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Volume 2 Issue 1: Editorial

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Welcome to Volume 2, Issue 1 of the *Journal of Working-Class Studies*. We have been thrilled with the reception of the inaugural issue of the journal in December 2016, and thank all the authors, readers and community members, and members of the Working-Class Studies Association who have been in touch with us following the launch. We welcome any other (or ongoing) correspondence, proposals and suggestions at editorial@workingclassstudiesjournal.com

This issue is themed around ‘Popular Revolt and the Global Working Class’, and we are proud of the responses to the call for papers, and the published articles included in the issue. At the moment there is certainly a global feeling of unease, but also energy, rising from recent political changes across many nations. It is heartening to see so many working-class people, who themselves are often the biggest potential targets of political change, so active in leading popular revolts towards social equality. The articles included are designed to promote debate, but also circulate a variety of perspectives and allow interested scholars and citizens a platform to be heard.

It would be almost impossible to cover this issue’s theme without addressing the impact of America’s forty fifth President, Donald Trump. While there are many positions from which Trump’s impact can be examined (and further predicted), we are proud to feature an analysis of Trump’s ascension to the White House, undertaken by Douglas Schrock, Benjamin Dowd-Arrow, Kristen Erichsen, Haley Gentile, and Pierce Dignam. This team from Florida State University painstakingly examined 44 Trump campaign rally speeches, paying particular attention to the emotional messages encoded in the future President’s appeals to working-class people. Importantly, the researchers remind readers of the universal appeal of such affective engagement, speaking back to often patronising mainstream media suggestions that working-class people were particularly vulnerable to emotional appeals.

Drawing on extensive existing literature and offering new evidence, Miranda Cady Hallett explores the position of transnational migrant workers in the US. Specifically, Hallett’s fieldwork with Salvadoran transnational migrant workers in the poultry industry provides critical detail to demonstrate the real effects of industrial and political change. Grounded in critical theory and contextual history, this article provides the reader with rich detail and insight. The value of her work is in both her integration of existing literature, and presentation of the worker’s own voices and circumstances.

Leaving the US, Jeremy Morris’ consideration of Russian working-class voices is thought-provoking and informative. Morris draws on existing literature and original ethnographic research, and presents context beyond the headlines, allowing an important insight into the region for readers without first-hand experience. While there are certainly distinct aspects to the experiences of working-class people in this region, there are also striking similarities in terms of resilience, commitments to change and the perseverance of working-class voices globally.

As part of the ‘popular’, we are happy to include Jennifer Hagen Forsberg’s piece on working-class representations in the television show *Mad Men*. Forsberg’s thoughtful and detailed reconsideration of the ‘Hobo’ figure in the show draws attention to versions of history (even television fictional ‘history’) that are so often overlooked. This is a longer piece than we have previously featured in the *Journal of Working-Class Studies*, but an article that displays a depth that we’re pleased to be able to accommodate in this open access format. Come for the cool drinks – stay for the wonderful analysis.

Richard Hudelson provides a personally informed, but politically engaged consideration of the contemporary American labour movement. With a philosophical background and practical grounding, Hudelson’s work provides historical context as well as a global comparison. His writing is direct and often short and sharp, making the broader concepts easily digestible despite their scope. Also drawing on a case study, Wyatt Nelson explores conditions in a mega-retail store in the United States. His paper outlines the move towards individualism; articulates the perils with this; and offers practical steps to move towards a return to collectivism in the workplace. Although brief, his work is an important snapshot and provocation.

The papers included in this issue are eclectic in their approach and speak to the theme from a variety of positions. We have also included two non-peer reviewed pieces, a commentary by Terry Irving and interview by Tula Connell. Irving’s position as a radical historian means that his work may provoke readers, especially with his criticism of identity politics. The boldness of his work is deliberately antagonistic; but in an issue themed on ‘popular revolt’, his, at times, uncomfortable argument seems apt. The interview with Maina Kiai by Tula Connell is also an unconventional but excellent exploration of labour rights, informed by direct engagement with the UN and contemporary developments.

The issue also includes six book reviews. Although individual items, collectively they demonstrate the ways in which race, gender, immigration and class are inextricably linked. We would suggest that this issue of the *Journal of Working-Class Studies* demonstrates that the current scholarship in our field (and related disciplines), is very strong indeed.

The Emotional Politics of Making America Great Again: Trump's Working Class Appeals

Douglas Schrock, Benjamin Dowd-Arrow, Kristen Erichsen, Haley Gentile, and Pierce Dignam, Florida State University

Abstract

Real estate developer and reality TV star Donald Trump's election to the presidency of the U.S. was a departure from politics as usual in many ways. Most notably, Trump received more white working-class support than any Republican presidential candidate since 1980. Using data from 44 Trump campaign rallies, we analyze Trump's emotional messages encoded in his working class appeals. We find that Trump's language (1) temporarily oriented audiences towards feeling shame or fear as a nation, (2) reoriented them towards feeling anger at the elites he blamed, and (3) ultimately promised they would feel safe and proud if he was elected. Trump's emotional scripting seemed crafted to resonate with working class audiences feeling left behind from decades of bipartisan neoliberalism. We conclude by discussing limitations and potential avenues for future research.

Keywords

Trump, election campaign language, working-class voters

Introduction

Donald Trump's successful 2016 U.S. presidential campaign has sometimes been referred to as a white working-class revolt (see, e.g., Tankersley 2016). The Pew Research Center has found that two-thirds of whites without college-degrees backed Trump, the largest amount to support any Republican candidate since 1980 (Tyson & Maniam 2016). This support was particularly integral in Trump's victories in Wisconsin, Iowa, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, which enabled him to win the Electoral College despite losing the popular vote. These Midwestern and Rust Belt states have arguably been devastated by neoliberal policies, which have led to the loss of family farms and unionized manufacturing jobs, and increased hopelessness and addiction (see, e.g., Longworth 2007).

Reflecting and eclipsing a national trend of the U.S. survey participants rising negativity toward corporate globalization, a 2011 survey found that by a 3-1 margin Midwesterners believed globalization hurt the economy, led to unfair competition and cheap labor, and harmed manufacturing; by about the same margin, they viewed China as a threat to jobs and security, saw trade policies as causing job loss, and believed that

there should be stricter enforcement of immigration laws in the Midwest (Cordery & Johnson 2011). *After the election*, survey researchers found that of Trump supporters, about 80% believed life is worse than it was fifty years ago; 70-75% believed that the U.S. is less internationally important, powerful, and respected than it was a decade ago; 75% believed U.S. trade policies have hurt the economy; 69% believed immigrants are a 'burden' because they take jobs and resources; 87% believed that federal regulations on the economy, environment, etc. were harmful; and 38% said they were angry at the federal government (Stokes 2016). While such research enables us to understand how key economic, demographic, and attitudinal factors were associated with Trump's victory, it is also useful to examine how his messaging resonated with working-class communities.

In this article, we analyze 44 transcripts of Trump's 2016 campaign rallies in order to answer the following question: How did Trump appeal to working-class voters? We secured transcripts online (mostly from CSPAN), verified and edited them for accuracy by watching YouTube videos of the rallies, and brought them into a qualitative coding software program (see Appendix 1). We first coded for substantive topics such as trade policy and job loss, military weakness, etc. But as we delved deeper into the data and began writing memos on these topics, it became increasingly clear that emotional language washed over Trump's appeals and we decided to reconceptualize the analysis to bring emotions to the forefront. We found that regardless of the substantive issue being discussed, Trump's language temporarily oriented audiences towards feeling shame or fear as a nation, reoriented them towards feeling anger at those he blamed for social ills, and ultimately promised they would feel safe and proud if he was elected.

Literature Review

In the U.S., the sociology of emotions gained its footing when Arlie Hochschild (1983) uncovered how women managed their emotions to fit sexist workplace norms. Hochschild uncovered how people manage emotions through bodily emotion work (e.g., deep breathing), cognitive emotion work (e.g., thinking about things differently), and expressive emotion work (e.g., smiling to hide one's anger). Research on 'cognitive' emotion work emphasizes how people use discourse--a way of thinking or talking about something--to transform a person or group's emotions. Classic work shows, for example, how medical students use medical and sometimes even slut discourse to mute feelings of disgust or arousal when dealing with the bodies of the living and the dead (Smith & Kleinman 1989). Social constructionists further developed a discursive approach to emotions, showing how narratives are often embedded with emotional messages (see Lutz 1988). As Loseke (1993, p. 207) put it, a speaker's words construct for audiences a 'preferred emotional orientation.' We take that approach in our analysis of Trump's working-class appeals.

Although social movement scholars have increasingly examined emotional processes of mobilization, as James Jasper (2005, p. 132) put it, 'even the most culturally oriented analysts of politics have ignored emotions.' Despite continued calls for research on politics and emotions (Srblijinovic & Bozic 2017, p. 410), most work is done by psychologists focusing on internal processes (e.g., Pliskin et al. 2014; van Prooijen et al. 2016). There are some notable exceptions. Ost (2004, p. 229) argues, for example, that politicians use language to 'capture and channel' citizen anger by 'offering up an 'enemy.' Scheff and Retzinger (1991) suggested that Adolf Hitler came to power

largely by transforming the population's emotions of shame into rage at named outsiders. And studies of political advertisements show that 'emotional appeals' are 'designed to evoke . . . happiness, goodwill, pride, patriotism, anger, and hope' (Kaid & Johnston 1991, p. 56). Marmor-Lavie and Weimann (2006) quantified emotional messages in political ads and found that Israeli right-wing parties more often appealed to fear, anger, and hope, while left-wing parties more often appealed to sympathy for the less fortunate.

Although not focusing on election rhetoric, Loseke (2009) analyzed how a politician's discourse contains emotional appeals, an approach we follow here. Focusing on former U.S. President George W. Bush's public speeches about the September 11th, 2001 terrorist attacks, Loseke found that Bush's 'Story of September 11' oriented audiences to feel sympathy for those constructed as worthy victims, anger at defined enemies, and pride in the nation. Importantly, this emotional discourse was embedded in a story structured as a 'melodrama,' a classic genre with pure victims, villains, and heroes. Loseke argues that Bush's emotional stories worked to justify going to war with Afghanistan rather than approach the attack as an international crime. Trump's emotional discourse at his 2016 campaign rallies took a similar form, though it was geared toward mobilizing voters as opposed to minimizing opposition to state violence.

Social movement scholars have shown the importance of emotional discourse for recruiting and mobilizing activists, which has similarities to mobilizing voters. Young (2001) found, for example, found that 1880s Christians were emotionally mobilized to join the abolitionist movement because leaders altered the religious discourse of 'slavery to sin' to mean 'slavery was sin.' Schrock, Holden, and Reid (2004) found that transgender activists promoted an emotional discourse that promised to transform personal shame into pride, fear of bigots into anger at them, and feelings of alienation and powerlessness into solidarity and efficaciousness. Wasielewski's (1985) analyses of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X's speeches similarly found transforming emotions was key: they would often, for example, linguistically orient audiences to reframe despair into hope, and shame and anger into pride. Charisma is not a personality characteristic, she argued, but an emotionally-oriented discursive action. As we show below, Donald Trump's working class appeals employed very similar linguistic strategies.

Temporarily Shaming and Terrorizing America

Trump's emotional discourse oriented rally audiences--at least temporarily--to feel ashamed of and fear for the nation. Such talk arguably resonated with working-class whites because of their tendency toward identifying with the nation and their suffering under bipartisan neoliberalism (Massey 2000). As those writing about working-class life point out (e.g., Vance 2016; Hochschild 2016), the white working-class has felt increasingly left behind, that the American dream is more fictional than ever before, and that their communities' suffering is neglected by political elites. Trump's rally rhetoric temporarily oriented people towards believing that they should no longer feel proud of their country. In doing so, he arguably tapped into existing feelings of alienation, fear, and shame in a fashion resembling the emotional tactics of white supremacist and right-wing movements (e.g., Blee 2002).

The most basic way Trump linguistically oriented people toward feeling national shame

was by inserting slogans that painted the U.S. as being in ‘trouble,’ in ‘bad shape,’ and ‘losing.’ In Clear Lake, Iowa, Trump informed the crowd gathered before him that ‘our country is in trouble . . . serious trouble.’ In West Palm Beach, he told his supporters: ‘When I declared my candidacy, I knew what bad shape our country was in. And believe me, all you have to do is look at world events.’ When describing why he ran for president, he declared in Manchester, NH, ‘Our country was in trouble.’ In Miami, he said, ‘Our country’s in trouble. A lot of people don’t know it, but our country’s in trouble.’ In Geneva, he said, ‘We’re losing everything.’ After mentioning the national debt, poverty, and crumbling infrastructure in Springfield, Trump summed it up with: ‘Bad Shape.’ Trump’s rally sloganeering constantly reminded audiences that America was in decline, implying national pride was a fading memory.

In Des Moines, Green Beret John Wayne Walding introduced Trump as ‘unapologetically American’ and primed the crowd for Trump’s emotional message: ‘Mr. Trump, he says things that may not make you feel good, but it is a better thing for this great country. And that’s what I care about.’ Later that evening, Trump said:

So I just say this: we are a country that doesn’t win anymore. . . We don’t win on trade. We don’t win on the military. We don’t beat ISIS. We don’t do anything. We’re not good. We are just not the same place. And . . . the rest of the world, [they] laugh at our stupidity. They cannot believe what’s happening.

Echoing what he said at other rallies, here we can see how Trump encouraged audiences to think of the nation as not only losing ground, but as being losers in the eyes of other nations. As Cooley (1922) pointed out, imagining others negatively judging you evokes shame or embarrassment. The ‘looking-glass self’ was a social-psychological process Trump used, at least temporarily, to discursively orient people to feel ashamed as Americans. Trump’s emotional appeals thus depended on a degree of nationalism, an ideological resource that working-class communities have long used to buffer themselves from economic difficulties.

Trump often presented the US as being outdone and sometimes ridiculed by other nations. Speaking of the Russian autocrat, he declared in Pensacola, ‘Putin laughs at our leaders, and takes them to the cleaners again and again.’ ‘Russia has defied this Administration at every single turn. Putin has no respect for President Obama and has absolutely no respect for Hillary Clinton,’ said Trump in Philadelphia. In Clear Lake, he said, ‘We’re not respected [by other countries]. It’s funny. We’re like the big, fat bully that gets his ass kicked all the time (laughter).’ And in Panama City, Trump declared, ‘Other countries are eating our lunch right now. They’re eating our lunch. We’re going to become noncompetitive.’ By presenting other nations as disrespecting and dominating the U.S. in international affairs, Trump’s discourse suggested there was little to be proud of as a nation.

In addition to global relations, Trump often painted a dire picture of the current US economy, focusing mostly on working-class concerns of unemployment and wage stagnation. In West Palm Beach, Trump said, ‘Our gross domestic product, or GDP, is barely above 1 percent. And going down. (booing) Workers in the United States are making less than they were almost 20 years ago, and yet they are working harder.’ In Delaware, Ohio, he warned:

Right now our economy isn't growing practically at all. . . Many workers are earning less today than they were 18 years ago. They're working harder, they're working longer, but they're making less and in some cases, they're working two and three jobs, but still taking home less money. It's ridiculous. [The economy is] the worst since the Great Depression.

As we can see here, Trump not only presented himself as someone willing to talk about economic difficulties the working-class face, but also as someone who passionately cared about it. In Marshalltown, he claimed the unemployment rate and deficit were spiralling out of control: 'Our country is starving for jobs . . . \$19 trillion in debt, tremendous deficits, and the real number in [unemployment] is not 5.2%, it's probably in the 25% category.' In Panama City, he summed things up by saying, 'We don't put America first anymore. . . Our government ought to be ashamed of itself for allowing it to happen.' Overall, Trump narratively evoked various economic indicators--declining GDP, stagnating wages, unemployment, deficits--to convey to audiences that America was no longer a land of opportunity. The implication was clear: the nation's sputtering economic engine was nothing to be proud of, and we should not only feel anxious but we should also sympathize with those suffering the most.

Trump lamented the lack of iconic working-class jobs, especially in manufacturing and mining. 'We don't make things anymore,' he declared in Geneva. In Phoenix he said, 'We don't build anymore, and we don't make anything anymore, relatively speaking. Everything comes in from lots of different countries.' And again in Marshalltown: 'We are losing the base and manufacturing.' Trump talked about closing factories, stoking working-class unease and uncertainty among his supporters in Cincinnati: 'That's 15 factories closing a day on average in our country--going to other places.' In Delaware, Trump said, 'Your jobs have fled. Companies like Carrier are firing their workers and moving to Mexico. Ford is moving all of their small car production to Mexico.' In Springfield, Trump said: 'Just this year, Eaton corporation in Ohio closed its plant, laid off 152 workers and moved their jobs to Mexico.' And in Buffalo, 'NAFTA has been a disaster. Now we have a new one coming up, Trans-Pacific Partnership (boos) It is going to make NAFTA look like peanuts. . . It will be detrimental as hell to the people up here and all of the people in United States.' By emphasizing the decimation of blue collar jobs, Trump's rally rhetoric represented the economy as losing ground in ways that could evoke anxiety or fear among the working class, but also sympathy for their plight.

Trump also lumped fear into what Americans might feel ashamed about: violent crime, terrorism, and the military, which he talked about at virtually every rally. Referring to being criticized for his 'tone,' he declared in Green Bay: 'We need a tough tone. We have people being beheaded all over the Middle East and other places. We have crime that is rampant. We have people in the Middle East being drowned in steel cages. This is like medieval times.' In Delaware, Trump said, 'Nearly 3,500 people have been shot in Chicago since the beginning of the year, since January 1st. 3,500 people. That's worse than what you're reading about over in the Middle East in many cases. Homicides are up nearly 50 percent in Washington, D.C. And more than 60 percent in Baltimore, and it's getting worse.' In Toledo, he said, 'In recent days, terrorists have attacked in New York City, New Jersey, and Minnesota. And it's going to get worse.' In High Point, Trump said, 'Since 9/11, hundreds of immigrants and their children have been implicated in terrorism and terrorist-related activity within the United States.' Trump

discussed the ‘depleted military’ during 24 rallies. Talking about Iran, Trump said in Hershey, ‘Now they feel emboldened and they go and they harass our ships and they take our 10 sailors and humiliate the sailors, humiliate our country.’ In Philadelphia, he said, ‘Our Navy is the smallest it’s been since World War I. Think of that.’ In short, Trump painted a picture of a nation susceptible to violence, orienting audiences toward shame and fear. Moreover, he painted the nation as not being able to defend itself from both internal and external threats.

Another way Trump created the impression that America was declining in ways that hurt the working-class’s bottom line was by talking about Obamacare, which he did at 39 of 44 rallies. He said people were ‘trapped in . . . job killing Obamacare’ (Tallahassee), were ‘being crushed by Obamacare’ (West Palm), and that the ‘so-called Affordable Care Act . . . is not affordable at all’ (Cincinnati) and was, in fact, a ‘catastrophe’ (Las Vegas) and ‘disaster’ (Charleston). During virtually every rally in the last two weeks of the election, Trump talked about Obamacare insurance premiums ‘surging’ (Sarasota), going through a ‘double digit hike’ (Geneva), and having ‘gone up almost \$5,000’ (Toledo), ‘115%’ (Concord), and ‘through the roof’ (Clear Lake). The following excerpt is from a rally most of the research team attended in Tallahassee:

As you know, it’s just been announced that Americans are going to experience another massive double digit spike in Obamacare premiums, including more than a 100 percent increase in the great state of Arizona. They are going up over 100 percent, think of it (booing). And everybody’s going to be going up like that. They gave a number of 25 percent average. They know that’s not true. They wanted to try and get out of, you know--get out in front--they know that’s not true. It’s much more. You’re going to have 60, 70, 80, 90 percent, increases in Obamacare. . . One in five Americans trapped in Obamacare will have only a single insurer to choose from. Lots of luck in that negotiation. Even Bill Clinton admitted Obamacare is the craziest thing I’ve ever seen in the world, (light applause) where people wind up paying, their premiums double and their coverage is cut in half. . . Insurers are leaving, companies are fleeing, jobs are being lost, wages are being slashed. It’s killing our businesses, it’s killing our small businesses, it’s killing individuals, and it’s no good.

Here we can see how Trump represented the Affordable Care Act as a shameful disaster threatening the financial well-being of Americans. The emotional message was clear: Americans should fear Obamacare because it was failing, becoming unaffordable, costing jobs, lowering wages, and killing businesses and human life.

Channeling Anger towards Elites

A culture of individualism and the ideology of the American Dream often leads people to blame themselves for their lack of economic success. This can add a layer of emotional difficulty over and above the general unease and psychological distress that researchers have long found associated with being poor and working class (e.g., Mirowsky and Ross 2003). Of course, the middle class can also experience anxiety in the form of ‘the fear of falling’ (Ehrenreich 1989). Trump’s talk, however, directed audiences to reorient these feelings of national shame and fear into anger at the political elites he framed as responsible for economic troubles. In doing so, his discourse took the form of a melodrama in which citizens were victims of incompetent and maleficent

political villains.

Trump's rally rhetoric often encouraged audiences to feel angry towards the elites who supported trade policies that encouraged outsourcing US manufacturing jobs. Trump declared in Grand Rapids: 'The political class in Washington has betrayed you. They have uprooted your jobs, your communities, and [t]hey put up new skyscrapers in Beijing while your factories in Michigan were crumbling. These are our politicians.' In West Palm Beach, Trump said, 'The political establishment has brought about the destruction of our factories, and our jobs, as they flee to Mexico, China and other countries all around the world. Our just-announced job numbers are anaemic . . . Take a look at what's going on. (audience yelling) They [politicians] stripped away these towns bare, and raided the wealth for themselves.' In talking about decimation of decent working class jobs in Buffalo, Trump more explicitly encouraged his audience to transform shame and fear into anger: 'Do not get scared and do not feel guilty. It is not your fault. It is politicians representing all of us who have no clue. Totally incompetent. These are people that represent us at the highest level including the president of the United States (boos) and look at what has happened here.' Trump talked about the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 31 of our 44 transcribed rallies. In Springfield and elsewhere Trump explicitly blamed the Clintons for NAFTA's role in devastating the working-class:

We are living through the greatest jobs theft in the history of the world. . . What our politicians have allowed to happen to this area [and] all areas of our country, NAFTA, TPP, they want to approve. (booing) A disaster. Ohio has lost one in four manufacturing jobs since NAFTA--a deal signed by Bill Clinton and supported strongly by Hillary. Remember, every time you see a closed factory or wiped out community in Ohio, it was essentially caused by the Clintons . . . We've lost 70,000 factories since China entered the World Trade Organization. Another Bill and Hillary backed disaster.

Trump clearly gives the working class, especially those in communities with shuttered factories and pervasive poverty, someone to pin the blame on. The implication was that economic problems were not caused by 'our nation' or the communities most affected or even the corporations pursuing profits. Instead, Trump's narrative emphasized that the lack of jobs, opportunities, and associated crises were caused by the political establishment, especially his opponent. Trump's discourse oriented working-class audiences to feel righteous anger at the villainous destroyers of their communities, and others to feel empathy for the victims.

Trump's rally theatrics also oriented audiences to feel anger toward political elites by painting the lack of decent and dignified work as resulting from politicians' overregulation of business. In Miami, he declared that 'regulations are choking and killing our businesses and stopping our businesses from hiring people--jobs.' In Green Bay and elsewhere he explained that 'Hillary wants to significantly expand regulations.' He told crowds in Manchester, 'She supports radical regulations that puts Americans out of a job, and that raise the price of their energy bills. You all see it! You all see it--beyond anything that you thought would ever, ever happen.' By painting Clinton as wearing the boot crushing American prosperity, Trump oriented workers to feel angry at his opponent for increasing joblessness and utility costs.

Trump also claimed that the political elites knowingly harmed not only the working class, but that they--especially Hillary Clinton--unfairly stigmatized working men and women. In Cincinnati, he said, 'Hillary Clinton thinks you're deplorable and irredeemable--and irredeemable might be worse, it means you can't help yourself. I call you hard working American patriots . . . In our country, 47 million Americans are in poverty and 45 million Americans are on food stamps, amazing right? In this day and age. This is the legacy of President Obama and Hillary Clinton.' In Geneva, he said, 'Washington insiders . . . look down on hardworking people who make a very honest . . . living.' In Manchester, Trump said, 'Drain the swamp! Hillary has shown contempt for the working people of this country. Her campaign has spoken horribly about Catholics and Evangelicals and so many others (booing).' In such accounts, Trump painted the politicians as not only causing economic suffering but also as othering those suffering: Hillary Clinton kicks you when you're down. The emotional implication was that those targeted should be righteously angry at her and the rest of the political establishment.

Throughout the campaign Trump also blamed political elites for misusing and weakening the military and neglecting veterans. Regardless of his presentation style, the content of the such talk targeted both a key employer of the working class and a bit of the glory, esteem, and national pride that many warriors and their friends and family bask in. The wars that risked and took lives, returned wounded warriors, and were justified with lies, said Trump, were primarily Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, and other political elites' fault. His account oriented people to feel angry at elites whom he portrayed as uncaring and life-destroying villains. Addressing a Philadelphia crowd, the former reality TV celebrity uttered:

Unlike my opponent, my foreign policy will emphasize diplomacy, not destruction. Hillary Clinton's legacy in Iraq, Libya, and Syria has produced only turmoil and suffering and death. Her destructive policies have displaced millions of people, then she has invited the refugees into the West with no plan to screen them. Including--veteran healthcare costs--and this was just announced and read over the last couple of weeks--the price of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan will total \$6 trillion. We could have rebuilt our country over and over again. Yet, after all this money spent and lives lost, Clinton's policies as Secretary of State have left the Middle East in more disarray than ever before. Not even close. Had we done nothing, we would have been in a much better position. Meanwhile, China has grown more aggressive, and North Korea more dangerous and belligerent. . . Sometimes it has seemed like there wasn't a country in the Middle East that Hillary Clinton didn't want to invade, intervene in or topple. She is trigger-happy and very unstable.

By portraying political elites and opponents as 'trigger-happy,' incompetent, and fiscally irresponsible warmongers, Trump presented Clinton and company as deserving of righteous anger. Political elites threatened the lives of the enlisted and the valor of those who have served and the culture of patriotism. Audiences who found such stories credible were discursively oriented to feel anger at elites and empathy for their victims rather than national shame.

Trump often blamed political elites, especially his presidential opponent for causing harm to military veterans. He told the following story at a rally in Ohio:

Hillary oversaw massive cuts to the military budget and said the problems at the V.A. are not widespread. Oh, they are really widespread. The veterans have been treated so badly. So badly. She said they are not widespread, right? Tell that to a veteran that waits in line for nine days and can't see a doctor.

By portraying elites as weakening the military and lying about and enabling veterans' substandard health care, Trump rhetorically guided audiences--especially the patriotic, to despise the villainous elites and feel empathy for less protected soldiers and neglected veterans.

Trump also discursively transformed fear into anger by blaming the political establishment and immigrants for crime, violence, terrorism and unrest in the Middle East. For example, in Henderson Trump told a crowd:

Any government that does not protect its own people is a government unworthy and unfit to lead. Countless Americans who have died in recent years would be alive today if not for the open border policies of Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama. The perpetrators were illegal immigrants with criminal records a mile long, but who did not meet the Obama administration's priority for removal.

Promising Respect and Pride

At rally after rally, Trump oriented people to not only feel angry at elites, but he promised that they would feel secure, happy, and proud if they elected him president. Such emotional promises are often effectively used by politicians and social movements alike. Barack Obama's 2008 U.S. presidential campaign sloganeering and promotions, for example, emphasized 'hope,' and researchers found that the extent to which people said Obama gave them hope before the election strongly predicted voting for him (Finn & Glaser 2010).

During Trump's campaign rallies, he sometimes used explicit emotional discourse to reorient live and online audiences to feel good by promising pride and happiness. For example, addressing a crowd in Miami he promised: 'Folks, you're going to be so proud. You're going to be so proud. We're going to make America great again. You're going to be so happy and you're going to be so proud of your country again.' In Tallahassee he declared, 'We will be so proud of our country again.' 'Vote for Donald Trump. You're going to see something and you'll be so happy. You'll be so thrilled. (cheering).' In Sarasota the day before the election, Trump said:

You have one day to make every dream you ever dreamed for your country come true. You have one magnificent chance to beat the corrupt system and deliver justice. You will deliver justice for every forgotten man, forgotten woman and forgotten child in this nation . . . We will start winning again and winning like you've never seen before, [I] tell you. We're going to win again.

Like many contemporary religious organizations seeking to recruit and sustain commitment of followers (Wilkins 2008), Trump promised an emotional transformation. Trump will usher in a new era of pride and happiness.

Such hope mongering often centered on bringing back jobs. He explicitly promised to bring 'jobs back' or 'bring/take back (our/your) jobs' 87 times during the 44 transcribed rallies. Often his rhetoric constituted promises without plans. In Grand Rapids, for example, Trump told a rally crowd: 'When I win, on November 8, I am going to bring your jobs back to America. (cheers and applause) . . . The long nightmare of jobs leaving Michigan will be coming to a rapid end. We will make Michigan the economic envy of the entire world once again.' Similarly, in West Palm Beach, he said political elites had 'taken our jobs away out of our country never to return unless I'm elected president. (Cheering and chants of Trump! Trump!).' Trump's promises of working class jobs were often intertwined with nationalism. As Trump said in High Point, NC:

We will rebuild our roads, our bridges, our tunnels, highways, airports, schools and hospitals. American cars will travel the roads; American planes will soar the skies; and American ships will, again, patrol the seas. (cheering) . . . American steel will send those new skyscrapers into the clouds. American hands will rebuild this nation and American energy, harvested from American sources, will power our nation. ("Yeah!") American workers will be hired to do the job. (cheering) We will put new American steel into the spine of this country. I will fight for every neglected part of our nation--every single part of this great nation. And I will fight to bring us together as one American people. (cheering) Imagine what our country could accomplish if we started working together as one people, under one God, saluting one flag. (cheering and chanting "USA! USA!").

Here Trump emphasized creating manufacturing and construction jobs, emphasizing 'America' ten times, rhetorically climaxing with Christian nationalism. In doing so, Trump's discourse emotionally oriented the audience to feel hopeful for their economic future and collective national pride.

Trump also constructed narratives about saving jobs for the 'forgotten' working-class. Sometimes he made simple, confident declarations: 'Your companies won't be leaving Ohio under a Trump administration' (Delaware) and 'I will be the greatest jobs president that God ever created' (Clear Lake). Other times he offered plans, such as promising to punish companies that moved jobs out of the country with tariffs. In Springfield, he promised 'Under my contract, if a company wants to fire their workers, move to Mexico, or other countries, and ship their products back into the United States, we will put a 35% tariff on those products. And, folks, just in case you have any questions, when that happens, you're not losing your companies anymore.'

Trump also promised to create new jobs by doing away with regulations designed to protect the environment or workers rights. Trump said in Delaware: 'We will eliminate every unnecessary job killing regulation.' This message was repeated across the nation, most notably in Ohio, Nevada, North Carolina, Florida, and Pennsylvania. He often suggested that eliminating regulations would support working class jobs: In Atkinson, for example, he declared:

Our plan will end excessive federal regulations that are harming fisherman on the sea coast, you know all about that. They're making it impossible. They're making it [impossible] for the miners, for the fishermen. They're making it impossible for the steelworkers with all the dumping of steel all over the place.

We will become a rich nation again--a truly rich nation.

His anti-regulation discourse often drew on leash imagery. He told a crowd in Herschel, 'We will unleash America's energy, including shale, oil, natural gas and clean coal. (cheering) We will put our miners back to work. We will put our steel workers back to work (cheering).' In Des Moines, he said: 'So we're going to unleash American energy, we're going to put those jobs back like you have not seen in your lifetimes.' Overall, such rhetoric offered hope that the working class would be revitalized if enough people voted for Trump.

In addition to regulations, Trump promised jobs and riches through negotiating better trade deals, essentially ending or slowing U.S. participation in neoliberal games. In Miami, he said he would, 'negotiate trade deals that put America first. Then there is no limit to the number of jobs we can create and the amount of prosperity we can unleash.' In Buffalo, he promised: 'We're going to make the greatest trade deals ever made. We're going to become so strong, so powerful, so rich, and you are going to be so proud of our country again. We are not going to be the dummies anymore (cheering).' 'We are going to renegotiate NAFTA to get a fair deal for our workers. And it will be a fair deal, and if it's not, we'll terminate and we'll start all over again,' he promised in Toledo. In Des Moines, he said, 'That means we're going to negotiate trade deals to protect our farmers, help them export their goods, and make money doing it . . . and grow family farming in America (applause).' He confidently proclaimed in Cincinnati, 'If I win, day one, we're going to announce our plans to totally renegotiate the worst trade deal ever made, NAFTA. (applause) If we don't get what we want in that renegotiation, we will leave NAFTA and start over and get ultimately a much, much better trade deal.' With such promises, Trump presented himself as the dealmaker-in-chief who would save farmers and factory workers alike. For communities affected by the loss of such jobs, Trump's promises evoked hope that they would soon be able to pridefully provide for their families.

During most rallies, Trump also made citizens feel protected by supporting the military, police, immigration forces, and veterans. 'We are going to support the men and women of law enforcement. We're going to rebuild our very depleted military and we are going to take care of our great veterans,' he succinctly promised in Henderson. In Las Vegas, he declared, 'To be a rich country, we must also be a safe country. We'll support local police and federal law enforcement in an effort to aggressively reduce surging crime (cheering and whistling).' In Phoenix, he simply stated, 'We will reduce surging crime and support the incredible men and women of law enforcement.' In Geneva, he announced: 'We will also repeal the Obama-Clinton defense cuts and rebuild our badly depleted military, the greatest people on earth. We will build new advanced aircrafts at places like Wright Patterson Air Force base and we will change our foreign policy.' Trump often linked rebuilding the military explicitly with creating working-class jobs. In Atkinson, for example, he declared:

Our Navy is the smallest it has been since World War I, you believe that? We will build the 350 Navy ships that our country needs, and really is requesting, which means lots more work for the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. (applause) Right? Great shipyard, not too busy, but it's a great shipyard. We'll make it busy. And you know, things like that--number one, we're building our defense, it also puts our great people to work, right? It's great. We'll also expand the center of

excellence at Portsmouth to recruit a large number of skilled craftsmen like pipefitters and welders that we need to expand our fleet. I'm honored to have the endorsement of more than 200 top admirals and generals and 22 Medal of Honor recipients. I was with them last night (applause) near Fort Bragg.

Here you can see how Trump not only promised that supporting the military would create working-class jobs, but also that his candidacy was endorsed by glorified warriors, orienting audiences to trust him. In Henderson, he claimed: 'We have such tremendous support from the veterans group, from law enforcement. . . We just had the endorsement from the Fraternal Order of Police, which represents massive amounts of police. (applause).' And in Phoenix Trump said, 'We have tremendous military support, unbelievable military support, and having, as you know, General Flynn here . . . Incredible guy (applause).' By emphasizing support from the military and police and complementing them as 'incredible guy(s),' Trump oriented audiences to feel hopeful that he would restore glory to those working with and within organizations of state violence and social control.

At nearly every rally, Trump not only transformed fear of immigrants and refugees into anger towards elites, but also instilled confidence in himself as the person who would protect them. In Marshalltown, for example, 'I feel we have to stop illegal immigration. When I announced I was running for president, I did this on June 16, I brought up illegal immigration. This would not even be talked about if I did not bring it up.' In Cincinnati, he put it bluntly: 'Let me state this as clearly and as nicely as I can: I am going to keep radical Islamic terrorists the hell out of our country (applause).' He put this another way in Clear Lake when portraying himself, unlike Hillary, as having the energy to win the so-called war on terror: 'We need high energy. (cheers) Do you think ISIS wants to know about low energy? You have to knock the hell out of them. Boom, boom, boom.' In Clear Lake, Iowa, Trump uttered, 'We're going to win on militarily. We are going to knock the shit out of ISIS.' His grammatical incorrectness and profanity added some 'authenticity' to his tough guy performance, which discursively reoriented the fear of violent victimization towards pride in carrying out violence against the internationally othered. He also promised freedom from fear by changing immigration policies. For example, in Springfield, Trump declared:

We don't want ISIS in our country. . . I only want to admit people who will support this country and love its people. So important. Keeping our families' safe is the highest obligation of the President of the United States. A Trump administration is going to suspend immigration from terror-prone regions and we will suspend the Syrian refugee program. That was easy. We're not going to take the risk when it comes to the safety of the American people. No longer.

Regardless if presenting himself as a tough guy willing to unleash violence or a more rational man willing to engage in bureaucratic nationalism, Trump oriented voters to feel hopeful that he would restore American pride and protect citizens from the alleged immigrant-based cultural and violent threats. The discursive walls he built were as important as the physical one he promised.

Trump also engaged in a rhetoric of hope when promising to fix the healthcare system. At every rally, he promised to 'repeal and replace' the Affordable Care Act (ACA), which he framed as failing and costly. This was seen most clearly in Concord, North

Carolina when he declared: 'I'm asking for your vote so we can replace Obamacare and save health care for every family in North Carolina, and frankly in the United States.' He had this to say in Des Moines: 'We're going to get rid of Obamacare and come up with great, great, powerful, wonderful healthcare.' As suggested here, he often tried to instill hope by promising he would 'come up' with rather than present a plan, although sometimes he invoked the language of free enterprise to promise lower costs:

Folks, we're going to have so many options. We're going to have so many great plans. We're going to have plans that you don't even know what--there's going to be so much competition. We're going to get rid of the borders. We're going to go get rid of the lines--the artificial lines that are put there to make the insurance companies rich, so they have no competition. You're going to have . . . great health care, and it's going to be at a tiny fraction of what you're paying right now, so just remember. (Phoenix).

This rhetoric suggests that if elected, Trump would not only improve the healthcare industry, but also reduce costs. Saving money was arguably especially poignant among working-class families spending a disproportionate share of their income on healthcare. After discussing the rising costs of health care, he told a Tallahassee crowd, 'We are going to repeal it and we're going to replace it and we are going to get you great, great health care at a fraction of the cost.' Similarly, in Delaware he said, 'And we are going to repeal and replace Obamacare. . . . you're going to have great health care at a fraction of the cost, OK?' Although he focused little on how he might actually do this, he often spoke with such confidence and authority that his emotional promises seemed plausible, especially to those who had experienced rising insurance premiums.

Trump's rhetoric often evoked hope by painting himself and his audience as part of a movement that represented *all* Americans. In Phoenix, for example, 'Our movement represents all Americans--thank you--from all backgrounds and all walks of life.' In Springfield, he claimed, 'I will fight for every American of every background in every stretch of this nation.' In Dimondale, he contrasted himself with his opponent as follows: 'Hillary Clinton is a legacy of death, destruction, and terrorism. America deserves a better legacy. I am the change agent. I am the change agent. (applause and chants of 'Trump! Trump!') I am your messenger.' In Delaware, he claimed, 'I am going to fight for every citizen of every background, from every stretch of this nation. (cheering) I'm going to fight for every child living in poverty.' By presenting himself as a 'messenger' for people of 'all walks of life,' Trump's words provided hope for a working class who had been thrown under the bus of bipartisan neoliberalism.

Trump's emotional promises embedded in his appeals often approached patriotic pandering, which promised to restore national pride. He presented a vision of every citizen united under the same banner, values, and beliefs at nearly every rally. For example, in Henderson, he said: 'Imagine what our country could accomplish if we started working together as one people, under one God, saluting one American flag. Can you imagine?' This vision was often the prelude into how he ended rallies--a ritualistic appeal of hopefulness that promised national pride, economic security, and freedom from fear. For example, in Lakeland, he uttered:

We are going to make America strong again. (chants of 'USA! USA!') We are going to make America safe again. We are going to make America rich again.

And we are going to make America great again. (the crowd joined in and shouted this last line). Thank you, God bless you everybody. God bless you. God bless you.

Conclusion

Political commentators and theorists often ask why many working class people appear to vote against their interests, and Trump's 2016 U.S. election victory was no exception (e.g., Taub 2017). Listening deeply to Trump's words suggests that part of the reason lies in how his emotional discourse oriented audiences to (1) temporarily feel ashamed about and fearful for their country and their neglected place in it; (2) feel righteous anger at political elites by blaming them for class-based suffering and widespread threats; and (3) feel hope for change that would bring personal happiness, national pride, and economic and physical security. Trump's emotional discourse repeatedly focused on working-class economic needs, promising blue-collar jobs by dismantling neoliberal trade deals and punishing U.S. corporations manufacturing abroad, or promising financial well-being by getting health care costs under control and increasing wages. He not only presented himself as sympathetic to class-based social troubles, but he valorized blue-collar workers and the police, military personnel, and veterans. And he generally framed his anti-immigrant proposals as fostering physical safety and job security. Such talk, if seen as authentic and credible, emotionally oriented audiences to support Trump.

Our analysis builds on the study of emotional politics by applying the concepts of emotional discourse and management to analyze politicians' working-class appeals. Our approach unpacks the often unspoken 'preferred emotional orientations' (Loseke 2009) embedded in political discourse. Our analysis supports Ost (2004) and Scheff and Retzinger (1991), who argued that politicians, especially populist ones, often gain support by evoking anger at establishment elites and outsiders. Our findings similarly support Marmor-Lavie and Weimann (2006), who found right-wing Israeli parties often appeal to anger, fear, and hope, although Trump also encouraged people to feel sympathy for those victimized by neoliberal policies, corporatized healthcare, and violent crime. Similarly to how George W. Bush constructed his 'September 11th Story' (Loseke 2009), Trump's emotional working-class appeals often took the form of a melodrama, in which there were clear victims (the working class), villains (Hillary Clinton and the political establishment), and heroes (Trump and his 'movement'). Reflecting social movement scholarship (Young 2001; Schrock et al. 2004; Wesielewski 1985), our analysis shows how Trump's discourse often temporarily evoked unwanted emotions (fear, shame, hopelessness), channeled it into righteous anger against political opponents, and hopefully promised pride, security, and happiness on the condition he was victorious in the election.

It is important to note that we have looked at just one communication channel through which political candidates communicate to the public, namely campaign rallies. Future work might compare the emotional discourse of social media posts, traditional media interviews, debates, advertisements, etc. Furthermore, as political strategists increasingly develop varied messages targeting different social groups and geographic populations, a more nuanced analysis may reveal how emotional scripting is differently designed to resonate with diverse groups. In addition, by only examining data from campaign rallies, we cannot know which of his appeals had the most effect on

motivating working-class supporters--although our analysis shows rally audiences often responded emotionally to his messaging. And by analyzing the texts rather than the videos of the rallies, we were unable to systematically examine Trump's own emotion-laden performances such as his hand gestures, tone of voice, and facial expressions, which seemed to prime audience response. Future research on working-class appeals should thus compare political rhetoric with interviews of working-class voters, video analyses of candidate presentations, and different modes of communication. It would also be useful to compare the emotional discourse of political opponents (see Marmor-Lavie and Weimann 2006).

Suggesting that working-class voters were emotionally motivated to support Trump should not be interpreted as meaning they are more easily emotionally manipulated or needier than others. All human beings have socially constructed existential needs to feel pride, joy, togetherness, and security. As long as we retain our capacity to feel, politicians and other influencers--including marketers and activists--will craft messages designed to emotionally resonate with targeted audiences. As technologies and strategies of emotional persuasion and control become more sophisticated and intrusive, those hoping for economic justice and a resilient democratic culture must become more emotionally sophisticated ourselves if we hope to have a chance against those who appear to care so little about either.

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Appendix

Donald Trump's Campaign Rally Transcripts

<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>
1/9/16	Clear Lake, Iowa	10/05/16	Henderson, Nevada
1/26/16	Marshalltown, Iowa	10/11/16	Panama City, Florida
1/28/16	Des Moines, Iowa	10/12/16	Lakeland, Florida
2/19/16	Charleston, South Carolina	10/13/16	West Palm Beach, Florida
2/22/16	Las Vegas, Nevada	10/13/16	Cincinnati, Ohio
3/19/16	Phoenix, Arizona	10/20/16	Delaware, Ohio
4/18/16	Buffalo, New York	10/25/16	Tallahassee, Florida
5/27/16	San Diego, California	10/27/16	Geneva, Ohio
7/11/16	Virginia Beach, Virginia	10/27/16	Springfield, Ohio
8/5/16	Green Bay, Wisconsin	10/29/16	Phoenix, Arizona
8/18/16	Charlotte, North Carolina	10/31/16	Las Vegas, Nevada
8/19/16	Dimondale, Michigan	10/31/16	Grand Rapids, Michigan
8/25/16	Manchester, New Hampshire	11/1/16	Valley Forge, Pennsylvania
8/31/16	Phoenix, Arizona	11/2/16	Miami, Florida
9/7/16	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	11/3/16	Concord, North Carolina
9/9/16	Pensacola, Florida	11/4/16	Hershey, Pennsylvania
9/10/16	Miami, Florida	11/4/16	Atkinson, New Hampshire

9/11/16	Cleveland, Ohio	11/5/16	Tampa, Florida
9/13/16	Des Moines, Iowa	11/6/16	Sioux City, Iowa
9/19/16	Fort Myers, Florida	11/7/16	Sarasota, Florida
9/20/16	High Point, North Carolina	11/7/16	Manchester, New Hampshire
9/21/16	Toledo, Ohio	11/7/16	Grand Rapids, Michigan

Labor, Discipline, and Resistance: Transnational Migrant Workers ‘on the line’

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Abstract

Unauthorized workers are foundational to neoliberal production regimes in the United States. The economic indispensability of such ‘disposable’ laborers in the era of flexible accumulation and the new energy they bring to labor activism promise to shape the emergence of the 21st century working class. This article explores the dynamics of labor discipline among undocumented workers, situating the current experiences of transnational migrants within a broader cultural history of the recruitment, disciplining, and exploitation of workers from vulnerable populations. Currently, conditions of illegality and deportability make transnational workers particularly vulnerable to labor rights violations and wage theft. The structure of immigration law, which frames and facilitates exploitation, serves the interests of capital and disciplines workers to perform their role as a subordinated class. Nonetheless, the confluence of labor militancy and immigrants’ rights activism over the past decade provides hope for social and political change based in solidarity and worker agency.

Keywords

Migration/immigration, neoliberalism, illegality and deportability, labor discipline, flexible accumulation

Introduction

Abstract theories of economic neoliberalism call for free movement of both labor and capital. Some have argued that the territoriality of restrictive immigration policy runs counter to the free movement ethos of neoliberalism, with the North American Free Trade Agreement’s (NAFTA) failure to address migration, one of the barriers to its success (Pastor: 2004). Restrictionist immigration policy and militarization of border areas are conceptualized as the ‘double-bind’ of the nation-state that aspires to take its place in a global order of the neoliberal global economy while maintaining the authority and imagined community associated with the nation-state:

In order to partake of that economy, to garner the value that it spins off, governments require at once to open up their frontiers *and* to secure them...In this way, the state is transformed, in aspiration if not in reality, into a mega-management enterprise, a licensing authority even, for the benefit of ‘stakeholders’ who desire simultaneously to be global citizens and yet corporate subjects... (Comaroff & Comaroff: 2005,129)

The neoliberal state behaves as a corporation, adopting techniques developed by private capital. Workers laboring without authorization could be seen as a failure of this ideal management role, and the presence of unauthorized residents violates the ideology of the nation-state with its isomorphic fit between people, place, and government. Perhaps for this reason, some have conceptualized unauthorized immigrant workers as an ‘exception’ to neoliberalism (Ong: 2006).

Based on my fieldwork among Salvadoran transnational migrant workers in the poultry industry, I argue by contrast, that unauthorized workers are foundational to neoliberal systems of production, and central to the emergence of a new working class in North America.¹ The status of illegality creates social illegitimacy around the workers’ personhood, facilitating employers’ exploitation—serving the system of flexible capital accumulation and disciplining workers to perform their role as a subordinated class.

In this article, I explore the discipline and resistance of a significant sector of the U.S. working class in the 21st century: Latin American transnational migrants. Industries with low wages and poor conditions tend to be dominated by such workers: food processing, carpet-making, textiles, agricultural labor, landscaping, custodial work, and certain service sector jobs. When transnational migrants make the move from their homeland to a new country, their transition often involves not only a shift in cultural context but also a transformation of their class identity. Smallholder farmers, self-employed all their lives, are likely to find themselves subjecting to new forms of hierarchy and adjusting to new bodily discipline. Migrants may undergo ‘proletarianization’, increasingly selling their labor power for wages (Rouse: 1992, 29). Yet as immigrants become ‘working-class-as-identity’, they also reshape the ‘working-class-as-entity’. The ways in which they do so are related to their structural condition vis-à-vis the state and the law, their role as ‘disposable’ laborers in the era of flexible accumulation, and the new energy and experience they bring to labor activism.

On May 1, 2017 millions of immigrant workers in the United States conducted a symbolic one-day strike to remind the country of their integral role in the lives of their families and communities. For many who marched, the issue was inclusion in the imagined community of the nation (Anderson:1983), or recognition of their economic contribution. These two aims are inseparably tied, as claims to economic citizenship can be one basis from which to resist socio-legal exclusion (Chavez: 2008). But for others, the issue may be the right to have rights — both human rights in the broad sense, and labor rights more specifically—after all, this was on Labor Day.²

At the time of writing, we are at an unprecedented historical moment when power is consolidating in the hands of people committed to dismantling some of the most basic

¹ The field of working class studies is emerging in the context of rapid and dramatic changes in regimes of production and at a moment of crisis and friction in global capitalism (Zweig: 2016, 14) that has particular manifestations in North America. The white working class has been blamed in elite liberal circles for a reactionary political moment of xenophobia and ethnic nationalism, ignoring the crucial role of wealthy whites in the revival of white nationalism, while life conditions and life chances for the entire working class are deteriorating. At the same time, the U.S. working class is transforming through in-migration and labor market restructuring.

² Internationally, May 1st is broadly recognized as a day to celebrate labor and labor organizing, although in the United States recognition of the day and its significance has been repressed—in spite of (or perhaps because of) the fact that it was chosen to commemorate the Haymarket massacre in Chicago on May 4, 1886.

rights—rights to security and livelihood—from vast numbers of persons in the territorial United States, including citizens and others. The framing of this particular protest as a *strike* is highly significant, and speaks to the import of transnational migrants today for labor resistance and working-class studies. Immigrant workers' incorporation into economic production in the United States, along with the 'politics of refusal' (McGranahan: 2016) enacted by migrants (resistance resonating with the historic aims and methods of labor strikes), is critical to the U.S. working class. Transnational migrants and their labor are central to the new U.S. economy brought on by the 'global transformation' of the late 20th and early 21st century (Standing: 2014, 963), and they will be central to the future of labor.

This population of workers suffers social and legal exclusions, racialization and criminalization, and powerful techniques of labor subordination. Some have called these conditions 'abjection' (Gonzalez & Chavez: 2012), others frame unauthorized migrants as part of a global 'precariat' class (Standing: 2014). These workers have nonetheless mobilized for change. By going on symbolic 'strike' through engagement with public demonstrations and other acts of solidarity, transnational migrant workers are asserting themselves as human beings and workers with the right to have rights. This strike was a powerful follow-up a decade beyond the 2006 immigrants rights' marches that stunned political scientists by confounding their predictions about likely agents of political protest, which reshaped not only the public debate on immigration but also immigrant workers' consciousness of themselves as a political community (Wallace and Zepeda-Millán: 2013, Zepeda-Millán: 2016). Mobilization under the concept of a strike also evokes a populist history of worker organization and oppositional politics that lately has been dismissed as an artifact of the industrial past. Many factors feed into the life and traction of the immigrants' rights movement in the U.S. today, such as the rich traditions of resistance and labor militancy in El Salvador and countless other countries of origin. But we can also understand the current mobilization to defend immigrants' rights, in part, by exploring conditions of discipline and dynamics of systemic exploitation faced by transnational migrants in US labor markets and workplaces. In this way, we can better understand the realities and potentialities of the emerging 21st century working class.

In this essay, I first discuss the shifting terrain of labor discipline in the U.S. from the early 20th century to the present. The dynamic interaction of structural forces and overt coercion is key, along with more subtle process of internalized discipline and the shaping of workers' behavior towards compliance. Also highlighted are the ways that workers' intersectional social statuses such as gender and racialization shape their positionality in regimes of production and exploitation. Emphasizing how transnational migrant workers are crucial to contemporary global capitalism and its regimes of flexible accumulation, I argue that U.S. immigration policy and the social divisions it produces function as tactics of labor discipline. Following this overview, I describe the specific conditions of work, discipline, and resistance experienced by Central American poultry plant workers, based on my ethnographic work among a community of Salvadoran migrants in central Arkansas.³ While I do not suggest that this community's

³ I spent August 2006-August 2008 living in Arkansas and conducting ethnographic fieldwork among Salvadoran migrants. As is typical of a research project in anthropology, I lived with and alongside Salvadorans, hung out in the town's Salvadoran café, attended church services, birthday parties, and *quinceañeras*, and generally participated in the life of the community. I also worked as a part-time "worker advocate" at the Northwest Arkansas Worker Justice Center (NWAJWC), a partner in the

experience is broadly representative of all foreign-born workers, it does highlight the embodied experience of workers in a critical sector and reveals the dynamics of labor discipline and resistance. Finally, I connect these dialectical conditions of discipline and resistance among transnational workers to the current political climate, suggesting migrants' rights activism may be a site of political possibility for labor as we struggle to confront the reconfigured systems of oppression operating in contemporary global capitalism.

'A new type of worker and a new type of man'

Systems of capital accumulation are about much more than economics, as the emerging discipline of working-class studies can well demonstrate. American Fordism in the early twentieth century was 'the biggest collective effort to date to create, with unprecedented speed, and with a consciousness of purpose unmatched in history, a new type of worker and a new type of man' (Gramsci cited in Harvey: 1989, 126). Fordism in industry and Keynesianism in governance aimed at stabilizing capital investments by reformulating social and work life (Harvey: 1989, 129). The Fordist-Keynesian era involved producing new forms of subjectivity and a 'total way of life' (Harvey: 1989, 135) centered on specific and gendered values of work and consumption that contributed to capitalist expansion. Labor control, more than a technique to control production processes, is also a force of subjection deployed throughout workers' lives:

...the disciplining of labour power to the purposes of capital accumulation... is a very intricate affair. It entails, in the first instance, some mix of repression, habituation, co-optation and cooperation, all of which have to be organized not only within the workplace but throughout society at large. (Harvey: 1989, 123)

The disciplinary measures that enter into labor control, therefore, extend far beyond the specific managerial techniques employed on a shop floor or assembly line, and the qualities promoted in a 'good worker' extend beyond behavior on the shop floor. Worker dispositions also differ across occupational sectors and over time.

Meatpacking was one of the first industries to implement the ideas of industrial innovator Oliver Evans, whose central insight was that control over productivity depends on control over the speed of movement of materials through the factory setting (Biggs: 1996, 9). In the mid-1800s, meatpacking firms mechanized the movement of carcasses through the factory (Biggs: 1996, 26-27). Production was transformed both through the mechanization of processes that had been performed by people and re-organizing and managing productive processes through the factory as a whole (Biggs: 1996, 35). These shifts foreshadowed later changes in the auto industry that maximized 'Taylorist' efficiency principles by moving the materials to the worker rather than the worker to the materials. Within the particular history of chicken and meat processing in the United States, technological and commercial innovations, coupled with aggressive labor control techniques, have transformed the industry from a plethora of tough and risky small-business ventures into a few highly profitable vertically-integrated mega-companies.⁴ These innovations have also been at the forefront of

Interfaith Worker Justice network, which not only allowed me to access stories of harms in the workplace, but enabled me to offer orientation and advice to the community on labor rights and resources.

⁴ Trends in meatpacking and poultry processing have often prefigured changes in other

shaping labor discipline and the experiences and dispositions of the working class.

Frederick Winslow Taylor's influential essay *The Principles of Scientific Management*, published in 1911, raised the notion of efficiency to the level of moral value and advocated a managerial method eliminating 'tiresome and time-consuming motions' and holding workers to a uniform, scientifically-determined standard of productivity (Taylor: 1998 [1911], 40). His work inspired Henry Ford and numerous other industrial entrepreneurs. His ambitions for this method of management extended beyond higher productivity: he hoped to minimize or eliminate "the labor problem," the persistent conflict between labor and management:

Scientific management will mean, for the employers and the workmen who adopt it—and particularly for those who adopt it first—the elimination of almost all causes for dispute and disagreement between them. What constitutes a fair day's work will be a question for scientific investigation, instead of a subject to be bargained and haggled over. (Taylor: 1998 [1911], 75)

In reality, the reverberations of the legacy of scientific management are 'efficiency drives' and line speed-ups that produce high rates of worker injury and dissatisfaction, sometimes leading to militancy rather than the harmony Taylor sought. Nonetheless, workers are subordinated to these mechanisms of 'efficiency' and their accompanying campaigns of moral discipline.

Workers selling their labor must be able to deliver their 'product' in a dependable way that meets production timelines 'They must turn up at the workplace regularly and punctually, be sober and rested so that the labor they provide is uniform and predictable, and use the time for which they are paid exclusively for work', (Rouse: 1992, 31). The promotion of specific social values among workers (ostensibly for the greater good, but conveniently fostering profits) has been a key part of the industrial enterprise. Mill owners in the nineteenth-century United States recruited young women from nearby agricultural communities as workers in the burgeoning industry, and housed the ladies in company-owned boarding houses with strict rules to maintain their social propriety even when out of the workplace (Biggs:1996, 17-18).

Henry Ford, in building semi-utopian factories, was concerned to avoid the 'social ills' of industrial urbanization. He provided employee recreation facilities, schools, and 'healthy and sober' programs to promote moral fiber (Biggs: 1996, 65-69). In 1916, Ford sent social workers into the homes of men working in his factory in order to assure that their family life was up to moral standards and fulfilling expectations of middle-class consumption (Harvey: 1989, 126). The interest in crafting worker morality and

industries. The poultry industry was in large part vertically integrated before WWII (Striffler: 2005, 41) – meaning that control over breeding, incubation, feed production, processing, transportation, warehousing and distribution, marketing and sales was held by single companies. It was difficult to keep product prices low enough to maintain demand, and in this context companies established tough labor management techniques and strong anti-union workplaces (Fink: 2003, Striffler: 2005). In spite of the rapid rise of vertically integrated giants, according to Striffler, '... even as late as 1950 there were thousands of specialized mom-and-pop chicken operations existing alongside large feed companies and budding integrators.... There was still competition all along the chicken chain' (2005, 42). That changed rapidly over the next 20 years and by the 1970s an oligopoly of large corporations ran the chicken industry.

sociality under Fordist practices has only become more intense in the post-Fordist era.

The Japanese model, as described by Laurie Graham (1995) in *On the Line at Subaru-Isuzu*, entails more extensive selection and training processes emphasizing character, participation, internalization of company values, and collaboration in work teams, attempting to circumvent adversarial worker-management relations through worker loyalty (1995, 2-6). A peculiar notion was promoted in the mid to late 20th century by both business owners and the burgeoning professional classes of managers, occupational therapists, industrial psychologists, and human resources professionals--that there need be no contradiction between the interests of capitalists and the interests of their workers. By humanizing the labor process and by shaping the identities and subjectivities of the laborer, workers' views of their own interests could be aligned with owners' interests, and workers' success and self-fulfillment could contribute to company efficiency and profits (Rose: 1989).

It is these tactics, in large part, that have caused the adversarial boss-worker relationship (symbolized by the specter of the strike) to seem outmoded. The end goal of these post-Fordist techniques is to reduce the waste of company energies on conflictive worker-employer relations:

The goal is to create a system of worker compliance. Success depends on management's ability to fashion an environment which appears free of coercion, giving no impetus for resistance. Instead of management devoting time and energy to controlling the workforce directly, workers control themselves. (Graham: 1995, 97)

Even in industries where this type of post-Fordist regime is dominant, Graham notes, the emphasis on participation is belied by the continuing Taylorist reality of the shop floor: management retains absolute control over decisions, and the life of the line worker is still dominated by repetitive manual labor (1995, 7-8).

The extensive orientation process Graham describes, a process which had the effect of making workers feel specially chosen and proud of their position in relation to the company, is a far cry from the cursory process experienced by applicants to poultry plants, described here by anthropologist Steve Striffler:

Tyson processes job applicants like it processes poultry. The emphasis is on quantity, not quality. No one at the job center spends more than a minute looking at my application, and no single person takes the time to review the whole thing. There are few pleasantries, but there is also no bullshit. I am spared questions like: what are your career plans? Why do you want to work in poultry? How long do you plan on working here? Instead, efficiency rules. (Striffler: 2005, 112)

The poultry industry process applicants efficiently because they have extremely high turnover (Fink: 2003, Striffler: 2005). The mobility of the workforce facilitates the process of flexible accumulation, as natural fluctuations in worker numbers enable the company to make adjustments in production systems and rates, without laying off workers and facing the costs of unemployment benefits or disgruntled workers (Andreas: 1994). In this context, the kinds of high-investment techniques common to

the Japanese model would be wasteful of company resources.

Poultry plant workers and meatpackers must deal with speed-up, deskilling, and intense 'efficiency campaigns'. Unlike auto workers disciplined through the Japanese method, they do not receive physical therapy or transfers to other tasks in order to alleviate their repetitive stress injuries (Graham: 1995, 90). While even auto workers were sometimes made to feel that the injuries were due to their own inadequacy (Graham: 1995, 91-92) meatpacking workers are more expendable and so managers attribute injuries to worker weakness rather than question the speed of the production line. Line speeds and repetitive motion injuries have been steadily increasing in meat-packing industries since the 1970s (Andreas: 1994, 114-116) and those who cannot keep up are told they are "not cut out for packinghouse work" (Andreas: 1994, 111). In her study, Andreas interviewed dozens of meatpackers and all of them had ongoing health problems due to their jobs, most of which were repetitive stress injuries (1994, 62-67). A recent report on working conditions in poultry plants in Arkansas, confirming my interviews and observations during my 2006-2008 fieldwork, also found rampant wage theft, repetitive stress and other injuries, as well as pervasive discrimination and harassment (Northwest Arkansas Workers' Justice Center 2016).

When turnover is high, workers are simply bodies, and the health and integrity of those bodies is a cost that can easily be 'externalized' as long as more replacement bodies are available. Rather than adapt working conditions to the capacity of human beings, workers are molded to the working speeds determined by mechanized mass disassembly lines, in turn determined by the company's production goals. Workers are systematically pushed beyond their physical limits, their bodies broken down and consumed for corporate profit. As Harvey (1989) observed:

The current trend in labour markets is to reduce the number of 'core' workers and to rely increasingly upon a workforce that can quickly be taken on board and equally quickly and costlessly be laid off when times get bad. (152)

In a poultry processing plant in northwest Arkansas in March 2005, industrial engineers were introducing new machinery. The process required a break in production, so human resources let people quit without rehiring, pushed workers harder as workforce decreased, laid everyone off for a few weeks while installing new equipment, and then took a recruiting trip to the Mexican border region for the new hires they wanted to make. They trained newcomers almost as easily as re-hiring experienced workers, and through this strategy minimized their transition costs.

What allows companies to violate safety standards with impunity, and treat their workforce as disposable? Two factors come into play here. First, in the case of rural and small-town plants, local residents often fear criticizing the company or demanding change in case the company should relocate production in the post-Fordist context of deregulation and flexible production:

As small-town residents are held hostage by ever-more-powerful corporations, the concentration of money and power in the hands of large conglomerates is encouraged by many legislators and government officials who see deregulation as a way of making the United States more competitive internationally—or who have a personal stake in the growth of giant corporations and banks.

(Andreas:1994, 6)

Ideologies of ‘freedom’ in systems of trade and production underpin this system, as legislators and company owners argue that laborers choose to work ‘of their own free will’, and that companies likewise should be free to move and set up in other sites without obligation to the community they leave behind. The mobility of corporate operations functions to decrease job security and depress wages in deskilled sectors such as chicken processing.

Secondly, other qualities of transnational migrants—language barriers, lack of familiarity with US legal protections for workers, precarious legal status, racialization and social stigma increase vulnerability in the workplace. Industry owners have often brought in workers who have fewer choices and more to lose—in earlier moments of industrialization, these vulnerable workers were drawn from poor rural areas close to the cities: the mill textile industry in Dalton, Georgia in the Appalachia region recruited a labor force of ‘impoverished rural whites’ (Hernández-León & Zúñiga: 2005, 245). Like the ‘docile’ young women working in mills in the rural northeast and the rural south at the turn of the century, transnational migrant workers are cheap, vulnerable, and cut off from many sources of social support and political leverage. All of these qualities make today’s transnational migrants desirable workers.

Workers under conditions of legal precarity also empowers employers to bring in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) at strategic moments—to respond to the threat of union organization (Fink: 2003, 179), to promote worker movement into other sectors such as agricultural work (Andreas: 1994, 22), or to create a climate of fear in which workers won’t socialize out of work or go out drinking (Rouse: 1992, 36). Publicity or rumors about the possibility of such workplace raids and mass deportations are an ongoing tactic promoting worker conformity and managerial control:

...employers actively recruit immigrant labor because they can pay immigrant workers less and work them harder than long-term US citizens. Legislation supposedly intended to stem immigration and prevent worker abuse serves, in practice, to terrorize workers, helping to keep them poor and subjugated. (Andreas: 1994, 28).

Historian Mae Ngai (2004) has amply demonstrated that ‘impossible subjects’—those immigrants not permitted a path to citizenship—have been central to the U.S. economy throughout much of the country’s history. Scholars have recently argued that ‘illegality’, and the presence of a significant population defined as ‘illegal aliens’, is produced by the state intentionally (De Genova: 2002, Motomura: 2008, De Genova & Peutz: 2010, Mize and Swords: 2011). It is not, as popular discourse would have it, an exception to the state’s order, imposed by lawless or criminal migrants themselves, but a crucial part of the state’s political-economic strategy.

The production of migrant illegality and the tacit allowance of an undocumented population of denizens entails many benefits for the state in a neoliberal moment. As law scholar Hiroshi Motomura argues:

The hallmark of enforcement against Mexican immigrants was discretion that reflected the needs of employers, who often preferred to hire Mexican workers with temporary legal status or no legal status at all. They were a flexible,

disposable workforce, ready to work when needed, but more easily sent home when they were not. Heavily influenced by a variety of racial perceptions that cast Mexicans as a subordinate, expendable, and nonassimilable labor force, economically driven fluctuations gave rise to a de facto policy of discretionary enforcement that continues today. (Motomura: 2008, 2050)

Since the historical period of discretionary enforcement Motomura describes, the tacit allowance of undocumented presence has continued, but the rhetoric and practice of enforcement of immigration law has intensified dramatically through the militarization of the border (Andreas: 2009, Nevins: 2010), increases in numbers of deportations and the production of a climate of fear for migrants (Golash Boza: 2015) while enforcement of labor rights for these same immigrants has eroded through legislation, the defunding of federal agencies, and unfavorable judicial precedent. In 1986, the Immigration Reform and Control Act criminalized the laboring activities of undocumented persons and required employers to examine immigration documents upon hire to determine legal status. This shift in policy re-framed migrants' work activities as illegal practices, leading in time to a series of court decisions that refuse equal protection and legal remedy to undocumented workers.

In the 2002 case of *Hoffman Plastics Inc. vs. the National Labor Relations Board*, for example, the Supreme Court found that a worker fired due to his union-organizing activities was not entitled to either reinstatement or back pay due to his dismissal. Arguing that legal remedies awarded to the plaintiff would constitute an incentive for illegal immigration, the *Hoffman* court based their decision to institutionalize a subordinate worker class on the absurd proposal that Latin American emigrants would calculate the probability of receiving compensation due to labor rights violations in their decision to migrate (Cunningham-Parmeter: 2009). Following on the *Hoffman* case, local courts have cited that precedent to justify unequal remedies—or no remedies at all—for undocumented workers. Even without the formal legal production of inequality, a suppression of labor rights for migrants is inevitable because ‘...even when the state recognizes the rights of unauthorized workers, the threat of deportation will always prevent a great many immigrants from exercising these formal rights’ (Cunningham-Parmeter: 2009, 28).

This story—that the state's tacit allowance undocumented immigration facilitates labor management and contributing to capitalist profits (see also De Genova: 2002, 2005, Massey et al: 2002, Gleeson: 2016), is diametrically opposed to the mainstream perception of illegality in the United States today. The characterization of migrants as choosing to become ‘illegal’, and in many cases as innately criminal, is supported by social imaginaries privileging bounded territoriality, racialized definitions of belonging, and ideologies of free choice in movement. These imaginaries emerge from white nationalist ideology, which structures notions of belonging and exclusion for many in the United States, and often frame all immigrants and all Latinos, not just so-called ‘illegals’, as people out of their proper place. This hostile social climate amplifies the precarity of insecure legal status, exacerbates labor discipline, and creates what Elizabeth Fussell (2011, 593) has called ‘the deportation-threat dynamic’. To make matters worse, the convergence of criminalization with legal status exclusion increasingly makes immigrant workers not only deportable, but denounce-able for criminal acts as behavior necessary to their survival, such as driving without a license, becomes redefined as criminal behavior (Horton: 2016).

The condition of illegality produces around immigrant workers a sphere of exception, a space where those who exploit them can violate various standards for workplace safety, employee treatment, and human rights (see also Mize & Swords: 2011, Fussell: 2011, Gomberg-Muñoz & Barbarena: 2011, Gleeson 2016). Similar to *de jure* spaces of exception like free trade zones and company enclaves (see Ferguson: 2005), the *de facto* space of exception of individual illegality puts workers in a vulnerable position and increases company control. Unlike the workers in the Subaru-Isuzu plant studied by Laurie Graham, Tyson disassembly line workers do not need to be trained to think ‘We are the corporation’ in order to be motivated to work hard (1995, 53). They suffer wage theft (Gomberg-Muñoz & Barbarena: 2011), bodily harms and the denial of workers’ compensation benefits (Holmes: 2013), and suppression of wages and organizing efforts.

While immigration policy papers and statutes may not appear on their face to be instruments of oppression, in practice the elaboration of conditions of exploitation and xenophobia around the figure of the undocumented migrant is an entirely predictable result of federal policy and practice—and a result that, not coincidentally, furthers the neoliberal state’s interests by allowing the presence of a subclass of undocumented workers while diminishing social welfare obligations to these workers and by removing them from many of the usual protections of rights-bearing citizen-subjects. If migrants are detained and incarcerated, they are often conscripted into labor for an even cheaper rate within the largely privatized and for-profit immigration detention system, whose centers together are the single largest employer of immigrant labor in the nation (Urbina 2014 cited in Gomberg-Muñoz: 2016).

In a context where the mere presence of Mexican and Central American migrants is criminalized in the popular imagination, and migrants are framed as morally unworthy of rights, even the most basic protections for human rights while in custody—not to speak of labor rights in the workplace—are political anathema.⁵ It becomes unthinkable to conceive of a worker’s rights being violated when the worker is conceptualized as having ‘stolen’ the job they work. It becomes nearly impossible to speak of the violation of human rights when the person is conceptualized as ‘an illegal’, a body out of place, a body whose presence is itself a violation of the ‘sovereign rights’ of US citizens to possess and control the national territory. State authorities, in theory responsible to protect the rights of those within their territory, are able to disclaim responsibility to the undocumented residents whose peculiarly fraught presence they both produce and promote. The production of social exclusion through the circulation in lay discourse of the notion of illegality couples with the state’s spectacular modes of detention and enforcement to achieve the continued reproduction of a subordinated class of racialized bodies to fuel the neoliberal economy.

Labor discipline in neoliberal Arkansas: injury, legality, and the moral worker

Elena, a 60-year old Salvadoran woman living in central Arkansas and working in the local poultry processing plant, was known in her small town for her healing abilities.

⁵ This is why the state actively promotes the circulation of anti-immigrant sentiment through the theater of raids, deportations, and national security. Through spectacular enforcement, the state both promotes racist ideologies that serve its interests and also distances itself from authorship of the ‘illegal problem’.

Workers would come by—always Spanish-speaking, usually Salvadoran or Guatemalan—after they had been injured at the plant or to ask for help with chronic pain and swelling brought on by their work. One afternoon in May of 2007, I walked into Elena's living room. Graciela, her niece, was sitting on the couch under the window, and César, Graciela's husband, lay on the facing couch with his foot propped up on the armrest. The ankle was swollen and purple, and Elena was massaging a cream into his foot while affectionately teasing César as he winced in pain. 'Every time I see you, you're *más jodido*, more screwed up than before!' Elena exclaimed, and laughed. I asked if he's been injured at the plant, and he responded, 'Of course'. 'This is nothing', said Elena, 'just a little twisted ankle. You should see his fingers!'

At Elena's prompting, he unwrapped the gauze around his splinted fingers. Though the injury was from September, he was still unable to use his hand fully. 'They are paying my medical expenses', he said when I asked, 'but they won't give me the records, the accident report, copies of the medical reports, nothing. I keep asking but they don't give them to me'. Without the reports, he's not sure that he can prove the plant's responsibility to him should they decide to stop paying for care, or fire him. 'I'm not a fool, I have analyzed the situation', he said. Elena made some sweet coffee while he recounted the story of the accident:

I was working the night shift, sanitation, and I was reaching underneath the heavy metal platform when it fell on my hand. I couldn't move it, it hurt so much, and couldn't take the glove off because it was a big mess with my hand. I sat there on the floor and called the supervisor over; he said to keep working if I didn't want to lose my job. I asked to go to the infirmary even though they don't have a nurse there at night ever. He just yelled at me to keep working, while my hand was bleeding and I couldn't move my fingers. Not even in the [Salvadoran] Army was I treated so badly! ('César' May 6, 2007).

César's denunciation of conditions in the poultry plants has been validated, nine years later, in the results of a study conducted by the Northwest Arkansas Workers' Justice Center, an organization where I worked part-time during my fieldwork. Poultry workers in Arkansas earn an average of \$28,792—far less than a living wage (Northwest Arkansas Workers' Justice Center (NWAJWC) 2016, 9), and nearly two-thirds of workers report wage and hour violations reducing their pay (NWAJWC, 22). Foreign-born workers were far less likely than native-born to have earned sick leave, and many report being discouraged by their employers from seeking treatment or reporting injuries to medical professionals outside the company (NWAJWC, 19). Line speeds injure many workers, though not at equal rates: 71% of foreign-born workers and 69% of black workers in the survey reported injuries related to line speed, while only 35% of white workers did the same (NWAJWC, 31). Injured workers have a one in five chance of being fired due to their injury (NWAJWC, 27), and companies do not fear reprisals because the tenuous or nonexistent legal status of workers makes them hesitant to get involved in rights claims or legal battles:

Here, when a person gets hurt at work they have to keep working if they possibly can, even with only one hand, and they don't ever send them to the doctor. One boy broke his hand and they didn't want to send him to the hospital for three days! ('Roberto' February 2007)

The only Salvadoran woman I interviewed who had filed a legal claim against the company—she was fired so the plant wouldn't have to pay her medical bills after being seriously injured in a workplace accident—was not only defeated in court, but also blacklisted in the region and found herself perpetually unemployed. She did not regret her choice, knowing when she decided to take legal action that her chances were slim:

They were always looking for a way to fire me, since I had made the [worker's compensation] claim... You have to understand the situations we confront in these little towns, where there are very powerful people who are the owners of everything.... I decided to fight because it wasn't right what they were doing to me. Many times it has happened to other people, but nobody wants to demand their rights because they are scared. I tell them there's no reason to be scared... we undocumented have the same rights as any worker. ('Julieta' February 12, 2007)

Unfortunately, with the increasingly ambiguous rights for undocumented workers, even formal equality under the law is no longer the case. And naturally, rights in practice are not as extensive as the statutory rights due to the pervasive fear Julieta mentioned (see also Gleeson: 2016). Supervisors and managers do not hesitate to make direct threats if they sense that workers might resist being overworked, seek to organize, or file a claim against the company. Most interviewees who had spent at least a year in the poultry plants bore the marks of the difficult and dangerous work on their bodies: scarred hands and forearms, chronic back problems, twisted fingers for those who used scissors, and marred skin from the heavy chemicals used in the midnight to 6 AM cleaning shift (see also Government Accountability Office (GAO): 2005, 21-25 on the prevalence of such injuries in the industry as a whole).

While injury and work-related physical stress and illness are a matter of course for migrants working in the poultry industry, these experiences are often as 'undocumented' as the migrants themselves. César was unable to convince the company to provide him with copies of the accident report, which raises suspicion as to the report's existence in the company's files. According to Bureau of Labor Statistics data, the rate of work-related illness and injury among meat and poultry processing workers dropped significantly in the 1990s, going from 29.5 cases per 100 workers in 1992 to 14.7 in 2001 (GAO: 2005, 26). Yet at the same time, the workforce in the industry was transformed, becoming predominantly Hispanic (42% nationwide) and with a significant proportion of foreign-born noncitizen workers—26% in the workforce as a whole, and 38% of the sanitation crews (GAO 2005, pp. 15-16). As the GAO report cautions, statistics claiming a steep reduction in workplace injuries cannot be taken at face value when the legal condition of workers contributes to underreporting, especially in the high-risk tasks of night-shift cleaning. In spite of this caution, the GAO still optimistically titled their report 'Safety in the Meat and Poultry Industry, while Improving, Could be Further Strengthened'.⁶

Many poultry plant workers I spoke with swear that their supervisors know the legal status of everyone working on the line. They believe managers know who has 'papers'

⁶ This mild double-speak is a great improvement over the USDA's euphemisms in a 2005 report. Describing a situation in which real wages declined for workers as line speeds increased dramatically, the report celebrates this as 'labor costs per unit of output dropped dramatically' and "labor productivity advanced substantially" (Ollinger: 2005, 23).

and who doesn't. Informal conversations with specialists with the federal forest service and human resources staff at the plants—one of whom said openly 'I think most of the Mexicans working here are illegal'— suggest that administrative leadership is well aware of illegality both individually and system-wide. When supervisors' knowledge is imperfect, they tend to assume that the worker is undocumented. In the fear-saturated context of the poultry plants, the use of illegality as a disciplining mechanism impacts even documented immigrants as those who do speak up for their right to dignified treatment become marked as troublemakers:

People don't want to demand their rights many times because they don't have papers. And the supervisors know who has papers and who doesn't. But my cousin, who has his residency, was never afraid to demand decent treatment. One time they were reprimanding him and he complained, saying they had to treat him well, with dignity and respect. They insulted him, saying that he was an illegal and didn't deserve anything. But he told them that he had residency and had rights, and they were ashamed. But the problem is that afterwards they saw him as a problem and they watched him, looking for a chance to fire him, which in the end they did. And they can do that with anyone, with papers or without papers. ('Gerardo' March 18, 2007)

Others mentioned that fear was not the only part of their legal condition that motivated them—they also felt the obligations of dependents back in El Salvador, and the desire to bring family members to join them, as powerful forces that pushed them to work hard, seek extra shifts, and endure difficult conditions:

The work was very heavy but I struggled and I told myself that I had to endure it, I had to struggle for my children so that they could come here to be with me, so I did my shift and later when they let me I worked a double shift. It was very hard but I dreamed of bringing my children. ('Isabel' February 26, 2008)

Isabel paid a smuggler (*coyote*) to bring her first son two years after her arrival, when he had just turned 16 years old. He was separated from the group and missing in Mexico for two months, and she swore she would never bring her other two children in that way.

As described in the previous section, the mobilization of certain sociocultural values and sentiments, both within and beyond the workplace setting, can play a significant part in labor control by feeding back into the production process: forms of 'work ethic', loyalty to a company, national pride or allegiance to place, masculine or feminine norms and ideals, ethnic identities and rivalries, and pride regarding one's own contribution to a task or a cause. These value orientations, and their more negative manifestations such as racial and gendered conflict, become mechanisms promoting workers' commitments to their tasks and foreclosing their capacity or willingness to organize to claim labor rights or benefits. Through my fieldwork, I came to understand that illegality and the deportation threat dynamic not only shaped workers' practical concerns, but their sense of morality and personhood.

In one conversation, a former poultry worker claimed that he did not take disability benefits after being injured at the plant in part because he takes pride in his independence. He had heard about '*Americanos* (whites) taking welfare money instead

of working, but he would never do that—even hurt, he would find some way to work. However, later in the same conversation the ex-worker revealed that he was also afraid his false identification would be discovered upon applying for benefits. Although it would be tempting to interpret this as the true reason and the value-laden statement as a rationalization, both frames could be sincere and operating simultaneously.

At the Northwest Arkansas Workers' Justice Center, clients who came in with complaints of wage theft would hasten to speak not only of the quality of the work they had done but also attitudes of respect, deference and gratitude towards employers, as though they would not merit minimum wage without demonstrating subordination. Workers' identities are shaped into proper proletarian shape, in part, through the heightened anxieties created around illegality and deportability.

The disciplinary process for immigrants occurs not only through the reprimands of supervisors on the line, or the social barriers of small town life in Arkansas, or the laws banning the sale of alcohol in Yell County, but also through the legal statuses, moral regimes, and other less tangible dimensions that shape immigrant subjectivities, creating selves that are fraught with anxiety and contingency, and whose greatest sense of belonging and safety comes when they understand themselves, and present themselves to others, as ideal low-wage workers.

A day without an immigrant: strikes, resistance and refusal

The current production of abject status for undocumented workers, their occupation of a mobile state of exception, proves convenient for state and corporate interests that appear increasingly convergent. As Benjamin reminds us in his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, 'the tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'state of emergency' in which we live is not the exception but the rule' (Benjamin: 1969, 221). In other words, what is defined as disorder and transgression in this moment of fearful reaction to threats of 'terrorist refugees' or 'illegal alien invasion' is in fact an ordered part of this state of emergency, one which the oppressed must experience risk and suffering in their everyday lives while those more privileged are able to enjoy the fruits of the ordered disorder. The condition of illegality performs a crucial disciplining role in submitting migrants to neoliberal regimes of production. The legal ambiguity of their condition conduces the disposability of their working bodies for the companies.

While restrictive immigration law is sometimes conceptualized as an *exception* to neoliberalization, it also fulfills a profoundly neoliberal logic and serves the interests of flexible systems of capital accumulation. In spite of the rhetoric of freedom accompanying political arguments for neoliberal reforms, state and corporate entities regularly immobilize and displace workers through the production of legal structures and racialized social hierarchies. These immobilizations and displacements become a crucial enactment of subordination of workers and managerial power within these regimes of production.

What possibilities exist for worker mobilization to change the terms of this system of production, entangled as this exploitation is with profound mechanisms of social exclusion and political repression through exclusionary laws and discriminatory law enforcement? On the one hand, migrant workers are at a profound disadvantage when compared with their U.S.-born counterparts. As Carol Andreas says of the meatpackers

she interviewed:

Because a majority of Monfort workers are recent immigrants to the United States, they either do not know about the minimum protections that they are guaranteed by law—such as worker’s compensation—or they feel powerless to seek justice. A large number have never done any kind of wage work before, either because they are very young or because they have come to Greeley directly from rural areas in Mexico, where their families traditionally engaged in subsistence farming. (Andreas: 1994, 123)

Here Andreas seems to indicate that such workers will be far less likely to demand their rights than native workers, in part due to the disorienting experience of class transformation mentioned before. Indeed, in Rouse’s study of proletarianization and Mexican migrants, his interviewees “not only adjusted their behavior to meet the requirements pressed upon them but had come to internalize the values and beliefs that these pressures worked to inculcate” (Rouse: 1992, 37). But Rouse also mentions that coincident with this ‘first language’ of conformity, his subjects also spoke a ‘second language’ in which they critiqued the ways their job situation impinged on their sense of independence and efficacy. I found a similar *double legal consciousness* among Salvadorans in rural Arkansas—migrants could simultaneously perform a sincere self as the enduring laborer, ready to work and unwilling to take a handout (see also Hallett: 2012), and also articulate a clear understanding and critique of the exploitative conditions of production.

This double consciousness speaks to the other side of the story of immigrant ‘vulnerability’, of the powerful hold of labor discipline in the neoliberal economy. In spite of the harsh conditions limiting their choices, migrants working in the US have also maintained and developed a compelling alternative vision of the country and its labor relations—a need to transform the dehumanizing ‘matrix of domination’ (Collins: 2000) consisting of capitalist production regimes intersecting with racialization and the vulnerability of legally precarious status. From the Justice for Janitors campaign, to the Service Employees International Union’s organizing model, to the workers’ center movement and day labor organizing, immigrant militancy is transforming not only the face of organized labor, but also its way of organizing (see also Zolniski: 2003, 2006). Leon Fink describes a labor dispute in Morganton, North Carolina in which indigenous Guatemalans formed the core of labor leadership and conducted their campaign by drawing on experiences, skills, and networks developed during the repression of Guatemala’s civil war (Fink: 2003). Many of the most vulnerable workers in poultry processing and other rural industries, especially those with undocumented status, have suffered and struggled dramatically to get where they are. Some were displaced by war or poverty, many crossed borders on foot, and all have dealt with harsh working conditions.

The forces of legality, morality, and political backlash place powerful constraints on migrants and discipline them to the crucial yet hyper-exploited role they play in the contemporary economy. Nonetheless, transnational migrants, with their histories of struggle, social and political networks spanning borders, and daily encounters with the dehumanizing conditions of late capitalist production and the threat of detention and deportation, may be uniquely positioned to contribute to the common working class struggle—both to imagine and enact resistance and refusal.

Author Bio

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From Betrayal to Resistance: Working-class voices in Russia today

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Abstract

This article analyses three aspects of working-class life in Russia that add to the debate about global working-class responses to disenfranchisement and 'crisis'. Firstly, it highlights how traditionally workers have been atomised as a group due to the demotivating effects of post-communist transition itself. Nonetheless, there remains a coherence of shared values and grievances rooted in the still-living memory of the communist-era 'social contract', and workers' current experience of harsh anti-labour industrial relations and state indifference. Thirdly, despite seemingly no outlet in oppositional politics, there are signs of resistance, if not revolt. These range from the informal 'black' economy as 'exit' from formal work, small-scale labour protests and the organising of new independent labour unions in transnational companies, and the rising political consciousness of working-class voters who look for any 'alternative' to the ruling party – including the popular-nationalist far right, and abstention from voting all together. The conclusions highlight the convergence of workers' and ordinary people's grievances in Russia in an unpredictable environment where multiple issues may coalesce and then spiral out of control. Recent examples of such issues have included labour unrest due to wage arrears, political corruption, road taxes on truckers, and the demolition of housing in city centres.

Keywords Russia, working-class politics, authoritarianism, labour, protest, trade unions

Ever since the end of the Soviet Union in 1991 a joke has been going around Russian factories and workshops: 'In the Soviet Union, ordinary people always knew the authorities were lying about communism; now they realise that they were telling the truth about capitalism.' This joke continues to speak to the universal feelings of betrayal among workers during the post-communist transition that seems to have no end in sight. For many they compare their standard of living now unfavourably with the past. While they are not nostalgic for the political realities of communism, the failure of the last twenty-five years to provide an improvement in the conditions, pay and general quality of life for workers and their families, means working-class people's grievances should be ripe for populists to prey on.

However, in this article, I focus on three aspects of working-class life in Russia that add to the debate about global working-class responses to disenfranchisement and 'crisis'. To do this I make use of research materials gathered through ethnographic participant observation and interviews, conducted in industrial communities in Russia since 2009.

Firstly, I outline the political-economy context in Russia. The authoritarian government carefully controls political expressions of dissent, whether through political parties,

protest or trade union activities. In addition, workers are relatively atomised as a group – this is due to the extremely impoverishing and demotivating effects of post-communist transition itself. One of the results of the long process of relative de-industrialisation after 1991 is the fall back of workers into patterns of subsistence and survival that appears to preclude organisation and resistance.

Nonetheless, a second aspect is the coherence and continuity of working-class life and consciousness, despite the dominant view of atomised workers. We need to look at the relative geographical concentration and continuity of working-class communities (in rust-belt cities) and the coherence of their shared values and grievances. These are rooted in the still-living memory of the communist-era ‘social contract’, and workers’ current experience of harsh anti-labour industrial relations and state indifference.

Thirdly, despite seemingly no outlet for frustration in oppositional politics, there are signs of resistance, if not revolt. These range from the informal ‘black’ economy as ‘exit’ from formal work, small-scale labour protests and the organising of new independent labour unions in transnational companies, and the rising political consciousness of working-class voters who look for any ‘alternative’ to the ruling party – including the popular-nationalist far right, and abstention from voting all together.

The conclusions highlight the convergence of workers’ and others’ grievances in Russia. While organised linking up of disparate political, social and labour protests is unlikely, their growing frequency and the febrile atmosphere of authoritarian politics, makes for an unpredictable environment where there is always the possibility for multiple issues to coalesce and then spiral out of control as a locus of common opposition leading to regime transformation. Recent examples of such issues are the corruption of self-enriching elites, road taxes on truckers, and the demolition of housing in city centres. Informal labour protests due to wage arrears are increasingly important too.

The political-economic context of Russian workers

Russia is an authoritarian state dominated by a small political elite. Elections are manipulated to ensure a large majority for the government, and the ruling political party and parliament is largely a rubber-stamp affair. The government does not hesitate to use its extensive security apparatus to stifle and punish independent civic organisation, particularly if this results in visible public protest. The position of workers who try to organise and protest their conditions is very difficult. Since the Labour Code of 2001, union powers have been severely curtailed. Strikes now must be approved by all employees, not just members. In many sectors strikes are illegal. The law also makes it difficult for new active unions to challenge or replace unresponsive and bureaucratic traditional ‘Soviet-style’ unions (Olimpieva: 2012, Ashwin and Clarke: 2003). The most militant unions have been targeted under anti-extremism laws by the security services.

A short historical and comparative contextualisation of Russian labour since 1991 is necessary. Christensen (2016), in an overview of the Russian working-class, characterises the story of the Russian economy as ‘calamitous collapse’ in the 1990s. Economic shock therapy in the 1990s saw factories – whose whole production logic

was previously based on quantitative outputs – rapidly exposed to market pricing and real costs. While many factories and concerns survive in severely truncated form, and strategic military-industrial factories were protected to a degree, only metals and hydrocarbons sectors have gained their share in the economy. It is fair to speak of wholesale deindustrialisation; industrial production is still only 85% of its 1990 level and seven million industrial jobs have been lost (Christensen: 2016). This is a 16% fall in the industrial labour force, in contrast to the US, where 4.5 million jobs were lost in the same period – or a 5% fall (Christensen: 2016). It is often thought that the experience of post-communist transition meant mass unemployment, but it more resembles the slow loss of industrial lifeblood as enterprises used natural wastage or fired women to reduce headcounts (unemployment reached a high only in 1998 at 14%). The massive destruction in the purchasing power of incomes is much more keenly felt in the living memory of working people. People cannot forget the real terms reduction of those incomes as they were left unindexed throughout the high-inflation 1990s and early 2000s, and in some insolvent firms' workers were affected by long-term wage arrears. This is important in the present, as Russians face a similar downturn in purchasing power of incomes after the sustained oil price fall in 2014 and other factors such as the Ukraine crisis.

In Russia, the socialist period was generally characterised by secure, formalised jobs, and an extensive system of social benefits for workers and their families. These benefits implicitly provided compensation for poor working conditions and no political representation (Cook: 1993). In the post-communist period, ongoing market deregulation has resulted in the erosion of standard employment practices, growing underemployment, sporadic wage arrears, an increasing number of informal and semi-formal jobs (Bizyukov: 2016), less secure jobs, a lack of the development of legal and social rights of workers, arbitrary wages, a sharp decline of social benefits, and a trade union system that is largely trapped in Soviet-style patterns of action (Ashwin and Clarke: 2003, Clarke: 1995; Stenning *et al.*: 2010). As a result, in-work precarity is the norm for many working-class Russians. However, the inherited values and prior experiences of workers such as the memory of a social wage are still important. In the recent communist past, standard employment provided significant social benefits such as access to housing, canteens, kindergartens, etc. In addition, the nature of shop-floor relations was often highly specific: many workers experienced relatively low or intermittent levels of work intensity, with piecework being the exception not the rule, as well as protection from overly individualised relations with management by the brigade system (Clarke: 2007, 193).

However, living standards and the memory of a social contract in the past require more contextualization. This was very much a minimum guarantee with numerous flaws: people had enough to eat, but spent a lot of time and resources in getting more than basics. In the 1980s even staple goods became hard to source without exhaustive queuing or endless personal networking. Workers benefited from factories building housing stock right to the end of the Soviet period, but the quality of dwellings was poor. For most families a flat consisted of a single room, a small kitchen, and a toilet/bathroom. Medical care was universal, but for those who were not members of the elite, it was of very low quality. Other social guarantees and benefits were nominally available, but in practice often inadequate, including medical care and pensions.

The point is that as an inflection point, the collapse of the USSR was understandably interpreted as the beginning of ‘Western’ standards of living for all. The transition of the 1990s and massive structural adjustments of the economy – largely borne by workers, was the ‘waiting period’ – highlighted by Sarah Ashwin in the title of her book on workers as the ‘anatomy of patience’ (1999). Particularly for people in blue-collar jobs, the last twenty-five years have illustrated the grim reality behind that joke about communism and capitalism – the massive economic transition to a system at least resembling market capitalism. From a system promising full employment, secure jobs, social mobility and decent in-work benefits, if not pay, many factories closed completely, some soldiered on through the 1990s. However, during Putin’s first tenure from 1999-2008, most people experienced sustained above-inflation boosts to their take-home pay.

The ‘Putin’ era, from 1999, is therefore broadly a marker of the end of the ‘waiting in line’ – oil prices rise and social expenditure increased sharply. But this faltered in 2009 after the global financial crash, and then when oil prices sustained their decline in 2014 the tap was turned off and austerity politics as well as devaluation hit industrial workers and government-sector workers hard. Just to give an example, a cement factory worker outside Moscow earned \$500 a month (equivalent) in 2010 and could (just) support a family, as long as that family already owned a home.⁷ In 2016 because of stoppages due to falling demand, and compounded by currency devaluation, the same worker’s pay is \$125.⁸ Add to that high inflation in staple goods and you have a situation where many Russian workers are experiencing the worst reduction in standards of living in living memory. Indeed, they pushed back into third-world levels of subsistence. Combining numerous data sources and taking a national overview of the situation, Strzelecki (2017, 10) notes that ‘the number of individuals who declare that they have too little money to buy enough food and those who cannot afford to buy clothes [...] amounted to around 40% of the population. The low paid workers in some regions are now spending up to 80% of their pay on basic food staples (TsEPR: 2016, 5).

The patient waiting metaphor is apt also in a comparative sense. The perceived injustice of ‘line cutters’ for the American Dream while workers endure the ravaging effects of neoliberal reform is key to Arlie Russell Hochschild’s work on the US context (2016). The rejection of political-business-as-usual has led to Trump’s victory there, but even in Russia, there are limits to the authoritarian state’s capacity to defuse discontent based on injustice and inequality indefinitely, particularly at a time where these issues can only grow worse and become more visible. Patience may be a working-class virtue, but it is not a renewable resource.

⁷ The economic significance of home ownership in Russia requires some elaboration. After the collapse of the USSR, many were able to privatize the flats they had formerly rented from the state. Until the late 2000s, utility and ground rents were subsidized heavily. The withdrawal of such subsidies recently, means even those older workers lucky enough to own a home feel significant financial pressure, let alone younger people, who, like in most industrialized countries elsewhere, have little chance of ever owning a home.

⁸ Average wages for all employees have fallen by around 50% in dollar terms between 2013-2016 (Strzelecki: 2017). It is also necessary to note that outside the big cities, many white-collar employees would have comparable incomes from main employment, forcing them to seek parallel ‘moonlighting’ opportunities elsewhere. In addition, everyday costs like food, energy and transport are now approaching those in Western Europe – thanks to sustained high inflation of around 8-10% since the 2000s.

Rust-belt Coherence and Continuity

The Soviet industrial project involved mass, and massively coercive, movements of people to formerly empty spaces for the creation of a primary industrial base unrivalled in scale and rapidity of development. These spaces were usually the site of raw materials like iron ore. This led to the growth of both small and large ‘mono towns’ where most employment related to a single activity or enterprise – coal mining, aluminium smelting, or later on, secondary production: automobile production, military hardware, etc. However, unlike the ‘rust belts’ of other global north countries, most of Russia’s industrial towns are spread out all over the country, rather than in roughly identifiable regions (such as the North in the UK, the upper Mid-West in the USA, or the Ruhr in Germany).

The meaning of ‘rust belt’ in Russia also has a different temporal meaning. Large-scale industrial migration resembles that which occurred in the West, however, in Russia this process is still a ‘living’ phenomenon – i.e. people still have a keen sense that they come from a family that migrated large distances due to employment within recent living memory (in contrast, for example with people living in Detroit today, for whom the ‘memory’ of moving from the South in the 1940s or 50s may be less meaningful).

Mono town settlements functioned as the fiefdom of a single (state) employer. Like in the US ‘company city’, the enterprise played an exceptionally important role in the provision of systems of welfare and patronage. Housing was built and maintained by the factory organisation, and leisure, health and other amenities were funded from the same source. Many mono town enterprises acted almost as ‘total social institutions’ and ‘states within states’ (Clarke 1993: 26). In the present there is still the expectation among inhabitants of a kind of social contract between the state and labour. There is also the geographical isolation of many industrial settlements from big-city life – ‘islands’ of factory settlements in a sea of forests and rural lands. With the exception of a few key military enterprises, like the weapons producers, the state is in no position to restructure blue-collar employment to sustain living wages, let alone repair the loss of social benefits enjoyed in the late Soviet period.

Nonetheless, while beyond the horizon of experience to the millions living in the relatively comfortable cosmopolitan centres of Moscow and St Petersburg, and despite now making up only 25% of urban space in Russia, these extractive and processing centres still provide about 30% of GDP (the majority of the rest coming from gas and oil). Only a relatively small number of large mono towns exist (with populations over 100,000) although ten million people live in them. The typical mono town is somewhat smaller. 14 million Russians (10% of the country’s population) live in these ‘small cities’ (less than 100,000 inhabitants), and the isolated-islands pattern of industrial urbanisation remains significant. These communities experience relative isolation, but also provide a sense of self-sufficiency and local identity, however illusory these may be in reality. However, the press and even sociologists and demographers approach the issue in terms of an urban hierarchy: these places are a ‘secondary Russia’; the main ‘problem’ is the ‘failure to adapt’ by these inhabitants. They are seen as politically and socially ‘backward’. Like the anti-working-class vocabulary in the West, a picture of hopeless ‘deplorables’ dominates. Such people’s low life expectancy is seen through their failure to ‘adapt’ to new market realities as much as it is the fault of reforms themselves. Ironically, it is the relative isolation and sense of victimhood that support

a sense of local identity and class-consciousness in these places. This worker is as significant as national or political allegiance – being more likely to feel a sense of solidarity as the exemplary class of economic, social and psychological ‘losers’ of post-communist transition. Where the factories survive in some form, people’s attachment to them remains significant in anchoring identity (Morris: 2016).

Many workers retain household rural land plots they were allocated by the factory in communist times. Even more important today for survival, workers cultivate them in their free time, retaining a precious link with the past. ‘Insurance policies’ and self-provisioning are just as important ideas and values for working-class people as in the past. What is often overlooked in terms of precarious workers’ real adaptation to conditions, is the ubiquity of the informal economy. This is the cash-in-hand, unskilled or skilled work in construction, truck driving, small trade and numerous other working contexts that are everywhere available, yet are invisible to the tax authorities. In particular, with the relative isolation of mono towns, informal economies are often tolerated by local authorities who know very well the few other opportunities for survival. While informal work is often interpreted as particularly precarious, exploitative or self-exploiting (Williams: 2008 Kalleberg: 2009, Waite: 2009), for underemployed workers, the informal economy is an ever-present insurance policy against destitution, and, more importantly, an alternative to formal employment. The ‘black’ economy is advantageous to both the state and individuals and may encompass up to 50% of GDP. The state benefits, particularly politically, as informal activities, e.g. ‘gypsy’ cab driving or day labouring, provide a buffer against unemployment and obviate the need for meaningful social security for the working-age population. On the other hand, informality at all levels is a major barrier to the Russian state attaining any kind of meaningful tax base from employment. Importantly, it is also a barrier to the institutionalisation of the structural power of workers in independent union movements. The ‘turnover’ of workers in even the factories with the best pay and conditions is exacerbated by the availability of alternative informal work. Thus, where effective and politically motivated unions do spring up, despite the obstacles, such as in the automotive industry, they are severely hampered by the instability of cadres and the ‘escape route’ from poor working conditions available to workers in informality.

Populist politics and the silent majorities

On the face of it, Putin’s ‘system’ of loyalty, patronage and coercion has effectively side-lined any potential militancy by workers. While taken separately the mechanisms are relatively weak (anti-union laws, political-co-option), they pale into significance in comparison to the one big success and the one big truth of the Russian political-economy. And this relates to the whole population, but is most ‘expressed’ among workers. The ‘success’ is the careful management of the media and the general population’s exposure to news. Add the age-old accelerant of xenophobia and nationalist fervour. A dollop or two of war helps. Some of my working-class research participants whole-heartedly support all the current military adventures and nationalist rhetoric. This type of effective populist distraction takes real effort, but is all the more effective in a state where most people get information from the television alone. Despite these disconcerting factors, there are a number of reasons to be hopeful about working-class mobilisation, resistance and agency in Russia today.

Voices: ‘exit’, the ballot box, and protest

The first category is informal economy as a ‘voice’ or ‘exit’ for working-class people, that merely by its existence and ubiquity remains a challenge to the stability of the state. As already mentioned, the ‘black’ or ‘shadow’ economy is problematic as an alternative to exploitative formal work. Untaxed and unregistered work, whether as a day labourer or self-employed tradesperson, or ‘gypsy’ cab driver is often unpleasant, physically demanding, dangerous, offers poor returns, and is often typified by more extreme forms of exploitation (and self-exploitation). So why think of it as an ‘alternative’ at all? This is because of what some workers themselves tell us about leaving formal work to go ‘underground’. A series of interviews I conducted with workers in 2010 revealed that they preferred the ‘lesser evil’ of informal work to factory work – whether in the old-style Soviet-era factories, or in the new hi-tech conveyor assembly lines of the auto plants located an hours-drive away near the regional capital. A key ethnographic interview revealed working-class ideas about the relative value of formal versus informal work:

I’d rather go out gypsy-cab driving. If it was easy enough to pay a decent wage, and more besides 20 years ago, then why not now under your capitalism? And really, everywhere is like that now, unfortunately, even the Cement works, even the Steelpipe workshop. It’s all about ‘have you done this, have you cleaned up the forklift park? The little bosses like to tyrannize everyone, trying to lord it over us and picking up on the stuff that’s unimportant. Even at the limekiln these days you have to watch your back as everywhere there are narks who will grass on you to those Germans to get ahead. I was always considered a first-class worker. I can put a matchbox in place with my forklift but will I ever get on the Board of Honour for it? [interview 2010]

For other workers who left the factories for an unlicensed plastic window workshop, their choice of informal labour over formal was connected to values of craft, sociality, flexibility and autonomy. While the work was seasonal, they were paid more for this work on an hourly basis than in the factories. In the ‘down’ season, they spent their time doing day-labour jobs, working on the vegetable plot, or taxi-driving. One former car mechanic, 25 years-old, was responsible for all the lathe work and develops the theme of autonomy:

The pace is slower [than in the local factories] you haven’t got people looking round the door to check on you. But then when the owner comes and says ‘we need this order for tonight’, then we’ll work harder than we would in the factory. I worked in the Cement and no one there would break their back for *avral* [storming to meet a deadline]. On the other hand when you get a decent amount of hard cash for the job then the quality is going to be right. [interview 2010]

A 29-year-old, who had worked in a broiler plant as a technician continued:

There is an element of craftsmanship [*masterstvo*] to it, after all, there isn’t if it is a proper production line. You just wouldn’t have time for that at the Polymer. In fact the reason we have so much spare plastic for making drainpipes at the dacha is because there is so much wastage because of them rushing [laughs]. It’s not like that here. Here the profit is in not wasting your material. Like we had a special order for a triangular window and it took us all day to work out how to

seal the sharpest angled joint. But it gave us a sense of satisfaction. Time isn't always money. [interview 2010]

Those workers who left full-time factory work for taxi-driving and odd day jobs did acknowledge the precarious nature of this existence, but also stressed flexibility and the value of time:

Yes, sometimes I might only earn a couple of hundred in a shift [\$5]. That's local trips only and that only covers the petrol. You just eat potatoes and try not to think about it. But is it that different from working at the Cement, or in Kaluga at the Hardware wholesalers? [Vanya had worked there for a couple of years as a paint mixer and loader after quitting the security firm]. When I worked there I was being ordered around every day and my back ached even before I got there. You know I only got 18,000 roubles [\$550], even after I got made deputy manager of the paint department. Fuck that. In the taxi I am my own boss [*sam sebe khoziain*]... But on the nightshift when people are drunk then I can get a thousand a day, easy—more if you get on the right side of the dispatchers and get the out-of-town trips, to the district centre or Kaluga. It's probably the same money as the factory for half the hours. And I can easily fit in some moonlighting [*kalym*] jobs in between. You couldn't do that at the factory. [interview 2012]

This final section discusses two other political categories of working-class response: firstly the ballot box and its boycott, and secondly, more active grass-roots labour protests and independent union activism as a substitute for left party-politics.

In the 1990s in Russia there was a more or less viable communist party opposition for whom many workers and others voted in elections until the 2000s, when it and other left-wing political forces were either co-opted or went into decline (March: 2002, 2009, Gel'man: 2007). Putin's initial popularity after the economic crises of the 1990s, along with high oil prices in the 2000s, which allowed significant spending on social security, meant that a ruling party closely associated with the president, United Russia, dominated the electoral environment. Russia became a 'hegemonic' presidential party regime (Smyth et al.: 2007) where ordinary people willingly, reluctantly, or through work-place coercion, regularly turned out to vote for the president's party. From 2008 onward, Putin's 'party of power' increasingly resorted to populist rhetoric after the economic crisis and foreign policy distractions. While there were largely middle-class protests on a large scale in Moscow in 2012, the parliamentary elections in 2016 marked a clear limit to the sustainability of xenophobic and patriotic voter mobilisation. Officially the ruling party won by a landslide, but reputable political statistical analysis uncovered massive ballot stuffing and put the real turnout and ruling party vote-share at 36% and 40% respectively (Moscow Times: 2016). Hardly a ringing endorsement. Speaking to many working-class voters involved in my research, many had ceased to bother voting in the early 2000s, unless their factory 'coerced' or incentivised them to do so (giving them a day off or a gift). Until 2006 they had the option to vote 'against all' candidates, and many did so. After this option was removed, it was postulated that other outlets of protest were likely (McAlister and White: 2008).

However, since the early 1990s there has been an alternative 'protest' party: the far-right nationalist party headed by a charismatic populist figure Zhirinovsky. Zhirinovsky's party regularly got around 10% of the vote in elections and as a political

celebrity fond of outlandishly populist, often-racist statements using obscene language, Zhirinovskiy has been a constant TV presence for twenty-five years. In 2016, while the communist vote collapsed, the far right got 17% of the (real) vote. While Zhirinovskiy was previously seen as attracting mainly lower-middle class voters (Makarkin: 2007), my interviews with working-class voters saw an increase in those voting for him in 2016. A series of campaign ads focussed on inflation in food products, access to medicine and to housing finance. Coverage describing the party as merely 'nationalist' (Monaghan: 2016) distracts from the social and economic messages: 24 of the 28 TV ads were on resonant working-class issues like caps on pay ratios between CEOs and workers, and policies to restrict debt collectors' activities – loose credit policies were likened to drug pushing.

In my small sample, non-voters remain the biggest group. 'We would vote for Zhirinovskiy, but we don't vote. Why would we?' said a welder in his 50s. This was the same person that in 2009 told me the Putin government would never care about 'people like him'. Others typically said, 'I don't know a single person who voted. I wouldn't even know where to go to vote.' Other people were more reflective and calculated – voting for the far right was a clear protest vote: '[the far-right party] are clowns but I voted for them because we need to send a message and there is no way of doing that. [Putin's party] has too much power. This is the last time they will win big.' These people are those who typically voted for Putin in the 'good' times of the 2000s. Corruption and inequality were high up on their agendas.

Grassroots protests and new union activism

While electoral politics remains peripheral to working-class politics in Russia, the downward spiral of the economy has sparked sporadic and unorganised, yet significant, labour protest – usually around issues of unpaid wages. This has involved miners in Rostov, farmers in Kuban, metallurgical workers in the Urals, a Ford plant near St Petersburg. This pattern was set back in 2009 when Cement workers in a small mono town near St Petersburg blocked a highway in protest at unpaid wages. Putin flew to the scene by helicopter and deflected blame on the billionaire owner.

The stifling electoral authoritarianism leaves no other available outlet for the expression of grievances. However, the most emblematic of these grassroots labour protests has been the 'passive' and informal strike action of truck drivers in 2015 and 2017. The truckers – often on self-employed contracts - faced large tax increases to use public highways. The protests also linked up labour grievances to corruption – a government crony was to make a large profit on collecting the new road tax. Like the more geographically localised protests, the truckers made their voices heard by blocking roads. However, unlike the isolated industrial communities that used this tactic, truckers were able to bring the protests much closer to the political heartlands of Moscow and St Petersburg. The first protest led to the government making concessions. The second set of protests are still carrying on as I write.

It's possible that, as with large scale urban protests, the security machinery of the Russian state is well-oiled enough to counter sporadic and relatively small-scale labour protests as they arise. By contrast, despite the securitisation of labour relations (where the security services get involved in union busting on a regular basis using 'anti-

extremism' laws), new union movements may have a better chance of success in achieving their aims through activism. This is particularly true in multinational companies like Volkswagen that came to Russia relatively recently (Hinz and Morris: 2017). These plants have no existing unions and small groups of activists can make a significant impact. This was the case in Volkswagen in Kaluga city, studied by Hinz and Morris (2017). Activists, some of whom had contacts in Russian leftist movements, were supported by the Interregional Trade Union of Auto Workers (MPRA – which is affiliated to the umbrella organisation IndustriALL Global Union). They organised and mobilised workers effectively and became dominant in the plant. This allowed them, despite the anti-union laws, to lead negotiations with the management and conclude a favourable collective bargaining agreement. This led to wage increases and a reduction in temporary contract labour.

The Interregional Trade Union of Auto Workers (MPRA) is one of the newly emergent activist unions (Olimpieva: 2012). The MPRA originated in Ford, the first foreign carmaker that moved to the Leningrad region (surrounding St. Petersburg) in 2005. Further alternative unions joined the MPRA and gained a foothold in all the major automobile manufacturers and suppliers throughout Russia, in both domestically-owned plants as well as in foreign-owned plants. MPRA is associated with the politicization of Russian labour unions since the 2000s. The auto sector in particular has a history of militancy and independence dating from the 1990s (Mandel 2004). Indeed, the 1990s saw cycles of intense and desperate protest action beyond the organizational structures of traditional unions (Greene and Robertson: 2009). However, these attempts failed, partly because of internal organizational conflicts. Nonetheless by 2010 around three million workers were eventually organised in an umbrella independent confederation of unions – KTR (*Confederation of Labour Russia*).

Even before the sustained economic downturn after 2013, the lack of legal avenues for resolving labour disputes saw 'protests spill out of the factory gates and merge with other types of social protest' (Bizyukov: 2011, 6). These include actions less traditionally associated with labour disputes – hunger strikes, solidarity picketing blockading highways, and so on. These show both desperation on the part of workers (Greene and Robertson: 2009), but also the unpredictable course protests can take if not addressed quickly by the authorities either by concessions or coercion. At a round table of leading unionists and sociologists in St Petersburg in May 2017, there was discussion of the increasing frequency of spontaneous labour protests, regardless of the role of trade unions. The consensus was that labour and social protestors' interests and demands were converging in a politicised form (Bizyukov: 2017, Olimpieva: 2017).

Conclusions

Despite the authoritarian state and anti-labour laws, new activist unions like MPRA have an opportunity to use their expertise and networks to fill the 'left-center niche in Russian politics' (Olimpieva and Orttung: 2013, 3). As long as the oil price remains low, disorganised and organised labour will represent an 'immovable object' in the path of the Russian government's plans for the mobilisation of society according to crude nationalist rhetoric and the demotivation of political protest by means of heavy coercion.

Current research and monitoring shows the convergence and politicisation of labour and social protests because of the lack of economic progress since the late 2000s. Clément notes that many ordinary people who participate in local and less ‘organised’ protests ‘have no previous activist experience, and may even have held negative attitudes towards activism and collective action before becoming involved’ (Clément: 2015, 212). The same is true of labour protests such as the long distance truckers’ dispute in 2016 (Bizyukov: 2017). Such a convergence indicates the possibility of workers, state employees such as teachers and medics, young people and pensioners making common cause in articulating grievances.

It is difficult to predict how the ongoing activation of working-class power in Russia will progress. It is increasingly impossible for the state to distract and deflect from the massive failure of economic and industrial policy in Russia. Politicians have made themselves hostages to fortune by closing off the option of the ballot box and the emptying of the political space of opposition. This is different from the ‘revolt against the elites’ context of democratic countries where populist politicians and parties are relevant, at least at the moment. On the other hand, the Russian example shows how even in an authoritarian political landscape, working-class people can make their voices heard – even if in the most desperate of circumstances. We should be attuned to the similarities as well as the seemingly differences of Russian protesting voices. Aleksandr Bibkov highlights the common themes of protest in Russia as attempts to activate ‘dignity’ and a sense of ‘collective autonomy’. In this sense, there is hope that workers and others can make common cause (Bibkov: 2012: 283-4). We should also try to see Russian workers’ struggles through a global lens of politics (Morris: 2017), and connect Russians’ grievances, aims and values to other capitalist contexts throughout the world, the political differences of democracy and authoritarianism may be less important.

Author Bio

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The Cross-Country/Cross-Class Drives of Don Draper/Dick Whitman: Examining *Mad Men*'s Hobo Narrative

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Abstract

This article examines how the critically acclaimed television show *Mad Men* (2007-2015) sells romanticized working-class representations to middle-class audiences, including contemporary cable subscribers. The television drama's lead protagonist, Don Draper, exhibits class performatively in his assumed identity as a Madison Avenue ad executive, which is in constant conflict with his hobo-driven born identity of Dick Whitman. To fully examine Draper/Whitman's cross-class tensions, I draw on the American literary form of the hobo narrative, which issues agency to the hobo figure but overlooks the material conditions of homelessness. I argue that the hobo narrative becomes a predominant but overlooked aspect of *Mad Men*'s period presentation, specifically one that is used as a technique for self-making and self-marketing white masculinity in twenty-first century U.S. cultural productions.

Keywords

Cross-class tensions; television; working-class representations

The critically acclaimed television drama *Mad Men* (2007-2015) ended its seventh and final season in May 2015. The series covered the cultural and historical period of March 1960 to November 1970, and followed advertising executive Don Draper and his colleagues on Madison Avenue in New York City. As a text that shows the political dynamism of the mid-century to a twenty-first century audience, *Mad Men* has wide-ranging interpretations across critical camps. For example, in 'Selling Nostalgia: *Mad Men*, Postmodernism and Neoliberalism,' Deborah Tudor suggests that the show offers commitments to individualism through a 'neoliberal discourse of style' which stages provocative constructions of reality (2012, p. 333). One of these stylistic discourses renders the well-dressed but poorly behaved masculinity of the show as an iconic facet of mid-century white, male cultural power. This display is Jeremy Varon's primary interest in 'History Gets in Your Eyes: *Mad Men*, Misrecognition and the Masculine Mystique,' which argues that Draper's enactment of mid-century vices 'collapses the sense of historical distance' and leaves audiences to 'glamorize' and 'condemn' his behavior from their contemporary time (2013; p. 262; p. 270). Both Tudor and Varon suggest that Draper's enigmatic masculine displays preoccupy critics and audiences, his character emblematic of a highly individualized but self-conscious presentation of gender. But to understand how Draper's masculinity works, it is crucial to also consider its racial identifications, and even more importantly, its class affiliations.

Throughout the *Mad Men* series, Draper's characterization offers a compelling case

study for how mid-century masculinity authorizes its behavior through self-making, and participates in a century-long spectacle concerned with self-presentation and self-preservation. Draper's mid-century appeal to a post-liberationist audience pressures viewers to be both astounded by the misogynistic and racist perspectives of the time, and amazed by their reception in the present.⁹ Week after week, viewers rubbernecked the wreckage of Draper's catastrophic love affairs, habitual infidelity, abused childhood and Korean-war flashbacks. In particular, viewers wanted to know when and if Draper would stop living the lie of his assumed identity and return to his born identity as Dick Whitman.¹⁰ Many predicted that Draper would crack under the pressure of his double life and end up like the ad man tumbling down from the top of the building in the opening credits of the show. Yet, as a testament of Draper's period-specific status, no risk generated from his lifestyle ever truly interfered with his success. Audiences were drawn into watching Draper come close to losing everything, but never realized that his position precluded ever actually losing anything.

In this respect *Mad Men* both represents and participates in a discourse that locates the crisis of masculinity in the mid-century (Penner 2011). Theorists and critics who contribute to this discourse often draw on popular culture to provide a provocative frame for studying representations of American masculinity and to envision the collision of gender, race and class identities.¹¹ Additionally, literary texts can help to deconstruct the monolithic privilege of white masculinity seen in cultural narratives. Pursuing study of *Mad Men* through the frame of American literature, which plays prominently within the series, allows Draper's character to be connected to the concept of the self-made man. Draper's character depicts American self-making as unlimited by social systems of inequality, and perpetuates a mid-century status quo of white, masculine centrality. To do so, *Mad Men* draws on a long-standing practice in literary culture that emphasizes social status by placing value on working-class representations. These representations obscure the socio-economic realities of class in an effort to reinforce hierarchical understandings of gender and race.¹² When these representations are circulated in literature, television, film or the media, they overlook the material circumstances of their time in order to sell stylized reputations, lifestyles and appearances of working-class identity. Examining *Mad Men* in this way helps to reveal how class representations function within American narratives not only within the dramatized mid-century era of prosperity, but to audiences in a post-recession moment, which like the postwar, understand that American classlessness has proven to be fiction.

⁹ Michael Bérubé (2013) argues that *Mad Men*'s appeal in the contemporary era is structured on envisioning the changes of the Sixties 'filtered through the present' (p. 347). As a period piece, the show enacts a 'back to the future' temporality that celebrates the cultural possibilities of the present by envisioning the past (Bérubé 2013, p. 347). These highly subjective interpretations allow audiences to claim self-serving value against a historical façade.

¹⁰ To be clear, Dick Whitman and Don Draper are the same person; but Draper is an assumed identity. For this reason, I will often refer to Draper/Whitman when the distinction becomes unclear, but will use the names separately to indicate tensions between the identities as represented on the show.

¹¹ In particular, Sally Robinson (2000), David Savran (1998) and Susan Jeffords (1989) provide an instructive model for pursuing the study of masculinity through a variety of textual types.

¹² *Mad Men* often used literature to incorporate mid-century specific culture. Two of several noted titles of the era include Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* (1957), which Cooper recommends to Draper, claiming that he understands Draper's philosophy of life (*Mad Men* 2007); and Frank O'Hara's *Meditations in an Emergency* (1957), which Draper sends to California as confessional missive of his identity crisis (*Mad Men* 2008).

I trace *Mad Men*'s mid-century preoccupation with class representations to early-twentieth century hobo narratives, which foreground a hard-earned masculine identity alongside the celebration of anti-hero or outsider figures. The hobo narrative is a confluence of road and travel narratives that celebrate mobility based on technological innovations in transportation in fraught economic periods spanning from the Progressive era to the Depression. These cultural narratives range in their political activism, some depicting the hobo as a marginalized working-class figure in search of work, while most highlight the freedom from domestic responsibility earned by hitting the road.¹³ The latter of these depicts the hobo through a romantic wanderlust, overlooking national and municipal pressures on the hobo to be a productive laborer in place of authorizing self-serving individualism. This heroic agency and romanticized itinerancy complicates how we view the hobo's material situation, the hobo narrative removing or disguising economic pressures to maximize masculine agency.

The highly gendered American labor tradition of the hobo narrative is practiced by what Todd DePastino calls a 'white male counterculture' (2003, p. xx). This renders the hobo narrative an alternative system of class representation, one that prioritizes work for the self or in service of the self, and stresses social agency and cultural command over economic vulnerability or volatility. Since the hobo narrative prioritizes adventure, whether for work or for play, it is a traditionally masculine form that champions the mobility of white, masculine access historically foreclosed to women and people of color.

The hobo narrative is inaugurated by Jack London's hobo handbook *The Road* (1907), which features a protagonist able to manipulate social situations from town to town in order to meet his material needs.¹⁴ This practice is revealed in London's first chapter 'Confession' (paragraph 40), where he explains:

For know that upon his ability to tell a good story depends the success of the beggar. First of all, and on the instant, the beggar must 'size up' his victim. After that, he must tell a story that will appeal to the peculiar personality and temperament of that particular victim.

Though a transient and underclass figure that must rely on the handouts of others, London offers that the hobo makes language a performative resource that secures food or board. With this interaction, London highlights a central tenet of hobo survival, that '[t]he successful hobo must be an artist' (paragraph 40). London's text emphasizes that a persuasive hobo figure is able to manipulate the severity of his material conditions through storytelling, relying on a verbal capacity to perform his social situation and guarantee survival. Predicated on the ability to identify an audience and produce an appropriate story, London's hobo-as-artist is celebrated for his verbal resourcefulness, rendering him a creative institution rather than a man economically dispossessed.

¹³ The hobo narrative may offer an autobiographical voice of resilient social experience, such as in Jack Black's *You Can't Win* (1926), or feature hobo or vagabond characters for political commentary, such as in John Dos Passos's *U.S.A. Trilogy* (1937).

¹⁴ The hobo narrative's reliance on working-class figures for resiliency relates to what Thomas Newhouse (2000) calls the 'hobo mystique.' Newhouse's concept suggests that the symbolic manipulation of the hobo is founded by figures like London, who constructed stylistic appeals to masculine ingenuity on the road.

In *Labor's Text*, Working-Class Studies scholar and literary critic Laura Hapke explains a similar phenomenon throughout American fiction when she argues that a 'new sureness of tone [is] born of the authority of the vagabond,' who makes 'language...the experience itself' (2001, p. 191). Hapke's observation sheds light on London's presentation of the hobo, acknowledging the ability to command a sense of cultural control through narratives that gain authenticity based on underclass associations. As a refined storyteller, this representation of the hobo uses the economic reputation to stress a privileged creative capacity to render hobo symbols and assert himself as a 'proletarian troubadour who [can] always get by' (p. 191).

In the hobo narrative, this resilient ability to 'get by' can be seen exhibiting a part-hobo and part-bohemian identity. This *hobohemian* character seeks to reinforce status-driven masculinity by creatively and strategically displaying his working-class affiliations.¹⁵ The continued presence of the hobo narrative in the postwar becomes suggestive of a creative method for earning masculine credibility in an era of containment. In the context of *Mad Men*, this concept helps to expose the mid-century interest in the hobo figure as a nostalgic fantasy by writers such as beatnik Jack Kerouac, whose depiction of class speaks to new social classifications within post-war economies that are growing increasingly white-collar.¹⁶

Mad Men's skyscraper may also represent that shift in social hierarchy, but it is crucial to note how Draper's story does not aspire for upward mobility because there is no legitimate risk of moving downward.¹⁷ Unlike the upward mobility promised by Horatio Alger's nineteenth-century rags-to-riches narratives that stress progress and hard work to earn social mobility, the hobo narrative uses physical mobility to depict twentieth-century lateral moves across geographic space. Draper's hobo narrative is overwhelming longitudinal, emphasizing panoramic strides across space and time in distinctly horizontal ways (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). These narrative facets help to decipher the gravity of the storylines within *Mad Men* wherein power is relegated the men of Madison Avenue, who go from office to office—and woman to woman—in order to maintain their status, virility and wealth. Characters like Don Draper show that

¹⁵ Hobohemia has historically been represented a geographic space. In *On Hobos and Homelessness*, Nels Anderson defines hobohemia as an early twentieth century 'mainline' of temporary settlement (1923, p. 28) at a crossroads with Bughouse Square, the bohemian Village of Chicago (1923, p. 36). By indicating hobohemia's capacity for cultural and economic exchange, I adapt this term to describe a subject who possesses hobo and bohemian affiliations.

¹⁶ In addition to *Mad Men* (2007-2015), there have been an increasing number of films about literary figures that utilize conventions of the hobo narrative. The most apparent of these are the film reclamations of Jack Kerouac and Beat culture in *One Fast Move Or I'm Gone* (2008), *Howl* (2010), *On the Road* (2012), *Big Sur* (2013), and *Kill Your Darlings* (2013). This trend can also be seen in other countercultural figures that entertain the cross-class appeal of the hobo, including work on Hunter S. Thompson's career in: *Buy the Ticket, Take the Ride: Hunter S. Thompson on Film* (2006), *Blasted!!! The Gonzo Patriots of Hunter S. Thompson* (2006), *Gonzo: The Life and Work of Dr. Hunter S. Thompson* (2008), and the work of Charles Bukowski, in *Bukowski: Born Into This* (2003), and the legal battle over James Franco's production of *Bukowski* (2013).

¹⁷ One possible exception may be the episode "Hands and Knees" (*Mad Men* 2010), where Draper's firm must get security clearance through the Federal Bureau of Investigation and he is in danger of being arrested for desertion. Interestingly enough, this fear results in Draper's ability to persuade and mobilize a network of support—personally and professionally--and eliminate the risk. I read potential imprisonment as a characteristic of downward mobility because it would restrict Draper's personal agency, not because of its criminal status.

there is no need to move up the hierarchy when one is already at the top, making the lateral an explicit indicator of male status in the show.

And though female characters like Joan Harris and Peggy Olson are able to move up significantly within the company, their movement is limited and tied to largely to domestic sacrifices and bodily vulnerability. This mirrors the gender dynamic of the hobo narrative, too, where a man's itinerancy is deemed as freedom and self-fulfilment as compared to women, who are left behind or relegated to stationary domestic concerns and maternal ties. Thus, when contemporary audiences consume *Mad Men* as a unique presentation of mid-century gender and race, they overlook the intense class positions woven into those identities. This stealthy use of the hobo narrative proves that twenty-first century viewers have been trained to see class as a stylish institution and lifestyle, rather than know what kinds of inequality are perpetuated by romanticized working-class representations. By calling attention to the popular form of the hobo narrative, this examination of *Mad Men* hopes to address a long-standing cultural practice that cashes in on such representations of the working class. This initiates an overdue conversation that acknowledges how contemporary politics and media continually use working-class representations to define and justify access to the American dream and the privileges of the middle class without seeing the complex interplay between gender, race and class.

Thus, while critics have argued that *Mad Men* creates a 'spectacle of masculinity in crisis at once so elegant, alluring and instructive,' this gendered performance also proves the cultural resonance of the hobo narrative and often problematic class representations (Varon 2013, p. 269). This regards *Mad Men* not as a text that depicts crisis, but rather as a text that captures the entrepreneurial strategies that white masculinity employs to handle the economic pressures of the twenty and twenty-first centuries. By resolving Draper's story line through a cross-country road trip, the last three episodes of the final season conclude the hobo narrative that had been integral to the series since season one. This ending suggests that by reclaiming the class identity of his past, Draper's—and the audience's—closure must participate in the cultural geography of a hobo counterculture. *Mad Men* envisions the appeal of this story line by focusing on its persuasive and creative protagonist, a man who can always 'get by.'

Flashbacks to Hobo Foundations

The hobo narrative underlying *Mad Men* is established in the season one episode 'The Hobo Code' (*Mad Men* 2007). This early episode presents Whitman's Depression-era struggles in conflict with the bohemians of Draper's current bourgeois life. By establishing Draper as both an upper-class ad man and an impoverished farm boy, *Mad Men* uses the hobo narrative to gesture toward tensions of masculine self-control by making class identity highly visible.

Draper's dual-class construction becomes clear in a series of flashbacks at beatnik girlfriend Midge Daniels' Village apartment. Draper intends to take Midge on an impromptu trip to Paris with a recent bonus, but is overruled by her bohemian friends, who plan to 'get high and listen to Miles' (*Mad Men* 2007). Unwilling to give up on his plan and return home to his wife and children, Draper gives into the bohemian vibe,

smokes marijuana with Daniels, and claims: 'I feel like Dorothy' (*Mad Men* 2007).¹⁸ Draper becomes the humble rural youth who has been transported to the big city and is amazed by its extravagance. By taking part in the bohemian scene, Draper is depicted as lost in Oz, and his dis-locatedness in the physical space initiates his first flashback as he washes his face and looks into the bathroom mirror. In the flashback, Draper is young Dick Whitman on the family farm as a hobo approaches looking for work. As an outsider on the family farm, the hobo is greeted with hostility and suspicion. The family entertains the hobo's verbal appeals for work, but does not satisfy his request.¹⁹ Throughout the negotiations for work, young Dick Whitman is portrayed as particularly interested in the hobo and the two are tied to one another through a series of hidden glances. This connection goes as far as the hobo articulating that Whitman 'reminds me of myself,' to secure the important link between the two characters (*Mad Men* 2007).

When Draper awakens from his flashback, he recognizes that he is an outsider in the bohemian apartment just as the hobo was on the family farm. The shabbily dressed bohemian group has disdain for Draper's well-dressed appearance and upper-class status that connects him to the system. Draper attempts to appeal to them on a personal level to secure Midge's affection. But this results in further teasing and mocking as they feign surprise that 'the ad man has a heart,' only to claim that 'love is bourgeois' (*Mad Men* 2007).²⁰ The bohemians distrust Draper as a system insider and class-climber, expressing their overt concern with the pressures they feel to take part in consumerist projects that erase their individuality. Draper, however, is aware that he is not an insider, but a complex performative figure that can work from the inside. Draper is faced with class duality: he is both the poor farm boy as well as the Organization Man (Whyte 1956), neither of which fit him wholly, and both of which are met with hostility in the bohemian apartment. Feeling physically, emotionally and socially dislocated, Draper's debate with what Norman Podhoretz (1958) calls 'Know-Nothing Bohemians,' becomes the catalyst for another flashback to young Whitman talking privately with the hobo. Whitman is perplexed by the hobo's identity, which appears at odds with what he has been told about them (*Mad Men* 2007):

Whitman: 'You don't talk like a bum.'

Hobo: 'I'm not. I'm a gentleman of the rails. For me, every day is brand new. Every day's a brand new place, people, what have you.'

The enigmatic status of the hobo, both gentleman and bum, is confusing for Whitman's young mind. But as a flashback from the bohemian apartment, this conversation provides Draper/Whitman an alternative mode of being that exists, for many as a

¹⁸ Draper's reference to L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) is also indicative of mid-century readings of the novel as Populist critique, including but not limited to the march to Oz as representative of General Kelly and General Coxy's march on Washington with the Tramp Army in the late nineteenth-century. Jack London travelled with General Kelly in 1894 and captured his observations in *The Tramp Diary* before parting ways to seek better food and board (1979).

¹⁹ The hobo is given a meal and promised work the next day. After performing his duties, Whitman's family refuses to pay him wages. This exchange provides Dick Whitman with the ability to see dishonest men, what the hobo writes on the fencepost in 'hobo code' to warn others from the farm.

²⁰ Love is manufactured in *Mad Men*. In 'Smoke Gets In Your Eyes' (2007) Draper claims that he has created the concept of love and sold it through the products he advertises. He tells potential client Rachel Menken she has never felt love because 'it doesn't exist. What you call love is invented by guys like me. To sell nylons' (*Mad Men* 2007). She responds by indicating that Draper's bravado attempts to hide a larger disconnection with life, observing that it 'must be difficult to be a man, too.'

paradoxical state, as ‘a gentleman of the rails.’ Just as Draper feels like an outsider but is seen as an insider, Young Whitman learns through the hobo that image and substance do not always correspond. For Whitman the hobo represents the potential of starting each day in a new way, issuing the option to self-make. Vaguely aware of the abusive living situation of young Whitman, the hobo understands the hope a different life can give the boy and offers Whitman a universal truth: ‘We all wish we were from someplace else’ (*Mad Men* 2007). This truth does not provide solace to Whitman, but rather decrees an alternative lifestyle in which someone can be from someplace else interminably. This instills the very impulse with which Whitman becomes Draper.²¹

Before leaving, the hobo teaches young Whitman a final lesson: the hobo code. These codes, written with chalk, communicate to other hobos what to expect at a given location. These codes use the power of communication to sustain and secure a hobo identity. After drawing a few symbols, the hobo gives Whitman the chalk. The passing of the chalk transfers to Whitman the hobo’s ability to survive through language. The hobo teaches Whitman not only a hopeful new vocabulary, but provides him with an instrument that allows him to literally and figuratively re-write his life. Like London’s hobo-as-artist, Whitman learns that the hobo can rely on his ability to tell a story to earn handouts, the codes securing his mobility and perpetual reinvention. The passing of the chalk directly affects Whitman/Draper by providing him a highly mobile life that can be secured by wielding language effectively. The benefits of this include his ability to spin a story that secures a new identity after the Korean War, as well as securing his professional reputation as an ad man who uses language to persuade a consumer public. The hobo, who brings Whitman opportunity through language, changes his impoverished beginnings but also Draper’s well-to-do future by presenting the option for new stories and appearances in pursuit of new beginnings.

The episode ends with Draper appearing to understand that based on his hobo flashbacks, his bohemian life with Midge is just as artificial as his executive one. Realizing his rejection by the bohemian group, Draper prepares to leave the apartment. Police lights shine against the window from outside, and the bohemians express fears of being busted. Draper, who stands out against the shabby bohemians in his well-fitted suit, takes his hat in hand and walks toward the door. The bohemians excitedly tell him he cannot leave because of the police in the building. Draper points at one outspoken young man with a spiteful smile and tells him ‘you can’t,’ and walks out the door, passing unnoticed by the officers in the hallway (*Mad Men* 2007). Draper’s action not only stresses the option to leave, forever mobile, but his retort acknowledges an understanding that he will be hidden by the appearances of a well-dressed ad man. In doing so, this episode crafts Draper as a hobohemian figure who is aware of the benefits of passing between the groups depending on his need for affiliation. This portion of his hobo narrative completes a class-crossing circuit between hobo and bohemian, as well as bohemian and bourgeois.²²

²¹ The hobo in this episode provides an example of what Erin Royston Battat (2014) calls a ‘volitional hobo’ rather than a ‘vulnerable hobo’ (p. 23). The hobo connects his satisfaction to mobility, and notes his status as a choice that escapes the confining pressures of a mortgage, job and wife. This circulates a distinctly cultural version of the hobo that stresses agency and individualism over the need for work during tense economic times.

²² In *Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There* (2000), David Brooks argues that the late twentieth century experienced a class shift as it learned to utilize cultural capital to advance identity politics. This included the bobo: a middle class, or bourgeois person who co-opts the

Though Draper judges the bohemians for their superficial class appearances, ‘buying some Tokaj wine, leaning up against a wall in Grand Central and pretending you’re a vagrant,’ the episode offers Draper/Whitman’s aptitude for his own class performance as authentically rooted in the hobo (*Mad Men* 2007). Draper’s hobo narrative allows him to claim class affiliations as a social and cultural advantage. This permits Draper to construct and reconstruct his identity as a highly mobile character, building masculine control through strategic class associations that have unchecked access.

Finding the Great American Hobo

The final season of *Mad Men* reinstates Draper/Whitman’s hobo beginnings as he travels westward in a desperate attempt to find himself. The last episodes of the season and series, ‘Lost Horizons,’ ‘The Milk & Honey Route,’ and ‘Person to Person,’ serve as highly identifiable circulations of a hobo narrative that still has a place in contemporary popular culture (*Mad Men* 2015). Draper/Whitman’s return to his hobo beginnings reinstitutes the centrality of his class characterization throughout the series. These final installments of *Mad Men* focus on wealthy, big-city Don Draper as he gradually strips off his constructed identity and returns to being poor, mid-western Dick Whitman. To show this transition, Draper draws on the hobo roots of his youth and learns to synthesize his double, class-performed life.

In ‘Lost Horizons,’²³ Draper’s class-chameleon act is seen under strain in order to show his inherent discomfort in his largely domestic, upper-middle-class life. Draper refuses to be troubled by his secretary’s insistence on choosing furnishings for his new apartment. He also refuses to be emotionally impacted when he is handed divorce papers at work. After his firm’s recent merger, Draper has become merely a presence both professionally and creatively. Draper’s boss calls him his ‘white whale,’ establishing Draper not as a man, but as a spectral pursuit of mythological proportions (*Mad Men* 2015).²⁴ As this spectral figure, Draper attends a meeting for a new account with Miller beer and goes unnoticed. He watches a young man deliver a pitch that invokes Draper’s style and that uses appeals toward the everyman. Draper leaves the room in middle of the pitch, gets in his car and drives out of the city. After a brief telephone exchange with his ex-wife Betty about the children—none of whom need him—Draper turns onto the Pennsylvania/New Jersey Turnpike and begins heading

qualities of bohemian identity for the advancement of more than economic or social capital. Draper/Whitman’s character is suggestive of movement toward this *bobo*, but who place cultural value on the hobo for historical effect.

²³ As a pop cultural allusion, Frank Capra’s film *Lost Horizon* (1937) evokes questions of being hijacked on the way to your destination, the inhabitants of a plane delivered to and held in the idyllic Shangri-La. In Draper’s narrative arc, his seemingly glamorous life in New York City is put in question, while his journey westward and toward Dick Whitman is noted as a return to the proper course.

²⁴ This allusion to Melville’s *Moby Dick* (1851) is a provocative one. The relationship between Ahab and Ishmael highlights another issue of working-class representation since middle-class Ishmael documents the workingmen’s search for the whale for his own social gain. Secondly, this reference also has mid-century countercultural presence in Thompson’s *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1971), which depicts narrator Duke driving ‘the White Whale’ Cadillac in search of the American Dream, a spectral journey of futile masculine assertion. The ‘white whale’ allusion in *Mad Men* (2015) denotes not only Melville’s creative power, but also the cultural circulation of a white masculinity that has relied on class affiliation throughout American literature and culture for over 150 years.

westward. The episode issues Draper's final journey as taking part in the flight from middle-class life, his personal and professional pressures becoming too much. Yet, Draper's solitary drive westward signals a more complex cultural unconscious related to the hobo narrative, and actively reclaims Whitman's hobo beginnings from season one.

This becomes clear after seven hours of late-night driving, when Draper hears his former boss, Bert Cooper, on the radio. Cooper then appears as a passenger in the car and asks Draper, 'You've been driving for seven hours in the wrong direction. Where are you going?' (*Mad Men* 2015). Cooper's gesture that running westward is the wrong direction offers that the mid-west, like the Illinois of Whitman's birth, and the far west of California, serve only to undo Draper's assumed identity as established in New York City. Cooper discourages Draper's westward movement because it threatens his self-made persona, and calls attention to Draper's self-destructive need to 'play the stranger' in a life of failed relationships and deceitful interactions (*Mad Men* 2015). The late-night drive and conversation with Cooper codes Draper's escape on the road as one that does not have to choose the 'right or wrong' direction, but that can simply move without risk or repercussion. Instead, the episode uses the road westward as a way to generate self-affirming experience in line with other hobohebian figures of the mid-century period. Draper asks Cooper:

Draper: 'Remember *On the Road*?'

Cooper: 'I've never read that book. You know that.'

Draper: 'I'm riding the rails.'

Cooper: 'Wither goest thou, America, in thy shiny car in the night?'

By alluding to Jack Kerouac's famous journey across the American landscape to find himself, Draper claims the hobo narrative as his method of self-making much as the series has claimed it to present his story. Kerouac's inclusion in the scene allows Draper to conflate hobo methods of transportation, offering a nostalgic reference to riding the rails in the early century in comparison to his mid-century passenger car. Further, Cooper's final words in this dream sequence directly quote *On the Road* (Kerouac 1957), a book he has not read but knows word for word. Cooper's recitation of Kerouac's lines present the cultural unconscious of the hobo. This romance of the hobo on the road or rails can be seen propelling Draper's movement, claiming it as an atavistic return to an American masculinity on the roads westward.²⁵ These latitudinal strides stoke the hobo narrative when the episode ends with Draper picking up a hitchhiker outside of Wisconsin. Eager to re-invent himself, Draper embarks upon his own Kerouac-inspired journey, heading toward the rider's destination of St. Paul, Minnesota, saying only 'I can go that way' to express his willingness and need to roam (*Mad Men* 2015).

Though it is Don Draper who leaves the eastern point of New York City, Dick Whitman truly begins to inhabit the driver's seat in 'The Milk & Honey Route' when he reaches the Midwest states of Kansas and Oklahoma.²⁶ Despite the coexistence of

²⁵ Kerouac's lines evoke another poet of the road, Walt Whitman. The western movement of men in 'Pioneers! O Pioneer!' (Whitman 1855) provides writers like Kerouac a starting place for the self-aggrandizing and self-making romance of moving across the American landscape. It is no coincidence that Whitman is Draper's birth name and is equated to his hobo beginnings.

²⁶ The title also refers to Nels Anderson's (1930) hobo handbook, *The Milk and Honey Route*,

Draper/Whitman thus far on the journey, the geography incites a transfer of primary identification when the car breaks down and he is stranded at a small motel. While the locals see Draper as well dressed and well off, Draper himself takes pains to emphasize that he is Whitman, a tinkering workingman who manages to fix the motel's typewriter, cash register and Coke machine (*Mad Men* 2015). These three symbols approximate more than Whitman's experience with certain types of labor, they also present a rich triangulation of Draper's ability to use language, make money and sell Americana. As Mark Seltzer (1992) makes clear with his reading of the mechanical typewriter, these symbols can be used to understand a "fundamentally different understanding of the work process" as related to the intellectual labor of masculine self-making (p. 14). Draper's intellectual ability to represent Whitman through his labor indicates an economic resourcefulness tied to social capital. Thus, while Whitman's act serves to earn working-class credit by working with his hands, it is Draper's creativity that becomes represented in his hobo narrative. This cross-class moment meditates on a mid-century redefinition of labor while presenting to the motel owners a strategic performance of class.

Surprised by Draper/Whitman's ability to work with his hands, the motel owners also initiate a series of interactions at a fundraiser for the local post of the American Legion. In an interesting revision of the hobo-as-artist where the veterans use their storytelling ability to earn a donation, Draper/Whitman sits silently and listens to them, uncomfortable exposing his class-duality. Yet, after hearing their tales, Draper/Whitman tells of his own struggle, explaining to the table: 'I killed my C.O. We were under fire. Fuel was everywhere. And I dropped my lighter. And I blew him apart. And I got to go home' (*Mad Men* 2015).²⁷ Finally attended by an audience that wants to hear the story he needs to tell, Draper/Whitman's testimony brings him closer to Whitman's embodied beginnings and further from Draper's assumed identity. This is further aided by how the veterans respond to his story, reassuring Draper/Whitman that as a general rule, 'you just do what you have to do to come home' (*Mad Men* 2015). These words acknowledge that Draper/Whitman's return from Korea is innately connected to the concept of home, something that his hobo journey has put in question. By using home as a marker of the American dream in the mid-century, the attributes of a prosperous modern life are challenged by the hobo's homelessness, which celebrates spatial, professional and domestic itinerancy.

In this way, *Mad Men* aptly calls attention to the correlation between the homelessness of hobo life and the 'early post-war period's concern with the reintegration of disenfranchised veterans to American civilian life,' what literary critic Erin Mercer points out is at the heart of texts like Draper's idealized *On the Road* (2011, p. 169). Draper/Whitman's reconciliation with his Korean War service makes clear that he requires the hobo narrative for masculine direction, using his multiple identities and

published under the pseudonym Dean Stiff. The milk and honey route originates as an indication of particularly generous handouts on the railroad line from Salt Lake City into Southern Utah. The phrase later represents anyone's personal vision of the good life in a particular space or place.

²⁷ This episode marks the first time the audience is given the details of the wartime event not through one of Draper's flashbacks, but Whitman's factual retelling of the event with full disclosure. The series had previously indicated that C.O. Don Draper was killed in battle and that Dick Whitman took his name, returning home under a different identity. In the episode 'The Gypsy and the Hobo,' Don Draper's wife Betty confronts him about his stolen identity (*Mad Men* 2009). The details of Draper's Korean War death are not divulged, only that Whitman had taken the name.

class duality to find footing in an era of prosperity that finds the expanding middle class in 'an ambiguous space in which peace and plenty were constantly haunted by a sense of anxiety' (Mercer 2011, p. 190). Draper/Whitman's hobo narrative displays these tensions and shows that white masculinity has become, sometimes strategically, homeless in the twentieth century. *Mad Men*'s casual engagement with homelessness becomes period-specific evidence of the central importance of class identity to the masculinity of the mid-century. This suggests that the anxieties of masculine life are in direct opposition to feeling at home anywhere but in perpetual motion. In mid-century interpretations of the hobo narrative, this homelessness is less impacted by socio-economic conditions than this need for movement.

In motion, Draper/Whitman's drive engages a white male fantasy based on the hobo's freedom from responsibility. Compelled to take part in this fiction, Draper impulsively gives his car to a young man who himself is desperate to escape the town. Instead of continuing his journey by driving, Draper/Whitman is shown sitting at a rural bus stop between farm fields, a single plastic bag of his belongings in hand. The absence of the car leaves Draper without the privileged transportation earned by his life in New York City. Yet, by presenting Draper/Whitman as making the *choice* to follow his hobo persona, *Mad Men* acknowledges that one can never really leave behind the privileges one has acquired. This moment clearly frames Draper/Whitman as a resourceful hobohemian, engaging symbols of the hobo narrative in a manner that helps to abate the pressures of Draper's personal and professional life. He has thrown himself into a hitchhiking and rail-riding identity headed westward, without the car but not without the ability to continue moving.

In the series' final episode, 'Person to Person,' Draper completes his transformation to hobo Dick Whitman (*Mad Men* 2015).²⁸ After catching a ride to Los Angeles from Salt Lake City—where he worked as the most iconic of working-class figures, the mechanic—Draper knocks at the door of a family friend, Stephanie, and is greeted as Dick.²⁹ He is haggard, dirty and tired; he has not shaved and still has only a bindlestiff bag of possessions. He appears desperate and destitute, asking for liquor in an almost delusional state. Stephanie invites him in, but expresses her concern for him as he collapses on the couch. This completes his hobo fantasy of westward travel away from his life as Draper. But when Stephanie invites him back onto the road to a New Age retreat up the coast he begrudgingly attempts to support her, despite his big-city Draper-like skepticism. After they arrive at the retreat, Stephanie grows over-emotional in a session and she leaves in the middle of the night. This leaves Draper/Whitman stranded on the coast.

For the first time in seven seasons, Draper/Whitman is forced to stop moving. The

²⁸ Andy Samberg, host of the 67th Primetime Emmy Awards, very aptly referred to *Mad Men* as the story of 'Dick Whitman Horny Hobo' (2015). Heather Tapley (2014, p. 35) argues that correlations between hobos and sexuality were created by medical discourse which 'produced the (white) hobo/tramp as lazy (labour) and, therefore, licentious (sexuality).' Ironically, the licentious aspect of Draper/Whitman's character is Draper, not the hobo Whitman, even though the latter is raised in a brothel.

²⁹ Stephanie is the niece of Anna Draper, the widow of the Korean War C.O. Don Draper, whose identity was stolen by Dick Whitman. Upon his return from war, Anna tracks Draper/Whitman down and the two forge a close friendship based on the secret identity. Stephanie has only ever known Draper/Whitman as Dick Whitman.

episode depicts him as stationary in order to reveal the gravity of his perpetual homelessness and hobo-driven desires. He is on the bluffs of the ocean and can go no further west. He is surrounded by strangers in a rural and natural environment, marking the final scenes as antithetical to his New York City high-rise life. He has no method of transportation and cannot leave the retreat until a car—which takes a few days to request—comes for him. He breaks down from the strain of being immobile, and collapses on the ground, trembling as he asserts, ‘I can’t move’ (*Mad Men* 2015). Fashioned as a mirror image of Jack Kerouac (1962), Draper/Whitman is dressed in plaid with bearded scruff, broken and exposed at the Big Sur retreat.³⁰

Draper/Whitman is presented as having hit rock bottom, but still remains connected ‘Person to Person’ by the phone, both to request a car to take him away, and to speak with co-worker Peggy in New York City. In both of these exchanges, he utilizes Don Draper’s privileged connections for survival in his immobility on the coast as hobo Dick Whitman. No longer able to participate solely in his hobo fantasy, Draper finds himself at the end of the road. He is unable to fully separate his class identities, and is beginning to understand the power of the two in combination. This internal tension is resolved when an instructor at the retreat fears for Draper/Whitman’s well being, helps him off the ground, and ushers him into a session. In this session, what Sally Robinson (2010) calls a ‘Middle American’ man—middle-aged and middle-class—reveals the unfulfilling nature of his corporate life and expresses that he feels transparent and unimportant. This narration of a vulnerable and invisible masculinity prompts Draper to get up in the middle of the man’s ramble. Draper/Whitman walks across the room and hugs the man with intensity. This embrace marks an internal acknowledgement of Draper/Whitman’s life-long class performance. Fearful of his own vulnerable immobility on the cliffs of Big Sur, hobo Dick Whitman is permitted to reconcile with his life as the ad man Don Draper. Embracing this class duality, put in focus by the hobo narrative, allows Draper to rediscover the mid-century privileges of white masculinity.

This scene is the last moment of the series where Draper/Whitman’s class identity exists in competitive duality. Thereafter the series features Draper/Whitman as whole and centred, meditating on the cliffs of the Pacific Ocean, clean cut, and in a white-collared dress shirt and khakis. The final shot zooms in on Draper/Whitman’s face, his eyes closed with a grin, before dissolving into the 1971 ‘Buy the World A Coke’ television commercial. The episode’s ending provocatively connects the resourcefulness of Draper/Whitman’s hobohemian acceptance to the implied authorship of the commercial. As a self-realizing creative hobo, Draper/Whitman’s commercial features youthful men and women of various ethnic, racial and national backgrounds. They sing on a green hillside about the collective ‘harmony’ of consumerism, both drinking Coke and buying it.

Mad Men ends not with Draper/Whitman’s introspection, but rather his conscious understanding that his status is imbued with privilege. Drawing again on the symbols of the typewriter, the cash register and the Coke machine, Draper/Whitman has ‘sized

³⁰ The associations between Draper/Whitman and Kerouac are profuse. Draper/Whitman is roughly the same age as Kerouac, both born in the early-1920s. At this point in *Mad Men*’s narrative (2015) it is 1970 and Kerouac had drunk himself to death the year before. This makes Kerouac’s likeness in Draper/Whitman a not only a provocative cultural symbol of the hobo mystique, but a frightening alternative for Draper/Whitman’s journey as the series nears to an end.

up' his audience and composed a story that can secure his white, masculine investments through consumer sales. Despite the surface level gesture of goodwill, Draper's relationship to the commercial actually exemplifies a strategy of hegemonic masculinity that secures status by differentiating and exhibiting control over an Other (Connell 1994). The series does this twice. First, it depicts Draper/Whitman telling the story of Coke from within a hobo narrative that uses working-class identity to advance the social status of white masculinity. Second, the series connects Draper/Whitman's intellectual labor as benefitting from the representation—and arguably exploitation—of predominantly young women and people of color.

Though the multicultural celebration of the commercial may inspire some to envision Draper/Whitman's resolution as harmonious and in a positive light, the 'new day, new ideas, new you' mantra of the meditation scene is inherently dark when Draper/Whitman grins (*Mad Men* 2015). This grin does not indicate New Age fulfilment, but rather a self-satisfied expression of control. Like Jack London at the turn of the century, Draper/Whitman's creation of a 'new idea' within his hobo narrative has secured his position, reinforced his status, and afforded him agency in whatever manner he chooses. And like his mid-century contemporary Jack Kerouac, Draper/Whitman has learned in this moment to draw on not only working-class affiliations, but also multicultural representations to disguise the privilege of his white masculine status. The blatant global commercialization of multiculturalism in the English-speaking advertisement renders Draper/Whitman a nearly imperial presence, colonizing viewers with not only a repetitive jingle, but also a status quo that draws on representations of identity to reinstitute a hierarchy of positions within capitalism.³¹

Hobohemian California

The final scenes of Draper/Whitman conclude the use of California as a regional symbol, one *Mad Men* had referenced for seven seasons as commercially viable and a space that promised reinvention.³² Engaged in a changing marketplace aided by air travel and television production, the bi-coastal relationship of Draper's New York City ad agency and California impacts his own personal agency, providing the setting for the kind of cross-country drives that have made the hobo narrative iconic. Placing Draper in the geography of the American West in search of his hobo journey suggests that places like California engender the performance of identity as a new frontier in the twentieth century.

It is not surprising, then, that the series would show Draper/Whitman arriving in California to develop this facet of his hobo narrative. California is for *Mad Men* and for

³¹ The 2017 Pepsi commercial 'Live For Now Moments Anthem' was almost immediately pulled for trivializing the Black Lives Matter movement and other youth-lead demonstrations for multicultural and international unity. *Wired* (Watercutter 2017) argues for a similarity between the controversial Pepsi commercial and the 'Buy the World a Coke' campaign dramatized in *Mad Men*. Both commercials attempt to stage global unity through beverage choice and sell the representation of identity as a consumer product.

³² The episode 'In Care Of' (*Mad Men* 2013) has several men from the firm competing for a move to California to run a remote office. Draper gives his option over to fellow partner Ted Chaough, who claims he needs it to keep his family together after an extra-marital affair. As the season 6 finale, the competition for California and episode ends with Draper taking his children to see the dilapidated warehouse where he grew up in Pennsylvania. This primes season 7 to make clear connections between geography and status with Draper's character.

Draper/Whitman a location of promise, one that Robert Seguin (2001, p. 94) argues is:

overdetermin[ed]...as the terminal point of migration in America, [and] as the place where the frontier comes to a halt on the sun-drenched beaches... California naturally became amenable to a host of fantasy investments and projections concerning the success or imminent failure of the American Dream.

Mad Men utilizes California as a fantasy-driven space of reinvention for the hoboemian character of Draper/Whitman. Draper becomes Whitman at Stephanie's door in California not because she knows his name, but because he has successfully 'host[ed]...fantasy investments and projections' of an American unconscious of self-making that is tied not only to the promise of California, but a hobo-driven version of the American Dream.

Mad Men's use of California also helps to exemplify the complex relationship between geography and class in the hobo narrative. The final season's continued allusions to Kerouac (1957) make this clear when they invoke *On the Road*. Kerouac's novel describes its narrator travelling into the Midwest and feeling like 'some stranger...[in] a haunted life' (Kerouac 1957, p. 15). At the geographic point, 'halfway across America' he identifies the landscape as 'the dividing line between the East of my youth and the West of my future...' (Kerouac 1957, p. 15). This relegates the cross-country drive and hobo narrative of *On the Road* (1957) as a coming-of-age story. But *Mad Men's* hobo narrative does not emphasize chronology so much as bi-coastal class affiliations. In the final season, the East is the site of Draper's professional success and financial security. The West inspires Whitman's hobo fantasy removed from the responsibilities of Draper's life. In this respect, Draper/Whitman's cross-country drive is not a coming of age story but rather one of class-consciousness, specifically a consciousness emboldened by the resource and safety net of white, masculine status.

Seguin (2001) also connects California to 'one of the primal building blocks of American classlessness. . . [:] 'sociospatial mobility [where] individual motion itself, can figure forth fantasies of social mobility' (p. 94). Draper/Whitman's 'sociospatial mobility' communicates the gains of early-twentieth century hobo travels and their mid-century revisions as exhibiting the value of white masculinity. Arriving in California only to be faced with where the 'frontier comes to a halt' on the bluffs of Big Sur, *Mad Men* indicates that Draper/Whitman's hobo fantasy utilizes geographic access and sudden limitation as a productive option to feature his dual-class identity and creative self. In doing so, Draper/Whitman's hobo narrative results in a reassertion of his invulnerable status: still employed/working, healthy, economically secure, and selling his privileged access to audiences as evidence of unlimited self-making.

The early-incorporation of the hobo into Whitman/Draper's character development highlights the profuse cultural appeal of class narratives in America. The hobo narrative provides the kind of flexibility promised by the benchmark American Dream, bound by conventions and classifications while at the same time defying those boundaries in an effort to highlight individuality. Further, *Mad Men* captures the way that the hobo narrative restores equilibrium to white masculinity rather than depicts it in crisis. Characters like Draper/Whitman exhibit resiliency through their cross-class identifications. These identifications provide safe social calculations that enforce privileged access rather show it at risk. Like Jack London or Jack Kerouac earlier in

the century, *Mad Men* presents Draper/Whitman as impervious to socio-economic pressures because he understands the marketability of class identity. Locating the hobo narrative not only within a twentieth-century backdrop characterized by increasing movements toward equality for historically marginalized minorities, but also as well received by audiences in a new century, indicates the pervasiveness of using working-class representations to reinforce the status quo of white masculinity. Characters like Draper/Whitman become a highly visible example of how American depictions of race and gender use class to consolidate privileges in the twentieth century, and how this practice has maintained a problematic centrality in the social and cultural discourses of the twenty-first century.

Author Bio

Jennifer Forsberg earned her PhD in American literature from the University of Nevada, Reno and is currently a lecturer at Clemson University. Her research examines the laboring of American culture within the 20 & 21st centuries, and pays special attention to tactics and strategies for developing subjectivity at the intersections of gender, race and class. Forsberg's recent work and monograph project explores the refusal to work in American literature and popular culture, and draws tensions between early notions of a Protestant work ethic and the capital gains of individualism.

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The Fix We Are In

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Abstract

I have been thinking about the history and future of the labor movement for fifty years. As an academic in philosophy I have focused my research on the intersections of the global labor movement with philosophy of history, philosophy of science, ethics, economics, and political theory. 'The Fix We Are In' is a summary of my current thinking. At present the grand strategies for emancipation, ascendant in the mid-twentieth century, have faltered. Headless capitalism runs amuck. The conditions of the working class deteriorate. There is no vision of a better world—no clear pathway toward a better future. The 'popular revolt' bubbling up around the globe is a product of this moment. My paper concludes with a difficulty regarding my own favored way forward. Responses from readers would be welcome at: rhudelson@uwsuper.edu.

Keywords

History of capitalism, labor history, Communism, Socialism, Social Democracy, unemployment, poverty, migrations, populism

My father was born into a tenant farm family in the American Midwest in 1915. He remembered as a boy helping to herd pigs to a holding lot next to the closest railroad. He was barefoot. He and his father and the pigs were walking on Route 40, the national highway. In 1911 my father's grandparents had scraped together enough money to buy a small farm about ten miles north of the tenant farm. In the late 1920s, with the old people no longer able to do all the physical labor, my father's family joined his grandparents on the farm. I remember that farm from the early 1950s. My great-grandparents were dead, but my grandparents were still there and still managing the farm. It was what was called a 'general farm,' largely producing for the family's own consumption. Electricity came to the farm in the 1930s, but there was still no indoor plumbing when I first knew it. Heat was provided by coal and wood burning stoves. Fieldwork was done with horses. My brother and I both remember picking corn by hand next to a horse-drawn wagon on one cold Thanksgiving Day.

In 1933, with his family strapped for cash, my father got a job working at the Chrysler, an auto parts plant in nearby New Castle, Indiana. The Chrysler then was working with layoffs and reduced hours. A farm boy with no rent to pay could survive. He ended up working at the Chrysler until he retired some forty years later. I worked there summers when I was going to college. I remember walking to work with Dad one Monday morning. I told him how I was counting the minutes until break and then lunch and then shift change and then the weekend. He said he had been doing the same every Monday for thirty years. Still, despite the regular layoffs and tight family budget, we

managed. Today, in the literature, these years are seen as a golden era of broad-based prosperity.³³

I left factory life to go to college and went on to be a college professor of philosophy. I was fortunate. I loved teaching. I liked academic life and the opportunity to keep reading and learning. The focus of my own research work has been on the proper role of markets in economic life. This took me into economics, the labor movement, and ethics. My father lived to see the passing of two ways of life: the small farms of his youth and the factory life of his adult years. After he died in 2007, I thought a lot about how much the world had changed during his lifetime. I also thought about my grandchildren and the world they would inherit. What follows is based on my academic work, but firmly attached to my working-class roots.

This Moment

Global capitalism has reached a turning point of sorts. Just what the future will bring is far from clear. In part, of course, that future depends on what we make of it. By ‘we’ here, I mean we, the global working class. We are, of course, a multi-textured working class. Among us are different histories, different standpoints, different understandings, and different ideas about what is to be done. In this paper I want to focus primarily on certain features common to the situation we, each of us, find ourselves in. Having done that, I will turn briefly to the part about what is to be done.

The Near End of Primitive Accumulation

Over its roughly three hundred-year history, capitalism has extended itself outward across the surface of the earth. As it has done so it has subsumed pre-capitalist social systems, expropriating as much as possible of the land and resources available to those social systems and dispossessing the people who had heretofore lived by means of that land and those resources. Many of those people died. Others migrated. Most of those who survived, either in the same place or far away, became a part of the growing global working class. That process continues to this day, but it is near its end. The surface of the earth is finite.

The Wealth of Nations

One of the central ideas in Adam Smith’s argument for capitalism is that competitive markets give each producer an incentive to lower the costs of production. To do so gives that producer greater profit for the same output sold. But, of course, all producers have the same incentive to lower the costs of production. The societal outcome will be an uneven but general reduction in costs of production across the whole range of goods produced. This outcome makes it possible to produce greater total wealth out of available resources. Adam Smith took an optimistic view of this increase in the wealth of nations. It made possible a broadly based increase in prosperity. A larger pie makes it possible for everyone to have a larger slice.

³³ In *Farm and Factory: Workers in the Midwest 1880-1990* (1995), Daniel Nelson provides a rich account of the world of farm and factory. Nearly everyone in the town I grew up in had at least one set of relatives still on the farm. Many of the men and women who worked at the Chrysler still lived in the country and continued to farm.

Unfortunately, while capitalism has made this happy outcome possible, it has not made it actual. Why should the capitalists share the wealth? In fact each capitalist has a strong incentive not to share. Competition is fierce and unrelenting. Accumulation of capital becomes a necessity for survival. Grow or die. Keep the costs of production as low as possible. Keep wages down.

Redundant People

The reserve army of the unemployed has accompanied capitalism from the beginning. Dispossessed from access to the land and resources that kept their ancestors alive, people roamed the earth in search of food and shelter. Many of them starved. Many were hanged. Many were deported. Technological innovations in agriculture, industry, transport, and commerce continuously add to the pool of unemployed and under-employed. Migrants crowd the roads and boats.³⁴

The Long Labor Movement

The labor movement accompanied capitalism from the beginning. Indigenous peoples resisted capitalism. They still do. The growing class of wage-laborers formed organizations of resistance. Workers formed unions. They demanded the right to vote. They formed political parties. They won elections. They won collective bargaining rights. In some nation-states political parties with roots in the labor movement—Labor Parties, Socialists, Social Democrats, and Communists--gained control of national governments. In other nations other political parties were persuaded or pressured to implement measures popular with working-class voters. These measures varied from country to country, but in general they aimed at providing a greater share of the wealth to working people, welfare state protections, pensions, health care, regulation of working conditions, rights of collective bargaining, and in some countries a voice at the table in matters of economic governance.

The quarter century following the Second World War showed the world the fruits of that long labor movement. In Western Europe, Socialist and Social Democratic parties, allied with organized labor, created nation-state versions of capitalism with a human face. Similar but somewhat more capitalist-friendly humane capitalisms were created in the UK, Australia, New Zealand, and even in the USA. In the Communist world built on the foundation of the Bolshevik Revolution, a radical alternative to capitalism presented itself as an incarnation of the rule of the working class. And, inspired by what had been accomplished in Russia and by Communist support for anti-colonial struggles, working-class friendly, anti-colonial governments came to power in China, India, Indonesia, Ghana, Egypt, Syria, Cuba, and elsewhere. By 1975, with the victory of the National Liberation Front in Vietnam and the Meidner plan gaining support in the Social Democratic world, capitalism appeared to be in global retreat. It was then not unreasonable to hope for the long-awaited ascendancy of the working class.

The Resurgence of Capitalism

³⁴ In *Common People: The History of an English Family* (2014), Alison Light documents the precarious economic security of her working-class family from the early 1800s on.

If the decade of the 70s began with an ascendant global working class, it ended with the resurgence of capitalist domination. The elections of Margaret Thatcher in Great Britain (1979) and Ronald Reagan in the USA (1980) both reflected and to some extent led this change. By the end of the decade labor unions were on the defensive in both the UK and the USA. Finance capital gained the upper hand, directing a rapid deindustrialization that undermined working-class communities. At the Chrysler in New Castle, part of production was moved to Mexico. Automation further reduced jobs. Within a few years, in the early 1980s, employment at the plant was cut in half, from roughly 4,000 to roughly 2,000. After some further ministrations by the wizards of finance, the plant shut down completely.³⁵ The neo-liberal turn would dominate economic policy in the UK and USA for the next quarter century. It also had a large impact on some other parts of the world, both as a persuasive ideology and as a powerful force in control of institutions attempting to guide global economic development, institutions like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the United States Agency for International Development.

The Collapse of the Socialist Alternative

The Bolshevik Revolution gave the specter of communism an in-the-flesh reality. For a significant part of the multi-ethnic global working class convinced of an approaching, liberating socialist future, the Bolshevik Revolution was a momentous and joyous event. The building of socialism in “backward” Russia became a model for anti-colonial movements in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Leaders of many of the anti-colonialist struggles saw Soviet-style central planning as a way to develop economic foundations that would rapidly lift up the poor masses of the working class oppressed by capitalist colonialism. Prominent among these leaders were Mao Zedong, Jawaharlal Nehru, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Kwame Nkrumah, and Fidel Castro.

The collapse of the Soviet Union had multiple causes. The vanguard role of the Communist Party no doubt served the working class in creating a foundation for economic development that did lift up masses of working people. But, it also created a new ruling class, an elite that exercised power and enjoyed a privileged way of life. Economic development under a bureaucracy of Communist functionaries also opened the door for corruption and inefficiency. The political suppression of opposition voices and opposition forces further undermined the ruling elite.

Not all of the post-colonial attempts to employ aspects of the Soviet model were burdened with these faults. India, for example, remained firmly committed to a democratic path that tolerated oppositional voices and oppositional forces. But, each such attempt was burdened by problems inherent in the idea of a planned economy directed by the state. All such attempts were burdened by inefficiencies, corruption, and the creation of a privileged elite. *The Economics of Feasible Socialism* (Nove 1983) gives a sympathetic yet powerful analysis of the deep roots of these difficulties in the attempt to institute and manage a planned economy. Before I read that book I considered myself a ‘socialist.’ After, I considered myself a ‘social democrat.’

³⁵ In *The New Castle Communicator*, a publication of the Chrysler corporation (Sept. 2003), Beverly Matthews chronicles the rapid changes in the management of the plant before the shutdown.

By the mid 70s, it was becoming clear that state-planned development had stalled in the Soviet Union, China, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America. Reform ideas circulated within the Communist world, many of them supporting greater reliance on markets and some recommending greater roles for privately owned enterprises. With the selection of Mikhail Gorbachev as General Secretary of the Communist Party of the USSR in 1985, this process of reform, already underway in much of Eastern Europe, accelerated and became more open to public discussion. The planned implementation of reforms within a commitment to socialism rapidly unraveled. A system of crony capitalism privileging many of the former Soviet elites gained hold, leaving much of the working class much worse off than before the change.

Similar changes followed throughout Eastern Europe. In China, ‘socialism with Chinese characteristics’ remains the official program of the ruling Communist Party, but a similar turn toward free markets and considerable private property has created an economic system marked by great inequalities of wealth and power. Within much of the former Communist world the changes of the last three decades have left a large part of its working class economically insecure and nostalgic for the Communist past. Many people have emigrated in search of employment only to find themselves living as part of a marginalized underclass. For much of the global working class, a possible better world was lost.

The Quarter Century Triumph of Neo-Liberalism

The collapse of the Soviet Union and Communist governments in Eastern Europe came at the end of a decade marked by the rapid rise of neo-liberalism. The dramatic collapse of ‘existing socialism’ seemed to confirm the neo-liberal alternative. A triumphalist self-certainty buoyed neo-liberal prescriptions for ‘shock therapy’ in the former communist world and for free-market policy everywhere, as the surest path to global prosperity. The new direction in China and the rise of the ‘Asian Tigers’ added wind to neo-liberal sails. So too did ‘liberalization’ in Scandinavia and Western Europe in the 1980s and in India in the 1990s. In a famous essay Francis Fukuyama foresaw the ‘end of history’ in a universal future of ‘democratic’ free market systems (1989).

There were a few skeptics. Among them was John Gray, a conservative British thinker. In the 1984 presidential election campaign in the USA, a campaign ad for the reelection of President Ronald Reagan famously proclaimed that it was ‘morning again in America.’ Gray wrote a scathing criticism of neo-liberalism entitled *False Dawn* (1990). The book attacked the rosy faith in unregulated free markets underlying government policy in the UK and the USA. Gray pointed out that those policies were in fact rapidly destroying the broad-based prosperity built up by the reformed capitalism of the earlier twentieth century.

The great recession of 2007 and the years that followed awakened a broader awareness of the failure of neo-liberal policy on multiple levels. Its economic theory rests on unrealistic assumptions (Schlefer 2012) and long discredited theories (Quiggin 2010). Further, there is a powerful economic argument for the view that neo-liberalism will lead to ever-increasing levels of inequality, threatening broad-based prosperity, freedom, and democracy (Piketty 2014). A recent history of the American standard of living confirms just how bad things really are in the United States. From 1972-2013, real, inflation-adjusted income actually fell for 90% of American households. From

1983 to 2013, real wealth for 46% of American households remained virtually flat. For 33% of households, real wealth fell, from \$11,400 to \$9,300. Only for the top 21% of households did real wealth significantly rise. For them it virtually doubled (Gordon 2016, p. 609 and p. 620).

Our Future: Global Unemployment, Poverty, and Migrations?

The global market is the central institution linking the peoples of the world. This is not to say the market determines our fate. Other forces are at work, including the consciousness of every human being. It is only to say that whatever agency each of us exercises takes place within a context significantly shaped and constrained by that global market. The land and resources of the earth have owners. Most of us have no such ownership. Market forces, whether competitive or oligopolistic, push owners of capital to accumulate. Market forces push owners to reduce costs of production, including employment of human labor. There is no law of economics saying that market forces will produce a world of full employment and broad-based prosperity. Nor does historical experience support that idea. It took greater democratic control of markets to produce the humane capitalism of the mid-twentieth century in parts of the world. Neo-liberalism encouraged greater reliance on market forces. It weakened democratic control. The neo-liberal era produced a world of increased wealth more narrowly shared.

It also leaves us in a world of massive unemployment and underemployment. A report issued in January 2017 by the United Nations' International Labor Organization projects increasing levels of global unemployment for 2017. In addition it projects vulnerable forms of employment ('contributing family workers or own account workers') as making up 42 percent of total global employment. Further, it projects a global 'working poverty' rate (\$3.10/day or less) of 28.1 percent. The report warns that 'global uncertainty and the lack of decent jobs are, among other factors, underpinning social unrest and migration in many parts of the world' (International Labor Organization, 2017). Insofar as employment insecurity, social unrest, and migration have accompanied free market capitalism throughout its history, it should come as no surprise that employment insecurity, social unrest, and migration would increase in the wake the of the neo-liberal turn.

The current plight of war refugees is enormous and morally compelling. In September 2016 the number of refugees stood at 65 million, the most ever recorded. (International Crisis Group, 2017). The wars that created these refugees have roots in post-Great War battles over control of Middle Eastern oil and in cold war proxy wars in Africa over oil and minerals.³⁶ It should also be noted that current economic conditions fuel even greater migrations. 'The refugee crisis is a distinct phenomenon, to be treated as such. But it is part of the larger dynamic of the mass movement of people. There are some 170 million migrants globally. According to the Board of Trustees International Crisis Group, 'demographic trends, economic stress, state weakness, climate change and growing inequality suggest that this trend is unlikely to recede imminently' (2016).

³⁶ Scott Anderson's *Lawrence in Arabia* (2014) provides a prescient view of the roots of the current wars in the Middle East, in post-war betrayals of Arab allies by English and American colonial and commercial interests.

Populist Revolt

Employment insecurity and fear of immigrants are clearly causal factors behind the global ‘populist’ surge of recent years. These factors are connected. People who are economically insecure fear that immigrants will take their jobs. They also fear that immigrants will impose social welfare costs on them. Such populist anti-immigrant sentiments are understandable, but in the face of existing global economic inequality, not even a wall on the USA-Mexico border is apt to succeed in stopping the flow of immigrants.

The long review of the history of capitalism offered above aims at establishing two central claims: that capitalism without democratic control produces substantial employment insecurity; and that employment insecurity causes migration. Now we add that employment insecurity and fear of immigrants are surely important aspects of the current populist revolt. The retreat from reformed capitalism, particularly in the UK and USA, has exacerbated tendencies inherent in unregulated capitalism and set loose a global race to the bottom. It is no accident that, within advanced economies, the populist revolt has been most pronounced in the UK and USA. In what follows I will be focused largely on the populist revolt in the USA.

Before going further, several points are in order. First, discussions of the current populist revolt, at least in the USA, often mention ‘anxieties,’ ‘feelings of being left out,’ ‘fears,’ ‘alienation,’ and other socio-psychological conditions found within the contemporary working class. These psychological conditions are real. But, they are not baseless. The working class has been left out. The wealth of nations has grown. Working-class wealth has not. A larger and larger part of the working class is, in fact, economically insecure. The underlying realities need to be addressed.

Second, education is not the answer. It is true that there are shortages of trained workers in some fields. That is one of the causes of immigration. However, research on future jobs consistently shows that the greatest demand for jobs will be in sectors that do not require advanced education.³⁷ The economy of the future will require people to clean hotel rooms, bathe the elderly, and work in retail stores. Currently far too many of these and many other jobs do not provide a living wage. There seems to be no reason in economic theory or economic history to think that market forces or economic growth will suffice to guarantee a living wage. Isn’t this a simple matter of justice? Is it just to pay someone performing socially necessary labor less than a living wage? To be angry about doing such work for an inadequate wage is both a sign of moral sense and a healthy human response.

Third, something needs to be said about an alternative view of what is causing popular revolt. J. D. Vance’s *Hillbilly Elegy* is a recent book that has received much notice in the USA. The book is subtitled, *A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis*. Vance grew up in Middletown, a factory town in Ohio. His family has roots in Breathitt County, in the Appalachian hills of southeastern Kentucky. Members of Vance’s family have struggled with poverty, alcohol, drugs, unstable marriages, domestic violence, and borderline criminal behavior. While acknowledging that his family faced challenges in Middletown caused by the decline of manufacturing in the USA, Vance

³⁷ In the USA, for example: https://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_table_104.htm (accessed 13 March 2017).

argues that his family's Scotch-Irish hillbilly culture also plays a role in its inability to respond to challenges in a constructive way.

A Critique of the Cultural Argument

It is not the purpose of this paper to argue that economics explains everything. It might be that economics and culture are each explanatorily relevant. That said, there remain some problems with the scope and relevance of the particular cultural factor claimed here by Vance.

For one thing, in *Hillbilly Elegy* the reader discovers a number of individuals in Vance's extended family who somehow escaped the influence of hillbilly culture, apparently without much struggle or trauma. What this suggests is that culture, like scripture, is open to interpretations. Culture is rich. Individuals draw from it in different ways. It also allows for considerable freedom. Individuals can escape. It is much more difficult to escape from the economic insecurity surrounding working-class life in a capitalist world.

Moreover, amid those praising *Hillbilly Elegy* are a number of observers who have found in the book a much-sought explanation for the revolt of America's entire white working class. On the dust jacket of Vance's book, Reihan Salam, executive editor of the conservative *National Review*, says, 'To understand the rage and disaffection of America's working-class whites, look to Greater Appalachia.' Would this include the rage and disaffection of the working-class whites on Minnesota's Iron Range made up of South Slavs, Italians, Scandinavians and Finns? Are they from 'Greater Appalachia?' Peter Thiel, venture capitalist and libertarian proponent of free market capitalism, goes even further in his dust jacket comment on the book: 'Elites tend to see our social crisis in terms of 'stagnation' or 'inequality.' J.D. Vance writes powerfully about the real people that are kept out of sight by academic abstractions.' Would these 'real people' include African Americans? Latinos? Native Americans? Does Thiel take them to be part of Appalachian culture? More than a few of them are also given to rage and disaffection. More than a few of them also exhibit the behaviors Vance's cultural factor is meant to explain. And, does Thiel mean to deny that real wages for working-class folks have remained stagnant and their employment security declined? Does he mean to say that this is of no importance?

Vance himself limits the scope of his 'culture in crisis' to people with roots in Scotch-Irish Appalachia (Vance 2016, pp. 2-9). He does not talk about the much larger American working class that includes whites of diverse ethnicities, African-Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, Asians and others. Still, does Vance's cultural hypothesis help much with respect to the Scotch-Irish Appalachians? Vance sees his hillbilly culture as one that 'increasingly encourages social decay instead of counteracting it' (p. 7). He goes on to say, "There is a lack of agency here—a feeling that you have little control over your life and a willingness to blame everyone but yourself" (p. 7). Further, he says, "This is distinct from the larger economic landscape of modern America" (p. 7).

But, are the destructive behaviors Vance is trying to explain specific to working-class whites with ties to Appalachia? The behaviors Vance has in mind are common throughout much of working-class America of the present, throughout much of present-

day working-class Britain, and in much of the present day working class in other parts of the world. We might also drop the word ‘present.’ Many of the behaviors Vance seeks to explain were common in the working-class world described by Charles Dickens. And, at an even more general level, these same behaviors may be typical of subordinate and under-respected people everywhere.³⁸ It is not at all clear that Appalachian culture is either causally necessary or causally sufficient for the behaviors Vance seeks to explain.

Finally, it should be noted, the culture surrounding Scotch-Irish Appalachia has not always been like the culture surrounding Vance’s family. Before the Civil War it was a place of self-sufficient small farms with relatively strong support for the abolition of slavery. It was the late nineteenth-century industrial development of Appalachia that destroyed much of the farmland, turned many of the people into economically insecure millhands and miners, transformed the region into a showplace pocket of poverty, and prompted the mass migration north (Eller 1982).

How Could They Vote for Trump?

The surprising victory of Donald Trump in the recent presidential election has brought a lot of attention to the white working class in the USA. It has also brought a lot of insults: ‘racist,’ ‘xenophobic’ and ‘ignorant’ are just a few of the most common. The critics have a point. Racism, xenophobia, and ignorance are abundantly spread within the white working class. But, then, in fairness it should be noted that racism, xenophobia, and ignorance can also be found in abundance in affluent suburbs, country clubs, and corporate boardrooms. A lot of those folks voted for Trump too. And, finally, as often noted, the same white working class that voted for Trump in 2016 tilted for Obama in 2008. So, why the change?

The change has been a long time in the making. In the early 1970s the Democrats had control of the White House and both houses of Congress. Seeing an opportunity to regain ground, organized labor pushed for a return of labor law to rules friendlier to labor. However, even with control of Congress and the White House, the Democrats failed to pass a labor law reform bill (Gross 1995, pp. 236-239). With inflation rising, real wages falling, labor density declining, and unions powerless to resist, the country entered the 1980 presidential campaign. The Republicans promised change. The Democrats offered nothing to address mounting economic insecurity in the working class (white, black, and otherwise). A significant number of working-class whites became Reagan supporters. In the presidential campaign of 2008, with the Republicans promising more of the same policies that brought the great recession of 2007 and Obama promising ‘change,’ the white-working class swung back to the Democrats. In 2012, with no change in sight, white working-class voters split their support or stayed home. In 2016 the Republicans promised change, and the Democrats had nothing major to offer. Once again, the white working class voted for the party of ‘change.’

I do not by any means intend to condone racism, xenophobia, spousal abuse, drug use, or criminal violence. I just think we need to think seriously about the situation we are

³⁸ Consider, for example, Franz Fanon’s description of colonized people in *Wretched of the Earth* (1963).

in. We appear to be at a long-coming historical outcome. Capital accumulation governs. We can be easily replaced. Tomorrow we may be redundant.

What Now?

Here in the USA the populist revolt has put a lot of hope in President Donald Trump. The change Trump promised isn't going to happen. The change Trump is most likely to deliver will be a blend of corporate-subsidized crony capitalism and neo-liberalism, neither of which will benefit a significant portion of the working class. Trump's celebrated rescue of Carrier air-conditioning workers in Indiana turns out to be a subsidy paid to Carrier Corporation by Indiana taxpayers. It will save some jobs for at least a few years, but leave most working-class Hoosiers (residents of Indiana) net losers. If Congressional Republicans bypass Trump, free-market neo-liberalism will prevail a little longer and the condition of the global working-class will continue to deteriorate.

Better Alternatives?

Soviet-model planned alternatives to markets, even in possible democratic form, would face the same theoretical and practical difficulties with central planning as were encountered in the Soviet Bloc, China and India, where such policies were tried. Such alternatives have the added disadvantage of being politically inconceivable within the foreseeable future.

Only slightly less politically inconceivable is a return to the model that prevailed in the USA during the era of strong labor unions and broad-based prosperity. Besides near political inconceivability, the USA model is unattractive because it channels labor solidarity into narrow self-interested bargaining units instead of into broad support for the working class as a whole. This leaves American unions susceptible to legitimate charges that they are special interest groups.

The most attractive pathway into the future is the social-democratic model found in Scandinavia and some western European countries. In this model, labor solidarity is institutionalized into centralized bargaining that sets standards protecting all or nearly all of the working class. This makes for more broad-based prosperity and for stronger support for unions.³⁹ It is this "Swedish way" that Bernie Sanders openly supported in the recent Democratic Party presidential primary. What he was proposing found surprising support and might even have won a majority of working-class voters had he prevailed in the primary. Still, even if such a pathway into the future were eventually to prevail in the USA and all other countries as well, major difficulties remain.

The social democratic models found in Scandinavia and elsewhere all involve institutional structures that work within the context of independent nation-states. Representatives of organized labor meet with representatives of organized business and representatives of government. They negotiate an agreement that attempts to protect

³⁹ In *The Rise and Decline of Nations* (1982), Mancur Olson presents an economic analysis showing why 'encompassing' labor unions are preferable to 'narrow' labor unions. Conservatives like to cite this book as a criticism of British and American unions, but fail to notice the radical implications of Olson's analysis supporting larger, stronger, and more centralized labor unions like those in Scandinavia.

the interests of all parties so far as possible and also attempts to provide support for interests sacrificed for the greater good. This involves considerable long-range planning based on assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the national economy.⁴⁰

An important theoretical and practical problem involves how such models might be extended beyond the level of the nation-state. There was some talk about doing this among leading European Social Democrats in the early 1960s, but for complex reasons European Social Democrats backed away from that. The result was the economic structure of the Eurozone we know today. This involves a system where the international agencies that do exercise some power are only tenuously and disputatively under any sort of democratic control. They are widely viewed within working-class communities with suspicion, as agents of organized capital, foreign governments, or global elites. Further, setting such mistrust aside, the recent difficulties of balancing the interests of Germany and Greece within the existing institutional framework of the EU illustrate how very difficult expanding any social democratic model to a global level would be (Reuss 2016).

We seem to be in a real fix here. Realistic solutions will require building global institutions capable of protecting working-class interests. However, understandably skeptical of remote elites, large sectors of the global working class are caught up in a populist revolt against such international institutions.

But what are the alternatives? Boom here and bust there? Mass migrations from there to here? Xenophobia and war? Paul Wellstone, Minnesota's beloved Senator, used to say, 'We all do better when we all do better.' This is a little short on details, but nonetheless profoundly true.

Author Bio

Richard Hudelson grew up in an auto parts town in what is now the rust belt of the US Midwest. His father and grandfather were blue-collar factory workers. He escaped the factories to go to college, took three years to do off-campus organizing against the war in Viet Nam, and finished a PhD in philosophy at the University of Michigan. He taught for nineteen years at the University of Minnesota Duluth and another fourteen years at the University of Wisconsin Superior. In addition to articles and reviews, he is the author of five books. The focus of his research work was on the history of socialist thought. His most recent publications have been in labor history. He is currently working on a soon to be published reflective memoir.

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Working in the Unconscious Masses: Inside a Mega-Retail Store in the United States

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Abstract and Statement of Purpose

Workers in the United States tend to seek individual solutions to social problems. Through personal narrative and references to academic literature, this essay explores consciousness and control in modern retail work. The essay identifies a lack of class consciousness at one workplace in particular and also seeks to explain the individualism of workers in general. I present three causes of individualism: the dominant idea that collective action is impossible, the current precarious economic situation of workers, and the effects of management techniques. Solutions based in building our real-life social networks and committing ourselves to material solidarity are suggested. In general, we can reorient ourselves to think of collective solutions. To orthodox followers of Marx, it seems self-evident that the concentration of wage-workers in towns, cities, factories, retail stores, warehouses, etc. would lend itself to the realization of the collective interests of wage-workers in proletarian struggle. To some extent, this historical observation has proved true. Yet there are significant elements of the wage-earners, especially in the United States, that pursue (usually ineffective) individual solutions to their economic woes. In short, we are isolated from each other. This short commentary seeks to frame the issue, explore the reasons behind it, and offer solutions to this contemporary problem.

Keywords

Working Class, Proletariat, Individualism, Class Consciousness, Collectivism, Retail, Workplace, Surveillance, Atomization, Isolation, Management Technique

The union organizer's voice rose as he accelerated his barrage of demanding questions. The visibly intimidated retail worker screwed up her face and tried to back away, but the strange man persisted. Suddenly, the video froze and words appeared on the screen: 'If approached by a union representative, you don't have to talk to them.' The words reminded us to report any such activity to our supervisor.

The video stopped, and the HR person flicked on the lights. Without a word about the video, she slipped a multi-page document in front of each of us New Team Members. The document declared that if we invented anything while at work, it belonged to the company. Very politely, she informed us we would be required to sign it if we wished to work here.

So I signed. I hardly thought about what I was doing because my mind was still processing the video. Apparently, there were nasty entities called labor unions that wanted to usurp my relationship with my boss. They would take part of my wage, require me to work certain hours, disallow me from cooperating with my co-workers,

and make communication with my superiors impossible. But confused and intimidated as I was, the video had given me a strange sense that somehow, my new employer was *afraid*.

I had not yet learned about the astonishing depth and scope of worker resistance to employers and capitalism. I would spend two years in the workforce before learning that the United States has one of the bloodiest labor histories in the world (Taft and Ross, 1969). I could not begin to comprehend the terrifying scale of labor exploitation on earth for another year after that. To this day I struggle to wrap my head around the absurdity of endless wealth accumulation and society's blind acceptance of a deeply rooted but deeply fallible pattern.

But back then I had no clue. Just like everyone else, I started work. Every day I donned my red shirt and khakis and reported to the time-clock on schedule. My department was grocery. I spent most of my time picking up boxes and bottles, moving them to a specific location on a vast array of shelves, and setting them in their correct place. Sometimes I stood behind a conveyor belt and scanned each of a customer's items before bagging them up. I put money in the cash register. I forced a smile. Every night, I spent three or four hours neatly straightening all the items on the shelves. During that long final hour as the clock ticked closer to midnight, we were locked inside the store to prevent any early departure.

Only later would I learn that locking workers in a workplace might effectively prevent early departure from work, but also contributed to the deaths of workers at the notorious Triangle Shirtwaist Factory⁴¹ (Stein, 1962). In a few years I would learn that the packages of food I moved around were commodities, and understand that commodification—charging money for every single individualized and standardized object—has negative effects on human beings and profitable effects for companies (Marx, 1867). Someday soon I would learn about scientific management of the workplace and its association with surveillance and control (Urso, 2006; Sprague, 2007).

But, like most workers do, I took pride in my work. When the milk cooler was full and fresh, I felt good. When I helped a customer find something they wanted, I felt satisfied. When my co-workers thanked me for doing a good job, I felt proud. For a while, I forgot about the anti-union video. I liked my boss. I even encouraged my friends to shop at 'my' store. I belonged.⁴²

But then the house of cards collapsed. My idealized perception of wage work began to fade when I learned just how long some of my co-workers had been doing this

⁴¹ It is fair to note that my workplace had unlocked fire exits. The lock-ins at my workplace were offensive because managers would often wait until 10 or 15 minutes after our shift ended to release us from the building.

⁴² A contributing factor to the feeling of belonging at my workplace was management's psychological manipulation of the workers. In an effort to make sure the workers gave high quality service to customers, the company endeavoured to alter the social relations of production. For an explanation of this process see Paul du Gay (1993) 'Numbers and Souls: Retailing and the De-Differentiation of Economy and Culture', *The British Journal of Sociology* vol. 44, no. 4, pp. 563-587; and Hyman, Richard (1987) 'Strategy or structure? capital, labour and control', *Work, Employment and Society*, vol. 1, no. 1 p.41.

monotonous job. Three years. Seven. Fifteen, and still making less than \$15 per hour. I found out how much more the managers made. I watched a colleague get fired without cause on the whim of a frustrated boss, who probably didn't like her own job either. Supervisors covered up unsanitary conditions. Back-to-back shifts meant substituting Red Bull for sleep. Most of us had back pain, ate poorly, and drank too much. Lots of us couldn't get health insurance. Daily sales goals meant substituting corporate desires for our own and working harder to sell more. The final blow came with my first raise. In exchange for a top score on my performance review, I earned five whole cents. My wage was increased to \$7.80 per hour. Another worker got a one cent raise. One cent!

My colleagues and I kept working. We smiled and said thank you to these insults. But out of view of the bosses, we expressed ourselves. Our resistance took place in aisle shadows, in whispered tones, and in furtive acts. Alone in the aisles we would mock our leaders, imitating their supposedly motivating catch phrases. We would snag a granola bar or expensive cosmetic. We gave our friends big discounts at the register. Whenever we could, we stopped work to chat. Breaks ran long. Some of us showed up late for work, and left early. Others quit. Meanwhile we talked about things we'd rather be doing, the latest gossip, and last night's sports or TV show.

One thing we never talked about doing was organizing together as a union of workers. The only thing most of us knew about unions was what we saw in the orientation video. After work, most of us were so tired we just wanted to go home—or just get away from this place. There was often a supervisor in the break room. Just down the hall, you could hear the HR manager clicking away on her keyboard. Some people had aspirations for management positions. Others banked on that next raise. Overall, we just didn't see the point. This was just the way it was. Get a different job if you want a better life, right? We were dupes.

The money I made at that job helped my family pay for my university degree in labor studies. What now sets me apart from most of my former co-workers is four years of academia—books, professors, clubs, conferences, ideas, and lots of young people to talk to and engage with. My work experience at one of the biggest retailers in the US informed my studies, and my studies changed the way I think about my old job. But back then, none of us had a clue. If my co-workers and I knew even a little of what I know now, things might have been different.

We might have thought of ourselves as workers. Our bosses called us 'Team Members,' but we would have seen right through that rhetoric and understood that we were not at all part of a team, but minions expected to take orders. We might have realized that it was our work, the efforts of our hands and of our minds, that was responsible for making the company's profits. We might have pointed out that our brothers and sisters—underpaid workers in other places—had sweat and died to produce the commodities we so neatly stacked on the shelves. We would have remembered the mines and landfills that capitalize and punctuate the sentence of production. We might not have been so eager to please our bosses and we certainly would not have quietly accepted pennies for a 'raise.' We might have even realized our common interest as a working class.

Collective Failure: Individual Solutions to Social Problems

Why didn't the workers in my workplace, including me, think of ourselves as a cohesive unit, an entity that could mobilize, an organized class? Clearly we recognized our bond and mutual struggle and this is why we shared in our practices of subtle resistance. Yet when trying to improve our material situation, we resorted to individualism. Why do we seek individual solutions to social problems? I will suggest three reasons relating to our material situation as workers, which do not offer a comprehensive explanation but hopefully do point in a meaningful direction. The first is that mainstream discourse presents collective action as futile. A second cause is management's intentional isolation of workers and manipulation of workplace culture. A third is the precarious and insecure nature of our jobs.

In the first place, there is very little collective activity in the Great Plains state in which I live. A few labor union locals, community organizations, and a handful of radical groups are organized and active. However, information that travels through the mainstream—television, radio, newspapers—fails to mention any of this activity. From the perspective of the workers at the mega-retail store, there is no such thing as collective activity in our society. As a result, such combination seems futile or even insane.

Secondly, intentional isolation of workers limits collective action. Managers were sure to keep only one worker per aisle, so we wouldn't waste time chatting. We were required to take lunch breaks in sequence, one after another, rather than all sitting down together at noon time. Shifts would start at 30 minute intervals, so large groups of workers wouldn't enter and leave the facility at the same time. These techniques are part of a much broader socialization effort described by one scholar:

Workplace organisation and culture in retail help to socialise the workers from an early stage into the values of personal initiative, enterprise, hard work, individual responsibility, and self-discipline. At the same time, the compulsions of workplace culture stimulate individualism and a self-centred pursuit of one's own interests, discourage cooperation and collective action, including workplace dissent (Goopta 2009, p. 54).

While Goopta's work focuses on retail workers in India, his observation is true for Midwestern American workers as well. Multiple systems at my store built up and reinforced the workplace organization and culture referred to above. For example, free meals were awarded to individual workers who received compliments from customers. 'Great Team Cards' were used to aggrandize the accomplishments of workers who took it upon themselves to clean up a spill or help a customer find something. We were instructed to refer to customers as 'guests,' as if they came to visit us. Grievances were handled individually in the HR office, often relying on reassignments, transfers, or termination to 'solve' problems. Intentionally and unintentionally, our store helped teach us to act as lone wolves.

A third explanation for individualization is insecure work. Goopta also summarizes the scholarly discussion on this topic. He points out that the 'heightened insecurity of labour, coupled with multiple, shifting employments, have fragmented and atomised the labour force and undermined collective action.' And 'the burden of risk from unstable employment has been privatised and come to be borne by individuals themselves, thus exacerbating labour market inequality and exploitation.' These

developments ‘have encouraged individualised responses and personal strategies for coping with the problems of work and employment’ (Goopta 2009, p. 46).

Indeed, our jobs were precarious. Most people didn’t stay for more than a couple years—sometimes significantly less time than that. This made it hard to make friends with co-workers. Sometimes it seemed like it almost wasn’t worth getting to know a new hire, because who knows how long they would stick around? And of course, everyone is worried about their own job, or thinking to themselves ‘where next?’. Goopta’s explanation of shifting risk also applied to us. A bad sales month meant fewer hours for everyone and maybe even layoffs. In this precarious environment we all silently but collectively decided it was ‘every man for himself.’ I went to college. One of my ex-co-workers is almost done with a nursing degree. A third became a manager at the same company. Many others moved onto different jobs—hopefully better ones. And save for a few tenuous connections some of us have managed to keep, most of us are scattered to the winds. Our destinies are as isolated and uncertain as the commodities we arranged on the shelves and sold.

What can we do?

Workers don’t need a bachelor’s degree to understand the condition of labor under capitalism; everyday life is training enough. But in order to achieve class consciousness and practice solidarity, workers deserve more than routine anti-union propaganda. Here is a task for educated workers and their allies. We can work to humanize and collectivize work in many ways, some of the simplest of which are listed below:

Talk to your coworkers. Be friends, talk about sports and love interests. Also talk about work. Ask people, what’s the worst part of your job? Do you like your boss? Do you get paid enough? Present yourself as the fellow worker you are and be a friend.

As an ally, talk to your workers as much as you can. When you check out at the store or see us cleaning, start a conversation. Ask us questions about ourselves. How long do you have to work today? Do you have kids? What are your dreams? What is your favorite place to eat around here? Is your job safe?

Support strikes. You can do this most concretely by donating money to strike funds and bringing food to strikers. Show up. Share the love. People will really appreciate you. You will be rewarded with smiles and handshakes and heartfelt thank-yous. For example, there are plenty of opportunities to support workers involved in the OurWalmart campaign and the Fight for 15 movement.

Learn about workers in other places. The global labor movement is gigantic and beautiful. Read about ship breakers in Bangladesh (Kernaghan 2014), port workers in Madagascar (ITF 2017), migrant workers in Qatar (ITUC 2014), farm workers in Mexico (Marosi 2014), or cotton pickers in Uzbekistan (UGF 2016). Hold other people’s stories in your mind as you go about your daily life. If the global working classes are going to create a global revolution, we need to understand each other.

Fight the bosses. Get some people together. You’ll know what to do.

Author Bio

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‘Labor Rights Are Human Rights’: An Interview with Maina Kiai, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association

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Abstract

Although the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights includes the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association among its thirty articles, more than sixty years elapsed before working people’s rights to form unions and assemble was accorded attention by the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC). The omission of worker rights’ issues reflects a global international perspective that historically has not embraced workplace rights within the larger human rights framework. The UNHRC’s appointment of a Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association in 2011 marked a noteworthy step in broadening the dialogue. Special Rapporteur Maina Kiai has strongly argued that a first step toward addressing the harsh effects of globalization on millions of workers around the world begins with the eradication of the artificial distinction between labor rights and human rights. As Special Rapporteur, Kiai has underscored the centrality of the global working class, and argued that the ability of the working class to exercise fundamental workplace rights is a prerequisite for a broad range of other rights, whether economic, social, cultural or political.

Keywords

Globalization; workers’ right; human rights

Editors’ note

This item has not been peer-reviewed

In May 2011, Kenyan lawyer and human rights advocate Maina Kiai was named the first-ever United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.⁴³ As unpaid, independent experts appointed by the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), special rapporteurs are charged with a time-limited mandate to examine and report back on a country situation or a specific human rights theme. Although the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights includes the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association among its thirty articles, more than sixty years elapsed before working people’s right to form unions and assemble rose to the level of attention accorded by UN independent human rights experts. This special

⁴³ ‘United Nations Special Rapporteur: On the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association,’ viewed 27 May 2017, <http://freeassembly.net/maina-kiai/>.

rapporteur process—the ‘crown jewel’⁴⁴ of the international human rights system, in the words of former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan—was created in 1967 with a Special Rapporteur on Apartheid.⁴⁵ Some forty-one thematic and fourteen country mandates operate now, and cover such areas as cultural rights and independence of judges and lawyers.

The UNHRC’s long delay in privileging worker rights’ issues reflects a global international perspective that historically has not embraced workplace rights within the larger human rights framework. In his role as special rapporteur, Kiai has strongly argued that a first step toward addressing the harsh effects of globalization on millions of workers around the world begins with the eradication of the artificial distinction between labor rights and human rights. Asserting that the ‘global attack’ on labor rights makes it ‘disturbingly clear that the old ways of defending workers’ rights are no longer working,’ Kiai told the UN General Assembly last fall that ‘it is time for states and the human rights community to place labor rights at the core of their work. The ability to exercise these rights in the workplace is a prerequisite for workers to enjoy a broad range of other rights, whether economic, social, cultural, political or otherwise.’⁴⁶

Kiai’s statement came as he presented a landmark report to the General Assembly that bluntly describes the state of worker rights in the world, and highlights how trends in the global economic order especially negatively affect women workers, migrant workers, informal economy workers and domestic workers. The ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association’ forcefully conveys how the vast majority of the world’s workers are disenfranchised from their rights to assembly and association—rights that are fundamental to all other human rights—either by exclusion or outright oppression. ‘Without assembly and association rights,’ the report states, ‘workers have little leverage to change the conditions that entrench poverty, fuel inequality and limit democracy.’ Further, ‘states generally prioritize economic and corporate interests at the expense of workers’ rights, a counterproductive approach that exacerbates poverty and inequality. This situation must be urgently addressed, both to allow people to exercise their rights and to ensure the viability of the world’s economic system.’⁴⁷

The report’s uncompromising language recognizes the detrimental outcome of unchecked corporate power on the ability of the working class to be accorded an equitable share of its labor, reflecting Kiai’s lifelong pursuit of justice. After attending Nairobi and Harvard universities, Kiai founded the nonprofit Kenya Human Rights Commission in 1992, where he served as executive director, championing constitutional law reform and documenting and publicizing rights violations in Kenya. Between 2003 and 2008, Kiai chaired Kenya’s National Human Rights Commission,

⁴⁴ ‘The UN Secretary General’s Message to the Third Session of the Human Rights Council’ (2006), 29 November, viewed 27 May 2017, <http://unpo.org/article/5942>.

⁴⁵ Limon, Marc and Power, Hilary (2014) ‘History of the United Nations Special Procedures Mechanism: Origins, Evolution and Reform’ (Universal Human Rights Group, September), viewed 27 May 2017, http://www.universal-rights.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/URG_HUNSP_28.01.2015_spread.pdf.

⁴⁶ Kiai, Maina (2016) ‘Statement by The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association to the 71st Session of the General Assembly,’ 20 October, viewed 27 May 2017, <http://freeassembly.net/news/unga71-statement/>.

⁴⁷ ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association,’ viewed 27 May 2017, http://freeassembly.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/A.71.385_E.pdf.

becoming nationally known for his effective advocacy against official corruption and support of political reform, and for standing against impunity for the perpetrators of the country's 2008–2009 election-related violence in which thousands were killed.

Kiai has held other key positions, including executive director of the International Council on Human Rights Policy, director of Amnesty International's Africa Program, and the Africa Director of the International Human Rights Law Group (now Global Rights, 2001–2003), and has held numerous fellowships, including at the Woodrow Wilson Center and TransAfrica. His many honors include the 2016 AFL-CIO George Meany-Lane Kirkland Human Rights Award.

As special rapporteur, Kiai was charged with 'reporting on violations of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, as well as discrimination, threats or use of violence, harassment, persecution, intimidation or reprisals directed at persons exercising these rights,' and making recommendations on ways and means to ensure the promotion and protection of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.'⁴⁸

In his six-year term, which ended April 30,⁴⁹ Kiai humanized the UN's often brittle bureaucratise with heartfelt descriptions of worker rights abuses and the struggles of the working people he talked with during multiple fact-finding missions around the world. In 2015, he found⁵⁰ restrictions on freedom of assembly in Kazakhstan, an environment that has since worsened with government attacks on unions and the imprisonment of union leader Larisa Kharkova, impelling him in March of that year to condemn the crackdown on workers' rights.⁵¹ In Rwanda, a country struggling to return to normalcy after genocidal war, Kiai encountered citizens arrested for exercising their rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association,⁵² and 'an opposition to vigorous debate and free expression of opinions that makes the current social reconciliation process unstable.'

And in the United States, following a seventeen-day, ten-city fact-finding mission last July,⁵³ Kiai issued a scathing statement on the country's racial, social and economic inequality. Kiai met with Baton Rouge, Louisiana area residents⁵⁴ and members of advocacy groups in the wake of the fatal shooting of Alton Sterling; talked with carwash workers from the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU) in New York City; and visited Nissan workers in Canton, Mississippi, where he expressed

⁴⁸ 'HRC Resolution 15/21 – Mandate Of The UNSR,' viewed 27 May 2017,

<http://freeassembly.net/about/mandate/hrc-resolution-1521-mandate-of-the-unsr/>.

⁴⁹ The mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association originally expired in 2014, but the UNHRC extended it to 2017. The term of Kiai's successor, international law professor Annalisa Ciampi, ends in 2020. Special rapporteurs serve for a three-year period, renewable once.

⁵⁰ Country Visit: Kazakhstan (A/HRC/29/25/Add.2), viewed 27 May 2017,

<http://freeassembly.net/reports/kazakhstan/>.

⁵¹ Kiai (2017) 'Kazakhstan: Authorities Heading in Wrong Direction on Labor Rights,' *Eurasianet* 14 March, viewed 27 May 2017, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/82831>.

⁵² Kiai (2014) 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association, Addendum: Mission to Rwanda,' 16 September, viewed 27 May 2017, http://freeassembly.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/A-HRC-26-29-Add2_en-final1.pdf.

⁵³ Country Visit: United States of America (A/HRC/35/28/Add.2 – Coming June 2017), viewed 27 May 2017, <http://freeassembly.net/reports/usa/>.

⁵⁴ 'Special U.N. Representative Hears Complaints from Baton Rouge Residents, Advocacy Groups on Handling of Protests,' *The Advocate*, 23 July 2016, viewed 27 May 2017, http://www.theadvocate.com/baton-rouge/news/alton-sterling/article_26ed1202-5040-11e6-b427-03e35b23141a.html.

shock that the lack of unionization and ability to exploit workers is touted as a great benefit for employers.⁵⁵

‘Racism and the exclusion, persecution and marginalization that come with it, affect the enabling environment for the exercise of association and assembly rights,’ Kiai stated, citing the gravity of the situation in the context of 400 years of slavery and Jim Crow. In the U.S., racial inequality is not the only inequality inhibiting the enabling environment for association and assembly rights, Kiai asserted. ‘Productivity and economic output has grown, but the benefits of these have gone primarily to the wealthiest, as the wages of average people have stagnated’.

‘This inequality has been accelerated by declining union membership in a context of laws and practices which make it difficult for workers to organize, increasing corporate power, and a free market fundamentalist culture that actively discourages unionization. A dysfunctional, polarized Congress that has seemingly lost its tradition of compromise has made things worse.’⁵⁶ A final report on the visit will be presented to the Human Rights Council in June.

Since then, Kiai has joined with another UN special rapporteur in calling on lawmakers in the United States to stop the ‘alarming’ trend of ‘undemocratic’ anti-protest bills designed to criminalize or impede the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression. Noting that no fewer than nineteen states introduced legislation restricting assembly rights since the November elections, Kiai and David Kaye, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, issued a report documenting the proposed restrictions and warning that if enacted, the bills ‘would severely infringe upon the exercise of the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly in ways that are incompatible with U.S. obligations under international human rights law and with First Amendment protections’ while threatening to jeopardize ‘one of the United States’ constitutional pillars: free speech.’⁵⁷

Kiai, who currently works as co-director of InformAction, a community organizing nonprofit in Kenya, leaves a strong legacy as champion of labor rights as human rights, the notion that the ability to exercise workplace rights is fundamental for workers to engage in a broad range of other rights, whether economic, social, cultural or political. In his report on assembly and association, Kiai radically shifted the lens through which rights-based organizations, the development community and public at large view human rights: Freedom of peaceful assembly and association are foundational rights precisely because they are essential to human dignity, economic empowerment, sustainable development and democracy. They are the gateway to all other rights; without them, all other human and civil rights are in jeopardy.

Now wrapping up his work as special rapporteur, Kiai reflected on the evolution of

⁵⁵ ‘Racism in U.S. Casts ‘Dark Shadow’ over Rights to Free Assembly, Association – UN Expert,’ UN News Center, 28 July 2016, viewed 27 May 2017, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=54582#.WSnnfuvyupr>.

⁵⁶ ‘Statement by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association at the conclusion of His Visit to the United States of America,’ viewed 27 May 2017, <http://freeassembly.net/news/usa-statement/>.

⁵⁷ United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner (2017) ‘UN Rights Experts Urge Lawmakers to Stop ‘Alarming’ Trend to Curb Freedom of Assembly in the US,’ 30 March, viewed 27 May 2017, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21464&LangID=E#sthash.Lye9AaOf.dpuf>.

worker rights and popular protest since 2011, the role of the working class in challenging racism and xenophobia, and examples of successful strategies for worker rights' advocates going forward.⁵⁸

CONNELL: You took on the role of Special Rapporteur in 2011, a particularly hopeful time for democratic movements, with popular uprisings across the Arab Middle East, anti-austerity demonstrations throughout Europe, and the Occupy Wall Street movement sweeping the world. Since then, not only have many of the Arab revolutions suffered severe setbacks—with Tunisia a clear exception—but these generally progressive-leaning global revolts against the elites have now been overtaken by illiberal anti-elite uprisings, and the accession to governments by the far right. Your position as special rapporteur affords you a unique vantage to assess for us some of the reasons behind this dramatic political and economic shift and its impact on the working class.

KIAI: There a number of reasons. The first one partly is the fact that the retroactive, reactionary forces in society and across the world have become better at positioning themselves, at articulating what issues that they want, they have become louder, and they also have done quite a bit of damage by making what was previously unacceptable, normal. Now we've got a new normal, which is where people can express racist, misogynistic things and get away with it.

It's also the fact that they learned how to control, how to organize better—and from the grassroots. The Tea Party coming in from the grassroots and changing the Republican party for example, or the British nationalistic party organizing and managing to convince people that the enemy of the people was Europe. They have become better at organizing and articulating the issues.

The other side of it, I think, is that the positive, progressive side has become mainstream. And I think it became a wee bit lazy in doing things the way they've always been done. So the world is changing, but instead of us ... also changing our approaches and our strategies and the way we do things, we've kept doing them, and thinking that, if we do more of the same, we will actually succeed. But it doesn't work that way. So the other part of it for me has been the utter 'projectization' of the democracy project and the pro-people project. So instead of us looking at us defeating poverty, or [thinking of] democracy or human rights as struggles, they became projects and we have these silos and we don't work together when we should.

It bugs me a lot that in so many parts of the world, there's a fraught or very ad hoc and uneven relationship between the powerless—between the workers, between the peasants, between the indigenous people. The powerless should be working together and seeing their commonalities as opposed to their differences. So I think in part we did it to ourselves. We became a bit cocky in our successes. For example, these 99 percent campaigns. If you ask yourself how many human rights organizations enter into that fully as partners, as opposed to being commentators on it, and researching it—you find there are not many. We've managed, in a sense, to isolate our professional work from our personal life.

⁵⁸ Kiai, Maina (2017) interview with the author, 21 May, via Skype.

Also, the rise of terrorism, and how it has been manipulated by George Bush the Second, after 2001, and how everybody became scared ... the fact that almost all of us in the world are prepared to sacrifice our liberties for security, even though that is a fake choice. You can't have liberty and security at the same time. I think when we saw the West also losing its values, or its charade of values, it also hurt around the world. And when torture became justified in the U.S., when Guantanamo Bay becomes ok, when you can arrest people and can disobey the rule of law...

But I also think the over-legalisticness of these struggles, of human rights, of workers' rights, has not necessarily helped because we have lost the ability now to communicate with people at a level that is understandable. Donald Trump can communicate in less than 140 characters on Twitter. And if you ask someone else from the progressive forces, they'll give you a long thing, and a PowerPoint discussion which doesn't necessarily appeal. So, we've got so much information flowing, with the internet and social media and we've not been able to use it sufficiently well.

I do think that we have to start thinking about doing things differently, and doing things in a more collaborative manner. And doing things that bolster all the weak organizations or sectors that are suffering within this new world order.

CONNELL: Worker rights increasingly are under attack around the world. The number of countries where workers were exposed to violence for trade union activity increased from 36 in 2015 to 52 in 2016, according to the International Trade Union Confederation Global Rights Index. Also in 2016, demonstrations were halted and workers suffered retaliation for expressing their views in 50 countries, nine more than in 2015. These data do not include outright legislative bans on union activity or government closure of unions, as recently occurred in Kazakhstan. What are some of the reasons underlying this widespread assault on freedom of association and assembly?

KIAI: I think we are in a world where market fundamentalism is certainly on top. Market fundamentalism meaning that those who have capital can make as much money as possible, it doesn't matter how. And one of the ways to do that is to reduce what goes to workers. It's all that pressure to make as much money as possible. The utter greed of people in business.

The fact is that the world has increased its productivity dramatically in the last 40 years, but you see a reduction in wages at the same time. So the gap is growing bigger. It is now seen as ok to have a big gap between rich and poor as though there are no security concerns, as though there are no social concerns when that happens, when the gap becomes intolerable. And it's just the way it's been sold. Part of the problem is the end of the Cold War, businesses saw that as a vindication of the capitalistic model, and they moved very quickly to remove regulations and restrictions. In the absence of any other political ideological option, then they felt they could do anything they wanted.

So the conflation of democracy and market fundamentalism has been a huge, huge, blunder. Because you can't be in a social democratic state, you can't have democracy **and** laissez-faire capitalism. You can't. We've seen as well the rise of China which calls itself a communist country but also has a strong market fundamentalist edge to it, isn't helping—and the whole gap between the rich and the poor therefore weakening trade unions. So it's more and more the elimination of voices—freedom of assembly is

under assault because those in power want to eliminate voices that are dissenting and are of a different opinion.

CONNELL: Your ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association’ points to economic globalization as putting migrant workers, women workers, and domestic workers as particularly at risk for discrimination, abuse, and relegation to low-wage, insecure jobs. Most of these workers toil in the informal economy, which is growing exponentially around the world. In Zimbabwe, for instance, more than 90 percent of workers labor in informal economy jobs. What is the impact of the informalization of work in shaping current political and economic trends?

KIAI: It’s massive. It’s massive. Because there’s a sense that when people do informal work, then they don’t fit squarely into the organized sectors of society. They don’t fit squarely into trade unions and trade unions don’t think about how to deal with the informal sector and the workers there. They’ve come up with this idea that people are independent contractors even though they just are eking out a living.

The migrant worker issue is the perfect issue where you should be having social movements, human rights organizations, trade unions working together. It’s a huge body of people. But if people cannot be organized or are not organized, then they are at the mercy of the powerful. The achievements of society have always come about when people get organized and fight back and reach a compromise against people who are powerful. Or, the people who are powerful are overturned, and we have a better system that comes through. But power does not give in just like that, does not give in with a smile. It has to be confronted. And it has to be confronted by organized people organizing.

So when you see trade unions are under attack, when you see civil society is under attack, it is all about making sure there is no organization to challenge the orthodoxy of opposing power. It’s something we have got to keep confronting. And of course there’s this [idea] that’s also part of these nationalistic dialogues that are going on—the idea that if you are a migrant, you have no rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights gives us all rights. We don’t park those rights at the border when we’re crossing borders. We go with them. There are limits to what we can do as noncitizens in a country. But we shouldn’t deny people their rights. That’s fundamental.

So when the progressive forces in the receiving country do not organize and welcome these people and help them organize as well, then they are in deeper and deeper shit. You just have to change the way you do things. You just have to think more broadly. Sometimes people see [migrants] as taking jobs of the nationals of a country, but often those jobs are not being taken anyway—that’s why there’s a market for these workers. Migrant workers do not go to places where there are no jobs. We have to think about broadening our alliances, broadening the work we do, seeing people as potential members of organized society and working with them so they can stand up. We’ve seen how domestic workers now have organized themselves around the world. We have to come up with creative ways to organize migrant workers as well. And that’s got to be done by all of us who call ourselves progressive.

CONNELL: Your response feeds very well into the next question, which is that the

issue of immigrant worker rights is fiercely divisive for many members of the working class, and significant numbers of working people have been part of the opposition to immigration, fueling right-wing candidates and policies like 'Brexit.' What strategies have you seen that work to successfully bridge this divide within the working class?

KIAI: I think a lot of it is education, a lot of it is lifting up. The strategy that speaks to me the most is one I found in New Orleans. A very small non-profit organization is working with migrant workers from Mexico and Honduras and El Salvador and they're working with black workers in New Orleans and trying to bring them together and understand that their fights and their antagonisms are only benefiting the employer who is cutting corners against all of them. And they are better off when they come together and say, 'Yes, there is space for all of us.' And often, there **is** space for all of them.

But once you create this antagonism, then you find that Latinos are fighting the African Americans and the African Americans are angry at the Latinos and they are all poor. So at the end of the day, the one smiling all the way to the bank is the employer with a federal grant who's cut costs so much he's laughing it off. So in a sense, it's us going back to the basics, it's us going back to organizing, it's us going back to the grassroots, person by person, door to door, home to home, bringing us all together, finding this is where we can gather socially as well. So we can understand that our similarities are actually much, much more than our differences, and at the end of the day, all we want is the same thing. All we want is a better life for ourselves and our children and our grandchildren. And there is space for all of us. There is.

CONNELL: Assaults on the rights of women also have fed the recent surge of global revolts against the elite. As your 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association' details, women are among groups of workers 'disenfranchised from the start by their status, making it more difficult to assert rights.' What, if any, connections can be drawn between such issues as lack of pay equity, gender-based job restrictions and gender-based violence at work and this broader political environment that we have been discussing?

KIAI: I think the lesson around women, especially, also has to come back home, to the homes and how we bring up kids and how that happens because most people are brought up in a very patriarchal society where men are in control, men have to call the shots and women are in the periphery. We got to start bringing them in.

As Obama said, 'A society that ignores or discriminates against half its population is a silly society.' It's really silly, it doesn't make sense. So, how do we then change ourselves? We have not yet found ways in which we can incorporate from the home the issue of gender equality. And going into jobs, we don't have environments yet that understand that women are critical players. And when they are, [for instance, in garment factories] the workforce is women, but the supervisors and managers are all men. So that just creates that whole dichotomy of harassment that goes on.

Sometimes I think it's a deliberate structure that's created, to try and keep women down consistently and to make sure they are always on the defensive. Because you're working somewhere with a male supervisor, you're always on guard. What will he want? How do I keep my job for tomorrow? Then there's sexual abuse, sexual harassment ... We've done a lot of work globally and things have changed dramatically. But I think we have

too many log frames and too many PowerPoints and forgot the human nature of what we should be doing, the human aspect of it.

CONNELL: You touched on this a bit before in terms of your discussion on organizing and going back to the grassroots, but is there a role for working-class activism in resisting xenophobia, nationalism and authoritarianism?

KIAI: It is not just a role. It is an indispensable responsibility. Because once we fight xenophobia, once we fight racism, it brings us all together and we have the byproduct of each of us fighting for each other all the time. And there is nothing stronger than when we all work together. When we bring this horizontal plane of all the marginalized and abused people and all the disenfranchised, bring them together, each of us fighting for each, we are much stronger. So absolutely, the working class activists have a fundamental role. Because the dignity of others is their dignity. But when we accept the role that is thrust on us that the only way to move ahead is if somebody else has been [beaten], then we are caught up in a trap. They have done very well in making us our own worst enemies instead of our own best friends.

CONNELL: As you reflect on the past six years in which you interacted closely with working people, human rights advocates as well as business and government leaders in diverse countries and environments around the world, what examples have you seen or insights you have reached that give you hope?

KIAI: Oh, there is a lot of hope. All the student activists I have met around the world and especially in Chile, who refuse to be intimidated, and who are so good at reaching out to trade

unions and workers and indigenous people. It's the people in South Korea who have got the model right. The progressives working together, from the human rights people, environmentalists, trade unions and all of them. They have internalized the culture of protesting as part of who they are and part of what defines them. The people in Oman who protest ... activists, knowing that it is so hard and so difficult, and so are trying to use the internet to get [their message] out there. Despite the gloominess of the current political environment, I'm actually quite enthused by how determined, how determined, how resilient [people] are.

But it can only work, it will only work, if we are able—which is the hardest thing for most of us—to internalize the need for us to work differently, and then we start working differently. Change is very difficult. Even when people are in a bad situation. We're afraid that change might mean that we are left out. We have to just retool ourselves, knowing that the only constant in life is change. That's the only constant. Change will happen, so we might as well go with it and engineer it, rather than be changed by it.

But I recognize how hard it is in progressive circles for people to say, 'Ok we've been working like this, let's try a different way to work.' It's a lot of trial and error. But that's fine. We're going to make mistakes, we're going to fail sometimes, but we keep trying. Which is what I like about all the activists I have met. Whether it is the Occupy people, whether it is Black Lives Matter, whether it is the Hong Kong umbrella revolution—people trying different things to get there. And that's what's inspiring.

There is a lot of hope. The migrant workers I met in Phoenix, Arizona, who have no

papers and they go out and their chant is ‘*Sin papeles y sin miedo.*’ That’s what I call courage. That’s what I call inspiring. And despite the odds against them and despite the fact that employers also use immigration to defeat the working class, people are still coming together and still fighting.

The world is majority working class in one form or another. Surely we can find a better way to be able to get away from all these divisions between us, whether it is nationality, whether it is religion, whether it is race differences, whether it is gender differences—we have to simply understand that this world order will finish us if we don’t come together properly.

Author Bio

Tula Connell is an historian of the United States focusing on 20th century labor and social movements. An independent scholar, Connell has worked in labor communications for more than 25 years and currently is Senior Communications Officer at the Solidarity Center, an international labor rights organization. Her book, *Conservative Counterrevolution: Challenging Liberalism in 1950s Milwaukee*, was published in April 2016 by the University of Illinois Press. *Conservative Counterrevolution* is a volume in the series, “The Working Class in American History” edited by Nelson Lichtenstein et al. Connell received her Ph.D. in American History from Georgetown University in 2011, and holds an M.A. in European History from Yale University and a B.A. in Journalism from Marquette University.

History and the Working-Class Now: The Collective Impulse, Tumult and Democracy

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Abstract

Terry Irving was invited to address the Sydney Historical Research Network at the University of Technology Sydney, Australia, in March 2017, as part of a session on 'Histories of Class Now'. The other speakers were Hannah Forsyth and Elizabeth Humphrys. Each of them was asked to say something about their current research. This is a revised version of his address, followed by a note on sources

Editors' Note

This article is classified as commentary (not peer-reviewed)

Keywords

Class, working-class collectivity, democracy, identity politics

They're talking about class again, the liberal commentators in the commercial media, and not in the sense of the 'class envy' that defenders of neo-liberal austerity scream about when their privilege and power are challenged. No, it's class as rupture. They are talking about the manifested anger of working people affected by ten years of global economic crisis. They note the rising tide of militant resistance – strikes, occupations, riots - in China, India, Bangladesh and other cheap labour countries where capital was supposed to be safe from grasping unions; they are astonished to discover that the number one division in society in the US is not race but rich versus poor, that globalization has cleaved the country into two hostile classes, and that young people, the precariat of the future, prefer to rally behind Bernie Sanders rather than Hillary Clinton. In the UK, public intellectuals, in the wake of Brexit and rank-and-file Labour support for Jeremy Corbyn, are noticing again that most Brits, disgusted by ruling class greed, still regard themselves as working class; and turning to Australia, we are told that 'class is the new black', and that it is realigning parliamentary politics.

So class is part of the zeitgeist again, as it was in the 1970s when Raewyn Connell and I conceived a study of class structure in Australian history. By the time we published in 1980, that moment was over. That was when the twin 'turns' were foisted upon us all – the neo-liberal turn of Thatcher and Reagan that inflicted misery on the global working class, and the cultural turn of post-modernity that saw a generation of liberal scholars burbling on about the terrible injustice of failing to recognise minority identities, mostly among privileged people like themselves. Globally, the great mass of workers, 6.3 billion according to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in

2013, including 3 billion who earned less than two dollars a day, was suffering actual material deprivation.⁵⁹

Meanwhile, the damage caused by identity politics was growing. Instead of exploitation in common, liberal thinkers looked for multiple oppressions. Instead of justice they privileged recognition. Instead of practising solidarity as activist intellectuals, informed by an understanding of the history of class struggle, they retired to academia and built abstract models of intersectionality. At the centre of this zeitgeist of ‘commercial scholarship’ as Werner Bonefeld calls it, there was the idea of difference.⁶⁰ It destroyed the language of class, pushing white workers into ‘an “identity” of white nationalism’, while leaving the rapaciousness of global corporations unchecked. It was the discourse that underpinned the strategy of corporate liberals, like Hillary Clinton – of putting together a coalition of separate identity groups – and it failed, but even had she won, the needs and desires of working people would have been ignored. In a series of essays in a recent issue of *Harper’s Magazine* under the heading ‘Trump – A Resister’s Guide,’ the young writers agree that the time has come to dump identity politics. So, today it seems this shameful phase in the history of capitalist social sciences and humanities is coming to an end.

What liberals fail to understand is that racism and sexism, for example, are, like class, destructive inequalities. They deserve to be analysed historically as products of the dynamics of capitalism, just as class is analysed. So when we talk about the identities of women and Aboriginal people we need to see them as expressions of the *practices* of women and Aboriginal people, reflecting as well as constituting the gender and racial dynamics of capitalism. Their identities should not be understood as bundles of detached ideas, with no material moorings. This is the mistake that liberal stratificationists make when they talk about studying the intersection of class, gender and race. In historical studies, this identitarianism results in a one-sided focus on the mental world of discourses and signs, ignoring the material world of exploitation and inequality, and the class perspective of eradicating them. So, as in contemporary politics, it plays right into the hands of the ruling class.

But we all make mistakes. When we wrote *Class Structure in Australian History*, Connell and I were trapped in our zeitgeist. As we wrote recently, our book was produced at a time when the organized working class was in a militant mood. ‘Strikes reached an all-time high in 1974, and between 1968 and 1974 the wages share of national income increased by almost 10%’ (Irving and Connell: 2016, p. 4). Although we recognized that the working class was ‘a highly complex structure’, when we wrote of ‘workers’ power’ we associated it with the kind of organized militancy that tried to prevent the export of pig-iron from Port Kembla to Fascist Japan in 1938.⁶¹ And we firmly fixed the flag of socialism to the remobilization of that working class in that kind

⁵⁹ Steven Kapsos and Evangelina Bourmpoula (2013), ‘Employment and Economic Class in the Developing World’, ILO Research Paper no. 6, p.1.

⁶⁰ George Souvlis, ‘Ordoliberalism and the Death of Liberal Democracy: An Interview with Werner Bonefeld’, viewed 3 June 2017, <http://salvage.zone/online-exclusive/ordoliberalism-and-the-death-of-liberal-democracy-an-interview-with-werner-bonefeld/>.

⁶¹ In December 1938, the Port Kembla branch of the Waterside Workers’ Federation banned the export of pig-iron to Japan, arguing that this strategic material that would assist Japan’s expansionism. See Rupert Lockwood (1987) *War on the Waterfront: Menzies, Japan and the Pig-Iron Dispute*.

of struggle, and assumed without question that the parliamentary state would continue to be a focus of political activity as the working class remobilized.

Today in Australia we are in a very different moment. Unions are smaller and corralled by the state, social-democratic corporatism has succumbed to neo-liberalism, revolutionary parties are as sectarian as ever, organized labour militancy is rare, and parliamentary democracy has been ‘hollowed out’. Consequently it is not surprising that the study of class is different, responding to different forms of struggle and a different kind of working class. Speaking descriptively, those differences are, briefly: (i) the working class has become global; (ii) work is precarious even in the core capitalist economies; (iii) the class struggle has broken out of its institutionalized straight-jacket and is now increasingly tumultuous and on the streets; and (iv) workers – especially those who are young, well-educated and precariously employed – are a key component of a radical democratic movement, refusing representation by the political class and flirting with horizontalism and other alternative models of politics.

As a result we’re rethinking our theoretical positions, we scholars of working-class history. In the presence of the awakening working class of the Global South it is not enough to embrace transnational histories, as if the nations on different sides of the ‘trans’ were commensurate. Imperial relationships were clearly never of that kind. And, it is impossible now to imagine labour progressing through ever-stronger organisation and deeper penetration of the state to socialism, let alone social democracy. The abject submission of organized labour in the capitalist heartlands to neo-liberalism has dealt the final blow to that faded – not to speak of unintelligent and deceptive – vision of postponed liberation.

Among the theoretical developments, there are three that I find compelling, and I can sum them up in three words: informal, porous and autonomous, each of these words describing an approach to the study of the global working class. Informal labour is labour that is unregulated and precarious. It is now an increasing condition of labour markets under the sway of neo-liberalism in the countries of the North Atlantic tier, Japan and Australasia, but it has always been a feature of labour in the Global South. Jan Breman and Marcel van der Linden, in their 2014 article (see Note on Sources), argue that, as informal labour extends its reach, the ‘West’ is becoming like the ‘Rest’ of the world. Trade unionism and collective bargaining, seen by earlier theorists and labour movement activists as the typical forms of working-class engagement with capital, and the acme of class formation for less mature working classes in the South, must now be recognized as atypical historical phenomena, confined to just a few countries for just a few decades. Can labour replace this ‘classical’ model? Breman and van der Linden see new forms of collective action emerging in response to the spread of informal labour.

Their work raises another question. In the West, prior to those few decades, is there a history of precarious labour relationships and informal collective behaviour in the working class? Should Western labour historians be looking for instances of workers striking without, or prior to, the involvement of a union, or striking in defiance of a union? Should we be looking for the go-slow, sabotage, organized pilfering, customary insolence etc. on the part of workers? And if so, should we conceptualize working-class collectivism in a different way, a way that releases it from the submerged teleology that dominated labour history in its formative period.

In Australia we have tended to date the origins of the working class to the unions formed after the gold rushes. My book, *The Southern Tree of Liberty* (2006), put a dint in this lazy view by restoring working people to the story of representative government in the years before 1856, their contribution made possible by decades of grass roots organization to obtain political rights and economic independence. I relied for part of the argument on articles by Michael Quinlan. Now his book, *The Origins of Worker Mobilization: Australia 1788-1850*, will appear in 2018 from Routledge in New York. Having seen the manuscript I can say that this is a truly path-breaking study of the collective impulse among workers, with important pointers for the global historiography of labour.

The novel aspect of his study is that it reveals the extent of informal (non-union), collective organisation among workers, both convict and free. Certainly there were a handful of organizations pursuing collective bargaining, but their members were more likely to experience worker power outside of those organizations. When I read the manuscript, Quinlan had discovered 1370 instances of worker mobilization; now he tells me that the number has risen to over 6000 (he is still entering recently discovered data), and he estimates there are another 2000 instances to document. This staggering figure is the result of Quinlan's three decades of digital computation of evidence of strikes, court actions, go-slows, demonstrations, mutual insurance schemes, petitions, mass abscondings, sabotage, political meetings, etc, gained through painstaking reading of convict conduct records, police gazettes, court bench-books and colonial newspapers. When historians now talk about this period, how can they not call it a period of class struggle? When they talk about the coming of self-government how can they ignore its meaning for workers who had been struggling to gain some self-government in their lives since 1788?⁶²

Quinlan hopes his book will 'act as a counter point to cultural/identity analysis that seems to have forgotten class as the critical category of social determination in capitalism (and you don't need to ignore women, migrants or non-Europeans to do this)'.⁶³ With that in mind we can answer questions about the meaning of workers' actions - such as supporting a new constitution for the colonies - by revealing their material situation as well as their discursive world. Workers wanted parliamentary self-government to mean tight control of their representatives. They wanted legislation for an eight-hour day, land reform, and restricted immigration. That was what the 'right' to self-government meant to them, not just something philosophical, or a practice, such as voting, empty of content.

Turning now to porosity: by this term I mean the fact that workers were not typically defined by a life-time spent in a particular kind of labour – say waged, or unfree, or domestic, or self-employed. Rather, workers have always participated in various kinds of commodified and un-commodified labour, for the boundaries within and between them were porous. There have been several theoretical paths to this insight. Andrea Komlosy has produced a global history of work since the time of Classical Greece and Rome.⁶⁴ Although her book is not yet available in English, we can follow her argument from other sources, including her chapter in a book edited by Jurgen Kocka and Marcel

⁶² There were three instances of collective resistance by convict workers that year.

⁶³ M. Quinlan; personal correspondence with the author, 9 March 2017.

⁶⁴ Komlosy, Andrea (2017) *Work – The Last 1000 Years*, Verso, London.

van der Linden, *Capitalism: The Re-emergence of a Historical Concept* (2016). She insists that working-class history shows a blurring of the distinction between free and unfree labour, and warns that labour history's blindness to non-waged work, assuming the primacy of the commodity form of labour, is leading us into intellectual and political dead ends. Consequently we need a more differentiated form of workers' history.

Another approach can be found in the work of Marcel van der Linden, of the International Institute for Social History. In his influential paper, 'Conceptualising the World Working Class' (2015), he constructs a typology of the forms of labour commodification and concludes that in capitalist society the boundaries between 'free' wage labourers and other workers are 'vague and gradual':

In the first place there are extensive and complicated grey areas full of transitional locations between 'free' wage labourers and slaves, the self-employed and the lumpenproletarians. Secondly, almost all subaltern workers belong to households that combine several modes of labour. Thirdly, individual subaltern workers can combine different modes of labour, both synchronically and diachronically. And finally, the distinction between different kinds of subaltern workers is not clear-cut. The implications are far-reaching. Apparently there is a large class of people within capitalism, whose labour power is commodified in various ways.

On the basis of this typological analysis, Van der Linden speaks of a class of subaltern workers rather than the working class. 'It is the historical dynamics of this multitude' that labour and social historians should try to understand. Those dynamics of course include how subaltern workers make themselves into a historical subject, a class, a process that typological analysis cannot, and does not aim to, grasp.

It is a process that autonomist Marxism places at the centre of its analysis. This is a strand of Marxist theory associated particularly with the theorist Antonio Negri who drew on his experiences as an anti-authoritarian Communist in the Italian *operaismo* movement of the 1960s and 70s.⁶⁵

Verity Burgmann, the Australian historian and political scientist, has recently promoted this strand of Marxist theory to labour historians, in an article in *International Labor and Working Class History* (no. 83, Spring 2013), and to political scientists in her just published book, *Globalization and Labour in the Twenty-First Century* (2016). Autonomism is the latest in a long tradition of Marxist critiques of economic determinism, starting with Gramsci in the 1920s and including J-P Sartre and E.P. Thompson.⁶⁶ Amongst recent historians, Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker are often cited as contributing to this anti-determinism through their book, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (2000). Burgmann argues that although the earlier Marxist anti-determinism recognized the agency, subjectivity and class consciousness of the working class, it still worked with the 'classical' or 'second international' understanding that capital accumulation and exploitation shaped the existence of the working class. Workers might have agency but they would always be reactive.

⁶⁵ See Note on Sources.

⁶⁶ Verity Burgmann, 'The Multitude and the Many-Headed Hydra: Autonomist Marxist Theory and Labor History', *International Labor and Working Class History*, no. 83, Spring 2013, p. 172.

But autonomist Marxism, in Burgmann's words, 'is more far-reaching'. Negri and his comrades placed 'labor at the very beginning of the labor-capital dialectic. Labor can exist independently of capital, but capital needs to command labor to ensure profit; therefore capitalist development does not occur due to internal momentum but in reaction to labor's tendency to unloose itself from capital.' History written from an autonomist perspective would place labour history within the internal history of the working class, a process of composition (as it becomes a class for itself), of decomposition (as the ruling class seeks to disrupt working-class solidarity), and re-composition (as the working class fights back by developing new forms of struggle). These three paths all point in the same direction: towards a history that takes the working class, not the labour movement, as its subject. We need to move from labour history to working-class history. A history of informal mobilization widens the understanding of worker power, showing that it can be expressed collectively in many ways. Unlike labour history it would not produce studies that are institutional (if that means exclusive of the fleeting and peripheral) or social (if that means exclusive of social labour) or cultural (if that means exclusive of culture's material context). The focus of working-class history would be political, in order to bring those separate studies together. A history of subaltern labour that recognizes that commodification takes many forms would make working-class history global as well as open to current responses by workers to precarity and uncertainty. And last, a history that adopts an autonomous perspective on the working class and its relation to capitalism would banish the idea that society is 'an order' and that the working class is subordinate. Capitalist exploitation and domination produce disorder, a dynamic of social struggles that is open-ended and complex. Working-class history would approach capitalism as itself constructed historically through social struggles.

A working-class history of this kind is already discernible in the development of 'Working Class Studies' in the United States. This new field has emerged because of the manifest limitations of labour history and industrial relations. It asked: what about the 85% of workers in the US that were not in unions? What about working-class culture, obscured by the nonsense that the US is a middle class country? Integrating historical research into broader social analysis, it aims to study society through the lens of class, especially the working class, for as indicated by the title of one of the area's seminal books, Michael Zweig's *The Working-Class Majority: America's Best Kept Secret* (2011), the US is a country with a working-class majority.

As Zweig insists, class is about power, not income, and using that insight the working-class majority might organize to achieve political influence and social strength. Working Class Studies is clearly partisan, conceiving, as the context for the future development of the field, a working-class social movement. There have been three centres of Working Class Studies (in New York, Ohio and Texas), a Working Class Studies Association, and an Association of Working Class Academics.⁶⁷ Outside of this

⁶⁷ The Center for the Study of Working-Class Life at Stony Brook University is now known as the Center for the Study of Inequality and Social Justice (<http://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/csisj/about/>). The Center for Working-Class Studies at Youngstown University is no longer active. The Texas Center for Working-Class Studies at Collin College can be found here: <http://iws.collin.edu/lkirby/>. The Working-Class Studies Association (WCSA) website can be found here: <https://wcstudiesassociation.wordpress.com/> (the Association of Working-Class Academics operates within the WCSA).

movement, but perhaps influenced by it, radical academics in the US are publishing noteworthy books on the history of class, eg. Barbara Jensen, *Reading Classes: On Culture and Classism in America* (2012) and Nancy Isenberg, *White Trash. The 400-Year Untold Story of Class in America* (2016).

The renewal of intellectual energy in class studies (and I'm including working-class history under that heading) can be seen in journal publishing over the last few years. I want to mention five. The Working Class Studies Association publishes *The Journal of Working Class Studies*, edited from the University of Technology Sydney by Sarah Attfield and Liz Giuffre. The blurb for its second issue, on 'Popular Revolt and the Global Working Class' makes two significant points. It defines the popular forces broadly as the 'working class, poor and other disenfranchised people',⁶⁸ and it positions the journal as a response to the current crisis. This year, *Working USA* has rebadged itself as the *Journal of Labour and Society* in order to focus on 'labour as a force for economic and social justice.' The new journal *Radical Americas*⁶⁹ welcomes 'scholarship which takes a radical approach' and that which moves away from the emphases of the cultural turn. Slightly older, dating from 2012, is the journal *Workers of the World*, published by the International Association for the study of Strikes and Social Conflict. Finally, there is *Critical Historical Studies*, which proclaims itself as working 'in the tradition of historically-reflexive approaches to capitalism', based on 'a critical appropriation of Marx'. It is notable that none of these journals has a national focus, none of them align themselves with traditional labour history, each of them offers a way for scholars to feel part of current large-scale transformations and movements, [and all of them suggest a shift away from discourse analysis to political economy], or, to echo the title of the new book edited by Jurgen Kocka and Marcel van der Linden (2016), to the re-emergence of capitalism as a historical concept.

My current project, 'Fatal Lure: Politics, Democracy and Gordon Childe', sits within a wider project to rethink the history of democracy in Australia. It begins from the observation that, when power and resources are distributed unequally, it is those who have less power, and less of the world's goods, who have the greater interest in democracy – if by that term we mean popular self-rule. Accordingly, my project looks for expressions of that interest, constructing a history of democracy that focuses as much on the democracy-driven struggles of working people, and the radical intellectuals who supported them, as on the constitution-making and liberal individualism of those using politics to defend their power and wealth.

Distinguishing between democracy as utopian, fleeting and rebellious, and democracy as 'being ruled' through the alienating routines and institutions of electoral politics and representative government, such a history would discover the episodes of mass action aiming to hold representatives accountable, the moments when upsurges of popular protest turned representation into delegation, and the forms of bottom-up democracy that popular movements developed in the process. Such a history would seek to reveal the continuing struggle of ideas between radical democracy and liberal democracy, the reactionary and defensive tendencies of liberal democracy and the creative and liberating potential of radical democracy.

⁶⁸ <https://workingclassstudiesjournal.com/current-call-for-papers/>

⁶⁹ <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ucl-press/browse-books/the-radical-americas-journal>

A decade ago I wrote a book, *The Southern Tree of Liberty* (2016), about the radical democratic movement that sought popular control of parliamentary ‘representatives’ in the period before 1856. My next book deals with Australia’s second bite at radical democracy, in the 1910s, when workers, socialists, pacifists and feminists rebelled against both the failure of state organizations – parliaments, political parties and trade unions – to respond to their needs, and the top-down model of governance in those bodies.

Fatal Lure is built around the first life of Gordon Childe (1892-1957), a life of socialist politics and ambivalence about the state. For ten years, until his early thirties, as a pacifist and socialist he organized, lobbied, made speeches, provided advice to leaders, and wrote for the labour press. His political activism culminated in his becoming a political minder and researcher for the Labor Premier of New South Wales. At the end of his life, Childe described himself escaping ‘the fatal lure of politics’ by returning to the study of archaeology in the mid-1920s. But the phrase may also be used to describe the suspicion of parliamentary politics that he shared with radical political activists of the 1910s.

In the 1910s the radical desire for self-government touched diverse communities and movements, putting them on a collision course with the state. Thirty-four thousand families refused to allow their sons to take part in the compulsory military training scheme between 1912 and 1914. Radical feminists, scornful of the supposed benefits to women of accessing the state through suffrage, widened their attack on patriarchy to include employment and the patriarchal family. In the labour market a wave of strikes by militant workers saw defiance of both employers and union officials. An unexpected feature of this militancy was that it extended to workers not usually thought of at that time as ‘working class’ – clergymen, sportsmen, artists, journalists, newspaper boys, university students, caddies at golf clubs, waitresses, bookmakers, medical doctors, nurses, taxi-cab drivers, and many more ‘atypical’ workers.

Within the sphere of the state we encounter the better-known instances of revolt. Angry members of the Labor Party forced its officers to expel a Prime Minister, a Premier and many leading parliamentarians. Freedom-loving voters twice defied the Prime Minister to defeat referenda aiming to introduce conscription. In the interests of self-government, rebellious residents of Darwin, led by the Australian Workers Union, forced the departure of the unpopular administrator of the Northern Territory.

These struggles were fraught with violence. Let me summarize the evidence. During food riots in Melbourne radical women fought on and off with police and scabs for almost six weeks. Workers on strike routinely roughed up scabs, while unemployed workers fought with police in Brisbane, Melbourne and Townsville. In Adelaide, Brisbane, Darwin, Kalgoorlie, Broken Hill, Townsville and Fremantle there were days, sometimes weeks, when militant workers controlled the streets. Sabotage was common, and workers in Sydney, Darwin, Melbourne and Townsville stole guns. Workers used firearms to defend themselves during demonstrations in Kalgoorlie, Townsville and Brisbane. Two men died, and hundreds were injured, some shot in the back by police. In 1918 a counter-revolution began when proto-fascist violence broke out. Organized by former AIF officers linked to the Commonwealth Investigation Branch, secret

armies of ex-servicemen attacked left-wing gatherings, newspaper offices and halls for the next four years.⁷⁰

In the midst of this turbulence radical thinkers were trying out alternative ideas about democracy. In a series of lectures for the Workers' Educational Association in 1918, Gordon Childe set out to derive a political philosophy for the labour movement by presenting a history of ideas that showed political thought moving away from the centrality of the state. Labour's political philosophy, he implied, should be anti-statist. In Brisbane a few weeks later, state school-teachers discussed their right as workers to control the education system and its syllabus. In intellectual circles, Guild Socialism's pluralism and diffused approach to sovereignty was well known. Militant unions, already influenced by syndicalism, were encouraged by Childe and other socialists to demand workers' control in their industries. There were conferences on industrial democracy in several states under the auspices of the WEA. In response, the Labor Governments in New South Wales and Queensland seriously considered the idea of appointing workers' representatives in management to head off more radical demands. But the appeal of industrial democracy was hard to diminish. As dissatisfaction with Labor's parliamentarism grew, it found expression in the formation of industrial labour parties, and these in turn led to the formation of a Communist party in 1921 that was not 'bolshevized' by Stalinism until the early 1930s.

Finally, to return to the invitation that led to this address, how is my project an expression of 'the history of class' now? In as much as democracy has always been an arena of class conflict my project is necessarily a history of class, with the qualification that it views this conflict through the eyes of working people and labour intellectuals. It has benefited by my discovery of Childe's resistance to determinist Marxism and my earlier exposure to Thompson's insistence that the working class makes itself. While concerned about Autonomist Marxism's contribution to the drift away from political economy, I am able to acknowledge its boost to the radical purpose of history writing: the interests of resistance, self-activity and restoring the commons. When I returned to the study of the 1840s I was struck by the strength of the impulse to collective action, including among workers not formally organized, and in a range of labouring situations. This interest continued into my study of the 1910s. In both periods I discovered a range of violent episodes glossed over by liberal historians. The collective impulse, tumult and democracy are what I write about, and I think they are pretty central to the history of class now.

Author Bio

Terry Irving is a radical educationist and historian who was formerly editor of *Labour History – A Journal of Labour and Social History*. He taught history and politics at the University of Sydney but is now Honorary Professorial Fellow at the University of Wollongong. With Rowan Cahill he blogs at <http://radicalsdney.blogspot.com.au/>. His website is <http://www.savagedemocracy.net/>.

Note on Sources:

⁷⁰ The matters dealt with in this paragraph will form Chapters 10 and 11 in my forthcoming *The Fatal Lure of Politics: A Life of Gordon Childe*.

To write working class history we should know ‘What we talk about when we talk about class’, the title of Michael Schwalbe’s article in *Counterpunch* (<http://www.counterpunch.org/2016/12/07/what-we-talk-about-when-we-talk-about-class/>), and ‘Why class matters’, the title of an interview with Erik Olin Wright in *Jacobin* (<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/12/socialism-marxism-democracy-inequality-erik-olin-wright/>).

We also need to be clear that thinking of class as a way of sorting people into categories will not help us to understand the working class as a product of capitalist dynamics. For this point see Raewyn Connell’s seminal chapter, ‘Approach to class analysis’ in her *Ruling Class, Ruling Culture: Studies of conflict, power and hegemony in Australian life* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977).

The liberal media commentary since 2012 on the reemergence of class struggle is too boring to note, but these recent responses by radical writers are interesting:

- Sarah Smarsh, ‘Dangerous idiots: how the liberal media elite failed working-class Americans’ (<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2016/oct/13/liberal-media-bias-working-class-americans>)
- Jeff Sparrow, ‘Class and identity politics are not mutually exclusive. The left should use this to its benefit’ (<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/nov/18/class-and-identity-politics-are-not-mutually-exclusive-the-left-should-use-this-to-its-benefit>)
- Peter Lewis, ‘Looking through a Marxist lens (and why class is the new black)’ (<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/nov/30/looking-through-a-marxist-lens-and-why-class-is-the-new-black>)
- Terry Eagleton, ‘The New Politics of Class review – has the working class been left behind?’ (<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/jan/19/the-new-politics-of-class-review-geoffrey-evans-james-tilley>).
- See also the contributions by Wesley Yang, Tim Barker and Katrina Forrester to ‘Trump – A Resister’s Guide’, Harper’s Magazine, February 2017.

Raewyn Connell and I have recently published ‘Scholars and Radicals: Writing and Rethinking Class Structure in Australian History’, *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 40, no.1, 2016, 3-15. See also Terry Irving, ‘The Lower Depths: Paternoster on Class Structure in Australian History’, *Labour History*, no. 111, November 2016. The book in question was published by Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, in 1980 (second edition, 1992).

The global turn in labour history has produced a large literature, much of it stimulated by the work of scholars at the International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam). See Jan Lucassen (ed.), *Global Labour History – A State of the Art*, Bern, Peter Lang, 2006; and Marcel van der Linden, *Workers of the World – Essays toward a Global Labour History*, Leiden, Brill, 2008. Van der Linden’s paper, ‘Conceptualising the World Working Class’ is in Sara R. Farris (ed.) *His Returns of Marxism: Marxist Theory in a Time of Crisis*, Chicago, Haymarket, 2015, and his paper with Jan Breman, ‘Informalising the Economy: The Return of the Social Question at a Global Level’, are in *Development and Change*, vol. 45, September 2014.

I also found useful the introduction to a special issue of the journal *Workers of the World* (vol 1, no. 3, 2013) written by Christian G. de Vito; ‘New Perspectives on Global Labour History’; and the contributions to ‘Scholarly Controversy: Defining Global Labor History’ in *International Labor and Working Class History* (vol. 82, October

2012), sparked by Marcel van der Linden's essay in that issue, 'The Promises and Challenges of Global Labor History'.

The origins of Autonomist Marxism are examined in Steve Wright, *Storming Heaven – Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism*, Pluto, London, 2002. Of the extensive literature on autonomist Marxism and the books that brought it to a wider readership by Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, there are two themes of relevance to this address: the stimulus to autonomist thinking given by the increasing appearance of ruptural moments and spaces – the revolt of a recomposing working class – connected to the changing character of labour and work in the contemporary global economy; and the promise of autonomist thinking for the study of the working class and its history. The first is addressed comprehensively by Verity Burgmann's book, *Globalization and Labour in the Twenty-First Century*, Routledge, London/New York, 2016; but see also the symposium on 'The Struggle for Survival, Self-Management and the Common Organizer' in *Antipode*, vol. 42, issue 4, September 2010, with important contributions by Paul Chatterton, John Holloway, Massimo de Angelis and Jai Sen. I am awaiting with interest the publication in 2017 of a special issue of the *Journal of Labor and Society*, devoted to 'Rethinking Working Class Self-Organization Beyond Unions, Parties, NGOs and the State'. It will be edited by Immanuel Ness and Robert Ovetz. The second theme is addressed by Verity Burgmann in 'The Multitude and the Many-Headed Hydra: Autonomist Marxist Theory and Labor History', *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no. 83, Spring 2013, pp 179-190.

Michael Quinlan's book, *The Origins of Worker Mobilization: Australia 1788-1850*, will be published by Routledge, New York, in 2018. Other works mentioned in my address are: Andrea Komlosy, 'Work and Labour Relations' in Jürgen Kocka and Marcel van der Linden (eds), *Capitalism – The Re-emergence of a Historical Concept*, Bloomsbury Academic, London, 2016 (note also an interview with her at the Toynbee Prize Foundation in 2015: <http://toynbeeprize.org/tag/andrea-komlosy/>). Her book has now been translated: see footnote 5. The introductory essays by Jürgen Kocka and Marcel van der Linden to their book are to be found on the Social History Portal: <http://www.socialhistoryportal.org/news/articles/308540>.

Michael Zweig, *The Working Class Majority - America's Best Kept Secret*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, second edition, 2011. Zweig has an important article in *Journal of Working Class Studies*, vol. 1, issue 1, December 2016, 'Rethinking Class and Contemporary Working Class Studies'. The Working Class Studies Association Website is: <https://wcstudiesassociation.wordpress.com/>. I am posting draft chapters of my project, 'The Fatal Lure of Politics – A Life of Gordon Childe' on my website <http://www.savagedemocracy.net/fatal-lure-of-politics>. Interested in my approach to democracy? Read Sheldon S. Wolin, *Fugitive Democracy and Other Essays*, Princeton University Press, 2016.

Spencer, Robyn C. (2016) *The Revolution Has Come: Black Power, Gender, and the Black Panther Party in Oakland*, Duke University Press, Durham and London.

Taylor, Keeanga-Yamahтта (2016) *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*, Haymarket Books, Chicago, IL.

Review by Scott Henkel

It is quite welcome to see a gifted writer using her talents to build from the lessons of a past political movement or focusing her critical attention on a contemporary movement. Considering the poverty of current affairs in the United States, intellectual work that is embedded in the politics of mass movements, committed both to theorizing and to achieving a better world, is a high point in an otherwise low time.

For those reasons, it was remarkable to read Robyn C. Spencer's book *The Revolution Has Come: Black Power, Gender, and the Black Panther Party in Oakland* together with Keeanga-Yamahтта Taylor's book *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*. These writers deliver prose that is at times breathtaking and heartbreaking, and their books display a willingness both to criticize where necessary and to propose ideas and pathways that may be fruitful to follow. Spencer and Taylor make historical and theoretical contributions and they succeed in negotiating the careful balance that will make their books valuable to both academic and activist audiences.

The Revolution Has Come is the first book-length history of the Black Panther Party's Oakland chapter—which is in itself a contribution to the scholarship on the movement, given that Oakland is the BPP's birthplace and, after 1971, in response to severe state repression, the city in which many of its national activists congregated. Spencer's book complicates many of the myths about the BPP—of these, its masculinity and its position on armed self defense are among the most insightful.

From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation is among the foremost contributions to our contemporary anti-racist movements. Taylor takes on a range of issues that the Movement for Black Lives has placed on center stage: the ever-growing number of black lives that are ended by the hands and arms of the police; why the movement erupted while the country's first black president held office, and significantly, why it has such prominence in Baltimore, a city with a majority black government; how the discourse of so-called colorblindness masks contemporary racism; and, like Spencer, how issues of race and gender intersect issues of class. As Taylor writes, 'the American

working class is female, immigrant, Black, white, Latino/a, and more. Immigrant issues, gender issues, and antiracism *are* working class issues' (216, emphasis in original).

Reading these two books together presents a picture of how a movement adapts in response to its situation and also, in a longer historical sense, how the movements of one generation put to use the lessons learned in previous generations. After reading these books, it is difficult to see either the Black Panther Party or the Movement for Black Lives as singular, static entities; while the critique of racism, capitalism, and sexism makes the groups cohere, the books show at length how activists adapt to their situations and how much both movements learned from their predecessors, changing tactics or taking new directions as necessary. Spencer shows, for example, that women in the BPP not only stepped into leadership positions when the state focused its repression on Panther men, but seized that opportunity because they were doing that work already.

Among the most nuanced analyses of *The Revolution Has Come* is the way Spencer acknowledges the gravitational pull that leaders like Huey Newton and Bobby Seale had on the BPP, but also emphasizes the fact that much of the substantive leadership for the movement came from women, notably Kathleen Cleaver, Connie Matthews, and also Elaine Brown, who led the group through the mid-1970s. Spencer charts how the BPP developed from the spectacular activities of armed self defense and police monitoring to the substance of what the party called 'community survival programs', which included giving free breakfast to schoolchildren, and also giving away thousands of bags of groceries, free rides to senior citizens, free sickle cell anemia tests, as well as running a free elementary school, bus services, a health clinic, and an ambulance service. Spencer calls these the 'lynchpin of the Party's new vision in this era' (117); she writes that as 'Panther tactics and strategies shifted, so did their inner organizational structure. They had moved from being an organization that applauded revolutionary action against the police to an organization that emphasized day-to-day work' (132). It is difficult to overemphasize the importance of this work and the profound improvement that clothes, food, safety, and schools meant to the people the BPP served. An organization that feeds the body and the mind—especially for people who have been systematically, structurally deprived of these things—proves, as Spencer highlights, that revolution is a process and that a revolutionary organization will face hostility from a classist, racist, sexist state for many reasons, the most obvious of which is that such an organization will make that state look morally bankrupt in comparison.

Whereas the Panthers became more centralized over the years that Spencer documents and its problems of leadership grew more pronounced, the Movement for Black Lives is purposefully decentralized—it seems impossible ever to expect it to become centralized without some drastic change in the movement's character. As Taylor writes, the 'political uprisings of the 1960s, fuelled by the Black insurgency, transformed American politics, including Americans' basic understanding of the relationship between Black poverty and institutional racism—and, for some, capitalism. Ideas are fluid, but it usually takes political action to set them in motion—and stasis for the retreat to set in' (50). Ideas are indeed fluid, and it is fascinating to see how, for example, charismatic leadership seemed vital to the Panthers, but now seems like a detriment to the Movement for Black Lives. Taylor notes how #BLM has reinvigorated the commitment to leaderlessness that the Occupy movement espoused, putting it into

substantive practice, but also complicating it where necessary (168, 176). The Movement for Black Lives has self-consciously decentered its leadership not only because of the catastrophic effects to a leader-centered movement when that leader is killed, compromised, or jailed, but it has also built beyond the Occupy movement. Leaderlessness may inoculate a movement from the pitfalls of vanguardism and personality cults, but it also raises problems in turn, like the difficulty for new participants to negotiate unspoken or informal rules (Taylor 145-48; 175-6). Similarly, she notes how a new generation of activists often brings a ‘new vitality to the patterns and rhythms of activism’ yet also that there exists much continuity between the current generation of activists and previous generations (162). ‘The tactical and strategic flexibility of the youth activists’, Taylor writes, ‘flowed from a developing politics that could not be constrained by a narrow agenda of voter registration or a simple electoral strategy. In Ferguson, these emerging politics were embodied by the emergence of young Black women as a central organizing force’ (163).

Regarding the political action that sets ideas in motion, Spencer and Taylor reflect on some of the most enduring questions about organizational form, about the sources from which a movement derives its power, and about the obstacles that movements generally face. While these books are specifically situated to address their particular movements, the likelihood that other similar organizations could draw inspiration from these studies is high.

The value of these books is manifold, and much of that value derives from the fact that both authors take an unflinching look at the problems we face. Consider a particularly powerful moment from Taylor:

The aspiration for Black liberation cannot be separated from what happens in the United States as a whole. Black life cannot be transformed while the rest of the country burns. The fires consuming the United States are stoked by the widespread alienation of low-wage and meaningless work, unaffordable rents, suffocating debt, and poverty. The essence of economic inequality is born out in a simple fact: there are 400 billionaires in the United States and 45 million people living in poverty. These are not parallel facts; they are intersecting facts. There are 400 American billionaires *because* there are 45 million people living in poverty. Profit comes at the expense of the living wage. [...] The struggle for Black liberation, then, is not an abstract idea molded in isolation from the wider phenomenon of economic exploitation and inequality that pervades all of American society; it is intimately bound up with them. (193–4, emphasis in original)

In Malcolm X’s phrase, the effort to say it plain to anyone willing to listen, to face the issues of the day and the obstacles to collective liberation without trepidation, in collaboration with mass political movements, is as rare as it is valuable. Spencer and Taylor make that effort successfully and admirably; their books deserve a wide audience.

Reviewer Bio

Scott Henkel is an Assistant Professor in the Departments of English and African American and Diaspora Studies at the University of Wyoming. He is the author of *Direct Democracy: Collective Power, the Swarm, and the Literatures of the Americas*, published in the Caribbean Studies series of the University Press of Mississippi. He is a member of the Steering Committee of the Working-Class Studies Association.

Hochschild, Arlie Russel (2016) *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*, The New Press, New York, Ny

Review by Jennifer M. Silva

In the opening pages of renowned sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild's *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*, we meet Lee Sherman, an 82-year-old environmental activist who lives deep in the heart of rightwing Louisiana. A former NASCAR driver, Lee made his living as a pipefitter for Pittsburgh Plate Glass. Although he suffered from chemical burns and inhaled dangerous toxins, Lee always did his job – even when the company asked him to illegally dump toxic waste, under the cover of darkness and in secret, into the nearby marsh. When he grew ill from constant exposure to toxic chemicals, the company fired him for absenteeism – they did not want to pay his medical disability. And yet this man, a victim of corporations that exploited his labor power, broke his body, and poisoned the land – and then threw him away when he was no longer profitable – is an ardent Tea Party supporter. He staunchly opposes the federal government, the idea of regulation, the social safety net, and, most of all, paying taxes.

There is nothing more perplexing to educated liberals than white working-class conservatives who appear to vote against their own interests. Why do the victims of pollution fight against federal environmental regulation? How can someone who has been exploited by big business vote to protect its profits? Hochschild calls this enduring puzzle the Great Paradox. For many liberals, to even try to empathize with the other side is unthinkable. But for Hochschild, it is urgent that we scale the 'empathy wall' – the obstacle to understanding that leaves us feeling indifferent or even hostile to them, 'We, on both sides, wrongly imagine that empathy with the 'other' side brings an end to clearheaded analysis', she reflects. But 'in truth, it's on the other side of that bridge that the most important analysis can begin'. Hochschild immersed herself for five years in a Tea Party stronghold in Louisiana. She cleverly focuses on one issue that encapsulates the Great Paradox – severe environmental damage, the desire for clean air, water, streams, and food; yet the utter rejection of government regulation.

Hochschild conducted 60 in-depth interviews with rightwing conservatives and then honed in on a subset of six people with whom she built close and lasting relationships. She drank sweet tea, ate fast food burgers, attended mega-churches and political rallies, and simply listened to people tell their stories. These hours of conversations, and thousands of pages of interview transcripts, unveiled how the single issue of environmental regulation in fact dovetails with many others that enliven conservative politics – from economic issues like taxes or wages, to deeper, more fundamental ones like the human needs for dignity, belonging, and honor.

Hochschild provides an inspiring model for reflexivity, for thinking about how her own identity and preconceptions shaped her research. Throughout the book, we follow her

journey of challenging her own biases as she consciously involves her research subjects in her analytical process, trying out her ideas on them to know if she is getting it right. In elegantly written, highly accessible, and deeply personal prose, Hochschild provides us with crucial conceptual tools for grasping the emotions and identities that underlie rightwing politics.

What emerged from her ethnography was a conservative deep story – a *feels-as-if* story –that illuminates why people living in a region with strikingly poor economic, educational and health indicators rally to support politicians who promise to reject federal help in precisely those areas. The deep story unfolds as follows: you are standing in a long line, ‘patient but weary’, awaiting the American Dream you’ve worked so hard for, and others are cutting in front of you – blacks, women, immigrants, refugees, even the brown pelican with its ‘long, oil-drenched wings’. You are enraged, but you do not complain. You are resentful of the line cutters, not only because they take more than their fair share, but because of how they demand you *feel*, ‘...happy for the gay newlywed, sad at the plight of the Syrian refugee, unresentful about paying taxes’. While Hochschild’s respondents were reluctant to talk about race, they nonetheless connect whiteness to deservingness: white people made America great through generations of hard work and sacrifice, while others try to use their race to unfairly get ahead

This deep story is animated by decades of lived experiences of distrust and betrayal. Lee Sherman felt bewildered and cheated by the IRS and was left scrambling to make ends meet. The Louisiana Department of Natural Resources gave out drilling permits even when they knew of the risks. State authorities issued statements about how to trim the fat and skin on fish to ‘reduce the amount of contaminants in the fish and shellfish’. When the government is believed to be manipulative, obscure, and ineffective, why would you trust them in the first place?

And so the Tea Partiers choose to make a virtue out of loyalty and hard work: they choose to endure in a system that requires the sacrifice of health and land and labor – capitalism – and they attach honor to that enduring. Hochschild creates a typology of characters - The Team Players, the Worshippers, the Cowboys – each of whom, in their own way, meaningfully sacrifices their health and safety for job creation, finds honor in giving up their wants and needs, and equates taking risks with having human freedom. Uniting these archetypes is the human need for emotional fulfillment – not economic self-interest – and the yearning to protect themselves from shame in a larger economic and cultural system that routinely robs them of dignity.

What makes Hochschild’s analysis so profound is that it is not only applicable to working-class conservatives, but rather to a broad range of people across the political spectrum who face the threat of downward mobility as the middle class contracts. Janice, for example, is a college-educated accountant who worked her way up to the middle class and lives by a ‘hard-nosed’ code of personal reliance. She declares memorably: ‘...if people refuse to work, we should let them starve’. Hochschild prompts us to ask: In a nation where secure jobs with good benefits are scarce, where we are all fighting for a piece of the rapidly dwindling pie, how do we keep ourselves from turning on others with bitterness and resentment? As long as we embrace individual achievement and meritocracy on a leveled playing field over collective economic rights and security, will Janice live in all of us?

There is one tension in the book that remains difficult to resolve: namely, that working-class conservatism is an obstacle to overcome. As Hochschild explains, in the liberal deep story, ‘...people stand around a large public square inside of which are creative science museums for kids, public art and theater programs, libraries, schools – a state of the art infrastructure available to all’ that they are fiercely proud of. But for readers from working-class families, who are the first in our families to attend college, who have felt like unwelcome strangers in liberal-minded elite institutions, and who have been wounded by the symbolic violence in museums and schools – it is less convincing that this deep story has all the answers. Liberals must interrogate their own deep story for the ways in which it perpetuates, or even requires, the loss of honor. Nonetheless, *Strangers in our Own Land* takes us a critical step forward in tearing down the empathy wall and weaving a deep story that unites us all.

Reviewer Bio

Jennifer M. Silva is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Bucknell University. Her first book, *Coming Up Short: Working-Class Adulthood in an Age of Uncertainty* (Oxford, 2013), examines the transition to adulthood among working-class youth. Her current book project, *Pain and Politics in the Heart of America*, examines working-class people’s political beliefs and behaviors in the coal region of Northeastern Pennsylvania.

Peralta, Dan-el Padilla (2015)

***Undocumented: A Dominican Boy's Odyssey from a Homeless Shelter to the Ivy League,*
Penguin Books, New York, Ny.**

**Vance, J.D. (2016) *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis,*
HarperCollins, New York, Ny.**

Review by Stefanie Stiles

The lives of Dan-el Padilla Peralta and J.D. Vance are remarkably similar, despite the obvious demographic distinctions: Peralta is a black, undocumented Dominican immigrant, raised in poverty in East Harlem, and J.D. Vance is a white Rustbelt denizen whose poor Appalachian roots go back many generations. Now in their early 30s, Peralta and Vance overcame unstable childhoods, graduated from the Ivy League (Princeton, Oxford and Stanford for Peralta, and Yale Law School for Vance), and went on to professional success in their respective careers in academia and finance. Although both of the authors' memoirs have generated significant media coverage, they've never been linked. In the inaugural issue of this journal, Sherry Lee Linkon and John Russo⁷¹ identified four major central questions in the field of Working-Class Studies, including the ongoing one of how to incorporate the topic of race and racism (and sexuality, gender, immigration status and other social categories) into discussions of class relations. One step in this direction is to examine these memoirs jointly as two meaningful articulations of the working-class experience. Doing so is intellectually productive because it calls attention to the commonalities of the authors' experiences across racial and cultural lines, as well as the ways that race complicates class issues.

In the popular press, Vance's *Hillbilly Elegy* has generally received good reviews and owes its bestseller status to its reputation as the book that explains Trump's appeal among America's beaten-down white working class. The author, a centrist political conservative, recounts his unconventional upbringing as a child of the 'Hillbilly diaspora' in a dying industrial town, Middletown, Ohio. His biological father is mostly absent, and his mother is a negligent drug addict, leaving Vance to be raised mainly by his older sister and beloved grandparents, 'Mamaw' and 'Papaw', who are far from moral paragons themselves. Vance is both proud of his family heritage and class background, and disapproving of some of its prevalent cultural practices. In particular, he notes the importance of a stable, loving home environment in producing functional adults; Vance's own childhood is chaotic, punctuated by domestic violence, in large

⁷¹ <https://workingclassstudiesjournal.com/>

part because of the some 15 different boyfriends and stepfathers cycled rapidly in and out of his life.

Undocumented has also garnered attention, though it has not been successful in changing the larger public conversation on the contentious topic of immigration reform, no doubt the aim behind its publication. In this account, the precocious Peralta's intellectual talents are recognized at age 9, while living in a homeless shelter with his mother and younger brother. Jeff Cowen, a shelter volunteer, is impressed by the young Peralta, and helps secure his admission on scholarship to Collegiate, a prestigious Manhattan boys' private school. The rest, as they say, is history.

The unlikely successes achieved by the authors are the result of a conflux of factors, but two stand out: individual agency and social environment. Regarding the former, it is evident throughout the narrative, for all of his inconsistent and not-so-very-convincing claims otherwise, that Peralta is an unusually brilliant and persistent individual. Peralta's use of literature as a means of escaping the tumult of his daily life—in his case the study of Greek and Roman classics—is a characteristic feature in many narratives of the working-class academic. Vance, likewise, though by no means a stand-out scholar like Peralta, is nonetheless intelligent and unusually self-motivated. He learns to conquer what he regards as a widespread class failing, 'learned helplessness' (he borrows Martin's Seligman's term), under first the tutelage of the wise and ferocious Mamaw and then his Marines' superiors.

Social relationships are also key in the authors' stories of class movement, in particular those with a few significant family members and mentors. Peralta's mother devotes herself to her sons' education, deciding to stay in the United States illegally and sacrifice her marriage to allow them access to better schooling and opportunities. She fosters their personal growth: monitoring their school-work, signing them up for arts programs, and encouraging Peralta's musically-inclined brother to audition for a choral group. Mamaw fills a similar role in Vance's life. She also emphasizes education, and constantly promotes the working-class value of hard work. Distrustful of politicians and the ruling classes, she still tells her grandson, 'Never be like those fucking losers who think the deck is stacked against them'. In spite of their lack of resources, the efforts of both women are examples of the 'concerted cultivation' approach to childrearing more common among middle-class parents, as per Annette Lareau.

Unfortunately, neither of these matriarchal figures can provide the social or cultural capital crucial in achieving middle-class status—in fact, Maria Elena Peralta can barely speak English. Various institutions fill in to cover these deficits for the two young men, or as Peralta puts it, 'structures, contexts, and luck reigned supreme' in his journey. It is clear that admission to elite educational institutions like Collegiate, Princeton and Yale change the course of their lives, but less obvious, perhaps, is the role of the Roman Catholic Church and the Marines at other critical junctures in the authors' stories. In Peralta's case, being an altar-boy at Resurrection Catholic Church provides him with an alternative to street life, and guidance from the kindly Father Michael. For Vance, besides building up his self-esteem, Marines' contacts also teach him practical skills that his family did not, like how to choose the best bank, or shop around for a low-interest car loan.

Where the two young working-class men differ, however, is in their racial background and immigrant status. In many ways, Peralta's is the more exceptional working-class

success story, because of the greater challenges he faced due to his lack of ‘papeles’. His college admission, scholarship funding, employment, ability to travel outside of the United States and return to visit his family—all of these things are threatened by his ambiguous immigrant status. Peralta must also grapple with racial prejudice that sometimes threatens his emotional health, and the violence of daily life as an impoverished person of color in Harlem. While at Princeton, he learns of the senseless shooting death of a peer who also worked his way out of the ghetto to college. Peralta muses, ‘I’d think of Tim, and for the most fleeting moment I’d fear that no matter how hard I worked and no matter what I achieved, I’d always be one angry motherfucker away from getting popped’.

Vance, on the other hand, though he lacks the cultural knowledge to know what sparkling water is at a dinner interview with law firm recruiters, is able to mainly fly under the radar as a straight white man crossing class boundaries. At Ohio State, he inwardly seethes while listening to a middle-class undergraduate spout stereotypes about soldiers, and at Yale he’s embarrassed when his group leaves a mess for servers at a restaurant. Yet these moments of concealed class rage, as uncomfortable as they are, do not constitute the same sort of insecurity that Peralta must deal with: at any time the existential threat of deportation hangs over his head. His ability to study and reach academic milestones under the Damoclean sword shows a mastery of focus and compartmentalization.

Not surprisingly, the authors’ politics are also divergent, at least on the surface. Vance is clearly conservative, and Peralta is almost by default liberal, though direct comparison is tricky, because their books’ political foci don’t often overlap. In Joshua Rothman’s insightful *New Yorker* review, he notes that Vance blames both economic and cultural factors for the declining fortunes of his hillbilly peers, and that his sharp analysis is leavened by his compassion. He argues that Vance’s book is remarkable because it moves beyond the typical, politically divisive ‘culture vs. economics’ explanations for poverty, refusing to attribute sole causality to either. I think Vance does indeed lean much more heavily toward personal agency as the solution, but Rothman is quite right in praising the author for taking a nuanced, sensitive view of a complicated issue.

There are far fewer moments of overt polemic in Peralta’s book, though the author’s life story in and of itself, of course, makes a powerful political statement about the societal contributions of undocumented immigrants. The overall sense is that Peralta is less an ideologue, than he is, at heart, a scholar’s scholar, often unwillingly drawn into a political debate. (Today Peralta is an Assistant Professor of Classics at Princeton.) He supports the now-halted DREAM Act, yet ultimately is left feeling jaded about the political process: when he asks his politician acquaintances about timelines for DREAM, his concerns are graciously dismissed with talk of ‘legislative priorities’. There is an underlying tone of resentment throughout the memoir, stronger than any professed political statement: Peralta refuses to be anyone’s pawn. He claims a multiplicity of selves, ‘I had and have no intention of ever being only a Dominican, or a minority, or an undocumented immigrant, or a Spanish Harlem resident; or a Collegiate man, a Princeton man, an Oxford man’. There is something exhilarating and very American about this personal declaration of independence.

Interestingly, the two men share a distinctly working-class political perspective—one that partially explains American blue-collar workers' rejection, in recent years, of establishment candidates from both parties—and that is frustration with a patronizing middle-class who often appear to be completely out of touch with the struggles of the poor. Like Linda Tirado, the working-class writer of *Hand to Mouth* (2015), Vance is critical of the well-intentioned attempts of politicians to curb the lending practices of payday loan companies, which he believes are an unfortunate, but necessary option for the poor who often cannot access quick funds elsewhere. As Vance states, 'Powerful people sometimes do things to help people like me without really understanding people like me'. Similarly, Peralta has little patience for middle-class idealism, referring to Teach for America recruitment emails ('Change things' read the email subject-heads) as 'corny and pretentious beyond belief'. Notably, both men come from families who view social workers, housing case-workers, and other agents of the state, as potentially threatening forces.

'What separates the successful from the unsuccessful are the expectations that they had for their own lives', argues Vance. His expectations for himself gradually change due to the influence of positive family members and mentors, and his internalization of the central message of the Marines, that a lack of effort, not a lack of intelligence, is what holds people back (a drill instructor barks at him, 'If you're not puking, you're lazy!'). Peralta's success is also predicated on a complex mix of fortunate circumstances, social structures, and sustained personal effort—this last element is what psychologist Angela Duckworth identifies as the all-important determinant of achievement known as 'grit'. These men are very much products of their environments, but they also grow to be knowing players in a greater social game. Viewed in parallel, their capacity for negotiating and transcending their environments is what makes Peralta and Vance more alike than they are different.

Reviewer Bio

Stefanie Stiles, Ph.D., is an adjunct faculty member in Seattle University's Institute of Public Service, as well as a Seattle-based freelance writer. She currently teaches in the area of ethics and society, and has previously taught English and rhetoric. She has published in journals including *College English*, *Pedagogy*, and *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies*, as well as the popular press.

Gest, Justin (2016) *The New Minority: White Working Class Politics in an Age of Immigration and Inequality*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK.

Review by Tim Francisco

The night before the presidential election, Justin Gest discussed *The New Minority: White Working Class Politics in an Age of Immigration and Inequality* at The Steel Museum in Youngstown, Ohio, where I have lived and taught for 13 years now. Youngstown is one of two ‘post-traumatic cities’ (the other is Barking and Dagenham, East London, U.K.) that are the case studies for his premise that the white working classes that built these once-thriving hubs have drifted toward marginality and ‘emerging radicalism’. The talk, and the book, now seems prescient given the victory that unfolded for President Donald Trump, thanks in large part to Rust Belt states like Ohio. Neither Youngstown, nor Mahoning County, went all in for Trump, but they did not turn out for Clinton in large numbers, while neighboring Trumbull County did swing Republican for the first time in decades.

Gest spent three months in Youngstown, and three months in East London, immersed in local culture, politics, and social life, and his research is the compilation of in-person interviews and survey data. The book explains the sense of disenfranchisement, loss, and frustration, linked to economic stagnation, globalization, and (more so in Barking and Dagenham than Youngstown) immigration, that has left the white working class feeling like a minority in the very communities it once dominated. By studying the two cities, the similarities between their socio-economic circumstances, and the responses to these challenges, Gest aims to show why white working class groups respond to these crises differently in terms of their political behavior—why some withdraw to the fringes of inactivity, as others embrace far-right politics.

In taking up this question, this book provides important contributions to the conversation about the ‘forgotten’ class, occurring just about everywhere in the post-Trump/Brexit era. One of the ways in which this study enriches the field is in Gest’s delineation of the relationship between citizens’ experiences of social deprivation, and the extent to which this influences political behavior. He accomplishes this by recording the symbolic repertoires his white working class subjects’ use to understand their subjective status deprivation. His findings suggest that while his British subjects see social positioning as linked to origin, Americans view social positioning as dependent upon income. For the British group then, deprivation and marginalization occurs as the result of ‘arbitrary favoring’ by a distant State of one group over another. For Americans, social position, as largely based upon wealth, is ostensibly surmountable in an economy that encourages individual agency. Gest’s argument for a correlation between degrees of perceived deprivation and tendencies to engage in anti-system behaviors makes excellent sense, although his delineation of anti-system behaviors is, in places, speculative. The metric that provides one of the most glaring examples of a US white working class shift toward far-right radicalism is the large numbers of

respondents (65 percent) who voiced support for a hypothetical third party centered on ‘stopping mass immigration, providing American jobs for American workers, preserving America’s Christian heritage and stopping the threat of Islam’, a platform that, as Gest notes, mirrors that of the British National Party (208). But, as Gest understands, politics are as much about candidates, histories, and more than ever, personalities. Because of this, support of a hypothetical party platform isn’t conclusive evidence that America’s white working class is embracing the far-right. It is, rather, one piece of a composite that seeks to explain political attitudes and behaviors as relational, according to subjects’ perceived positioning in social hierarchies.

It’s difficult to discuss white working class politics without attending to racism and xenophobia, particularly in the current political moment. Gest understands this, and he explores the implications of shifting formations of class-consciousness and mechanisms of social mobility with attention to the pejorative beliefs his subjects sometimes reveal. He does not level a blanket dismissal of white working class disaffection, or support for far-right politics, as solely a byproduct of racism or xenophobia, even as several of his subjects deploy coded (and not so coded) language and imagery of both, in their discussions of social programs, such as welfare in Youngstown and immigrant influx in East London. Instead, while acknowledging both racism and xenophobia, Gest broadens the discussion to articulate some of the causal factors for white working class perceptions of their own adversarial minority status. He explains that the decline of unions and the disinvestment in local politics that once provided some means of organizing around class-based interests, has, in part, fomented mobilization around a default identity of disenfranchised whiteness. Compounding this stymieing of a broad, inclusive, working class is the dominance of corrupt, single-party politics that has entrenched political apathy and withdrawal.

Gest also finds that the built environments of post-industrial cityscapes nurture a crippling nostalgia, acting as physical reminders of both loss and possibility, and that, in Youngstown, residents are ‘reluctant to alter the structure of their city, desperately preserving what’s left of a bygone era in anticipation of its resurrection’. To be sure, the nostalgic impulses here are strong, and can be debilitating, but I also wonder if this is becoming a rehearsed narrative, or perhaps a generational one. Recently, the city has accepted the help of the National Guard for a pilot demolition program, City Council is moving forward with a planned amphitheater and green space, and, despite what Trump promised, few are actually waiting for the mills to come back – in fact, the amphitheater will be built on the site of a demolished mill. Youngstown is trying to do what Gest urges in his conclusion: to ‘challenge nostalgia with hope’, but, as he makes plain, this requires opportunity for social and real capital, that, thus far, neither political party has delivered, for as he notes, working class voters ‘are rational’, and they want candidates to take their grievance seriously (200). What makes Gest’s book important, then, and a really good read, is his fundamental argument that the white working class has been adversely affected by myriad forces and systemic breaches—and that understanding these factors, along with their social, economic, and psychic effects is critical for any rebuilding of progressive working class politics.

Reviewer Bio

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