballots (Brown, 2021). These campaigns are following the example of other states (Maine, Idaho, Nebraska, Utah, Oklahoma, and Missouri) that placed Medicaid expansion on the ballot, resulting in Medicaid expansion for those states (Brown, 2021; Jaspen, 2019).

There is no current productive push for Medicaid expansion to be on the ballot in SC. For states like SC, the most effective and expedient option would be to submit an application for a Medicaid waiver 1115 to expand coverage to provide health insurance via Medicaid for child care workers.

Expand Medicaid for Child Care Workers

This policy analysis has demonstrated that Medicaid expansion for child care workers should improve their health outcomes, make it easier for them to perform their jobs, and allow them to keep approximately $1,092[10] that they may have otherwise spent on health care each year. Medicaid expansion ultimately benefits not only the workers, but also children and families, as well as ultimately all taxpaying citizens and members of society living within the state.

Currently, the South Carolina Department of Social Services (DSS), which licenses child care facilities estimates that there are 23,696 child care providers in South Carolina (SC) (Leach, 2021). This number translates to .01% of the 2,107,760 people in the SC workforce (Bureau

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[10] This number is based on the calculation provided in Table 2 for annual health care costs ($985), plus an annual cost estimate provided on healthcare.gov for a single woman, age 36, with no dependents ($1,199), averaged.

of Labor Statistics, 2020a), and expanding Medicaid would greatly benefit them. Useful data points about the overall situation for child care workers in SC and the US are provided in Table 2. The estimated number of child care workers provides a scope for how many workers are affected by the issue of low wages and scant benefit availability. The average income, poverty level to receive Medicaid, and current cost of Marketplace insurance for child care workers is included in Table 2 to demonstrate the impact of such a cost on this population. Additionally, the number of uninsured child care workers is included; this helps highlight the overall utility of Table 1: covering child care workers under a Medicaid waiver which would be impactful to the lives of child care workers and should not create a large burden for the state of South Carolina.

Table 2: *Child Care Worker Indicators at a Glance: South Carolina and the United States*

Indicator	SC	US
Number of child care workers[a]	23,696[j]	561,520[e]
Average income for child care workers	$21,000[f]	$25,510[g]
Poverty level to receive Medicaid[h]	$11,671 for single parent, one child; 67% FPL	$24,040 for single parent, one child; 138% FPL
Marketplace insurance cost for child care workers	$31.39/month; $985/year[b]	NA[c]
Uninsured child care workers	14%[d]	16%[i]

Note. FPL = Federal Poverty Limit according to U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (2021).

[a] Total includes the following occupations as defined by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment Statistics (OES): 'child care workers,' 'preschool teachers, excluding special education,' 'preschool teachers, special education,' 'education administrators: preschool/child care center programs.' These data do not include the self-employed, although home-based child care assistants, who are employees, are likely included in the 'child care worker' category. Due to the limited data available across states in the OES, state-based surveys or registries may provide more comprehensive estimates of the Early Childhood Education workforce.

[b] These numbers are based on https://www.healthcare.gov/see-plans/#/plan/results: 1 parent, 1 3-year-old, $19,570 annual income (based on 2019 data when this calculation from

healthcare.gov could be obtained), $482 subsidy for a BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina BlueEssentials Silver 14 plan.

[c] This value for the US as a whole is not applicable (NA). Each state has its own limits and allowances, and the amount also varies by state expansion status.

[d] Percentage based on percentage of sample that was uninsured from Rao and Chen (2018).

[e] Data from Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020a).

[f] Data from Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020b).

[g] Data from Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020a).

[h] 138% FPL is the Medicaid expansion level. Data from Kaiser Family Foundation (2021b); U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (2021).

[i] Data from National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team (2020).

[j] Data from SC Department of Social Services Director Michael Leach (2021).

Recommendation: Use Medicaid Waiver 1115 to Expand Healthcare Benefits to Child Care Workers

Since it is unlikely that Medicaid will be put on the ballot in South Carolina in the near future, a more immediate solution would be to apply for Medicaid Waiver 1115 to include a special population: child care workers. Such a waiver could provide health care access to child care workers who do not currently have it, as well as to those who are currently enrolled in the exchange or are paying high premiums out-of-pocket. Oklahoma originally used Medicaid waiver 1115 to expand access to health insurance for special populations before making their decision to expand Medicaid. The fact that Oklahoma was approved to use the 1115 waiver for special populations indicates that this is a possibility that could be applied in SC.

Oklahoma also originally stipulated eligibility for Medicaid coverage in their individual plan would be 250% FPL, then lowered it to 200% FPL before being required by the ACA to lower it to 100%--which would not have happened if Oklahoma had originally expanded Medicaid (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2019c; Oklahoma Health Care Authority, 2019; M. Thomason, 2019). Therefore, there is also precedent for fellow non-expansion states using the 1115 waiver for coverage of special populations at 200%, which is the minimum needed to cover low-wage child care workers regardless of household size. Single, childless child care workers making up to $31,225 would be covered if FPL is set at 250% FPL under this waiver (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2019b).

Medicaid expansion for child care workers would likely improve their health outcomes, make it easier for them to perform their jobs, and allow them to keep approximately $1,092[11] that they may have otherwise spent on health care each year. Medicaid expansion ultimately

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[11] This number is based on the calculation provided in Table 2 for annual health care costs ($985), plus an annual cost estimate provided on healthcare.gov for a single woman, age 36, with no dependents ($1,199), averaged.

benefits not only the workers, but also children and families, as well as ultimately all taxpaying citizens and members of society living within the state.

Other Groups that may be Included in Medicaid Waiver 1115.

If expanding Medicaid can provide healthcare benefits for child care workers, that coverage population also be extrapolated to other important service providers who do not typically receive (at least adequate) health care benefits or make a minimum wage. Such helping professions may include home health workers, non-profit employees, or other domestic workers (such as nannies or house cleaners) (The Hatcher Group, 2019). Actual wages for domestic workers may often go un-reported, and non-profit wages vary widely by state and sector, but recent labor statistics indicate that the US annual median wage for home health aides and personal care aides is $26,440 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020a). States may look into specifying that those in helping professions who make low wages and do not have access to healthcare benefits may be eligible for Medicaid. These are the employees who support the economy and families by doing the work in homes, and with loved ones that allows others to go to work outside of their homes each day.

Future Research

Future research could expand upon several areas. First, if Medicaid waiver 1115 for child care workers and other helping professionals is submitted, it could evaluate the health outcomes provided in this analysis, workforce environment impact, and impact on turnover rates for child care workers. Second, the potential cost-savings that may be realized due to expansion to child care providers and other low-wage workers in the helping professions should be examined. Some cost-savings may be realized through preventive care or reduced emergency department visits, as well as other improved health outcomes previously cited on pages 19-20. The saved money previously used for medical-related expenses may then be re-allocated for other programs, services, or expenses to make life for South Carolinians better. Third, benefits may include a better-prepared workforce—present and future, which would be fascinating to examine.

Improvement of Work Environments

Concrete efforts can also be taken to improve the work environments for child care workers through policy and advocacy efforts, such as: (a) identifying a sustainable source of public funding to improve wages; (b) creating a wage scale; (c) providing paid time off, planning time, predictable work schedules, adequate staffing, and a substitute pool; (d) creating guidelines for educational standards in staffing that are compliant with best practices; and (e) providing an accountability framework to make sure these items occur (Howes, Whitebook, & Phillips, 1992; Schlieber, Whitebook, Austin, & Hankey, 2019; Whitebook et al., 2018; Whitebook et al., 2014; Whitebook & Sakai, 2003).

Conclusion

There have been ongoing efforts for decades to improve the pay for child care workers—with mixed results. Progress for earning a living wage will require a systems overhaul for early education, but child care providers cannot wait for workforce environmental improvements. Action must be taken now to augment the shortage of healthcare access for child care providers.

In SC, Medicaid helps some child care workers receive access to health care, but expansion through Medicaid waiver 1115 would include many more child care workers who do not currently have access. Additionally, including other workers in the helping professions would afford some of our most valuable workers—the ones who allow us to live, work, and play more easily—the health care benefits they deserve.

Ultimately, in order to provide child care for all who need it, the US needs to consider early childhood education as a fundamental and necessary resource for all families. Like public education, child care must be considered a right for all children in the US, and supported as such. Ensuring living wages and access to health for those who provide child care is an essential component of providing quality early childhood care. We must invest in our present and future population now.

Author Bio

Amanda McDougald Scott, PhD received her doctorate from Clemson University in the Institute on Neighborhood and Family Life, Master of Science from Augusta State University in Applied Experimental Psychology, and Bachelor of Arts from the University of South Carolina in Experimental Psychology. She is a researcher, advocate, mother of a preschooler, and former candidate for County Council. Dr. McDougald Scott's background in academia; starting non-profits; community engagement; volunteering; and passion for working towards big goals using strategic, actionable steps has led her to advocate for solutions that will make life more equitable for all. Dr. McDougald Scott has an array of both interests and areas of training, and her understanding of systems—that all areas of policy must work well with together to create a more meaningful whole—allows her flexibility in her approach to different topic areas. She also has much experience with building diverse and inclusive coalitions to work towards common goals. For the past seven years, Dr. McDougald Scott has been a community and policy researcher, which fuels her advocacy for early childhood with a special focus on child care. Kindergarten readiness is workforce readiness for children, families, and employers.

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The (Un)Making of a Worker Poet: The Case of Md Mukul Hossine and Migrant Worker Writings in Singapore[12]

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Abstract

This article discusses the migrant worker poet Md Mukul Hossine. Showing Mukul as the representative migrant worker poet also severely restricted and complicated his process of 'becoming' a poet. From a Marxist standpoint, the Singaporean literati's dismissal of Mukul reveals the predicament of being a working-class writer in today's neoliberal market. The particular bourgeoise 'production mode' of working-class literature in Singapore first 'made', then 'consumed' and ultimately 'condemned' Mukul. First, I examine the publication process of Mukul's poetry and its success followed by a series of problems. In the second section, I offer a close reading of Mukul's poems understanding Mukul's poetics and struggles as a migrant worker poet as his poetry is seldom examined in literary criticism. Finally, I argue that the representation of migrant workers writers such as Mukul is problematic due to the nature of the whole system: how they are empowered in such a context equally does harm to them. This mode again reproduces the systematic structure of power hegemony and social inequality through the field of literature.

Keywords

Working-class poetry, migration, neoliberalism, Singapore

Introducing Md Mukul Houssine and his success in Singapore

When discussing migrant worker writings in contemporary Singapore, it is impossible to neglect Md Mukul Hossine's works and his experiences as a poet. Md Mukul Hossine was born in Bangladesh in 1989 and arrived in Singapore in 2008. He worked in the construction sector. His first poetry collection, *Me Migrant*, published in 2016 by Singaporean publishing house Ethos Books, gained massive media coverage and a relatively wide readership since its publication. Mukul thus won a reputation as *the* representative of migrant worker poets in Singapore. In the following year, Mukul published his second poetry collection *Braving Life* with HealthServe, a non-profit organization supporting migrant workers in Singapore. He also published a self-sponsored poetry collection *Unfulfilled Desire* in Bengali.

The production of *Me Migrant* was a complicated process. It was originally written by Md Mukul Hossine in Bengali, then translated into English by Fariha Imran and Farouk Ahammed, and finally 'transcreated' by the established Singaporean writer Cyril Wong. There is no detailed information on the first translators in the book. However, an editorial note in the book,

introduces Cyril Wong as 'a Singapore Literature Prize-winning poet…a finalist for the Singapore Book Awards…a past recipient of the National Arts Council's Young Artist Award for Literature' (Hossine 2016 p.7) Wong offers a brief explanation of the methodology he employed, stating that

> I have done my best to mirror the intriguing combination of Mukul's unpretentious voice and his artistic aspirations through my *transcreation*. My frequent meetings and conversations with Mukul were essential in helping me decide not only how the translated poems might read or sound, but also how they should flow into each other.

As literary critic Richard Angus Whitehead indicated: ' 'Transcreation' is a word unlisted in the Oxford English Dictionary, but from Wong's 'Editorial Note' to 'Me Migrant' the word in this context seems to cover not only translating but also 'rewriting and editing'' (Whitehead 2017). Thanks to Wong's efforts, Mukul's poetry was able to reach more readers in Singapore and the English-speaking world. Next to a wider readership, the book also greatly appealed to the media and was promoted in social events, such as poetry readings and talks for different audiences, including academics just as myself who are incapable of reading his works in their original language.

Mukul's second book, *Braving Life* contains 24 poems in English, first translated from Bengali by Swagata Sen Pillai and then again 'transcreated' by Cyril Wong. Interestingly, the book also includes Chinese translations of all poems face to face to the English versions. On the acknowledgments page of the book, titled 'gratitude', the founder of HealthServe Goh Wei Leong declares that 'we are equally grateful to the students of Nanyang Girls' High School, who readily took on the challenge of translating Mukul's poems from English to Mandarin Chinese' (Hossine 2017).

Before delving into Mukul's poetry , I would like to discuss Mukul's story of being a poet in Singapore, focusing especially on his relations with the circle of people who helped to produce his works, and the dynamics between Mukul and Singaporean literati. In fact, the path of 'making' Mukul as a 'successful' migrant worker poet is rather bent, if not controversial.

Right after the publication of *Me Migrant*, Mukul was introduced and praised in various media including local newspapers and TV shows. He also attended many literary events with local politicians and writers. However, things changed very rapidly for the young poet. In the author's note of *Braving Life*, Mukul sorrowfully states that 'I have always tried to express my emotions in words – in poetry. I have faced a lot of criticism too because of this, but my writing gave me peace. In this foreign land I have lost my job, and I have been ridiculed and berated for my literary passion' (Hossine 2017 p.3). Furthermore, in the preface written by Cyril Wong, it is mentioned that, 'at the same time, the poet no longer has a work permit until he is able to land another place of employment' (Hossine 2017 p. 9).

During a conversation I had with a friend of Mukul in Singapore in January 2018, she told me the reason why Mukul lost his job and work permit. Mukul's ex-boss thought he had gotten too 'famous' to work for him. It concerned the boss that Mukul had made too many connections with people in literary circles and media industries. Obviously, the boss did not want to draw attention to his construction industry business and potentially expose it to public scrutiny about working or living conditions of migrant workers. Finding it very difficult to find any job as a

migrant worker once he had become famous, Mukul had to go back to his home in Bangladesh in 2017[13].

Similar to MD Sharif Uddin[14] and many other migrant workers, it seems that being rapidly translated into English was Mukul's 'entrance ticket' for being read and recognized. Mukul's case begs the question, however, what price a migrant worker may have to pay for such recognition? What may happen to them and their writings once they have been given a public stage?

Unable to read Mukul's poetry in its original language, it is somewhat disquieting for me to attempt analyzing his poems after their 'transcreation' in English by Wong, especially after having witnessed Mukul's rather overwhelming reading in Bengali. I keep wondering, what is the gap between what I read in the printed book and what I heard from his voice? Is there something lost or is there something gained in this process of translation and transcreation? I am not, however, making the point here that poetry cannot be translated or studied in translation. Having gratitude towards the translators for their hard work, I yet suggest that in the case of migrant workers writing today in Singapore, the act of translating demands specific attention. While we discuss and study poetry collections such as *Me Migrant*, it is a necessity for us to bear in mind the 'production' process of the book, and the complicated power dynamics behind the translation, transcreation, and publication.

Classic translation issues have already been examined by other scholars who studied Mukul's poetry. For instance, Whitehead reminds us in a general manner that, 'we are still some way from if not wholly, then acceptably satisfactory translations of Bengali migrant poetry in Singapore. Simply, the majority of translators lack equal proficiency in both Bengali and English language and culture' (Whitehead 2017). In addition to this concern, he also reveals that the migrant worker poets themselves are not fully convinced by and satisfied with the English translation of their works.

To a significant extent, the 'transcreation' of Mukul's works by Cyril Wong reminds me of the collaboration between Tan Kok Seng[15] and Austin Coates[16]. Both Md Mukul Hossine and Tan Kok Seng, as working-class writers who started writing in their native language, finally published literary works in English with the help of English-speaking professionals, or elites, in Singapore. Both Wong and Coates were impressed by the writings and enthralled by the working-class life experience of the authors they translated, although they were dealing with different literary forms, one with autobiography and the other with poetry.

After almost five decades, it seems that the narrative power of a colonial British writer who translated a Singaporean coolie has been passed on to an accomplished Singaporean poet rewriting a Bangladeshi migrant worker. From the perspective of the working-class, it may be asked if there is any shift of a power dynamic here at all? Has there been any change of the situation of 'subalterns who cannot speak' in their mother tongue? It may seem that along with

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[13] In Singapore, the migrant workers can only stay with a valid work-permit issued by the government.

[14] Md Sharif Uddin is a migrant worker writer in Singapore. I have discussed his work in Zhang (2020).

[15] Tan Kok Seng (1939-) is a working-class writer from Singapore. His works include *Son of Singapore* (1972), *Man of Malaysia*(1974), *Eye on the World*(1975), *Three Sisters of Sz*(1979), and the Chinese edition of *Son of Singapore*, *Xinjiapo Zai* 《新加坡仔》(1985). Tan's books are all published with the support of Austin Coates.

[16] Austin Coates (1922-1997) was a British colonial civil servant and author of many books including fictional works such as *City of Broken Promises* (1967) and *The Road* (1959) and historical books such as *A Macao Narrative* (1978) and *Macao and the British, 1637–1842* (1988).

the progress of the nation, the only thing that changed for the working-class writer is that instead of needing an English-language patron with a colonial background, they now need a Singaporean English-language writer with a post-colonial background. Can this be regarded as a real transfer of power?

In order to reflect on the production of working-class literature from Singapore, with both Tan and Mukul in mind, we can bring to the table what Bassnett and Trivedi described as the 'shameful history of the role of translation.' They observed that 'the close relationship between colonization and translation has come under scrutiny; we can now perceive the extent to which translation was for centuries a one-way process, with texts being translated *into* European languages for European consumption, rather than as part of a reciprocal process of exchange' (Bassnett &Trivedi 1999 p.5). In the light of these remarks, we may ask at this point if the translation or transcreation of migrant worker poetry into English in Singapore today still parallels a colonial one-way process where the literature of the 'subaltern' is merely propped up and ornamented for bourgeoise consumption? The answer, I am afraid, may be a yes. And here I offer two major reasons for this affirmative anwer.

Firstly, on a rather large scale, migrant worker writings served the function of *showcasing* the life of migrant workers in Singapore for the Singaporeans. As discussed somewhere else[17], there is a huge number of migrant workers in Singapore in various industries. Yet, ironically, at the same time they remain somehow 'invisible' for many locals. Given this situation there is an overriding idea that the migrant worker writings '…offer readers a glimpse into the thoughts, hopes, and dreams of Singapore's invisible workforce' (Lim 2017). More specifically, as the founder of HealthServe Goh Wei Leong remarked about Mukul's poetry, 'through his writing, Mukul has both inspired us and given us insight into the life of migrant workers in Singapore.' He adds: 'I am positive that this collection of poems will help us move towards this same end – that us in Singapore learn to appreciate our guest workers more' (Hossine 2017 p.71). In this way, under the umbrella of benevolent intentions and good wishes, it seems that the writings of the migrant workers are mainly endorsed for 'us' Singaporeans to learn about (and thereby distinguish ourselves from) the migrant 'them.' 'Their' writings are produced for 'our' curiosity, 'our' knowledge, and 'our' sympathy.

Tied to such 'showcasing' is a tendency of romanticizing the hard labor of the migrant workers by adoringly equating them to the founding generation of the Singaporeans. This fosters a nostalgic sentiment. When Md Mukul Hossine approached Ethos Books for publication opportunities, the company's founder Fong Hoe Fang was amazed by his writings. For Fong, Mukul's poetry is striking because, as he says, 'I am reminded of some Singapore pioneers who came from China and built a new Singapore, yet never lost their culture and love for the country of their birth and the memories there.'[18] Actually, Fong's opinion is not exceptional. In March 2019 when I attended the 'Migrant Heroes' Festival'[19], a Singaporean official guest speaker for the event also remarked in his speech that the migrant workers reminded him of the Singaporean pioneers who industriously built the country with toiling labor. In line with such nostalgia, he declared: 'I salute you for your hard work for Singapore'. The speech echoed the

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[17] See Zhang (2020).
[18] See: https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/foreign-worker-who-published-book-started-by-scribbling-poetry-on-bags-of-cement
[19] It is organized by Sama Sama, an NGO seeking to 'redefine the narrative of migrant workers as unconventional leaders. In collaboration with NGO HealthServe, the campaign guides the public to see migrant workers in a different light and as more than their roles in Singapore'.

sentiments Teo You Yenn reflects on in her book about the dominant narrative of the nation embraced by the Singaporean middle-class:

> This is the story we tell ourselves about ourselves: Singapore became in a matter of a few decades a shining Global City. We were poor and now we are rich. We had no natural resources and now we can eat whatever we want, buy whatever we want, right in our own city. We were uneducated and now our children score among the highest in the world on standardized tests. We are safe, we are clean, we are amazing. We are amazing. We are amazing (Teo 2019 p.43).

This national narrative excludes the migrant workers from the 'contemporary us.' The logic rather is that 'we worked hard then and we salute you for working hard for us now.' Inhuman working conditions can be normalized and severe institutional policies restricting the rights of migrant workers become acceptable once platforms such as festivals for migrant workers are established to express the Singaporean gratitude. By defining 'the other', namely the migrant workers, the narrative at the same time still contributes to a Singaporean national identity of 'us'.

The second reason for my conclusion that certain colonial power structures are maintained in the production and reception of migrant worker literature in Singapore today was formed after watching a short documentary[20] released by CNA Insider[21] in 2019 and produced by Goh Chiew Tong and Ray Yeh. Titled ''He got too famous': A Construction Worker Turned Poet Pays the Price', the 13:24 minutes video documents Mukul's story after he went back to Bangladesh. It was partially filmed in his hometown Patgram and partially in Singapore. In the video, Mukul talks about his double life as a migrant worker and a fledgling poet in Singapore. He also talks about an exhibition of his paintings at his home in Bangladesh timed for the CNA filming (although his paintings are hardly shown in the video).

What astounded me most and what I intend to discuss here is how in the CNA video Cyril Wong, supported by Cai Yinzhou[22] who also had helped to promote Mukul as a writer in the first place, bluntly comments about Mukul's supposed 'fault' as a migrant worker poet in Singapore who has too much 'ego'. I consider their comments critical since, on the one hand, they were the ones who had 'empowered' Mukul to grow into a celebrated migrant poet, while, on the other hand, their very way of producing Mukul as the representative migrant worker poet also severely restricted and complicated his process of 'becoming' a poet. More importantly, from a Marxist standpoint, their dismissal of Mukul reveals the predicament of being a working-class writer in today's neoliberal market. The particular bourgeoise 'production mode' of working-class literature in Singapore first 'made', then 'consumed' and ultimately 'condemned' Mukul.

A large part of the video consists of interviews with Cyril Wong and Cai Yinzhou (who is credited as Mukul's confidant in Singapore in the documentary). Having witnessed Mukul's

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[20] See: https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/cnainsider/migrant-poet-construction-worker-mukul-singapore-bangladesh-11817978
[21] CNA is an English language news channel based in Singapore and founded in 1999.
[22] Cai Yinzhou is the founder of Geylang Adventures. He is actively engaged with migrant workers in Singapore. The website of Geylang Adventure states: 'We believe Geylang Adventures to be a platform for bottom-up initiative in changing social norms and perception. This is done through a series of pop-up social initiatives involving ordinary Singaporeans who choose to do a little extra'. See: http://www.geylangadventures.com/about-us/

successful and quick transformation after his first book's publication along with his constant struggles of going back to the construction industry, Wong reflects, 'I think the worst part about this experience was watching Mukul's ego basically explode with the fame. He thought as long as he was famous, every door would open for him, he wouldn't have to do construction anymore'(Goh & Yeh 2019 05:21). Cai sees the same problematic aspect, stating that, 'He doesn't belong in construction. He is so articulate, he's so expressive. But that said, it is only on merit as a migrant worker that he is here. He should do that well before he even does anything else like poetry' (Goh & Yeh 2019 06:31). It seems that for Wong and Cai, although Mukul published poetry, he should not have been eager to become famous as a poet but stick to his original status, that is, remain a migrant worker.

Wong's view echoes my point that the translation of migrant worker writings in Singapore largely serve as a postcolonial one-dimensional process for Singaporean bourgeoise consumption, since Mukul's identity is essentially petrified only as a migrant worker and not as someone who should claim poetic subjectivity. More interestingly, Wong's and Cai's statements also reveal that poetry (or literature in a broader sense) is regarded by them as something that does not truly befit a migrant worker and should not be prioritized in a worker's life. It seems that both Wong and Cai internalized and normalized to an extent the national policy and institutional regulations for migrant workers in Singapore.[23]

Reflecting on the fact that Mukul had to go back to Bangladesh when he was no longer able to find someone willing to employ him in Singapore, Cai states: 'The consequence of his action is that he has let his family suffer financially, compared to successful migrant workers who have come and gone, he has lost out'(Goh & Yeh 2019 09:36). Here, Cai refers to the fact that Mukul's father borrowed around 20,000 Singapore dollars over the nine years to make it possible for Mukul to work in Singapore. Mukul, as almost all the migrant workers, had to pay most of this money to the agency through which he attained his job[24]. Cai's reflection shows a rather mainstream Singaporean misperception that migrant workers become 'successful' (in Cai's words) and rich by working in Singapore. In the article 'Myth and Facts: Migrant Workers in Singapore', Charan Bal recapitulates three main myths about migrant workers in Singapore, and among them, 'migrant workers will be rich when they return home' is the first. According to his research, 'In Singapore, it is, in fact, possible for migrant workers to become wealthy upon returning home. However, due to the nature of recruitment systems and government regulations, such outcomes are highly unlikely due to a number of reasons' (Bal 2017).

Whereas Cai's view is based on a misperception of the reality faced by migrant workers in Singapore, Wong directly accuses Mukul of being immature due to his wish to escape poverty while being a poet. In one part of the video, he says:

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[23] 'They are deprived of the opportunity to settle down in the country and are not allowed to bring family members with them here. They are not allowed to change jobs and must leave the country when their contracts end or are terminated.' See: https://newnaratif.com/research/myths-and-facts-migrant-workers-in-singapore/

[24] 'Bangladeshi construction workers pay an average of S$8,000-10,000 (at the time, US$ 6,126-7,657) – the equivalent of at least ten months of their potential wages in Singapore – to secure a job in Singapore. Part of the payment goes to employment agents and sub-agents in Bangladesh while the remainder is shared between the employer – in the form of kickbacks – and employment agents and their runners in Singapore (HOME and TWC2 2010, 10). Foreign workers and their families thus incur huge debts to secure jobs in Singapore and other labour-receiving countries. Workers unable to repay their loans face severe consequence' (Ong 2014 p.446).

'Whether you come from a third world country or first world country, as long as you decide to be an artistic practitioner of any kind, you're not going to be a millionaire. But with Mukul, he has this *strange childlike innocence* that as long as he was a famous poet, he will be rich, he will be able to take care of his parents, he will be able to build his home in Bangladesh, as long as he became famous' (Goh & Yeh 2019 09:50, my emphasis).

Wong's description of Mukul as 'childlike' sounds rather condescending. His judgement is especially confounding when taking into account that he 'transcreated' Mukul's poem 'The Labourer's Lament.' In this poem, included in *Braving Life*, Mukul writes:

I have wept in helpless hunger
No one stopped to see
Bitter tears have swept my cheeks
Because I didn't have ten cents on me
The streets of Kakibuki know how pain fills my days
How crushed, I know, under my father's debt
I cannot repay

Another time, another life, had me weep for grain
I step out in the world today with love to gain
I have no love for money, my friend, don't want a mansion grand
I forget my pain to weep for men and roam in foreign land

Even if he worked through Mukul's poems in a literary sense, it seems difficult for Wong to grasp the existential state of a migrant worker like Mukul whose life is constituted by 'hunger' and 'debt' while working in a 'foreign land'. Mukul's more than understandable wish to advance his exploited life to a better condition, if only by means of being a recognized poet, is regarded as both too innocent and egotistic by Wong. In this poem, lines such as: 'I have no love for money, my friend, don't want a mansion grand' directly challenge Wong's assumption that Mukul is longing to become a 'millionaire' through artistic practice.

Even more worryingly, Wong further suggests: 'I would want Mukul to think less in terms of his ego, and more in terms of how he can give back to the community, and how he can grow as a poet, and as a human being, because those two things are not separate' (Goh & Yeh 2019 12:04). Such a moralist demand from a bourgeoise, well-established perspective not only dismisses Mukul's artistic contributions as a working-class poet, but also reveals a hypocritical aspect of the literature field Wong is embedded in. If we follow Marx's idiom famously included in *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, 'It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness' (Marx 2010 p.92)[25], we gain an understanding that, as a matter of fact, Mukul's

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[25] As Marx explained, 'In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness' (Marx 2010 p.92).

life conditions as a migrant worker are not determined by how he may 'grow as a 'poet' or in terms of how he may 'grow as a human' as Wong advises him to. In reality, such 'growth' is for him limited by the material life conditions he must endure. I quote Marx's explanation on social relation here to contest Wong's view (which I believe is not uncommon among Singapore literati) of Mukul as an overly ambitious poet to full of himself and offer a different perspective for understanding Mukul's condition and that of migrant worker writers in general.

Wong's accusation of Mukul as having a 'strange childlike innocence' deserves some further discussion, since, even if unintended, it reflects a certain prejudice informing Wong's views and also points to some literary aspects of Mukul's and other migrant workers' texts. It is interesting to note that in migrant worker writings, there is indeed a certain tendency of not fully embracing the Western 'enlightenment' ideal of the 'adult,' and a kind of urge of wanting to be a child, or, to be childish. Noticeably, Mukul, and other migrant worker writers often link the childhood and being a child to dear homeland, happy memories, and a sense of self-actualization. In a way, the harsh adult life as a migrant worker reinforces their imagination of an alternative life. For instance, in one of Omar Faruque Shipon[26]'s mini stories published in *Migrant Life: Stories of Reverist*, the protagonist declares:

> 'I went to the cash counter for paying and bought two cones of ice-cream for us. My intention was to lick ice-cream and to talk with him. I sometimes eat ice cream like a child. I eat chocolate too in that manner. Whatever my age is, I never lost the kid in me. I believe everyone has a kid inside their heart which they enjoy sometimes. Sometimes they enjoy the show of being a kid. That's why, many of us behave childishly some time. We are normal human beings, because we have this kid in us' (Shipon 2019 p. 75).

Here, Shipon shows his embrace of childishness in one's life. Being a child in migrant worker writings is often related to a state of being carefree and happy. It is a way for them to escape the exploitation of capitalism and the despair of their lived reality.

Both in Mukul and Sharif's writings, traces of a 'child' can often be noticed. When Mukul dedicates a selection of his poems to his mother and family he situates himself as a beloved child. While he experiences loneliness and pain as a migrant worker in Singapore, he imagines himself as a 'child' longing for kindness and affection. For Sharif, the state of childhood represents a different world apart from the one where he has to toil and suffer. In his poem 'The Call' (Sharif 2017 p.121), he starts the poem with a short stanza:

> Be with me on my childhood river
> just you and me
> and our sailboat too!

The 'childhood river' brings him to an existential mode of being 'pure' and 'true', and it represents a way to freedom when he suggests, 'let's lose our way. Will you?' However, Sharif converses the tone of the poem rapidly, presenting an opposite picture:

> …Maybe love has
> been distinguished,

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[26] Omar Faruque Shipon is a migrant worker writer from Bangladesh currently working in a shipyard in Singapore as senior safety coordinator.

maybe dreams are
dead. Survival, greed,
money; greed again.
These are the only things that interest you now.

Here, it seems that Sharif's 'childhood river' is replaced by a different reality 'now', where only 'greed' is stressed. The inclination towards 'having a child in us' and returning to the childhood in migrant worker writings speak to what Pheng Cheah encapsulated in these words: 'Global capitalism, however, incorporates peoples and populations into the world-system by tethering them to Western modernity's unrelenting march of progress and capitalist time and violently destroying other worlds and their temporalities' (Cheah 2016 p.19). The migrant worker writers I have discussed above offer us an alternative 'world' through the lens of a 'child' which differs from 'Western modernity's unrelenting march of progress and capitalist time'. While Western modernity champions progress and agency, the migrant worker writers long to return to a position where a glimpse of humanity and love can be located.

Coming back to Wong's comments at this point, it becomes clear that neither Wong nor Cai have any radical disagreement with or critical reflection toward the fact that migrant worker poets are badly exploited both economically and institutionally. Instead, they make the neoliberalist suggestion that Mukul ought to 'grow as a poet and as a human being' so that he will be able to 'give back to the community'. Further below in the next session when offering a critique of this 'mode' in which Mukul was 'made', I will revisit this neoliberal context which 'showcases' migrant worker writers. But before doing this, I wish to proceed with discussing Mukul's poetry in more detail.

Getting to know Mukul's Poetry: *Me Migrant* and *Braving Life*

Mukul mines the agony and loneliness of the life of a migrant worker with poems that shimmer with love, family, and religion. Most of the poems in his first poetry collection *Me Migrant* speak in a rather sad and lost tone, exploring his solitude and rootlessness as a migrant worker in Singapore. He also writes extensively on homesickness and his longing for empathy and kindness. One of the most poignant poems in this collection also titled 'Me Migrant' strikingly portraits the life of a migrant worker:

Me Migrant
Live overseas
Thousand thousand miles away

Me Migrant
Beyond borders
Mislaying smiles
Dawn to dusk the dawn again

Bearing sighs and a cry
inner heart
Love, compassion, kindness
Lose their meaning
Be careful: no one here
And nobody
To see and know such pain

> Me Migrant
> Live outdoors
>
> Outside from you

Reading the poem, one can easily sense a migrant worker's suffering from Mukul's plain and direct language, describing on the one hand the reality of the harsh working conditions, and on the other hand the loss and despair of his inner world. The poem ends with a symbolic line, emphasizing the marginalized and forgotten position of the migrant workers in the Singaporean society by using the words 'outdoors' and 'outside'. The poem is short and yet it registers different layers of voices. Starting by speaking from a 'me' perspective, it describes the experience of a migrant worker eager to show his migrant life. The eagerness transits to a compelling and solemn tone and then returns to the 'I', warning that 'Be careful: no one here / And nobody / To see and know such pain'. Readers immediately encounter a sense of frustration and loss. Yet the poet proceeds further to accompany the frustration with a note of accusation, when the voice speaks to 'you', claiming that 'me migrant / Live outdoors / Outside from you'. This claim marks the highlight of the poem, showing, as aforementioned, the migrant workers' marginalized position and exclusion from taking part in the Singaporean society.

In Mukul's poem 'Mother', following 'Me Migrant', the tone of impediment and frustration is even intensified:

> Worn and decayed life
> Surrounded by the thorny wire
> I stand still like a beggar
> A shadow of sorrow
> in every pulsation
> A long time I fail to see
> My mother's tenderly smiling face

This stanza typifies Mukul's poetry to a great extent. Two central emotions recur in this poem, that is, pain caused by the 'worn and decayed' reality and emotional longing for tenderness and motherly love. The poem further reveals an existential crisis of the migrant poet when he concludes the poem with two devastating lines:

> Life abroad
> Is really a jail

These lines in a way contest a trend of globalization where 'life abroad' may be represented as mobility and multiculturism. For migrant workers like Mukul, life in a foreign land compares to 'jail' and is associated with total confinement and alienation.

Interestingly, the ethos of the book is not wholly consistent. There are two fractures in it, one relating to the nature of the publication and one to the subaltern position of the migrant worker poet.

First, the structure of the book is strange. In the middle of the book, a section titled 'Pieces Together' is inserted, including an introduction to HealthServe by Tan Lai Yong and three

poems by student volunteers at the Healthserve community clinic. These poems reflect an attempt to show that the students have a concern for migrant workers. It seems that the HealthServe community clinic wants to display its part in Mukul's 'book formation and life' (in Tan's words in the introduction). Such insertions further reveal the power dynamics behind the publication of the book of a migrant worker poet.

Second, Mukul's poetry diverges time and again from his dismay and predicament as a migrant worker in Singapore. In poems such as 'Singapore's Golden Jubilee' and 'Closing Adoration', Mukul adopts an uplifting and laudatory tone, speaking highly of Singapore and its political leader. In 'Singapore's Golden Jubilee', the last stanza says:

> Oh, praiseworthy Singapore,
> you're rooted in the heart of citizens;
> you're the home of pride;
> you're a dreamland;
> you're shelter
> for all us foreign workers.
> That's why we must always
> sing and sing for you.

Quite different from other poems, one may find it surprising (if not eerie) to see Mukul embracing Singapore as the 'shelter' of the migrant workers. Moreover, he affirms that 'we *must always* sing and sing for you' (my emphasis). Obviously, this poem speaks in a very divergent voice and expresses Mukul's admiration of 'praiseworthy' Singapore. Such lines can be also found in the 'closing adoration' where the poet chants for 'Mr. Lee', namely, Lee Kuan Yew: 'You're forever / There is the work of every class of people / In every heartbeat / In my closing adoration oh great leader'. These lines remind us of Md Sharif Uddin's plea concerning the publication of his book: 'No hurt feelings, please!' In a similar vein, one may argue that Mukul shares the concern about exposing his poetry in this way. As Whitehead observed, consciously or unconsciously, the poets 'adopted a politic strategy (that perhaps we all adopt in this place, this climate infected with something vaguely akin to fear) by editing and policing themselves' (Whitehead 2017). Mukul's drastic twist toward self-policing in this poetry collection can be easily seen when he replaces a description of Singapore as a 'jail' where he badly suffers from economical exploitation and emotional alienation with one of Singapore as a 'shelter' which all migrant workers have to praise.

However positive, I still found Singaporean writer Theophilus Kwek's review[27] of Mukul's book quite disturbing. He thinks that Mukul's poems on Singapore and Bangladesh show 'a sense of cosmopolitan openness, and their permeability to a transcultural traveller like him' (Kwek 2016). That Kwek equates Mukul's migration with a 'cosmopolitan' and 'transcultural' experience appears to be somehow flimsy and perfunctory. The review seems to reflect a quite mechanical neoliberalist portrayal of an 'upper-class' way of migration. In the poem 'Living in Pain', Mukul writes lines such as this one: 'I am a pathless traveller.' Here, we cannot sense any 'cosmopolitan openness,' but only pain.

Compared to *Me Migrant*, Mukul's second poetry collection *Braving Life* is more consistent, both in its structure and ethos. It includes 24 poems. Mukul's sensibility and poetic power in language are revealed between his lines. A strong sense of despair and longing for 'home' steer

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[27] See: https://singaporereviewofbooks.org/2016/05/26/me-migrant/

again into his poems, especially when 'home' is embodied as his mother. Interestingly, all the poems are narrated from an 'I' perspective, which by and large unveils Mukul's stringent desire of 'speaking' and claiming his subjectivity through poetry. Also, the 'I' voice poignantly demands 'ears' to listen. In line with the homesickness of the poems of *Me Migrant*, some poems in this collection further explore his existential crisis under difficult circumstances. In the poem 'Braving Life' for example, he writes that:

> Sometimes I think I shall become a *gypsy*
> Unmasking the disguise of polite society.
> Power and position: for them, such birth rights.
> Forgetting righteousness and compassion
> Like sharpened knives.

Here, 'a gypsy' represents Mukul's wish for divorcing from the pain he suffers and a yearning for freedom and un-belonging to his current being. It also shows his urge of contesting the existing 'polite society'. Meanwhile, in this verse he portrays a 'them' to show readers a vivid contradiction in social relations between the oppressor, those who have 'power and position,' and the oppressed who yearn for freedom, like the 'I'. Moreover, in the following verse, the lines quickly intensify the brutality of such a relation:

> Like a newborn, I analyze their cruelty.
> Helpless, I lose my words.
> Tears no longer run.
> Blood searing my veins.
> I want to fling everything away. I want a bloodbath.
> But Mother comes into my mind.

For the oppressed subject 'I' the suppression is overpowering. The reality leaves the 'I' only in a state of being 'helpless'. The verbs change from 'I analyze' to 'I lose', and to a more passive yet aggressive tone: 'I want to fling everything away'. The linguistic transformation in a way portrays the process of alienation for the subaltern workers. Here, the metaphor 'I' like 'a newborn' forms an acute contrast with the 'them' who are like 'sharpened knives', revealing the savageness of the exploitation. A twist appears in the last line, where a 'but' leads to a deeper emotional confession:

> I remember a child's voice, Father, a wife's gentle words.
> I weep silently in the restroom—eyes exploding hibiscuses,
> a headache that kills me. I reach for Panadol.

Like many other migrant poets, Mukul continually seeks comfort and love in his home in Bangladesh; for him it has an aura of sweetness. For example, motherly love is a returning motif in his poems, such as in 'Oh Mother', 'Heart', and 'Child'. While he encounters such an ordeal in Singapore, he harbors in himself the memory of his mother and lover to erase his pain. Yet, even such comfort cannot help. He has to proceed to physical medicine: ' I reach for Panadol'. However short and plain, this poem highlights the predicament of a worker in our society today who can only 'reach for' a pill to remove his pain temporarily.

The word 'pain' keeps recurring in Mukul's poetry. The pains he expresses are both physical and psychological. The amounts of workload torture his body, and he states that the body is

always 'exhausted'[28]. There is a poem in this collection titled 'exhaustion' which offers a series of detailed descriptions of the physical sufferings of a worker: 'hemorrhaging heart', 'sickening thirst', and 'tear-sated eyes'. Mukul is sensitive and observant as a poet. Apart from writing about his own emotions and experiences, he catches the life of other marginalized groups in Singapore: the tissue-paper sellers and cleaning ladies. In his poem 'Atman', he writes:

> I speak of the tissue-paper seller
> who sits at the M.R.T station.
> I speak of those with cancer
> who haven't lost hope.
> Those who retain their humanity
> do not beg for money—
> …
> Sometimes, at work, I see
> the seventy or eighty-year-old Aunty
> searching for cartons in bins.
> Eyes wet, I am speechless.
> My aged parents rush to mind—a childhood forgotten—
> and how they struggled exactly like this
> for me.

This poem is particularly interesting in the context of working-class literature from Singapore. In the 1970s, as a Singaporean working-class writer, Chong Han (1945-) often shed light on the migrant workers who toiled hard in Singapore. For instance, he writers about workers from India in 'Indian Workers[29]':

> In the city,
>   industrial area,
> paving roads, dredging………
> in the winds and storms,
>   under the hot sun,
> in the thunderous roar of machines,
> your traces of laboring are everywhere.
>
> a piece of bedding,
> a few pieces of old newspaper,
> under the verandas,
> in the shabby lanes,
> home everywhere home nowhere.

Here, we find that working-class writers, such as Chong Han and Mukul, though writing in very different periods and influenced by different ideologies, are still establishing a way of solidarity from below. Both poets are concerned with the life condition of the working-class beyond a national perspective. While they portray a vivid picture of the working people, they both cannot help but questioning; Chong Han asks: 'Why the toiling masses / share the same fate with you?', and Mukul asks: 'I see his reddened face and wonder / What is this life?' We can see these questions as resistant voices challenging social inequality. The answers to these

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[28] In his poem 'the migrant's love', he also writes: 'body exhausted by a busy city/ I write a poem for you'.
[29] The translation is mine.

questions, however, display a rather contrasting ethos of two working-class poets. Chong Han concludes his poem with uplifting lines, he promises to the migrant workers:

> Yet,
>
> you don't need to be disappointed.
> Faith,
>   ideal……
> unite with the waves of struggle of toiling masses.
> Together they push the wheel of history leaping forward,
> Spring of happiness will certainly come.

Similar to some of his other poems from this period, Chong Han conveys hope and faith in his concluding lines. He is not only hopeful towards a 'spring of happiness', moreover, he believes in the eventual victory of the working-class.

On the contrary, Mukul's poems ends in a very pessimistic and gloomy tone,

> People in the narrow lanes:
> no one looks, no one hears the sorrow of forgotten folk.
> They decorate their lives with colours
> of Likes and Dislikes. The gasp in love's ocean.
> Those days lie forgotten; time lies unattended—
> a tiny signboard, a flute, tissue paper, that wheelchair…
> All that they possess.

Mukul sees himself in the 'forgotten folk', identifying with the life of those marginalized Singaporeans. He registers the indifference and brutality of society: 'no one looks, no one hears the sorrow of the forgotten folk'. This powerfully contradicts the mainstream narrative that migrant workers 'cannot speak' as subalterns. It is not the case that workers cannot speak but rather that 'no one' listens to them. Unlike Chong Han, Mukul's poem expresses neither hope nor faith, but despair and loss. It deepens our understanding of how rampant capitalism alienates and confines the workers. Moreover, it vividly displays the transformations of working-class poetry in the context of Singapore. Chong Han wrote working-class poems in the 1970s with a group of leftist Singaporeans. Han explains that 'during this period, the dominant way of literary expression by local leftist writers, commonly known as 'New Realism', was targeted at echoing Mao Zedong's advocacy of literature that serves the proletariats, i.e., workers, peasants and soldiers. In this respect, poetry was combative and regarded as a 'weapon', an essential part of leftist literature' (Han 2004 p.vii). Yet, for today's migrant worker writers, such as Mukul, poetry is neither 'combative' nor a political 'weapon'.

Interestingly, there is also a parallel between Mukul's poetry and Chong Han's later non-political texts: Religious belief recurs in their writings as spiritual comfort and pursuit. Disillusioned by the social transitions and political reality, Chong Han became devoted to Buddhist teachings and preached to people to do good. Mukul, very similar to Sharif, often rests his aspirations and hopes in his belief in Islam. Moreover, religion is a way of rooted bonding between him and other co-workers. In his poem 'Do Not Lose Heart' for example, he encourages his brother Rajeev to hold onto faith in his hard life:

> Pray to the Almighty and beg for forgiveness.

> Everything waits for you.
> In wholeness you will find both your worlds restored.
> Your inspiration, your beloved.
> We shall chat our hearts out at the River Drum,
> consume the night during our happy conversation
> at Happy Star or Nana Biryani House.

This stanza exhibits Mukul's faith in 'the Almighty'. The speaker in the poem deems that a bright future will be ensured if 'we' do pray and 'beg for forgiveness'. The poet speaks rather upliftingly and is hopeful as to the support by his religious faith. He continues to present imagined happy pictures of the future at his home in Bangladesh, listing specific places such as 'River Drum' and 'Happy Star'. The imagination of a 'happy' future often motivates migrant workers to overcome their hardships and grief.

In the preceding stanza of the poem, Mukul writes: 'Brother Rajeev, don't be afraid / Allah will support you though this trail'. From a Marxist perspective, one could easily argue that Mukul has been governed by his religious belief and under such ideological influence, it is hard for him to articulate the spirit of resistance and rebellion. Ideas such as to overthrow the capitalist system become unlikely. Instead, he dwells on his sufferings and hopes for a 'restored' world. Mukul's case is not unique; almost all aforementioned migrant worker writers from Bangladesh are devoted Muslims. Sharif shares a similar religious attitude. For instance, in his short essay 'Father's Death Anniversary' he muses: 'Like a toddler walking around aimlessly, I shouted at the sky. I said, 'O Allah! Let no one in the world be like me. O Lord, if I have any reward from you then please give it to my parents' (Sharif 2017 p. 143).

While there clearly is a religious aspect and ideological influence in Mukul's writings, I yet hesitate to conclude that their religious ideology makes the migrant workers 'enslaved' and 'degraded' as Marx put it. Rather, when reading migrant worker literature through a religious lens, we gain a picture of their intricate identity formation, and as Barbara Foley suggested, 'a fuller dialectical understanding of the social totality'. I will quote her here at length as she reminds us of the significance of Marxist literary criticism:

> The Marxist critic is not a scold, seeking out political shortcomings for exposure and punishment. Rather, the goal of Marxist criticism—and pedagogy—is the development of a fuller dialectical understanding of the social totality giving rise to both doctrines and structures of feeling, whether these clarify or obfuscate the 'real foundation' (Foley 2019 p.159).

Concluding Remark: migrant worker writings and 'catwalk empowerment'

My main critique regarding the production of Mukul's works concerns its particular mode or cultural form within the capitalistic logic and neoliberal context. The representation of migrant workers and particularly, worker-writers like Md Sharif Uddin and Md Mukul Houssine is worrisomely problematic. The core problem of this kind of 'migrant worker writings' promotion lies in the nature of the whole system: how they are empowered in such a context equally does harm to them. The empowerment of the migrant worker writings in today's Singapore, as I argue, is actually 'catwalk empowerment' as precisely defined by Malin McGlinn: 'that is, empowerment that calls for visual recognition to be meaningful. The project participants, much like models on a fashion catwalk, are shown off in order to attract the gaze of others' (McGlinn 2018 p.214).

Events like migrant worker poetry competitions and the 'Migrant Worker Heroes Festival' are led by the main motivation of 'showcasing' and mass-medializing the migrant worker community to exhibit the 'goodness' and 'gratitude' of the Singaporeans. I acknowledge that these events do have an impact on the migrant worker community's visibility, yet, visibility in this context calls for symbolic recognition of the Singaporeans. Again, in line with McGlinn's argument, we can easily find for such migrant workers events that 'the other form of symbolic recognition that is embedded in catwalk empowerment is premised on what Edenborg calls 'the representational mode of visibility.' By this he means a view on visibility 'that is guided by the notion that public visibility is a necessary means for marginalized groups to achieve equality and inclusion''' (McGlinn 2018 p.125). Indeed, in Singapore, the visibility of migrant workers has to be represented in such a showcase format to highlight migrant workers as a marginalized group who need to be revealed and included in the national narrative. The showcase-promotion of migrant worker writings fundamentally functions through 'a sympathetic gaze' producing such representational visibility rather than visibility of the group itself.

In my view, the problematic aspect of exposing the 'visibility' of the migrant workers and their writings in such representations is that this mode again reproduces the systematic structure of power hegemony and social inequality. The 'sympathetic gaze' in the Singaporean context runs through migrant worker writings, from the initiative of organizing and regulating events such as the Migrant Workers Poetry Competition, to the translation and 'transcreation' of Mukul's poetry. However, it is noticeable that the role of sympathy in terms of working-class writings, as Eric Schocket already insightfully examined, is problematic:

> But neither does it mean that one can simply assume that sympathy is always or even usually a progressive step towards the amelioration of suffering. Since it is the emotional currency of the very system of relations that produces class suffering, the discourse the affect may, in Ann Cvetkovick's words, 'serve to contain resistance…. Rather than leading to social change, the expression of feeling can become an end in itself or an individual solution to systematic problems (Schocket 2006 p. 6).

When the migrant worker writers are 'produced' and 'empowered' through such a sympathetic gaze, paradoxically, at the same time, their works are somehow made suitable for one-dimensional consumption. The sympathy shown towards the migrant workers in such a way easily lends itself as a means of expressing one's feeling, one's goodness, or one's gratitude. It is very obvious that in Mukul's case people sympathized with him for being a migrant worker poet with talent and they helped him. But the very fact that he was made relatively famous as a writer also led to his eventual inability to stay in Singapore and to accusations of wanting to be a poet only for fame and fortune.

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What's Worth Knowing? Research and Instructional Impacts of Books on Working-Class Academics

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Abstract

What are the research impacts and instructional impacts of books of essays on the perspectives of faculty from working-class backgrounds? To what extent are these books used in undergraduate or graduate courses? Previous research on the content of these edited volumes has been limited to manual constant comparative analyses that described book content. This study employed data analysis methods in the emerging field of altmetric sciences to investigate the impacts of books of personal essays about faculty from working-class backgrounds (N=11). Book-level and chapter-level analyses were conducted to measure research impact using the Altmetric Explorer online tool and instructional impact using the Open Syllabus Project Explorer online tool. Data analysis results on research impacts for books on working-class academics produced extremely low impact levels. Few books (N=4) generated patterns of attention and these patterns were limited in scope. Data analysis results on instructional impacts identified that each of the 11 books generated a Teaching Score, but all scores were minimal and indicated low impact levels. The results suggest that scholarship on faculty from working-class social origins is not being widely included in undergraduate or graduate course syllabi. Further, a large proportion of the book-level scholarship in the subject area of 'faculty diversity' has been limited to the constructs of race and gender. Issues involving faculty social origins have been largely omitted from curricula in this area and raises the important question: What is worth knowing?

Keywords

Higher education, faculty, social class

Reporters at *The Chronicle of Higher Education* investigated the question 'What's the most influential book of the past 20 years?' (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2018) and noted:

> 'Each year, more than 15,000 academic books are published in North America. A scant few will reach beyond their core audience of disciplinary specialists. Fewer still will enter the public consciousness.'

In the arts and humanities, as well as many subdisciplines in the social sciences, the published book is the standard unit of academic productivity (Huang & Chang 2008; Nederhof, 2006).

Clark (1973) reviewed the literature in the sociology of higher education and analyzed salient areas of scholarly inquiry. He assessed the scholarship in the field as being comprised of four areas, and one area is 'the study of 'academic man,' or higher education as a profession.' Gumport's (2007) discussion of Clark's (1973) work established important additional societal

and organizational contexts for the study of college and university faculty. A significant body of book-level research on the US professoriate in general has been published, including Wilson's (1942) analysis of structures of faculty appointments, Lazarsfeld and Thielens' (1958) study of faculty during the McCarthy era, Lipset and Ladd's (1979) exploration of faculty and politics in the 1960s, Finkelstein's (1984) discussion of faculty roles, Schuster and Finkelstein's (2006) investigation of patterns of faculty research, and Finkelstein, Conley, and Schuster's (2016) examination of the present and future of the academic profession.

Focusing more specifically on books on faculty from working-class social origins, most are in the form of edited volumes of personal essays on various subgroups and roles: white working-class male faculty in the social sciences (Ryan & Sackrey, 1995), a diverse group of working-class women faculty in the humanities (Tokarczyk & Fay, 1993), LGBTQ faculty (Oldfield & Johnson, 2008), instructional roles (Shepard, McMillan, & Tate, 1998; Rosen, 2013), and women faculty relationships with their parents (Welsch, 2005), among several others.

Personal narratives by poverty-class and working-class people can raise consciousness of class inequality and provide powerful insights into their lives and experiences (Pifer & Riffe, 2018; Launius, 2019).

These books have all made valuable contributions to the knowledge about this aspect of faculty worklife, diversity, and the marginalizing experiences of being an academic from a working-class background in profoundly middle-class work environments (Van Galen & Dempsey, 2009). However, further intellectual reductions into narrower subpopulations of faculty from working-class backgrounds raises questions about the significance of the scope and nature of future contributions to knowledge in this area.

One purpose of this study was to empirically investigate research and instructional impacts to identify the influences of these volumes of edited books that address the intersection of faculty and working-class social origins. Another purpose was to assist scholars in the sociology of higher education to gain deeper insights into the structure and impact of scholarship on one aspect of the 'study of higher education as a profession.' Two research questions guided this study:

1. What are the levels and patterns of research impact for books on working-class academics?
2. To what extent are books on working-class academics used to achieve instructional impact in undergraduate or graduate courses?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is grounded in the previous scholarship in two areas: a) Working-Class Academics, and b) Measures of Research Impacts.

Working-Class Academics

Faculty from working-class backgrounds possess ambivalent feelings about the reference group and social class to which they identify; on one hand, this upbringing exerts significant influence on how one views their world. On the other hand, significant social mobility to the middle-class professions and the effects of the current social class position provides another

influence on this view (Lubrano, 2003). Sennett and Cobb (1972) identified these feelings as *status incongruity*, and defined it as 'the discontent as a result of upward mobility from the social class of one's origin to a higher social class.' This incongruity creates discontent for poverty-class and working-class faculty (Ryan & Sackrey, 1984), and this significant social class movement creates feelings of being 'out of place' in a social class higher than that of one's origin (Dews & Law, 1993).

Many personal essays in edited volumes include heart-wrenching anecdotes describing the 'hidden injuries of class' (Sennett & Cobb, 1972) in the form of classism and other obstacles these working-class academics encountered as they attempted to enter the typically middle-class work environments of higher education. Other anecdotes focused on difficult transitions involved in the significant social mobility to the middle-class and its unfamiliar culture. Stricker (2011) completed manual content analysis of 94 personal essays from working-class academics in five edited volumes published between 1985 and 2006. Her analysis found that many faculty began their careers devoting little attention to social class, but eventually became more outspoken. She also identified four areas in which institutions should view faculty social origins as a useful measure of faculty diversity. Pifer and Riffe (2018) completed document analysis of 166 publications of working-class academics' experiences in higher education. This analysis included ten edited volumes of books on working-class academics and identified two primary dimensions of experiences: understandings of institutions of higher educations as workplaces, and efforts to gain acceptance in scholarly communities. However, the research methods in these two studies were limited to manual constant comparative analyses that described book content.

Measures of Research Impacts

The concept of research impact has metamorphosed over the past several decades and has been constrained by the limits of available bibliographic technology (e.g., Heckman & Martin, 1968). Fifty years ago, bibliographic research on publication patterns in higher education were completed by labor intensive manual inspection of publication reference lists and compilations of journals, authors, and research topics. Garfield developed the Journal Impact Factor measure which was considered the gold standard for measuring research impact (Williams & Padula, 2015).

Over the past several decades, terminology has shifted from 'bibliographic research' to 'impact factor' to 'research impact' to reflect contemporary technological advances in data science. Focusing on a general definition of research impact, the Australian Engagement and Impact Assessment has defined it as: 'the contribution that research makes to the economy, society, environment or culture, beyond the contribution to academic research.'[30] However, this broad definition does not accurately address the specific characteristics of scholarship in working-class studies or on working-class academics. Reed (2017) identified ten different types of research impact (e.g., 'Understanding and Awareness,' 'Economy,' 'Environment'). More specifically applicable to the present study, the type of impact that most accurately addresses working-class studies in general and first-person academic essays by faculty from working-class backgrounds in particular is impact on 'Culture.' Reed defined this specific type of research impact as effecting 'changes in the prevailing values, attitudes, beliefs, discourse and patterns of behaviour… [or] social groups or society that deliver benefits to the members of

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[30] https://www.arc.gov.au/policies-strategies/strategy/research-impact-principles-framework

those groups or those they interact with.' Further, Reed (2017) provided an example of cultural impacts that is directly applicable to the study:

> '… research on working class entertainment might lead to changes in attitudes towards historic entertainment venues that had been left to fall into disrepair, leading to them being valued more greatly by members of the public. This might then lead to other forms of impact, for example economic impacts based on restoring historic entertainment venues that bring in visitors and revenue to previously overlooked locations.'

Taylor (2019) assessed the related literature on book-level metrics and observed that 'altmetrics that can show books' cultural influence, as well as non-traditional scholarly impacts.' Further, he noted that 'The research makes clear that anyone who wants to understand 'big picture' impact for a book or monograph should use a variety of data, rather than citation counts … alone.'

In the past, book-level metrics were logical when scholars found research by reading print publications. However, with advancements in data science, a book's connection to a specific publisher is less important than how scholars find it or use it. Further, analyzing assigned readings from books and book chapters in university syllabi can provide insights into the educational utility of books in ways that citation counts cannot.

Faculty are often expected to provide evidence of impact from research in their respective fields and beyond to earn promotion and tenure. Measuring research impact is now easier than ever, and data science companies such as Altmetric, PlumX, PLOS, Dimensions, and FigShare have developed complex and wide-ranging databases of multiple online resources to measure patterns of dissemination and research impact.

Within the structure of contemporary scholarly measures, 'altmetrics' is the approach used in this study and are metrics that are not citation-based, but rather, social media metrics. In the past several years, altmetric data science on research impact has expanded to the humanities and social sciences.

Methods of Inquiry

Three decision rules framed the data analyses: the study was limited to edited books (a) comprised entirely of first-person essays by college and university faculty, (b) that included a focus on poverty-class or working-class social origins, and (c) that focused on faculty in the US. Books were excluded from the study if they reported empirical research findings (e.g, Grimes & Morris, 1997), or if the edited books included essays by graduate students, staff, or people who did not work in higher education, or if the edited books included essays that did not focus on social class backgrounds. As a result, books such as Gutierrez y Muhs, Niemann, González, and Harris (2012); Niemann, Gutierrez y Muhs, and González (2020), Standlee (2018) and Zandy (1990) were excluded from the study because they did not meet decision rules.

Data Sources and Evidence

The dataset for this study was comprised of eleven volumes of personal essays by US faculty from poverty- and working-class backgrounds that were published between 1993-2016. (See

Table 1 for volumes used in the analyses). In addition, I disaggregated the eleven edited volumes into the 203 individual chapters to investigate: (a) research impacts of specific essays with individualized demographics and life experiences, and (b) instructional impacts of shorter readings as required course assignments.

Data Analysis

First, I used the proprietary online tool Altmetric Explorer ('Altmetric Explorer,' n.d.a) in the first stage of data analysis to measure research impact. The rationale for using this tool is because of the widespread adoption of Altmetric Explorer by university libraries, research journals, and book publishers. The websites of these organizations include visualizations of research impact for each individual publication and are presented in the form of 'donuts' that display the amount of research impact and sources of attention among the fifteen social media and research sources monitored by Altmetric Explorer. More importantly, for the purposes of accurate data science research, these research impact data and donuts are continuously updated with the most current impact data.

The Altmetric Explorer tool generates an 'Attention Score' for a research output (e.g., book, chapter) that measures the amount of attention it has received in 15 different online sources, including blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn ('Altmetric Explorer,' n.d.b) since 2011. Book-level attention scores are calculated from the weighted attention to the book and its chapters (See Table 2 for Altmetric sources and weighting) and an individual book's score is not the sum of all the chapters' scores. Similarly, these analyses are not a comparison between books; the book is unit of analysis, not the list of books. I searched for each book and generated results on the patterns of attention (See Table 3 for book-level attention scoring). In addition, I searched for each chapter of each book to investigate patterns of attention.

Second, I used the free Open Syllabus Project ('Open Syllabus Project,' n.d.) Explorer online tool in the second stage of data analysis to measure instructional impact. This database contains more than nine million English language college course syllabi from 140 countries that were obtained from instructor donations and from the Internet Archive's Wayback machine. However, no individual syllabi in the Syllabus Explorer are publicly available. The Syllabus Explorer online tool calculates the number of times a book appears in syllabi (i.e., 'appearance counts') and also generates an instructional 'score' ranging from 1-100 which is a scale of ranked appearance counts in the context of all 1.7 million book titles in the database. For example, Strunk's (1999) *The Elements of Style* is the top ranked book with more than 15,500 appearances and a rank of 100.

Third, I used Google Scholar to generate another metric on these eleven books that provided insights into more traditional patterns of impact. This data collection was completed at one point in time (March 2021) to assure consistency of results across publications and minimize the potential effect of a time window on changing citation counts.

Results

Research Impact

Using an entire book as the unit of data analysis, results to answer research question #1 indicated extremely low levels of research impact for the eleven books on working-class academics in this study. Only four books out of eleven received any attention in the fifteen data

sources monitored in the Altmetric database: Dews and Law (1993); Hurst and Nenga (2016); Muzzatti and Samarco (2006), and Ryan and Sackrey (1984/1996) and this attention occurred between July 2015 – August 2020 (See Table 3 for Research Impact).

In contrast to the metric of 'research impact,' the established 'impact factor' metric is easy to interpret because higher numbers are better. However, with regard to research impact scores, impacts of individual books are not judgments on the books themselves, because individual readers will obtain individual levels of meaning from them. In addition, books can generate widely different research impact scores depending upon either broad or narrow audiences. The numbers are much less significant than the types of mentions that a book receives because this illustrates dissemination patterns and helps to answer the questions: Where are people talking about this book and why?

Many of the books in this study were published before the Altmetric database was created in 2012. As a result, the research impact of these publications did not benefit substantially from contemporary technology or communication methods to disseminate knowledge and awareness. This can only be a partial explanation, however, and the two exceptions to this timeline limitation were Dews and Law (1993) with an Altmetric score of 20 and both editions of Ryan and Sackrey (1984/1996) which combined for an Altmetric score of nine. One possible explanation for these two books is that some individual essays might have addressed particularly specific, meaningful, or broadly applicable perspectives on academic work or life experiences that appealed to readers. However, research impacts for all books in the study occurred in other ways as evidenced by subsequent published volumes of personal essays and resulting citation counts.

For more specific analyses, I disaggregated the eleven edited volumes into the 203 individual chapters to investigate research impacts of essays that either focused on understanding contemporary topics at the chapter level, or on specific lived experiences of faculty from working-class backgrounds. Similar to the finding of low levels of research impact for entire books, there was no evidence of research impacts or patterns of attention for any of the 203 individual book chapters. This absence of evidence confirms Taylor's (2019) finding that 'only 1.8% of book chapters receive attention online' and one possibility is that scholars reference a chapter in a book by sharing a link to the entire book, rather than a direct link to the chapter.

Instructional Impact

Results to answer research question #2 indicate that each of the eleven books in the study registered an Overall Teaching Score in the Open Syllabus Project database ('Open Syllabus Project,' n.d.) for instructional impact in undergraduate or graduate courses. However, the scores were uniformly low and ranged from 2 to 1 on a scale from 0 to 100 (See Table 3 for Instructional Impact). These low results are surprising when considered in the context of special focus professional associations, their special interest groups on social class in education and on working-class faculty, and presentations at annual conferences that are convened to discuss these issues (e.g., the Working-Class Academics section in the Working-Class Studies Association). Additionally, many of these organizations and groups have social media accounts across several platforms that have the potential to facilitate conversations around these meaningful books.

Google Scholar Citations

I included Google Scholar citation data in the analyses to provide traditional descriptive context to the low levels of research and instructional impacts that were measured by more innovative methods. This citation evidence demonstrates that some of these books have had substantial scholarly impact since their publication dates for the narrower audience of other academics writing on similar topics, but this evidence does not meet the definition of *research* impact (See Table 3 for Google Scholar citation counts).

Conclusions

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate research and instructional impacts of eleven edited volumes of personal essays by faculty from working-class backgrounds and this study is significant for several reasons. First, this study employed data analysis methods in the emerging field of altmetric sciences to answer sophisticated research questions about research and instructional impacts of the previous scholarship on faculty from working-class backgrounds. Previous research on edited volumes of essays by faculty from working-class backgrounds has focused internally on the content of the books, rather than externally to investigate research and instructional impact, as was completed in this study.

Second, the study purpose was to empirically identify the books on working-class faculty that were the most influential. This study represents a shift from anecdote to evidence; working-class academics can identify strongly with personal essays in these edited volumes that resonate with their lived experiences. By extension, an assumption can be made that similar impacts occur for a large number of other faculty from working-class backgrounds. But for the most part, this produced surprising and counterintuitive findings. Perhaps this topic is less important to scholars and practitioners who may be looking for course materials that are related to more practical problems and issues being faced on campus. One pressing contemporary issue in higher education involves institutional diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) policies and programs to promote the representation and participation of a diverse array of faculty, including those of different genders, races and ethnicities, religions, abilities and disabilities, ages, cultures, and sexual orientations. The study also achieved the purpose of understanding the structure and impact of scholarship in the sociology of higher education, but provided substantial evidence that this subfield of knowledge has not been widely taught in humanities or social sciences courses. This could be explained by the rapid pace of knowledge generation and a short-term focus on more current issues related to college and university faculty (e.g., diversification and retention of the professoriate).

Limitations

There are several potential limitations to this study. First, this research design does not measure research impact of books that are digitally linked between institutional learning management systems and library reserve holdings. Further, promotional announcements from authors that publicize new books via email or social media are often linked to retail websites (e.g., Amazon) and exclude information such as ISBN or DOI that is necessary to be included in the Altmetric database, and this also masks research impact.

Second, with regard to the limitations of citation counts, Kousha, Thelwall, and Rezaie (2011) concluded that citation counts in Google Scholar are one source to help evaluate research impact in academic disciplines that view the book as the scholarly gold standard. Some of the books included in this study have notable citation counts indicating scholarly impact. While

citation counts are one common metric for research impact, however, on a macro level this approach incentivizes dubious citation practices including overuse of self-citation and scholars can employ strategic citations practices to artificially increase research impact (Baccini, De Nicolao, & Petrovich, 2020). Further, detecting these strategic citation behaviors at the individual publication level is difficult. Another limitation of using citation counts reported by Google Scholar is that book-level citation analyses have a four-five year lag time because of the slow nature of subsequent books published (S. Konkiel, personal communication, February 27, 2020).

Third, Kousha and Thelwall (2016) observed that success in teaching scholarship can be measured by book mentions in course syllabi. However, this is based on the assumption that students complete the assigned readings (Sharma, Van Hoof, & Pursel, 2013). In fact, the results of one study suggested that less than 30% of psychology students completed assigned readings from course textbooks. As a result, book or chapter mentions in syllabi may not always be an accurate proxy for instructional impact.

Structure and Function of Knowledge

Books serve a vital role in scholarly communications and present unique perspectives that cannot be found through the production of more narrowly-focused journal articles. Edited volumes of essays on faculty from working-class backgrounds fall squarely in the subject category of 'faculty diversity.' Sharlet (1999) described the race-class-gender view as a triumvirate and raised the question, 'Is there a more familiar mantra in fin de siècle academe?' Unfortunately, much of the literature on faculty diversity has narrowly conceptualized it to issues of race and gender (e.g., Trower & Chait, 2002; Moody, 2012; antonio & Muñiz, 2007; Evans & Chun, 2007; Gappa, Austin, & Trice, 2007; Maher & Tetreault, 2007; O'Meara, Terosky, & Neumann, 2009; AFT, 2010; Minor, 2014) and issues of social class origins from poverty-class to upper-class have received much less attention in the scholarly literature. More recently, Ingram (2021) identified social class as the 'forgotten dimension of diversity.'

Examining the sociology of higher education scholarship on the academic profession in this area more closely, Rhoades' (2007) discussion of the literature on faculty race, gender, and social class also primarily addressed issues related to race and gender. This included hiring patterns for faculty of color, feminist scholarship, and gender stratification in the professoriate. According to Rhoades (2007), 'the sociology of professions in academe would benefit from an exploration of the role of professionals in relationship to social stratification and institutional and social change' (p. 135). Scholars have addressed this recommendation, but as indicated by the study findings, very little of it is being discussed or being taught.

In one sense, the instructional impacts of these books is a curriculum issue and at the individual course level, instructors or academic departments decide what knowledge is worth knowing. Notably, some of the most contentious discussions of curriculum reform in the United States occurred in the 1980s related to debates about whether to require multiculturalism courses in the general education curriculum at Stanford (Pratt, 1992). The United States is a culturally plural nation and the disproportionly low representation of social class in the literature on college and university faculty suggests what does and doesn't count in terms of cultural capital in course syllabi.

Any book can be intentionally written for either a broad or narrow audience, and scholarly books are no different. This is important to note because the modest results on research and

instructional impacts suggest that these books attracted narrow audiences and have neither been discussed in social media nor included in courses on broader related topical issues. As a result, one broad consequence of these results on research impact is the reduced levels of awareness of the concept of faculty social class origins, in general, and working-class academics, in particular. Graduate students from poverty-class and working-class backgrounds who aspire to the professoriate and current faculty will be less likely to understand that this is an established subfield of study in the sociology of higher education and represents a recognized avenue for future scholarship.

A narrower consequence of the results on instructional impact is the limited learning that will occur for undergraduate and graduate students from poverty-class and working-class backgrounds. Students are less likely to be exposed to this body of literature and will have fewer opportunities for introspection and personal insights that can result from reflecting on the specific lived experiences and worldviews of faculty in the essays. In addition, students from poverty-class and working-class backgrounds will be less likely to recognize that working-class academics are allies who can serve as role models in the classroom and as mentors in successfully navigating the typically middle-class environments of college campuses. Another perspective on this issue can be framed by the question 'How diverse is your reading list?' (El Kadi, 2019) and much of this discussion relates to Eurocentrism in required undergraduate coursework in the humanities (Bird & Pitman, 2019).

Since the data analysis generated extremely low levels of research and instructional impacts, another possible explanation for these results focuses on generational differences between scholars and levels of comfort with social media and self-promotion. A second plausible explanation involves faculty or administrators who may make value judgments regarding this type of faculty work. The provocative title of Lemke, Peters, and Mazarakis' (2019) blog entry 'If you use social media then you are not working' captures the essence of this sentiment. Other researchers view self-promotion on social media as uncomfortable or 'humblebragging' (Khoo, 2016).

Scholarship has progressed beyond the limits of hardcopy book catalogs and traditional publishing models. Academic research has become widely available online to be located, disseminated, and discussed. Scholars conducting research on issues of faculty diversity will benefit from understanding existing patterns of dissemination and attention to their research in order to identify reasons for, and nature of, discussions in their topical areas. In this way, scholars can identify subsequent uses of their work and generate new knowledge and make important contributions to knowledge in the future.

Author Bio

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Acknowledgement

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Table 1

Books Included in the Analyses

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Adair, V., & Dahlberg, S. (2003). *Reclaiming class: Women, poverty, and the promise of higher education in America*. Temple University Press.

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Table 2

Altmetric Weights for Sources of Book Mentions

News	8
Blogs	5
Twitter	1
Facebook	0.25
Sina Weibo	1
Wikipedia	3
Policy Documents (per source)	3
Q&A	0.25
F1000/Publons/Pubpeer	1
YouTube	0.25
Reddit/Pinterest	0.25
LinkedIn	0.5
Open Syllabus	1
Google+	1
Patents	3

Source: How is the Altmetric Attention Score calculated? (n.d.). Retrieved from
https://help.altmetric.com/support/solutions/articles/6000060969-how-is-the-altmetric-score-calculated-

Table 3

Research Impact and Instructional Impact for Books in the Study

	Altmetric Score	Total Mentions	Altmetric Timeline	Syllabus Appearances	Teaching Score	Google Scholar Citations
Adair & Dahlberg (2003)	0	0	---	18	1	89
Dews & Law (1993)	20	10	2015-2020	31	2	352
Hurst & Nenga (2016)	1	1	2016	1	1	17
Muzzatti & Samarco (2006)	1	1	2018	5	1	71
Oldfield & Johnson (2008)	0	0	---	9	1	39
Rosen (2013)	0	0	---	9	1	2
Ryan & Sackrey (1984/1996)	9	1	2016	11	1	452
Shepard, McMillan, Tate (1998)	0	0	---	12	1	64
Tokarczyk & Fay (1993)	0	0	---	25	2	352
Van Galen & Dempsey (2009)	0	0	---	2	1	17
Welsch (2005)	0	0	---	1	1	55

(Data retrieved March 3, 2021)

Giving Away the Game – Scattershot Notes on Social Class and Other Afflictions

Jim Donnelly

Abstract

One of my earliest jobs was driving for an unregulated car service in New York. In the days before Uber they were called 'gypsy cabs.' One night I found myself on the business end of a revolver. Telling the tale to my dispatcher next day, he was staggeringly nonplussed. 'Ya gotta put up with a lot,' he said, 'when you're tryin' t' get ahead.' 'Yeah,' I replied, disgusted, 'even gettin' your head blown off.' Some time later, another driver, an African-American in a similar scenario, didn't make it, emphasizing how much higher the stakes for a person of color. These are the real wages of work, I thought, and the rules of the game.

My dispatcher's nonchalance bespoke how invested in the game he was; in a set of beliefs, assumptions, and animating myths that keep the wheel of fortune going. Like the Monty Python skit about the collapsing tower, if too few invest in those myths, the entire edifice crumbles.

The following is a personal essay that attempts to navigate the game's parameters - social class, aspiration, and its attendant neurosis - and the myths that animate such notions as 'getting ahead,' 'climbing the ladder,' and the 'American Dream,' my country's main (ideological) export. The approach is less theory-driven than empirical, phenomenological. Hence the numbered sections, a style popularized by Wittgenstein, Herbert Read and others. Here it doesn't represent chronology so much as the elusive, episodic nature of the beast.

Keywords

Social class, aspiration, working-class Italian Americans

1. My mother, a working-class Italian-American, forfeited her status as a result of manic-depression. In the early 1950s, around the time she finished high school, several studies were published[31] on the effects of downward mobility among ethnic groups. They found the Irish more or less where you'd expect, on Skid Row, in Bowery flop houses, with alcohol as cause and effect, a dark chaperone. Jewish downward mobility was more elusive - they couldn't seem to find any. Until they went with a hunch: What about psychiatric wards? Strong family dynamics and the rarity of heavy drinking found few Jews languishing on Skid Row. But a respect for therapeutic professions meant that institutions weren't stigmatized, the way they were for other groups.

Of course, the fortunate few needn't worry about downward mobility. When I was a young boy, my mother and I went to see the movie *Mame,* a story with tempting comparisons. If my

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[31]There were a number of books on this theme, but I'm thinking mainly of A.B. Hollingshead and F.C. Redlich, *Social Class and Mental Illness,* Wiley and Sons, 1958

mother had been a rich WASP, would she have been merely the Bohemian aunt, a lovable eccentric? Institutionalized several times, she came home to a family ill-equipped to define her problem. 'Josephine's high-strung,' her beleaguered parents would say, and I was forever warned that my mother was a 'sick woman.' There was always a smattering of peasant superstition in it, like 'Cellar-Lise' in Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus,* an abject crone living in a basement, rumored to be possessed. Even the enlightened, he tells us, hide their kids in their coattails lest Lise give them the 'evil eye.' Small comfort either way, the people in my mother's world were anything but enlightened.

But they were possessed. Possessed by that post-war monetary scramble of G.I. Bill, Eisenhower interstates, and movie-tone news showing sprawling Levittowns[32] on erstwhile potato fields. The great auto-driven crush for that beachhead, the one that proclaimed if you weren't rich yet, you had a shot at it. You'd finally turned, in your spiffy Ford Fairlane, that long-promised corner to prosperity.

2. 'When Jim is dressed up, he looks like he owns a pool hall.' So spoke the resident of a senior center where I once worked. On a superficial level I took it as a compliment. Firstly because my tastes eschew Waspy blandness - wing-tip shoes, boring ties, blazers with elbow patches, etc. Secondly because hey, they said I looked like the hall's owner, not the resident leg-breaker. But on a deeper level it spoke the truth of the pecking order - it put me literally on the outskirts of town, far from the hallowed halls of finance, insurance, and real estate, at a remove from respectable institutions. I didn't much care what those men thought of me; beyond facile friendship, there wasn't much riding on it but minimum wage. At my level one didn't carry a reputation from job to job. But these were the proverbial organization men of the '50s and '60s, who had to grapple with the thorny trappings of reputation writ large. If they were anything other than 'other-directed,' in David Reisman's famous phrase[33], they could risk job *and* career. In other words, you didn't show up for work looking like you owned a pool hall.

Why are we so fantastically uptight in America when it comes to the subject of class? Well, in a word, because it's *everything.* And unlike those other Americans to our north we don't plan to do anything about it (something like single-payer healthcare is a mechanism of redress.) So it remains the proverbial 500-pound gorilla, the thing hiding in plain sight we pretend isn't there. When speaking of race in America, James Baldwin famously compared it to a pair of friends chatting over coffee, one having murdered the mother of the other, her body hidden in the pantry. 'We can't talk about anything,' he said, 'because we can't talk about *that.*'[34] We can talk about very little in the U.S. because we won't truly admit class into the conversation.

3. I had a miserly aunt who used the same tea bags many times over. She'd literally hung a little line in her kitchen for drying them out. The tea they made was a barely beige water, like the landlady in Crime and Punishment. As a teenager I once brazenly quipped, 'Are you too cheap to give a person a lousy tea bag?' 'Mr. fancy-pants wants a new one,' she snarled. Sitting in her house in second-hand clothes, my mother and I on public assistance, I wondered who she was addressing. For her part she wasn't on a fixed income. Her son was a wealthy

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[32]The first of several low-cost suburban housing developments built by Levitt and Sons following WWII, and accelerated by veterans' benefits.

[33]*The Lonely Crowd,* David Reisman, Nathan Glazer, Reuel Denney, Yale University Press, 1950

[34]This is from Baldwin's essay 'Notes for a Hypothetical Novel,' *Nobody Knows My Name,* Dial Press, 1961.
 Further, on the intersection of race and class, see bell hooks, *Where We Stand: Class Matters,* Routledge, 2000;
 Angela Davis, *Women, Race and Class,* Vintage Books, 1981

professional who doted on her, financially and otherwise. Knowing her status as a second-generation Italian-American, some, I suppose, might float the Memories of Privation argument.

But the demons of privation were so far in her past the cost of a tea bag wouldn't sate them. I was told she wasn't so miserly with everyone, so I suspect a less personal, more populist demon was at work: the demon of the undeserving poor. My mother and I had done nothing to 'rate' fresh tea. Worse yet, we were on public assistance, so perhaps it was her patriotic way of recapturing revenue, one tea bag at a time.

4. I had an uncle whose interest in a house was not so much the 'laughter and tranquility' Sinclair Lewis[35] spoke of but its function as an outer, protective layer for his TV, namely Sunday football. A boy from the proverbial teeming tenements of wailing babes, bellowing drunks, feuding families and nosey neighbors, it's no wonder he saw the suburbs as Valhalla, particularly its funereal silence. Ensconced in a BarcaLounger,[36] beer at the ready for kick-off, here was his American Dream. A man whose beginnings evoked those *Life* magazine images of socks and boxers on the line amongst the fire escapes, I never met a more devout dweller of the cul-de-sacs. When I'd complain of its isolation, its anomie, its carnivorous appetite for land and resources, better left for worthier things, he'd look at me like an evil heretic, blaspheming his savior. Isolation? He craved it. Anomie? Never heard of it. The appetite for land and resources? Why, that was the genius of capitalism at work, my boy. The more working stiffs you could take from the tenements and put into tract houses - and let's not forget 'nice' cars - the more the society could be called a success. 'Sure, some of Manson's followers came from suffocating suburbs but so have some of our finest actors.' He didn't actually say this, I only imagined he could have. While we're on it, some of our truly greatest talents - James Cagney, Barbara Stanwyck, Steve Mcqueen, Rita Hayworth, Sidney Poitier, Clara Bow, Red Skelton, *were* from the teeming tenements, euphemistically or otherwise.

5. I remember the tedious talk of what constituted a 'nice' car while riding in the rear of some gaudy ocean liner: Lincoln Continental, Buick Riviera or Chrysler Caspian Sea, listening to the elders up front pontificate on the beauty and desirability of every brand, wondering, fleetingly, if you'd survive this excursion, emphasized by the accidents you'd sometimes pass. A city kid who knew the street as a venue for every sport, you'd had close calls with cars, and could recite the names of stolen friends. You knew also that every family had a story of vehicular loss. The lovely young daughter, her photo on the mantel, killed on a lonely road while at college. The harried father, moonlighting as a salesman, coming back from Boston like Willy Loman, falling asleep at the wheel. Or sometimes the living and maimed, prodded by young, morbid curiosity on your end and gin or medicated bravado on theirs, rattling off the particulars of their own brush with death, the grisly details in real time. Oddly the desire for a nice car superseded all this, for it made of status a traveling show. The idea of status doesn't mean much standing still - there aren't enough people to ogle it. But truly the only 'nice' car would be one that stood still, like the kiddie cars at the arcades, that bounce about on a spring, thereby sparing human life and the physical landscape. 'Nice' understood as something the opposite of ubiquitous, rapacious, and menacing.[37]

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[35] In *Babbit* by Sinclair Lewis, Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1922.
[36] 'BarcaLounger' was the original term for recliner, and a patented brand name. Americans used the terms interchangeably, much like 'Frigidaire' for refrigerator.
[37] There were over 36,000 car fatalities in the United States in 2019. In terms of yearly statistics, this is seen as a 'lesser' casualty rate! For more on motor vehicle mayhem, see *The Car Culture,* James J. Flink, M.I.T. Press, 1975; *The Great American Motion Sickness*, John Burby, Little, Brown and Co., 1971. On the relationship

As I write this, in the midst of a hideous heat wave, a bulletin announces the cancellation of a NASCAR race in New Hampshire, due to the scorching temps. Not a note of irony as to the massive role played by the motorcar in climate change.

6. I grew up being told that the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc were the most lied-to societies on earth. There was the occasional perfunctory nod to Nazi Germany, but post-war rehabilitation was the order of the day, so the onus was on the Red bogeyman. Of course this was no accident; the German cartels[38] that helped Hitler rise to power also financed his war. Nazi Germany was a capitalist country. The United States, its history, its ethics, its very raison d'etre made it the nexus of capitalism. European countries, both before and after Nazism, have had a complex relationship with free enterprise. German sociologist Werner Sombart's 1906 study 'Why is There No Socialism in the United States?' referred to America as a 'steeple chase...each against the other and all against all.' If he was only being figurative, there is everywhere the literal. There is always some World Series or Superbowl, always some summer or winter Olympic, always some marathon or competitive stunt to 'raise money.' In the 1980s, Reagan, 'the Gipper,' presided over his army of yuppies, hopped up on marching powder, a decade-long marathon of Gordon Geckoe, *Dallas,* and *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous*. We've been on that page ever since. Of course propaganda can take many forms, not just the caricature of Big Brother and Orwellian garrets. Herbert Schiller referred to it as 'mind management,' and George Gerbner called it 'the symbolic atmosphere.'[39] Consider the noise machine of AM radio: 'I'm the guy who made millions buying foreclosed homes and I'm gonna show you how!' followed by (erstwhile sports announcer) Rush Limbaugh... All of a piece.

7. A painful episode in my young life involved a Christmas 'Grab Bag' (In New England they call it a Yankee Swap.) Talking mom into it wasn't easy, as Welfare allowed nothing in the way of disposable income. I don't recall a financial exemption, but what's the more embarrassing, being too poor to contribute, or plunking down a crummy gift? I agonized over it - a paltry plastic gun from a pharmacy rack - and thought of pouncing on it myself to spare others the chagrin. I knew my classmates were well-off, but never had the chasm seemed so wide as that day, when a concrete display of buying power would lay my predicament bare for all to see - and ridicule. I wound up with a pricey paint set, something I had no interest in, but dimly aware its primary purpose was to flaunt a bank account.

I called it a painful episode, but I suffered no permanent damage from it, in fact I glean from its symbolic fount all the time. It's not often we live through an episode so full of ready touchstones. Most of what happens is scattershot, without rhyme or reason, a perplexing pastiche of events and observations - meaningless, or replete with meaning, depending on disposition. So terribly obvious is the grab bag episode it has the trappings of caricature. A school kid antes up for a holiday ritual where everyone gets a prize. He's poor and must conform to the fierce limits of a budget. He goes through an existential crisis, and considers pre-empting the lame excuse for a gift, thereby sparing his classmates. Rum luck, someone

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[38] between a car-dependent economy and suburban sprawl, see James Howard Kunstler, *The Geography of Nowhere*, Simon and Schuster, 1993.

[38] For more on this, any of Noam Chomsky's recorded talks on the subject (available on YouTube). On I.G. Farben and the Holocaust, see Diarmuid Jeffreys, *Hell's Cartel,* Macmillan, 2008. More broadly on the corporate connection, see *Nazi Nexus*, Edwin Black, Dialog Press, 2017.

[39] Herbert Schiller, *Mind Managers*, Beacon Press, 1973; George Gerbner, 'The Symbolic Context of Action and Communication' from *Contextualism and Understanding in Behaviorial Science,* R.L. Rosnow, M. Georgoudi, Praeger, 1986

beats him to it - the gift, and the trappings of his life, laid bare. The stuff of an award-winning young adult book, that parents read to their kids, rectitude all the way 'round.

8. To paraphrase H.L. Mencken, no one ever went broke underestimating the intelligence of the American public. To that could be added P.T. Barnum's quip regarding a sucker born every minute. Both sentiments apply to that most curious - and preposterous - of 60s inventions, the plastic slipcover. 'Ya can't have nothin' nice,' we the children of the working class were always advised and admonished. Admonished especially when committing the crime of say, tossing a ball around a living room. To my surprise in my sarcastic quest around the internet, I found they're still being made and sold; in fact most of my findings were commercial boostership, very little in the way of critique. Memory via sense perception is often enough remarked upon, so suffice to say that the singular sensation of clear plastic sticking to you on a humid summer day is so many-splendored and evocative, evocative of the deep-seated neurosis of people desperate to preserve 'something nice,' even to the preclusion of its enjoyment.

Growing up we had only second and third-hand sofas, but my mom, at the urging of a zealous aunt, caught the plastic slipcover bug - or plague, I should say. The sofa was a light blue monstrosity with steep sides more like battlements than arm rests, custom-fitted to compensate. These detachable affairs were forever glued to your forearm or shoulder when you stood up, like unclaimed baggage. An elementary school friend, hearing me bemoan the slipcover scourge, weighed in.

> 'Yeah we had one of those on the couch 'til my dad got pissed and tore it off.'
> 'What happened?' I asked.
> 'He came home one night from the plant and wanted to lay on the couch and read the paper. came out of my room 'cuz I heard all this yelling. 'Goddamn it,' he says, 'I wanna feel fabric under me, not a goddamn shower curtain,' and he started ballin' it up and crammin' it in the trash. Mom says, 'Rich people preserve their furniture, why can't we?'
> 'Rich people don't put shower curtains on their sofas,' he says. 'Bill, when've you been in a rich person's house?' she says. And Dad says, 'Take my word for it.'

9. One of the great laboratories of class aspiration is the television car commercial (always some variation of one car with all the road, every road, to itself, an absurdity no one seems to notice). Of course this is the whole commercial schemata; the coveted object is yours alone and the world is yours entirely. I've been gently admonished by middle-class friends who'll say 'Really Jim, people are more sophisticated than that, no one takes these ads literally.' If so, if everyone is such an uber-sophisticate, then how can they sit still for such crap?

More pervasively, more insidiously, we've earmarked another word: freedom.[40] Every politician genuflects to it, every Chief of Staff invokes it on the ramp-up to war, every school kid recites pledges to it, and every ad agency keeps it in their arsenal, such as a car manufacturer some years back. 'Freedom is calling you,' intoned a voice over the typical one-car, empty road scenario. Freedom in our culture is not a conceptualization but an article of faith, and, as with any quasi-religious tenet, it's tough to get people to question it, much less define it. Webster's Ninth Collegiate calls a concept 'a complex product of abstract or reflective

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[40]On this most inscrutable of concepts, I recommend Maxine Green, *The Dialectic of Freedom*, Teacher's College Press, 1988, largely an American overview. For a more universal perspective, see *Freedom:Its History, Nature and Varieties*, Robert E. Dewey and James A. Gould, editors; Macmillan, 1970.

thinking.' If Americans were to reflect on the ways they're supposedly free they'd also have to consider the ways they are most definitely *not* free.

Such as, most glaringly, the workplace, a feudalistic institution where Americans spend at least half their waking lives. I've been told at more than one paltry, dead-end job that if I didn't like the treatment, conditions, or pay I was 'free' to leave. Of course I was, and I remember that feeling of elation when I hit the street, a state-of-grace lasting all of five minutes. I was only as free as my churning gut and the landlord allowed me to be. I was, like so many others, free to die in the gutter, ragged and stinking, covered in sores and raving in delirium. Some freedom.

The twentieth century left us a ghastly iconography of unfreedom: gulags, concentration camps, Berlin Walls. Throw in what historians and sociologists have said regarding the complex of emotions around slavery - amongst white Americans, the ones that holler the loudest about freedom - and you've quite the Mulligan stew. The fact that all this can add up to an anxiety bordering on psychosis is illustrated by the hubbub over Obama's so-called 'FEMA trailers,'[41] the specter of a Black president exacting revenge for the trials of his people.

Here we arrive at the subterranean trappings around the appeal of Donald Trump.

An enlightened person might see freedom as a sort of unfettered, unencumbered state of grace, intellectual and intuitive in equal measure. Freedom in America is a different animal in people's minds - like housing and health care, a marketing concept. Frank Zappa's *Absolutely Free* directed itself to the acquisitive ethos of the 1950s. The 80s were a retrofitting, exemplified by Reagan's Brilliantine'd hair. Trump, a Reagan worshiper, is history's acid reflux, tragedy and farce as one indigestible lump. Trump's vulgar appeal is to freedom understood as doing anything that comes to mind. A mobster-like rich guy comes to the party, harasses the Mexican gardener, grabs the maid's pussy,[42] then drunkenly takes a leak on the carpet. On the way out he slips you a fifty, winks, pats your back and says, 'No hard feelings.' The appeal is to the guy who'd like to do all of the above, minus the money gesture. That is, until his better (?) angel says, 'Don't beat yerself up, Bud...I mean it was a party, right? Tell ya wut - trow d'guy a fifty. Dat's class.' Money equals license, and license is what the culture is selling.

10. I recall a conversation in the early 90s with a young guy, classifiably a hipster, about dwelling options in a rapidly gentrifying New York.

> 'Have you tried Jersey City?' I asked. 'It's a lightning commute to your job in Manhattan, got a lotta nice prewar buildings, hasn't been fully colonized...'
> 'Yeah,' he said, 'A friend o'mine moved out there so I thought I'd check it out. I took a walk around the neighborhood...Wow man, pretty sketchy.'

The word was new to me at that juncture, being ten years his senior, but I knew it to have a negative slant. Wiktionary tells us 'sketchy' describes something 'creepy, iffy...an air of uncertainty...and just generally something or someone you don't want to be associated with...' Webster's primary definition is 'something not clearly defined.' I lived in Jersey City in the 1980s and it was anything but sketchy. Its problems were there in bold relief, another white

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[41] See https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/107109-lawmakers-raise-concerns-with-contaminated-fema-trailers-housing-oil-spill-clean-up-crews

[42] I apologize for the term, but I wanted the image to reflect Trump's singular vulgarity.

flight casualty, left for dead like other peripheral cities. I was living there at the same level as its denizens, in a roach-infested flat, slogging away at a dead-end job, before the requisite hipsters, yupsters, life coaches, aspiring screen writers, dog walkers and cupcakeries had arrived to neutralize its sketchiness. Or, more accurately, bulldoze[43] its problems out of sight, hence out of
mind.

11. Social class abides by a kind of unacknowledged mysticism, an extension and articulation of the functional mysticism around money. Investigations into the architecture of money, from its function as 'legal tender' to its preeminent position in capital formation, illustrate how money seemingly moves of its own accord. But we needn't go all the way left to understand the contours of money mysticism. Economists of every stripe avow there's nothing 'inherently' valuable about money. According to Alan Gotthardt:

> Money has no intrinsic value, only relative value. Its worth is measured by the ability to exchange it for something of value to the owner. In this light, the man who has no money and no wants is in the same position as one who has all the money in the world but cannot buy what he wants. In both cases, money is irrelevant because it cannot accomplish its purpose.[44]

Marx spoke of the 'dazzling money form,'[45] referring to the conversion of coins into commodities, a further remove from barter, an exchange form that cleaves closer to vital necessity. With commodities comes design, and with design comes aesthetics, and this brings us closer to what makes people itchy when it comes to class.

But of course aesthetics, that which meets the eye, is really the core of our inquiry. Aesthetics - and sense perception. I knew a fellow who drank only small-batch brandy because 'Remy? That's mass-produced swill.' Someone else won't drink Bud, while someone down the block (or down the bar) won't drink a particular beer because it's not 'cottage' enough. (Blue bloods think all beer is gauche.) Some won't live in a house with less than three bathrooms. Some will break the bank for a cramped flat if it's in a swank neighborhood. Someone else thinks it's brutish and tacky to rev one's engine, while others think it's snooty to notice. Some people are impressed by tuxedoes, and if you point out the wealthy abandoned them long ago - except for isolated occasions - you're accused of inverse snobbery. Some people would be impressed if they saw a man in a tuxedo on a subway. Some would wonder: why the subway? Some would remain impressed even if he picked his nose, scratched his ass, and spoke in a thick Bronx accent. If you pointed out such behaviors as low-brow, conduct unbecoming a dinner jacket, you might be thought jealous. Some people think having a hothouse tan, sitting on a throne, and chanting 'Lock her up!' is class. Others think you're a snob if you're too good to

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[43]On the problems of gentrification and who it leaves behind, see Peter Moskowitz, *How to Kill a City: Gentrification, Inequality and the Fight for the Neighborhood*, Public Affairs, 2017. 'Bulldoze,' is hardly a metaphor. As stated earlier, I grew up on public assistance, living in Black majority communities in both New York and Atlanta. I recently found out, to my horror, that all of Atlanta's public housing projects have been demolished. This includes the Capitol Homes, where my mother and I lived in the 1970's. She, an indigent single mom, often swapped baby sitting duties with other single moms. The Atlanta Housing Authority, touting new 'mixed income' units and vouchers, has not so much guaranteed resettlement for former tenants as abandoned them to market roulette. See 'Who Benefits When Public Housing is Torn Down,' Mother Jones, March 24, 2020; 'Atlanta Housing Demolition Sparks Outcry,' March 10, 2008, www.npr.org
[44]Alan Gotthardt, *The Eternity Portfolio*, Tyndale House, 2003. Gotthardt is a Christian investment and philanthropy guru.
[45] In *Capital Volume One*, Section Three: The Form of Value or Exchange Value.

have a lover in jail. It's just such triangulation that makes the subject of social class so maddeningly difficult to write about.[46]

12. I have a unique vantage point when it comes to the question of social rankings because I host a monthly reading series. Introduced in this way writers quickly become deferential, as I have something they desire - a chance at an audience. So it's interesting to see a sudden rise in my prestige as formalities progress. This does nothing to change my social status of course, though there's the assumption that I possess an MFA or a degree in literature. I don't. The only certificate I hold is a GED.[47]

I came from behind the podium at a feature reading in New York many years ago to lavish praise from a woman in attendance. I was on a double bill with another writer, and out of a kind of rote courtesy she praised him as well. It was obviously superficial, obviously a blind, and regretfully for her she'd dialed the wrong number with Bobby, a working-class tough from the Bronx. 'Yeah, yeah right...' he blurted gruffly, literally pushing her to one side as he headed for the snack table. This left me standing with this starchy, librarian-like woman awkwardly trading niceties, grateful for any interruption that happened by. That came in the form of another colleague, who let slip that I hosted readings.

> 'Oh? Do you...?' she queried, the previous incident already fading in importance.
> 'Yes,' I answered, with false conviviality, 'Are you a writer as well?'
> 'Well I've appeared in some small publications...' Here she glanced uneasily over her shoulder. 'I hope I haven't offended your friend; he *is* your friend, isn't he?'
> 'An acquaintance. And I'm sure he'll recover.'

Not only did this set her at ease, she doubled down on her self-promotion, hardly missing a beat. (I've always been amazed at how seamlessly the middle-class can stay on task. They are, after all, the class most trained in the art of negotiation.) She was attractive, and because Bobby was always after a new conquest, or cheering on someone else's, I could see him ogling us from across the room. She intercepted this, putting her back off balance. We parted with her having secured a feature, but not without her looking back quizzically, trying to square, I suppose, my seemingly suave demeanor with my choice of friends. While adept at aping the trappings of bourgeois etiquette when the occasion demands, get me angry and I'm back among the street urchins. Anger, like sitting down to eat, will always betray class origins.

13. Social classification is the first resource in a society based on appearances. On a bus, on an elevator, at a party, we are continually classifying and categorizing those around us. Some of this is deep anthropology - the fight-or-flight instinct seeking its parameters. But in modern American society it is barometric, determining whether we behave warmly or coolly to our peers. As Lionel Trilling put it, in 'Manners, Morals, and the Novel:'[48]

> Snobbery is pride in status without pride in function. And it is an uneasy pride of status. It always asks 'Do I belong - do I really belong? And does he belong? And if I am observed talking to him, will it make me seem to belong or not to belong?' It is the

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[46]On the conundrum of taste, 'lifestyle' (a loathsome term) and what clothing communicates, still the best and most entertaining is Paul Fussell's *Class,* Simon and Schuster, 1983.

[47]General Equivalency Diploma – a welcome recourse for drop-outs and someone like me, missing school time due to family disruption.

[48] Lionel Trilling, Manners, Morals, and the Novel, *The Kenyon Review*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Winter, 1948), pp. 11-27.

peculiar vice not of aristocratic societies which have their own appropriate vices, but of bourgeois democratic societies...The dominant emotions of snobbery are uneasiness, self-consciousness, self-defensiveness...

...In a shifting society great emphasis is put upon appearance - I am using the word now in the common meaning, as when people say that 'a good appearance is very important in getting a job.' To appear to be established is one of the ways of becoming established...status in a democratic society is presumed to come not with power but with the tokens of power...

Inadvertently I've tested this theory of appearances. I have a number of vintage blazers that I wear on occasion. In combination with an antique tie, dress slacks and shoes, I've been referred to as 'sharp.' In fashionista New York I'd be seen as a curio. In the small town where I live the petty bourgeois mistake me for a professional; my fellow proles think I'm the enemy. Triangulation again...

One day I held the door of a thrift shop for a woman loaded down with bounty. I didn't realize I had a small item - a tie clasp - in my hand, and obliviously I walked out with it. For a moment I considered boosting it, but want no longer dictates need so I re-entered the shop and forthrightly told the cashier what occurred.

'It's only two dollars sir,' she said, looking about furtively for her superiors. 'Just go 'head and take it.'

Her eyes flashed coquettishly as she folded my hand around the tie clasp. I could congratulate myself on my magnetism, but it was the suit that did it. As far as stealing goes, I just didn't fit her profile.

14. My working-class family's obsession with money was a thing to behold, not for the squeamish. As I said earlier, they were part of that mad post-war scramble, and by sheer will and 'hustle' they managed to shoulder their way into the middle-class - financially at least. A few went further, marrying into the upper middle-class and mimicking its cultural trappings. To walk the walk and talk the talk; after all, the procedural signposts are everywhere available, on TV, in the movies, in ads in magazines. There are even coaches now, teaching the affectations of the manor-born. But why spend? Get even a low-level job at an insurance firm or trade magazine, attend some company parties, and you'll get a crash course. But back in the hollows, where the real fireworks over finance take place, the attitude towards money and its powers can only be described as, well, grubby. There were some in my family that weren't above deception, subterfuge, and outright theft to get their hands on the stuff. I've been amongst the very rich and they aren't obsessed with money. Leisure is their obsession. 'Yes,' some will say, 'but money buys leisure.' And with that they display their tedious middle-classness. Such an observation is procedural in nature - that, like taxes, they leave to the rest of us. Particularly the middle-class, who are so willing to scramble about and keep the aspirational facade up and running. The upper class doesn't bother.

15. The other day I watched a news clip of a basketball player being interviewed post-game on the court. His jersey had a Nike logo in one corner and another logo (Who knows? Who cares?) on the other. He mopped his sweat with a 'Gatorade' towel. The arena itself, I'm sure, sported the name of some corporate entity. Gone are the days when they were named for civic figures. We don't seem to ask why, or even when, this happened, because as Gore Vidal put it, we are the 'United States of Amnesia.' On a deeper level it represents our full-on surrender to

commercialism's dictates, a kind of brute osmosis into every corner of life. We fail to notice, of course, because we've *become* the product. Consider the stencils on truck cabs like 'Silly boy, trucks are for girls,' or the ubiquitous pissing urchin, letting go on the brand most reviled. Or vanity license plates that mimic some advertising pitch. A man where I worked told a tale of his late professional father, who would host the proverbial cocktail party for his colleagues - a semi-private, semi-professional affair undertaken for career advancement. (The novels of John P. Marquand come to mind.) One evening the gentlemen - and in those days it was exclusively a men's club - discussed automotive renown.

> 'Y'know, Chet, the Crown Victoria is every bit as good as a Cadillac, dollar for dollar, and leaves a lot more in your pocket for other things...' essaying a go at practicality over prestige.

But his father, the higher-up of the two, gently set his underling straight, with a declamatory quip right from a big-three car ad, cleverly combining an oddly commercialized common sense with the obligation to climb the corporate ladder.

> 'Maybe so, Andy,' he said, 'but what would you *really* rather drive?'

Author Bio

Jim Donnelly is a former trucker, forklift operator, warehouse worker, and union organizer. A writer and musician, he wrote a monthly column called 'Media Misinformation' for the *Aquarian Weekly*. He now provides education and entertainment to elder communities. His two collections of poetry are published by Moon Pie Press, Maine and he has creative nonfiction forthcoming in issue #8 of *Lumpen*, a UK journal for marginalized writers.

A Carpenter's Rainbow

Julie Kitzenberger

My Dad was anything to do with building: carpentry, construction, design, and specialty kitchen cabinetry. He built freeways, parking lots, bank lobbies, museums, restaurants, office buildings, and remodeled kitchens. He was a carpenter, true and true.

Although he and my Mom had not been married for over 50 years, they had always remained friendly. When he passed away, my step-mother fell into a deep depression and said she was not up to having his memorial.

'Your father deserves a Celebration of Life,' my Mom said. We held the gathering in her back yard.

It was a sunny day, full of blue sky and lots of light. There was a wooden bench that circled an enormous Cypress tree. Folks helped me lift my Dad's carpenter toolbox onto the bench for all to admire. He had built it with the precision his work was known for. It had 7 drawers. Each was for a specific type of tool, with wooden pieces built in to section out where the various tools of his trade belonged. There was a door that shut in front of all the drawers, with a lock. Whenever he worked on a job, he would load the toolbox into his SUV, drive it to the construction site, and chain it to something so nothing could be stolen.

On top of the toolbox I placed the award I made for my Dad the year before. It said he had been inducted into the Master Builders Hall of Fame. It had a San Francisco Giants baseball World Series trophy with one photo of my Dad welding something while wearing his safety glasses and another of him smiling, a photo I called, 'My Dad, Always Laughing.'

We played my Dad's favorite song, 'If I Were a Carpenter,'[49] throughout the afternoon. Johnny Cash sang it to his wife, June Carter Cash, asking if she, a lady, would still marry him if he were only a carpenter. It wasn't outdated; it was a classic. Some had pressured my Dad to stop doing what he loved to become a contractor, but he wouldn't abandon his chosen occupation to make more money. Johnny represented the working man. So did my Dad.

My Dad's preferred hammer was a 13-ounce claw hammer with a hickory wood handle. Peter, Paul and Mary's song, 'If I Had a Hammer,'[50] was another of his favorites, which we also played. My Dad cared deeply about the welfare of others. In the song, the hammer represents justice and the lyrics speak of love for community 'all over this land.'

Those who loved my Dad from all walks of his carpenter's life were there. Workers from the local carpenters' union. His former students and staff from the city's Building Education Center, where he taught carpentry to homeowners on evenings and weekends for over 30 years. Co-workers from the local Ace Hardware, where he had worked after retirement, providing

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[49] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MSQ6fSKLlG0
[50] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JD-pyWALro4

carpentry advice until a few months before his passing. And clients who had become friends were there to share stories of the remodeling work he had done for their homes.

During the service, we watched for rainbows, which my Dad loved. Two days later, I loaded my car with my Dad's things from the memorial to take home with me: his toolbox, his award, his framed photo and his cap from the Building Education Center. As I walked down the steps from my Mom's porch, we looked west into the blue sky and noticed many white clouds. The sky was usually all blue, but this day there were pillow-sized clouds everywhere.

We noticed a rainbow shining across one cloud hovering high over a palm tree. Then we noticed a second rainbow shining across a second cloud, just as high up, and somewhat to the left. I've never seen that before or since.

My Mom smiled. 'Your Dad sent a rainbow for each of us.'

Author Bio

Julie Kitzenberger is an emerging writer who shares her passions for cats, wildlife, ranching and the surprises of daily life through both her writing and her photography. Her writing guides her photo capture; her image prospecting often inspires her stories. Julie won national awards for her first two pieces published. Her cover story for *Western Horseman*, "A 125-Year Tradition," won Best Freelance Writer in Equine Journalism. Her feature story for *Modern Arabian Horse magazine*, "A Lady Rancher with the Right Stuff," won Best Feature Story and Best Editorial Photo in Equine Media. These stories can be read on the Tearsheets page of her website, www.JulieKitzenberger.com. Recent flash fiction favorites can be found on her blog, juliekblog.com. Julie has a B.F.A. from New York University's School of the Arts and a B.S. in Computer Science from Rutgers University. Julie lives in the San Francisco Bay Area where she trains and photographs her amazing cat, Coco.

#1 - My Dad's award, 'Master Builders Hall of Fame':
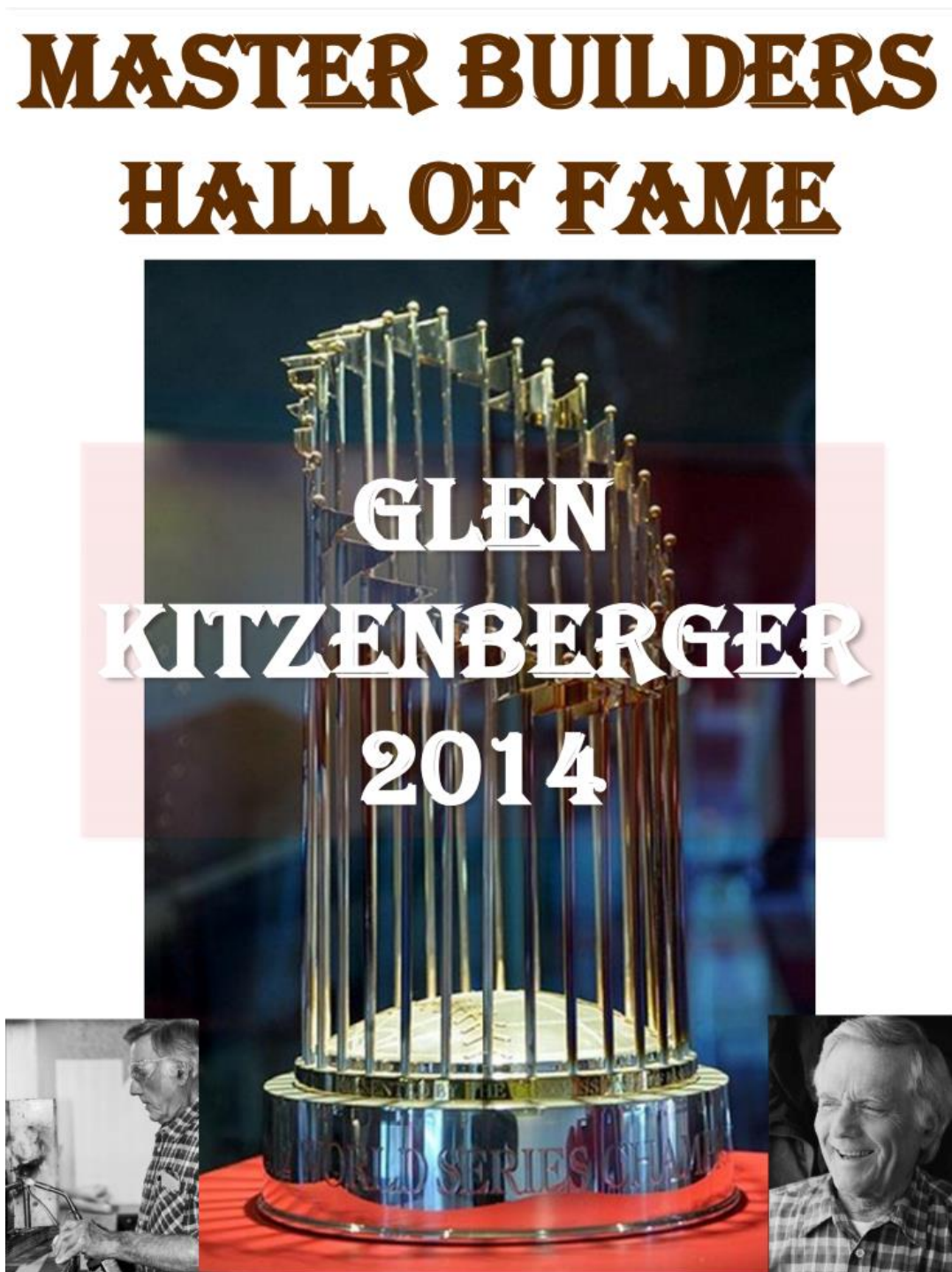
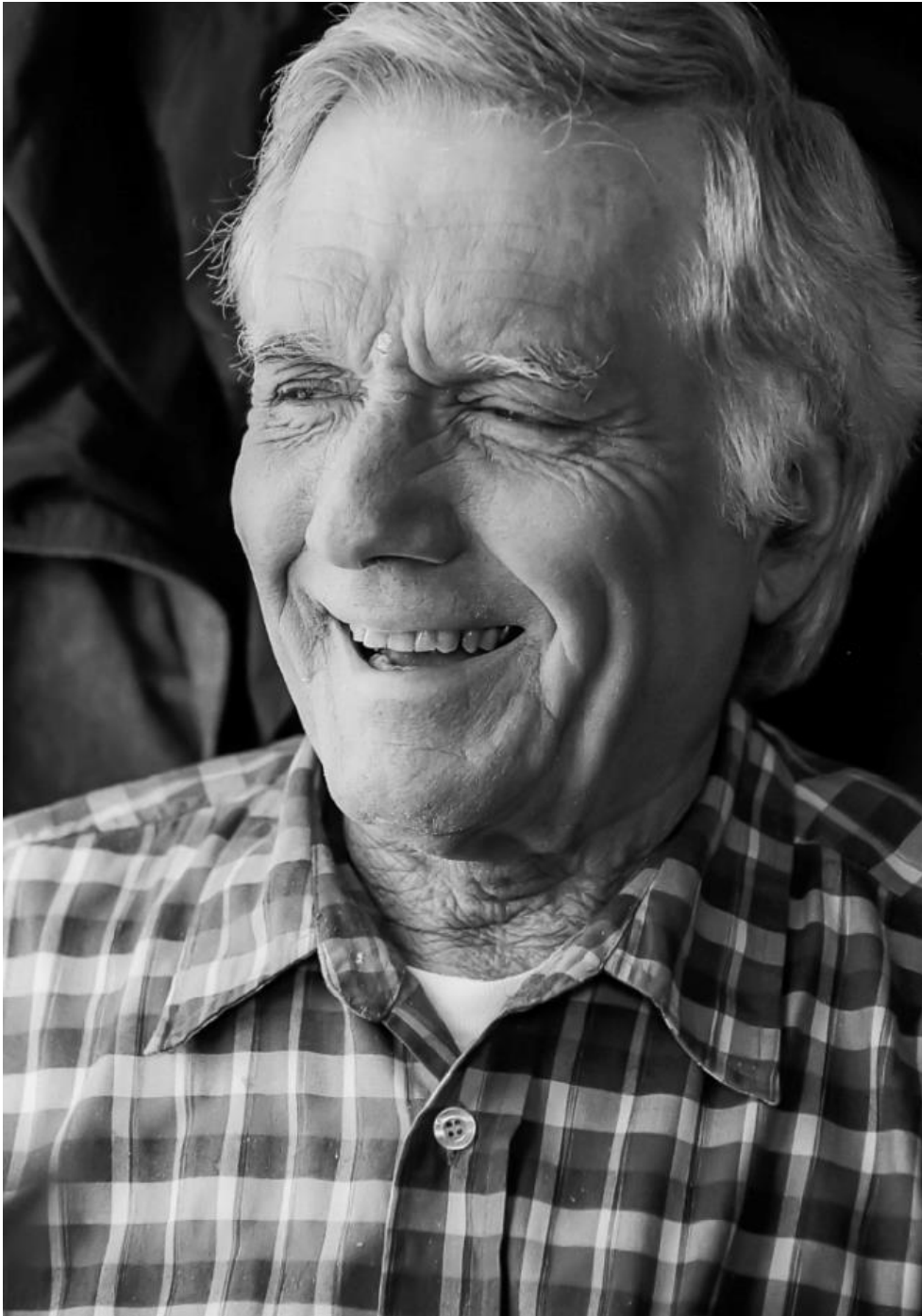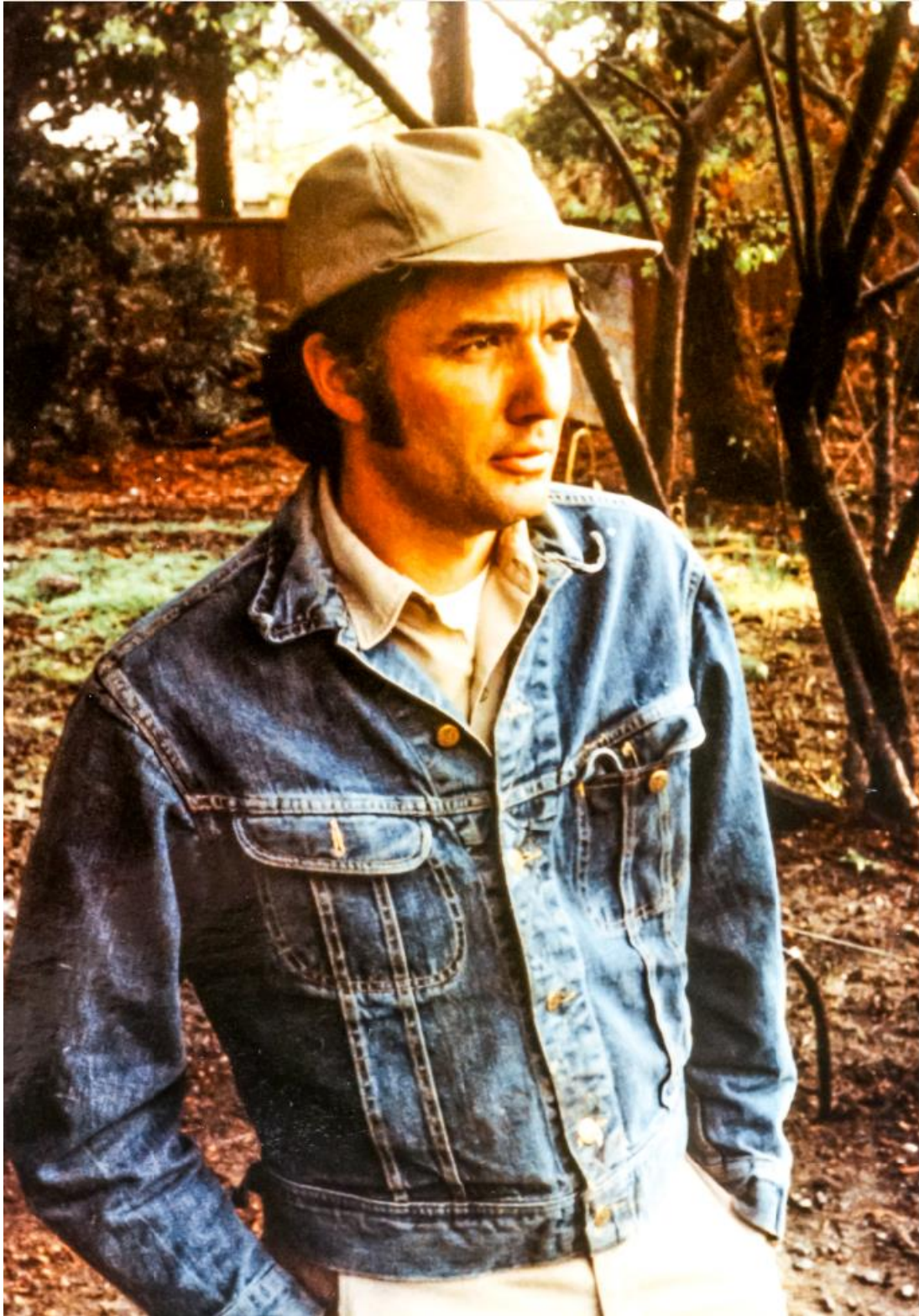#2 - Two views of my Dad's hand-made toolbox:

#3 - Toolbox

#4 - My Dad's toolbox with his cap from the Building Education Center and the photo of him always laughing.

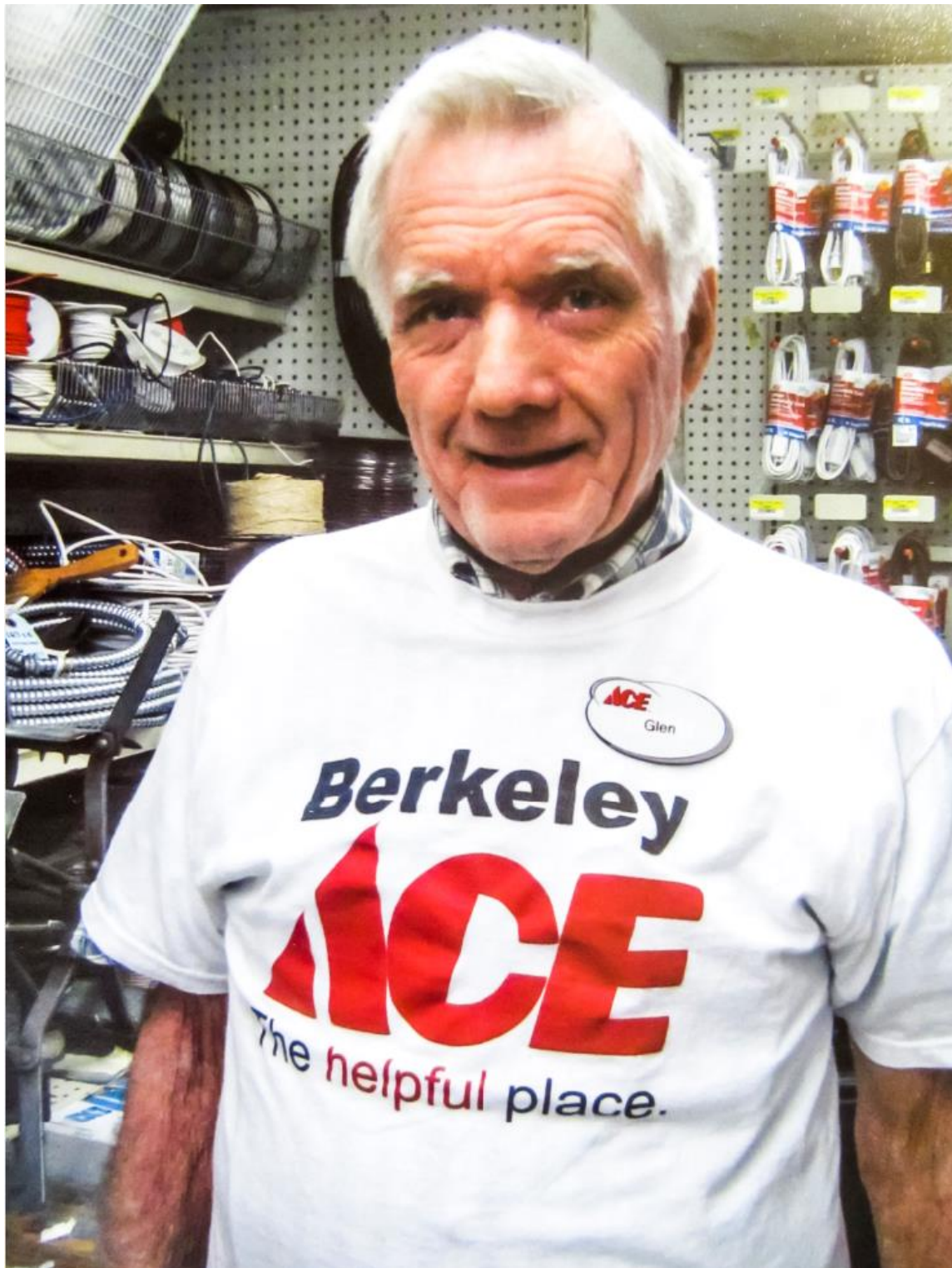#5 - 'My Dad, Always Laughing'

#6 - My Dad in his carpentry clothes in the 1970s:

#7 - My Dad teaching welding at the Building Education Center where he taught carpentry to homeowners for over 30 years.

#8 - After retirement, my Dad worked at the local Ace Hardware, giving carpentry advice to customers until a few months before he died.

Gibbs, E. (2021). *Coal Country: The Meaning and Memory of Deindustrialization in Postwar Scotland.* University of London Press.

Review by Tim Strangleman

These are exciting times to be in the field of deindustrialisation studies. There is a real sense of momentum and dialogue between the various studies emerging from a range of projects across the globe. In addition, a new generation of scholars who work naturally across disciplinary boundaries has emerged. There is a strong affinity between those researching deindustrialisation and the interdisciplinary field of working-class studies. In many ways working-class studies really owes its existence to the profound shock of industrial closures of the 1970s and 1980s, a process which revealed class politics and cultures at the point of loss or serious erosion. These issues frame Ewan Gibbs' fine new volume *Coal Country,* drawn from his doctoral research. This is an ambitious book, seeking to tell the story of the Post-World War Two coal industry in Scotland and its long-term demise.

Organised around seven substantive chapters, *Coal Country* weaves together the experiences of three generations of miners and mining families, drawing on a rich seam of wonderful oral history narratives from thirty-five interviewees. Chapters in turn examine the industrial development of the Scottish coalfields, the moral economy of the industry, coal communities, gender, generations, coalfield politics, and deindustrialisation.

Scotland is one of the best-studied areas in the UK in terms of a collected, curated and cohesive set of oral history projects on industrial experience and working-class life. Through the members and associates of the Scottish Oral History Centre based in Glasgow, there has been a coherent longstanding attempt to tell the story of Scotland's industrial heyday and subsequent decline through a 'history from below' approach. This focussed coherence is in marked contrast to the scholarship of English industrial decline, which remains fragmented. Gibbs' book both draws on that established tradition, as well as makes a fine original contribution to it. This Scottishness is really central to the book, providing a geographic boundary which at once is large enough to say something meaningful, while simultaneously small enough to not lose sight of detailed coherence. Running through the volume are a number of themes, perhaps the most distinctive of which is the way industrial loss is wrapped around a growing sense of Scottish national identity, as distinct from a wider British one. Gibbs draws on Scottish historian Tom Devine's notion of deindustrialisation bringing about '"a deep crisis of national identity" that stemmed from "a collective psyche" invested in heavy industry'(p. 242). Gibbs' *Coal Country* fleshes out this insightful comment by showing that industrial decline and closure were a feature of the Scottish coal industry from the late 1940s, pre-dating the Thatcher era by some margin. Closures and rationalisation unfolded in a peculiarly Scottish way that helped to shape nationalism and imprinted itself on the wider working-class experience.

The real value of *Coal Country* lies in the way Gibbs tell the story through generations of industrial workers, the oldest of whom experienced grinding poverty and injustice in the interwar period when the coal industry was under callous private ownership. There is more

than one account here of families evicted from their coal company homes as the result of strike action, industrial downturn or blacklisting. Memories of these events were seared into individuals, families and communities, and helped shape post-war attitudes toward politics and industry. Gibbs shows how these embedded cultural norms and values explain why workers acted as they did from the 1950s through to the 1980s and beyond. He shows how there emerged a distinct moral economy within individual industrial districts and at the level of the Scottish area of the National Coal Board (NCB) as a whole. This moral order included a recognition of the importance of health and safety measures, the acceptance of closure of pits on the grounds of exhaustion of seams, and the value of trade unionism.   As Gibbs and others have pointed out, this moral economy was not the monopoly of the working class, but was a feature shared by employers and politicians – part of a wider post-war political consensus, again with a clear Scottish character.

Scotland is also a useful space to show the complexity of working-class life, with relevance beyond the coal industry. Gibbs skilfully holds in tension multiple identities working-class people held: geographic (national, regional, local); religious (Catholic and Protestant); gendered; generational; and political (Labour, Communist and Scottish nationalist). These were identities that sometimes united, but more often divided, working-class life, and bring a unique flavour to the wider experience of deindustrialisation in Scotland.

Coal Country really comes alive when we hear the voices of workers from the oral history material; this is largely absent in the early background history in chapter 1, which is a shame. I was torn here between needing to know and worrying what a more general reader might think of the account, which is fairly dense. The frustration I felt with that section increased when the oral history accounts began to be fed into the narrative. Indeed, I felt that Gibbs rather under-used his material. The narratives he recorded were so rich we deserve to hear far more of them. This is always a tension in oral history in balancing the critical narrative arc the author intends with the need to let people 'speak for themselves'. The narratives in *Coal Country* are often so fascinating that they could be the basis of a short story. There is a real value in letting working-class people speak, especially from an older generation. This lies in the reader becoming familiar with the timbre and cadence of speech patterns, the sense making of working-class life - in short, the articulacy of working people when given the opportunity to talk and, perhaps more importantly, be listened to.

One of the signature weaknesses of both working-class studies and deindustrialisation studies is their tendency to be backward looking; by which I mean their focus is how the past shaped the recent past. The frustration is often at how little we know of the impact of historical legacy on the much younger generations. How do younger working-class people make sense and meaning of industries that have little physical or economic presence in their lives? *Coal Country* shares this weakness. This absence is understandable, as researchers need to record rich reflections on the past by the generations that experienced both heydays and declines, but we also need to make space for the voices of the future.

Coal Country is a fine and valuable contribution to both working-class studies and the study of deindustrialisation. This is a well-written and insightful account of one industry's role in the unfolding of a national story. It is in its account of the role of industrial decline on progressive politics in Scotland that we see the potential for hope in a working-class future. Working-class people took employment in the coal industry because it provided income – sometimes good, often not so good. That industry was dangerous, polluting, injurious to health and environmentally a disaster. But once that industry has gone, people deserve a better range of

possibilities for themselves and their children. *Coal Country* hints that such brutal industrial erasure has opened up a series of progressive futures.

Reviewer Bio

Tim Strangleman is Professor of Sociology at University of Kent, Canterbury, UK. He has written widely on work and deindustrialisation. His book *Voices of Guinness: an Oral History of the Park Royal Brewery*, was published by Oxford University Press in 2019, and he has recently co-edited *The Routledge International Handbook of Working-Class Studies* with Christie Launius and Michele Fazio.

McAlevey, J. (2016) *No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age*; Oxford University Press.

Review by Gary Jones

For more than a decade organizer, author, and scholar Jane McAlevey has argued, in person and now in print, that while past organizing errors have undermined the labor movement, future organizers can learn from those errors, avoid repeating them, and rebuild the labor movement. As such, *No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age* is quickly becoming an important and influential text among many committed to rebuilding the labor movement and promoting progressive social change in the 21st century.

Since the publication of her first book, *Raising Expectations (and Raising Hell): My Decade Fighting for the Labor Movement* (Verso, 2012), McAlevey has earned a PhD in sociology from the City University of New York in 2015, served as a Post-Doctoral Fellow in the Labor and Worklife Program at Harvard Law School, and published *A Collective Bargain: Unions, Organizing, and the Fight for Democracy* (HarperCollins Publishers, 2020) in addition to *No Shortcuts*. Currently a senior fellow at UC Berkeley's Labor Center, part of the Institute for Research on Labor and Employment, McAlevey is also a regular contributor to *The Nation* and *Jacobin*.

In brief, Chapter 1 of *No Shortcuts* begins with the author – correctly - stressing the significance of the labor movement's post-war shift away from the organizing of the early CIO and towards the mobilizing and advocacy of the reunited AFL-CIO and New Labor. This shift, McAlevey adds, coincided with a historic decline of the labor movement, from which it has yet to recover. In Chapter 2 McAlevey proposes a return to an updated CIO-style 'whole-worker organizing' and describes what such organizing means on-the-ground. In Chapters 3-5 McAlevey provides thoroughly researched and well-documented 'paradigmatic' case studies of campaigns by 1199NE and nursing home workers in Connecticut, the UFCW and slaughterhouse workers at Smithfield Foods, Tar Hill, North Carolina, and the Chicago Teachers Union and public educators and staff, Chicago, Illinois, respectively, all of which have recently won using a 'whole worker organizing' approach. Chapter 6, in contrast, provides a case study of the mobilizing approach of worker center Make the Road New York, Brooklyn, NY. Chapter 7 concludes with McAlevey's observation that when it comes to 'actual power,' as opposed to 'pretend power,' there are 'no shortcuts.'

Of course, McAlevey is aware that the labor movement faces external as well as internal obstacles. Nevertheless, given that some of the above-mentioned external obstacles have been weakened, if not yet removed, due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the election of 2020, and the introduction of the PRO-Act, the publication of *No Shortcuts* has come at a propitious moment for the U.S. labor movement, as many more workers are now ready to join unions, organize, and strike. Readers are therefore most likely to be drawn to McAlevey's 'paradigmatic' case study of 1199NE's 'whole-worker' approach, based as it is on class struggle, organizing, strike-readiness, and collective bargaining, that has yielded the best contracts for private nursing home workers in the industry. Perhaps such militancy is hardly surprising, as 1199NE's roots lie in 1199, the CIO-era union, left-led, that organized Black,

Puerto Rican, and female hospital workers during the 1960s-1970s, and aligned itself with major social movements of the day. To be fair, the author's other case studies, of the unjustly obscure UFCW union and slaughterhouse workers at Smithfield Foods, Tar Heel, North Carolina and the justly famous CTU and public-school educators and staff, also demonstrate the utility of 'whole-worker organizing.' For McAlevey such an approach is necessary for the labor movement to have the 'power to win' the NLRB certification elections, card checks, strike authorization votes, supermajority strikes, and good contracts that bring 'life-changing gains' to workers, and in the process contribute to rebuilding the labor movement and promoting progressive social change.

Most recently, the author has returned to her own roots as an organizer. Since the publication of *No Shortcuts*, McAlevey, working with the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, a socialist foundation based in Germany, has led a series of online 'Strike Schools' to train and develop thousands of organizers from the U.S. and abroad. As sponsored by the RLS and led by McAlevey, 'Strike School' is free and consists of one three-hour session offered every Tuesday for six weeks. Press reports indicate that course materials include *No Shortcuts* and a *Strike Manual* and the curriculum covers 'whole worker organizing' techniques such as workplace leader identification; semantics and six-step structured organizing conversations; workplace and community charting; structure tests; and strike mobilization. In order to best assist current campaigns and build collective organization, McAlevey and the RLS have now restricted registration for strike school to groups and organizations rather than permitting individuals to register as they had before. (Registration for future 'Strike Schools,' can be found at McAlevey's website, janemcalevey.com).

In sum, in *No Shortcuts* McAlevey provides a convincing argument for her often-expressed view that while past organizing errors have undermined the labor movement, organizers can learn from their errors, avoid repeating them, and rebuild the labor movement. As such, *No Shortcuts* has become an important and influential text among many committed to the long, hard, critical work of organizing that remains indispensable to rebuilding the labor movement and promoting progressive social change. For McAlevey, her readers, Strike School alumni, and many others, there is only one thing left to say and do, *organize!*

Reviewer Bio

Gary Jones is a U.S. historian who has taught many of the major eras and themes of American history at Muhlenberg College, Allentown, Pa., and American International College, Springfield, MA. His research focuses on the labor and working-class history of Gilded Age and Progressive Era Pennsylvania.

Lauter, Paul (2020) *Our Sixties: An Activist's History,* Rochester University Press.

Review by Michael Zweig

The first question one asks when considering a memoir is: Why would I want to know about this person? In Paul Lauter's case, there are many reasons, especially for anyone interested in how life experience draws a person into political activity, and how that activity leads them to groundbreaking progressive political action.

Lauter was born in 1932. He was fourteen years old when the first baby boomer came along, having grown up before most of the students who built the core social movements referred to as 'the Sixties.' Nonetheless, in his memoir Lauter lays claim, in its title and in the arc of his development, to that tumultuous decade, which stretched into the early '70s.

By 1960, Lauter had already spent eight years teaching at several colleges and universities. He had written a number of articles in *The Nation, The New Republic*, and other liberal publications. He had become the father of two boys, and saw his first wife, whom we know only as Tris, 'dump' him, seemingly due to the strains a '50s marriage put on a PhD wife following her husband from place to place as his job prospects unfolded.

Lauter describes his 'political coming out' in the act of leafleting a showing of the movie *On the Beach* on behalf of the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE) early in 1960, while teaching at UMass Amherst. Here he makes the critically important point that political action, even in such a small way as leafleting a movie audience, is 'when the butterfly emerges from the cocoon,' when a person enters the public realm of social practice from the interior world of thought. The rest of the book recounts the paths Lauter has followed, in which theory and practice have continually intertwined to shape his personal development.

Readers will find here revealing thumbnail sketches of important 'Sixties' organizations, in which Lauter sometimes acted as a functionary, sometimes played leading roles. Among them are the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO, which led Freedom Summer activities in Mississippi in 1964), Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the New University Conference (NUC), and the United States Servicemen's Fund (USSF). Lauter also was the staff person for Resist, the organizational arm of the 1967 'A Call to Resist Illegitimate Authority,' helpfully reprinted as an appendix to this book, and he co-founded the Feminist Press with his long-time partner Florence Howe. These glimpses into the Movement provide interesting historical information, placing Lauter's personal growth in that context.

Readers will probably be most familiar with Paul Lauter as the editor of the *Heath Anthology of American Literature*, and as a guiding light for the newsletter/journal *Radical Teacher*. These landmark publications played central roles in transforming North American approaches to pedagogy and to the literary canon.

Lauter explains how his experiences in the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Schools helped give rise to these contributions. His role in the Freedom Schools was to bring in films on nonviolence and teach Negro (as it was called then) history and literature. The students were Black people of all ages who were preparing to challenge the murderous repression Mississippi whites had unleashed against Black people attempting to register to vote. This was his introduction to 'education for insurgency,' altogether different from Lauter's previous teaching experience.

Lauter reflects on this contrast in his juxtaposition of the anti-Vietnam War Teach-ins that started at the University of Michigan in March 1965 to the Teaching About Peace Conference he helped organize for the American Friends in June 1964, just before he went to Mississippi. That conference had nothing like the impact of the Michigan Teach-in, Lauter says, because it was oriented towards policy makers while the Teach-in was oriented towards the activists who would build the anti-war movement.

Lauter's understanding of his Freedom School experience sharpened when he was hired to lead the transformation of the Morgan Community School in Washington, D.C to 'community control' in 1967. While he had thoughts of implementing the COFO Freedom School model in D.C., he found it was impossible because the Morgan project lacked two central ingredients COFO provided: clear organization and genuine community engagement. Without these, Lauter found, there could be no education for insurgency. The project failed.

Lauter explains how these involvements shaped his view of the limitations inherent in traditional teaching methods, which he characterizes as the 'banking theory of knowledge,' in which the teacher is the repository of knowledge to be transmitted to passive student receptacles. Instead, he came to champion 'student-centered teaching' that brings out what students know as the basis for what more they learn. This in turn led Lauter to understand the need to confront the standard literary Canon: 'The primary cry of the movement was for representation, that is, for being heard, not as the inheritors of 'the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer,' but as those who had been marginalized by that very formulation.'

These experiences shaped the content and orientation of the *Radical Teacher*, which Lauter and Florence Howe started as a newsletter of the New University Conference in 1969-1970. The publication is active to this day, with Lauter on its editorial board. And the challenge to the Canon led Lauter to edit the *Heath Anthology*, a vast compendium of writing from sources far beyond standard Canon fare, in which we hear the voices of all communities.

For all his skill as a writer, Lauter left me frustrated in many places where he tells a story without explaining its relevance to the theme of the book, or just leaves the story unfinished. He tells us there was a debate about the meaning of 'conscience' in the draft-avoiding conscientious objector status, but not the content of the debate. We hear of several sexual relationships with women, but for no apparent purpose. We hear about fierce debates in the feminist movement, but not what he learned in the context of his long relationship with Florence Howe and the development of the Feminist Press.

Towards the end of his memoir, Lauter explores the difficulties of bringing working class literature and art into the college classroom. He talks about how the working-class literature of struggle 'wore my younger students down.' He reflects on the relative disappearance of class in relation to race and gender as identities from the 1970s on, and the reluctance of academic leaders to accept the 'art of combat' that suffuses working-class culture. For practitioners of working-class studies, a deeper exploration of these experiences would have been welcome.

Lauter has lived through decades of unstable academic employment interlaced with jobs as an organizer in various movements. This can serve as a model for many young activists these days, for whom this book will be a valuable resource.

Reviewer Bio

Michael Zweig is emeritus professor of economics and founding director of the Center for Study of Working Class Life at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. A long-time activist with roots in the Students for a Democratic Society in the 1960s, he is one of the founders of the Working-Class Studies Association and author of *Working-Class Majority: America's Best Kept Secret*.

Goode, J., ed. (2019) *Clever Girls: Autoethnographies of Class, Gender, and Ethnicity.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Review by Christie Launius

This ambitious volume, a co-recipient of the 2020 Jake Ryan Award for books about the working-class academic experience, is the latest in a long line of collections that highlight the voices of those who have achieved some measure of upward class mobility via higher education. Editor and contributor Jackie Goode has brought together fourteen writers in this collection. In addition to contributing her own narrative essay that recounts her experiences of family, schooling, and upward mobility, Goode wrote an extensive Introduction and Conclusion, as well as two substantial scholarly essays, 'The Classed, Gendered, and Racialised Subject,' and 'On Autoethnography.' This volume, then, not only contributes a remarkably diverse array of narrative essays, but also makes a significant contribution to the scholarship on narratives of upward class mobility achieved via higher education. It's like the best kind of 'buy one get one free' deal, whether your primary interest is in the narrative essays themselves or the theoretical discourses on subjectivity and the methods of autoethnography.

As the title suggests, all of the contributors are women, and a primary focus of their narratives is their experience of being 'clever girls,' working-class girls who were marked out for their 'cleverness.' In her Preface, Goode provides the British lineage of this kind of autoethnographic writing about class, education, and upward mobility, some of which may be unfamiliar to readers outside the UK. She cites Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy,* Liz Heron's *Truth, Dare, or Promise,* Heidi Safia Mirza's *Young, Female, and Black,* Bev Skeggs' *Formations of Class and Gender,* Mahony and Zmroczek's *Class Matters,* and Valerie Walkerdine's *Growing Up Girl.* There is an extensive companion literature in the U.S (for an overview, see [Warnock 2016](#)); two notable volumes that focus on gender in particular are Tokarczyk and Fay's *Working-Class Women in the Academy* (1993) and *Those Winter Sundays: Female Academics and Their Working-Class Parents* (2004).

A strength of the volume is that Goode very intentionally solicited narrative essays by women across multiple generations, or as she puts it, the collection contains a 'temporal component' that 'trac[es] continuities and change across generations through stories from the children of the Welfare State/Butler's 1944 Education Act; Thatcher/Blair's children; and Cameron/May/Johnson's post-EU referendum/Trump-era children' (p. x). The narrative essays are presented chronologically, with the eldest writers appearing first. Claire Mitchell's essay appears toward the end of the volume, marking her as among the youngest contributors.

While all of the narratives recount struggles of many kinds, Mitchell's essay stands out from the rest for her revelation that in spite of all her striving, the acquisition of educational credentials has not brought about the desired upward mobility. She writes movingly about her experiences growing up with a single mother who went to university at the age of 27. Claire follows in her mother's footsteps, attending university, and they both earn undergraduate and master's degrees, sharing the belief that their hard work will pay off in the form of greater security and wider opportunities. Neither was forthcoming in their experience, however: 'There's an expectation that you should be doing well now—an expectation that for a long time you shared since, after all, you had played your part and worked hard. So the struggle should have paid off by now, right? Sadly, that's not the case' (p. 297). The piece, written in the form of a letter to her younger self, signs off 'With love and sorrow' (p. 297).

Mitchell's essay suggests that this genre of writing and its conventions may shift significantly as a result of political and economic changes in Britain and the U.S. Whereas the genre has previously

accommodated intense ambivalence about whether it was worth it, and whether the gains outweigh the losses associated with achieving upward mobility via education, the assumption has most always been that some measure of upward mobility was in fact achieved. As a reader, I was left wanting a way to check in on Mitchell in five, ten, twenty years from now, to see both how she fares economically and how she feels about and understands her pursuit of education.

Another strength of the volume is that a number of the contributors foreground their racial identity in relation to their class position and their educational experiences in ways that complicate and extend our understanding of what it means to pursue class mobility via education. Particularly moving are the narratives by Black women, two of whom identify themselves as children of parents of the Windrush generation. Those who watched Steve McQueen's 2020 film series *Small Axe,* particularly the film simply entitled 'Education,' will be familiar with aspects of their narratives. Christa Welsh, for example, writes that 'In the 1970s, second generation West Indian children were institutionally discriminated against. In Primary Schools, a disproportionate number of West Indian immigrant children were placed in classes for the 'Educationally Subnormal'. I was one of those children' (p. 131). The racism they faced as children (and continue to face as adults) is presented unflinchingly. In the educational setting, it manifested both overtly and more covertly, in the form of lowered expectations and expressions of disbelief at their accomplishments, as when Victoria Adukwei Bulley recounts being asked 'Is this *yours*? . . . Did *you* write this?' She continues, 'I would often find this penned onto sheets of work that had been marked by teachers. Not so much a celebration of my work, more a sense of dissonance' (p. 286).

A final feature which makes this volume unique in the genre is that Goode gave the contributors a chance to read and respond to each other's essays. She then collated and edited those responses into an essay titled 'Clever Girls in Conversation' that appears right before the conclusion of the volume. Some of the responses to one another's pieces are cursory, which is understandable given that there are fourteen different contributors to the volume, but there is something undeniably powerful about staging this encounter with each other's words. According to Goode, the process of reading and responding to each other's essays 'felt transformative, turning the 'making' of the book into a collaborative autoethnography in itself that embodied more than the sum of its parts' (p. 14). I was reminded of Sherry Linkon's assertion that scholarly personal narratives, which she argues are the signature genre of the field of working-class studies, 'recount and analyze the centrality of belonging in working-class culture, and they also help to create it.' In *Clever Girls,* Jackie Goode has pushed this aspect of the genre to a new level.

Reviewer Bio

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Leichter, H. (2020) *Temporary.* Emily Books/Coffee House Press.

Review by Lindsay Bartkowski

In the bizarre world of Hilary Leichter's 2020 novel *Temporary*, an underclass of workers must meet the shifting demands of their employers to become whoever and whatever they desire. Temporaries cycle through placement after placement, hoping and searching for a feeling of permanence to settle in, a 'steadiness' that suggests they've finally found 'the one'—their permanent position and place in society. The playful narrative recounts one woman's quest for stable employment: an unnamed narrator who 'the agency' sends to work as a mannequin, a pirate, Chairman of the Board, and even a ghost. She comes from a long line of temporaries who, the more Biblical passages suggest, were created in the early days of the universe to fill in when gods become weary. Says the unnamed narrator, 'I'm filling out forms, always. I'm shaking hands. I'm gainfully employed, again and again and again. The surest path to permanence is to do my placements, and to do them well' (p. 9).

It is a process and sentiment that contingent employees, including those like myself who are searching for work in academia, know all too well. While enduring job insecurity has often been imagined as an unfortunate consequence of economic downturn or the necessary result of a surplus of academic labor, the fact of the matter is that a flexible labor force constitutes the vast majority of higher education—70% of all instructional staff appointments, according to pre-COVID statistics assembled by the AAUP. This contingent and temporary class of workers is not, in other words, an excess of institutions of higher education, but rather is integral to their operation. Like the system of temporaries that Leichter describes, we are contingent by design. Non-tenured and adjunct faculty reapply for placements all over their cities, semester after semester and year after year, in order to someday prove valuable enough to become permanent.

Leichter's novel, in its absurdist register, follows this economic restructuring to its most extreme end, imagining a world in which temporaries not only take on the roles and responsibilities that their placement requires, but are expected to *become* the person, animal, or apparition that they replace. A temporary aboard a pirate ship must not only fulfill the role of the ship's parrot, but, to the extent that it is physically possible, must *become* the parrot. Temporaries are shapeshifters, required to take on the affect, personality, personal history, and social network of the person that they replace. It is a system that requires that they have no self-interest, no personal history or social network of their own, and no autonomous identity. A mostly light-hearted premise, this idea has darker implications for the narrator.

When she is hired to replace 'Darla' on a pirate ship, the narrator must infer from her shipmates what it means to be Darla. Says the narrator: 'I try to feel Darla's absence as it relates to every other person… I sense Darla is someone both loved and feared, and I try to adjust my temperament to properly fill her boots. I slap a lot of backs and laugh a lot of laughs, and other times I walk the deck with stern and hollow eyes' (p. 30). Her shipmates are generally pleased and the temporary even earns the affection of Pearl, Darla's best friend. They shower the temporary with a chorus of suggestions, trying to help her do as Darla would do. She wouldn't steal a pudding or brew herself some coffee, but she would drink ale. She would never ask for overtime nor severance, and worst of all, according to the 'first mate of human resources,' Darla would never 'say no' to his sexual advances. The scene of assault is brief and narrated

with the same detached and sardonic tone as the rest of the novel. Coercion, the temporary knows, is a necessary facet of her relationship with her employers and coworkers. To do her placement well, she should comply with their wishes and conform to their expectations in order to become precisely what they want and expect. Leichter reminds us that within an economy that prizes workers' 'flexibility,' even mundane 'bullshit jobs,' to use David Graeber's term, are sustained by violence. When employers demand that workers pledge allegiance, perform accommodation, and provide service 'with a smile,' they enlist workers in a deeply alienating and coercive relationship, even if it is apparently premised on friendship or affection.

But Leichter's protagonist is not without agency, nor does she uncritically accept the terms of her employment. Her transgressions of her employers' wishes begin innocently enough: stealing a pair of shoes from a particularly insufferable employer, declaring on her resume that she can 'totally handle seasickness.' But when she's pushed, when her shipmates require that she mete out 'severance'—which on the ship means that she literally 'sever' another employee—the temporary chooses to deceive the group instead. In order to effectively perform as 'Darla,' the temporary presents the ship with a bloodied knife, proclaiming that she's gone so far as to sever the head from the employee in question. But, in truth, the temporary has sliced her own arm open and allowed the woman in jeopardy to jump overboard and go free.

From here, the novel escalates towards more and more violent work, as the temporary becomes the assistant to an assassin, and then, as a 'fugitive temp' working on a blimp, pushes the button that drops bombs on coordinates below. Says the narrator: 'Harold explains that if the supervisor doesn't touch the buttons, then technically, she doesn't drop the bombs. And if the supervisor doesn't drop the bombs, then neither does the owner of the blimp. And since fugitive temps are hidden and without recourse, we technically don't exist, at least not in the eyes of the law. And if no one drops the bombs, no one can be blamed for dropping the bombs, and no one can be tried, and no one can be hanged, and no one can be held accountable, and it's maybe as if the bombs were released by none other than the wide and wondrous sky itself' (p. 122). The fact of her simultaneous existence and non-existence as an 'illegal' or 'off the books' temporary allows her employer to deny any liability for the damage and death caused by the bombs. These are jobs that enlist workers to do harm to others, to enact systemic violence, even as they themselves are exploited and working always under duress. It is here where the novel's protagonist draws a sharp line, invoking the sentiment of Melville's Bartleby to declare: 'I refuse' (p. 123). The temporary 'refuses vehemently,' and comes to the realization that 'subordination doesn't lead to steadiness' (p. 125).

Like many contemporary novels about work, Leichter's isn't exactly a call to action. We can't so easily open the hatch and extract ourselves from systems designed to do harm. Rather, as a meditation on the changing relationship between self and work in the neoliberal era, Leichter's novel and others like it ask us to consider what opting out might look like. Novels like Ling Ma's *Severance* (2018) and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* (2021)*,* for example, are similarly invested in exploring and laying bare the alienation produced by neoliberal economic and cultural structures. Their protagonists—an overly-committed salesperson who continues work even as the world crumbles around her, and an artificially intelligent robot built to serve— reach the end of their usefulness and must consider what's next amidst the wreckage. For working-class scholars and activists, these fictions provoke questions about the conditions of our own work and the viability of the institutions in which we operate. After the pandemic, how will working-class studies, and academia more broadly, be changed? How can we refuse— whether through our academic, artistic, or organizer labor—to comply with the demands of an exploitative system?

Reviewer Bio

Lindsay Bartkowski is an independent scholar, labor organizer, and writer. Her research studies the role of literature and culture in shaping perceptions and attitudes about work in the U.S., with a particular focus on service labor.