

Table of Contents

Editorial

Sarah Attfield and Liz Giuffre

Articles

‘Ping Ping Ping / I break things’: Productive Disruption in the Working-Class Poetry of Jan Beatty, Sandra Cisneros, and Wanda Coleman

Carrie Conners

Brutal Youth: Colin MacInnes and the Architecture of the Welfare State

Simon Lee

I Was a Retail Salesperson: An Examination of Two Memoirs About Working in Retail

Brittany R. Clark

Reframing Solidarity: Company Magazine as Family Album

Courtney Maloney

Breaking Through the Concrete Ceiling: Tradeswomen in the United States Tell Their Stories of Struggle and Success

Heidi E. Wagner

Occupying the Picket Line: Labor and Occupy in South Central Indiana

Joseph Varga

The Moral Economy of Department Stores’ Working-Class and their Class Identity

Alejandro Marambio-Tapia

Working-Class Culture as Political Participation: Reading Trump as Revolt Against a Middle-Class Public Sphere

Liberty Kohn

Interview

‘A Little Crow in the Tree’: Growing Inequality and White Working-Class Politics in the U.S.

Lawrence M. Eppard, Arlie Hochschild, Richard Wilkinson

Book Reviews

Linkon, Sherry (2018) *The Half-Life of Deindustrialization: Working-Class Writing about Economic Restructuring*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, Mi.

Review by Christine J. Walley

Coles, Nicholas and Paul Lauter, eds. (2017) *A History of American Working-Class Literature*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK

Review by John Lennon and Magnus Nilsson

Barrett, James R. (2017) *History from the Bottom Up & the Inside Out: Ethnicity, Race, and Identity in Working-Class History*, Duke University Press, Durham, NC

Review by Lou Martin

Ocejo, Richard E. (2017) *Masters of Craft: Old Jobs in the New Urban Economy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ

Viscelli, Steve (2016) *The Big Rig: Trucking and the Decline of the American Dream*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Ca.

Review by Colby King and Jacob Bibeault

Fasanella, Marc (2017) *Images of Optimism*, (with essay by Leslie Umberger and chronology by Paul S. D'Ambrosio), Pomegranate, Portland, Or.

Review by Janet Zandy

Faue, Elizabeth (2017) *Rethinking the American Labor Movement*, Routledge, New York, NY.

Review by Joseph Varga

Volume 3 Issue 1: Editorial

Sarah Attfield, University of Technology Sydney

Liz Giuffre, University of Technology Sydney

The Journal of Working-Class Studies is now in its third year and is proud to continue to feature an impressive range of content. As editors we are struck by the momentum that the journal specifically, and the area broadly, continues to gather. This is in no small part due to the energy of the members of the Working-Class Studies Association, and we thank those members and the organisation's allies for their continued activities of reading, sharing, reviewing and generally supporting the journal as it develops.

Volume Three, Issue One is the result of a 'general call for submissions' rather than a specialist call. The result is a collection that is diverse in scope and perspectives, but not without common themes. We have grouped this issue's collection according to focus, but this is just a 'serving suggestion' for the reader. The order itself is not particularly critical, but there is a flow. As always, it is possible to either read the issue as a collection, perhaps most conveniently accessed as the one PDF file, or in sections.

The issue begins with a collection of articles exploring the relationship between working-class life and literature. In "'Ping Ping Ping / I break things": Productive Disruption in the Working-Class Poetry of Jan Beatty, Sandra Cisneros, and Wanda Coleman', Carrie Connors explores the relationship between creative practices and lived working-class experience. With a focus on poetry, particularly that by American women, Connors gives poetry as an art form specific context and advocates for the consideration of both the content *and* form that the writers have chosen. The article will appeal to readers already familiar with the poets, as well as those coming to their work for the first time. Next, Simon Lee explores Colin MacInnes' London trilogy in 'Brutal Youth: Colin MacInnes and the Architecture of the Welfare State'. Like Connors, Lee's article is accessible to those who may not already be familiar with the author, but also provides rich detail to extend readers who want to know more. The depth Lee presents, particularly in exploring the physical architecture of the setting for the books, is something we are proud to be able to foster in this journal. The article rewards readers from many disciplines interested in exploring MacInnes' world.

In 'I Was a Retail Salesperson: An Examination of Two Memoirs About Working in Retail', Brittany R. Clark examines the relationship between written and lived experiences of retail workers. Using Barbara Ehrenreich's *Nickel and Dimed: On Not Getting by in America* (originally published in 2001) and Caitlin Kelly's *Malled: My Unintentional Career in Retail* (2011) as comparison points, Clark questions why working-class experience is featured in these works and presents an important counterpoint to existing narratives. Importantly, questions of exclusion and inclusion are raised, and provide the reader with a useful case study to consider in isolation, or to continue to apply in other similar settings. Following then is 'Reframing Solidarity: Company Magazine as Family Album' by Courtney Maloney – a study of how working-class relationships can be traced and reconsidered by exploring trade literature. Focusing specifically on the magazine 'Men and Steel', Maloney shows how the publication became a place to foster, promote and cement solidarity. It is a fascinating approach to these texts. Following is 'Reframing Solidarity: Company Magazine as Family Album' by Courtney

Maloney – a study of how working-class relationships can be traced and reconsidered by exploring trade literature. Focusing specifically on the company magazine *Men and Steel*, Maloney shows how the publication became a place to foster, promote and cement solidarity. It is a fascinating approach to such texts.

In the middle of this issue Heidi E. Wagner presents ‘Breaking Through the Concrete Ceiling: Tradeswomen in the United States Tell Their Stories of Struggle and Success’. As a minority in an already underappreciated group of working-class people, Wagner’s championship of the tradeswomen featured is a valuable contribution to working-class scholarship, ensuring that a diversity of experience (and often, struggle) is placed on the official record and given due respect. Next is ‘Occupying the Picket Line: Labor and Occupy in South Central Indiana’ by Joseph Varga – also an important documenting of presence and force of otherwise isolated workers. Of particular importance is the ‘Lessons Learned’ section of this piece, where Varga presents a thoughtful evaluation of the motivations, struggles, wins and losses of the striking labor union and the Occupy Bloomington group in South Central Indiana in Fall, 2011. Revisiting the events with hindsight and careful consideration, the article serves as a strong case study to inform future action as well as illuminate the past.

We move next to a new area of consideration for *The Journal of Working-Class Studies*. Alejandro Marambio-Tapia’s ‘The Moral Economy of Department Stores’ Working-Class and their Class Identity’ presents a study of two cities in Chile; Santiago, the capital, and Copiapó, a mining town in the North. Marambio-Tapia’s study is based on interviews with workers in both cities and invites international, specifically English speaking readers, to consider the nuanced experiences of workers in this region and their motivations for using department store credit schemes. The article provides an important comparison point to native Anglophone narratives and Marambio-Tapia’s work is generous in providing an easy access point.

The continued impact of Donald Trump’s Presidency for American people is also covered in this issue. In ‘Working Class Culture as Political Participation: Reading Trump as Revolt Against a Middle-Class Public Sphere’, Liberty Kohn explores Trump’s ascension as a reaction to class exclusion rather than a display of it. Kohn’s consideration provides context for perceptions of alienation for white working-class Americans in the years leading up to the Trump election, as well as a providing a reminder of the systematic and institutional strategies used to convince voters from the pro and anti-Trump campaigns. The analysis is thorough and timely, especially as the US approaches the mid-term election cycle later this year.

An interview-based article is also included in this issue. In ‘A Little Crow in the Tree’: Growing Inequality and White Working-Class Politics in the U.S.’, Lawrence M. Eppard interviews widely cited scholars Arlie Hochschild (author of *The Second Shift*, among others) and Richard Wilkinson (author of *The Spirit Level*, among others). The resulting discussion provides insight into these scholars’ work as well as a nuanced commentary of contemporary working-class experience, or the ‘working-class squeeze’ – with each interviewee drawing on a variety of expertise to further the discussion. The tone is accessible and inspiring – drawing the reader into the energy of the conversation while also appealing for further engagement beyond dialogue and towards action.

In this issue we are also proud to feature several book reviews. These include Christine J. Walley’s review of Sherry Linkon’s *The Half-Life of Deindustrialization: Working-Class Writing about Economic Restructuring*; John Lennon and Magnus Nilsson’s review of Nicolas Coles’ and Paul Lauter’s edited collection *A History of American Working-Class Literature*;

Lou Martin's review of James R Barrett's *History from the Bottom Up & the Inside Out: Ethnicity, Race, and Identity in Working-Class History*; a combined review of Richard E. Ocejo's *Masters of Craft: Old Jobs in the New Urban Economy* and Steve Viscelli's *The Big Rig: Trucking and the Decline of the American Dream* by Colby King and Jacob Bibeault; Janet Zandy's review of Marc Fasanella's *Images of Optimism* and Joseph Varga's review of Elizabeth Faue's *Rethinking the American Labor Movement*.

We hope readers find the articles informative, engaging and inspiring and we welcome any correspondence relating to the journal (editorial@workingclassstudiesjournal.com) as the field of working-class studies continues to expand globally.

‘Ping Ping Ping / I break things’: Productive Disruption in the Working- Class Poetry of Jan Beatty, Sandra Cisneros, and Wanda Coleman

Carrie Conners, LaGuardia Community College, City University of New York

Abstract

This essay explores how working-class lives are represented in the poetry of three American women poets, Jan Beatty, Sandra Cisneros, and Wanda Coleman. It discusses how the poets’ working-class backgrounds affect their poetics and their perceptions of poetic craft. Through analysis, I show how their poetry shares a sense of defiant resistance, communicated through imagery of violence, labor, and sexual pleasure, responding to societal and institutional limitations placed on working-class women and working-class women writers.

Keywords:

Poetry, working-class poetry, working-class women poets, American literature

Introduction

In January 2018 the satirical news show *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee* featured a segment about media coverage of the American working class. It emphasized that media coverage since the 2016 U.S. presidential election has disproportionately focused on the lives and concerns of white male industrial workers despite the fact that the working class is much more diverse, in terms of gender, race, and job type. In the segment, Bee failed to find any working-class people to interview in a bar because the workers, all white male industrial laborers, were already being interviewed by members of the media. After this failed attempt, Bee was taken to a room full of working-class folks who were not already bombarded with interview requests, all women and people of color. Their conversation, though funny, highlighted serious issues that these workers face, including quality of life matters and real economic anxiety, not the coded ‘economic anxiety’ that came to stand in for racism and xenophobia during the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Bee cheekily concluded that these media-neglected women and minority workers need a Bruce Springsteen-esque anthem to garner the attention of the mainstream media. The proposed solution, though hilarious and obviously in jest, seemed a bit futile. There have already been numerous hit songs about working-class women and people of color, including Tracy Chapman’s ‘Fast Car,’ Donna Summer’s ‘She Works Hard for the Money,’ Dolly Parton’s ‘9 to 5,’ and The Bangle’s ‘Manic Monday,’ yet the media and cultural imagination still overwhelmingly link the label of working-class to white male industrial workers.

Thanks to the work of scholars, including Paul Lauter and Janet Zandy, working-class women poets have not been as neglected as the women workers in Bee’s segment. But, contemporary working-class women poets still have not garnered the critical attention and treatment that they

merit. Scholarship on recent American working-class poetry written by male poets, such as Philip Levine, still outpaces that focused on their female colleagues. To try and address this disparity, in this article I will explore how working-class lives are represented in the poetry of several contemporary American women poets, Jan Beatty, Sandra Cisneros, and Wanda Coleman. I chose to analyze the work of these poets in part because they are from different geographical and racial backgrounds in order to highlight the richness and diversity of American women's contemporary working-class poetry.

Despite these differences in their backgrounds, there are many commonalities to be found in their poetry. Their work shares a sense of defiance and resistance, created by destructive and/or violent imagery, imagery of labor, and explicit depictions of sexuality. The proletarian poets who saw art as a weapon spring to mind when reading their poems. Proletarian poets believed that literature should be used to change people's minds. Cary Nelson, discussing poetry written between 1910-1945, much of it proletarian, claims that the poetry '[h]ad the power to help people not only come to understand the material conditions of their existence but also to envision ways of changing them' (Nelson 1989, p.124). Similarly, the work of Beatty, Cisneros, and Coleman seeks to explore and represent the lives of the working class and to alter others' conceptions of working-class women and working-class women writers. Their work enacts the disruption necessary to carve out a space for themselves as writers, which sometimes involves pushing back against the expectations of their working-class communities, and often requires breaking down barriers in the writing establishment. They resist the scripts assigned to working-class women. Part of this resistance is an insistence on physical, often sexual, pleasure. This celebration of sexual pleasure runs counter to societal expectations of women's behavior; emphasizes that their bodies are their own, not just vessels for work or objects of pleasure for men; and resists the numbing effects of capitalism.

Solidarity: Backgrounds and Connections

Beatty, Cisneros, and Coleman began regularly publishing poetry in the 1980s and 1990s. In the same time period, many influential volumes of poetry that explored working-class lives appeared, including Philip Levine's National Book Award winning *What Work Is* (1991); Jim Daniels's *Punching Out* (1990) and *M-80* (1993); and Jeanne Bryner's *Blind Horse* (1999). Several critics offer hypotheses about why the 1980s and 1990s in particular saw such robust representation of American working-class poetry. In *Inside Jobs: Essays on the New Work Writing*, Tom Wayman cites 'increased access to post-secondary education since World War II' as one reason for the uptick in working-class poetry (Wayman 1983, p. 24). As Jim Daniels, a poet who frequently writes about working-class issues and lives, points out in his essay 'Work Poetry and Working-Class Poetry: The Zip Code of the Heart,' several presses and literary journals dedicated to publishing poetry of work emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, including Bottom Dog Press and *Blue Collar Review* (Daniels 2005, pp. 115-116). I would add to this list of possible reasons for the increase in publication of working-class poetry during that time period economic shifts that affected the working class—including deindustrialization, the rise of the service economy, and the weakening of unions. Criticism of Reagan and George H.W. Bush's 'trickle-down economics' and how it squeezed the U.S. middle and working classes also augmented cultural awareness of working-class issues and impelled writers to voice these concerns and represent the lives of people dealing with these realities. The emphasis on the working class during this time period can be seen in other sectors, such as the entertainment industry, which saw the television sitcom *Roseanne* near the top of the ratings for the late 1980s and the better part of the 1990s; successful films including *Do the Right Thing*, *9 to 5*, and

Silkwood; and numerous hit songs by musicians including Tracy Chapman, Dolly Parton, Billy Joel, Donna Summer, John Mellencamp, and Bruce Springsteen.

Sandra Cisneros, Jan Beatty and Wanda Coleman, directly identify as workers and as writers committed to representing the working class. In the author biographies from some of their books, in addition to emphasizing their writing accolades, their self-descriptions include a litany of other jobs. On her webpage, Cisneros describes herself as ‘an activist poet, short story writer, novelist, essayist and artist. Writing for over 50 years, her work explores the lives of the working-class’ (Cisneros 2018). Her 1995 volume of poetry *Loose Woman*, mentions that ‘[s]he has worked as a teacher of high school drop-outs, a poet-in-the-schools, a college recruiter, an arts administrator, and most recently as a visiting writer at a number of universities around the country’ (Cisneros 1995). Beatty’s bio in her 1995 book *Mad River* indicates that she: ‘has held jobs as a welfare caseworker, a rape counselor, and a nurse’s aide. She has worked in maximum security prisons, hoagie huts, burger joints, jazz clubs, and diners’ (Beatty 1995). Wanda Coleman’s author description in her 1998 book *Bathwater Wine*, includes the following: ‘As a struggling young welfare mother, she was determined to become a writer. She has worked as a medical secretary, magazine editor, journalist, and scriptwriter’ (Coleman 1998). Including these jobs in literary biographies next to their awards and fellowships shows how these writers value work. These inclusions also emphasize that these writers had to work in order to support their literary production. They want this fact to be known because it shows the material conditions affecting working-class writers, specifically working-class women writers. These lists show respect for other people working those jobs, that their labor and societal contributions should be respected, and also that people working in those jobs are more than those jobs. The medical secretary or diner server has interests beyond their position and might also be a poet or an artist. Listing the jobs also emphasizes that people who work in those jobs should be represented in poetry, in art. Workers’ lives are valuable, interesting, and important.

Jan Beatty is a Pittsburgh poet who, as we can see in the epigraph from her 2002 book *Boneshaker*, links her recurrent poetic subject of working-class life with the act of poetic creation: ‘What is the current that makes machinery, that makes it crackle, what is the current that presents a long line and a necessary waist. What is this current. What is the wind, what is it?’ (Beatty 2002). Although Gertrude Stein’s *Tender Buttons* might not immediately conjure associations of working-class life, in the context of Beatty’s work—the poem that opens the book is titled ‘Machine Shop of Love’—Stein’s words evoke the industrial settings, sexuality, and electricity that pervade her poems.

She frequently writes about her own working experiences and those of others, as we can see from a small sampling of her poem’s titles: ‘A Waitress's Instructions on Tipping or Get the Cash Up and Don't Waste My Time,’ ‘Cruising with the Check-out Girls,’ ‘The Waitress Angels Speak to Me in a Vision,’ and ‘My Father Teaches Me Solidarity.’ In ‘Sticking It to the Man,’ Beatty’s respect for other working-class women is conveyed in the description of one of the poem’s subjects, a bank teller:

Lateeka’a working, my favorite teller—
she’s got wild nail art & fire red/
feather extensions. [...]
Lateeka & I always talk hair & makeup,
she’s in school for accounting. (Beatty 2013b p.58)

Beatty's speaker knows details of the bank teller's life and her aspirations, has a friendly relationship with her, which starkly contrasts with the impatient man in line behind the speaker who shouts about the wait and storms out of the bank. This is just one example of care for other working-class people in Beatty's poems, which even show concern for difficult working-class customers in poems describing work as a waitress, including the eponymous woman in 'Louise' who inexplicably wants 'a cheeseburger with no cheese,' not 'a hamburger' (Beatty 2002, p. 31). This sense of sympathy probably stems from recognition that these people also had to face the difficult situations that Beatty describes in 'I Knew I Wasn't Poor,' deciding whether to 'buy tampons or birth control pills,' combating hunger by hoarding leftovers from rich restaurant customers instead of tossing the food, and foregoing insurance for a car (Beatty 2017, p. 41). The speaker's solutions to these problems aren't always legal (shoplifting) or wise ('thr[owing] parking tickets in / the backseat with a flurry,' but instead of feeling 'shame,' the speaker feels 'accomplishment' for figuring out 'how to live' in difficult circumstances, just as Lateeka, Louise and other working-class women have to do (Beatty 2017, p. 41).

Born in Chicago, growing up there and in Mexico in a working-class family, later living in San Antonio, Sandra Cisneros explores the lives of working-class people, frequently Chicanas, in her poetry. As we see in Beatty's work, Cisneros also connects laboring with writing. In the titular poem from her 1995 collection *Loose Woman*, Cisneros's speaker declares:

I am the woman of myth and bullshit.
 (True. I authored some of it.)
 I built my little house of ill repute.
 Brick by brick. Labored,
 loved and masoned it. (Cisneros 1995, p. 112)

Playfully using terminology of construction, the speaker depicts her identity formation, as a woman and a writer, as an act of physical labor. The epigraph by Impressionist painter Mary Cassatt, another independent woman artist, from her 1987 volume *My Wicked Wicked Ways: Poems* echoes that stanza's casting of artistic creation as work: 'I can live alone and I love to work' (Cisneros 1987). She gives a voice to those workers, especially working-class Chicana women, underrepresented in literature, and categorizes her own writing as work. In this way she is not apart from the working class but a part of it; her work is to represent their lives.

In 'Las Girlfriends,' a poem that depicts snapshots of the lives of the speaker's working-class friends, we see this solidarity enacted in the opening stanza:

Tip the barmaid in tight jeans.
 She's my friend.
 Been to hell and back again.
 I've been there too. (Cisneros 1995, p. 105)

The speaker implores the reader to treat her friend well and pay her for her work, acknowledging that they have both lived through tough times. At this point, the speaker's command seems directed at a generic reader, but the first word of the second stanza, 'Girlfriend,' reveals that the speaker is addressing a specific reader, a girlfriend, a woman, or a person who identifies and sympathizes with women, who can relate to the speaker's contention that, though she 'believe[s] in Ghandi,' 'some nights nothing says it / quite precise like a Lone Star / cracked on someone's head' (Cisneros 1995, p. 105). Other girlfriends are

introduced in the poem, their often violent transgressions detailed or hinted at, such as ‘Little Rose of San Antone,’ ‘the queen bee of kick-*nalga*,’ of whom the speaker advises, ‘When you go out with her, / don’t wear your good clothes’ (Cisneros 1995, p. 106). The speaker includes her own act of violence when she ‘kicked a cowboy in the butt / who made a grab for Terry’s ass,’ claiming ‘it was all / of Texas I was kicking, / and all our asses on the line’ (Cisneros 1995, p. 105). These acts of violence are not characterized as isolated events, but connected, each one performed in defense of all the girlfriends and the trauma that they are made to endure, being harassed on the job and on their leisure time, treated as if they are servants or objects for others’ pleasure. At the end of the poem, someone declares of the girlfriends, ‘Ya’ll wicked mean,’ but the speaker denies it, characterizes the outbursts as somethings deeper than meanness:

I tell you, nights like these,
something bubbles from
the tips of our pointy boots
to the top of our coyote yowl. (Cisneros 1995, p. 106)

The girlfriends’ frustration and anger is ever-present; they keep it to a simmer until something sets them off to cause it to ‘bubble’ over. It’s a shared state of existence, difficult to endure, that Cisneros acknowledges and honors.

Wanda Coleman lived and worked in Los Angeles and made her experiences and those of others who lived there the subjects of her poems. Although Coleman wrote drama and fiction, the fact that so much of her writing takes the form of poetry is not by chance; as Jarvis McInnis points out, she predominantly wrote poetry because she could do so in the brief spaces of time between her various jobs and responsibilities, including waiting tables, typing, and caring for her children (McInnis 2014, pp. 190-91). Much of Coleman’s work explores the intersections of gender, race, and class, as we can see in ‘South Central Los Angeles Death Trip, 1982’ from her collection *Mercurochrome*, a poem that presents a series of individuals’ encounters with police violence. Each section emphasizes the victim’s gender, race, and work to create a picture of each individual’s life—such as the 8 ½ months-pregnant woman who ‘had just gotten home from working / the register at the club and her feet were / killing her’ (Coleman 2001, p. 144)—and to emphasize that poor and working-class minorities, particularly African-Americans, are too often the victims of police violence.

In addition to their on-the-job and life struggles, Coleman shows the difficulties of finding work for working-class women of color. In ‘Job Hunter’ from her 1987 volume *Heavy Daughter Blues* Coleman casts the speaker as an outlaw in a western, the job interview a ‘showdown’ (Coleman 1987, p. 18). The speaker stresses that as an interviewee, she must combat the racial prejudice of the bosses, typically white men. The speaker wonders ‘what’s it about me that frightens these dough-flesh / desk-riders? Something outlaw’ (Coleman 1987, p. 18). Although the speaker claims her undoing in a second interview is due to ‘the sheriff’ ‘an IBM executive’ typewriter that ‘shoots 120 words per secretary’ and is ‘too fast for [her],’ the poem shows that the real killer is the racial discrimination that ends the interviewee’s chances before the interview even begins, leading to the speaker’s rejection or ‘death,’ which Coleman characterizes as ‘an elevator on its way / down to the lobby’ (Coleman 1987, p. 18). The poetry of all three writers conveys a sense of solidarity among others through shared experiences, represents a community of working-class people, a feature common to working-class writing observed by critics including Paul Lauter, Janet Zandy, and Karen Kovacic (Lauter 2014, p. 65; Zandy 1990, p. 11; Kovacic 2001, p. 35).

Beyond showing solidarity with working-class people in their poetry, Beatty, Cisneros, and Coleman have repeatedly shown solidarity with each other. Beatty cites both Cisneros and Coleman as influences, as people ‘who gave me permission to write through their writing’ (Beatty 2013a). Beatty had Cisneros as a guest on her long-running radio show *Prosody* and in her 2013 book *The Switching/Yard* she has a poem titled ‘Reading Wanda Coleman on the California Zephyr’ which includes the lines ‘Iowa needs some Wanda Coleman, someone who’s / not afraid to say it hard’ (Beatty 2013b, p. 25), high praise from a writer whose most recent collection of new and selected poems *Jackknife* begins with the dedication, ‘for women everywhere / who are told to be nice / and to shut up—’ (Beatty 2017). Coleman wrote a poem ‘Thunderhead’ in *Mercurochrome* based on Cisneros’s ‘Cloud’ in *Loose Woman*. Cisneros and Coleman have written blurbs for Beatty’s books. Of Beatty’s 2002 book *Boneshaker* Cisneros writes: ‘“Wild girl fire” is what Jan Beatty calls it, “that white-hot tearing” that ignites into art or self-destruction. Poetry against all odds. Poetry as the death-defying act. Poetry as the wild choice for a girl running reckless from the working class. Between odd jobs and odd loves, Beatty writes from the tender heart without flinching.’ Beatty’s 2008 *Red Sugar* inspired Coleman to claim:

Having mastered the art of fury, Jan Beatty does not merely write a poem, she wrenches it into being, slaps it on the page, applies the flames of her passions, then gentles it into the sweating fleshy sweetness of childhood hungers, longings inspired by loneliness or loss, starkly erotic yearnings—all served in deliciously monstrous proportions, to be savored like a long slow French, that perfect tongue of a kiss that sets the soul on throb.

These assessments of Beatty’s work are equally applicable to the poetry of Cisneros and Coleman. Theirs, too, is a poetry that ‘ignites,’ ‘wrenches,’ and ‘gentles.’ A ‘wild choice’ ‘to be savored.’

Isolation and Marginalization

Working-class women with creative aspirations face many obstacles, even in comparison to working-class men. The difference can be seen in Philip Levine’s award-winning poetry volume that focuses on working-class lives, *What Work Is*. In the collection we see working-class people with artistic ambitions, but they are often male. For example, the speaker’s brother in the volume’s titular poem works the night shift at the Cadillac factory and spends his days studying German so that he can sing Wagner (Levine 1991, p. 18). Smart, creative working-class women are depicted differently in the book. About a female classmate in ‘Coming of Age in Michigan,’ described as ‘a skinny whiz in Math and English,’ Levine’s speaker states,

Noel Baker
did not become a famous woman: it was too late
to enter the fiction of F. Scott Fitzgerald, too early
for her to become the governor of Michigan,
which hardly makes you famous. (Levine 1991, p. 66).

The options left to Noel Baker to achieve success in the late 1940s during which the poem is set are sparse. Playing on her last name, which she shares with F. Scott Fitzgerald’s character Jordan Baker from *The Great Gatsby*, Levine’s speaker deems Noel Baker too late to be

represented in such literature, let alone as possessing the option of penning literature like Fitzgerald or Levine himself, despite her English skills. At the time, as Levine's speaker notes, opportunities in politics for women were also rare. Levine captures the difficulties that women faced in the contrasting lines 'boys growing into men' and 'girls fighting to be people' (Levine 1991, p. 67). While boys face growing pains, girls must struggle to be recognized as humans. Near the poem's conclusion, the speaker recalls seeing Noel Baker again years later 'talking too much and too loudly' in a liquor store, suggesting that these gendered societal limitations drove her to alcoholism.

Although the poetry of Beatty, Cisneros, and Coleman often depicts events that occurred later than the 1940s of Levine's poem, it frequently describes the difficult position of working-class women poets, recalling the frustrations experienced by Noel Baker. To become poets, working-class women writers often defy familial and social expectations, creating a sense of isolation from people they love. They also face resistance from the writing establishment, one that is overwhelming middle and upper class and publishes male writers with far greater frequency, leaving them marginalized. On top of it all, they must balance the economic pressures that accompany working-class life with the time and energy required for poetic production.

In Beatty's 'My Father Teaches Me to Dream,' a poem that captures a lecture from her late father, a working-class Pittsburgh man, in his voice, the speaker declares '*all this other stuff you're looking for— / it ain't there. / Work is work*' (Beatty 2002, p. 25). His sentiment echoes Levine's thought of Noel Baker, that she had limited options in life, that work isn't something that fulfills one's dreams or passions. The poem conveys the familial tensions that many working-class writers experience. To pursue a career that differs from those of the family creates confusion, rifts. Some of this tension may stem from a place of protection, not wanting the budding writer to face rejection from those who may see her as an outsider because of her class. Some of the resistance may result from the conflict between the concept of work as one's passion and work as a means to an end. Beatty's father's conception of work acts as a coping mechanism for him, as a way to get through the experience of work that doesn't fulfill him. Obviously Beatty chose another path and turned words dissuading her from pursuing something other than unfulfilling labor into art, simultaneously legitimizing her voice, her stories, and the voice and story of her father. But, that path is one that often results in a distancing from family members, creating a sense of isolation which is compounded by the feelings of isolation that are inherent to working-class identity.¹

In the prefatory poem to the rerelease of her 1987 volume *My Wicked Wicked Ways*, Cisneros depicts her decision to be a poet as one not offered to her, as a crime that she committed to escape her limited options that resembled those of Levine's Noel Baker:

My first felony—I took up with poetry.
For this penalty, the rice burned.
Mother warned I'd never wife

Wife? A woman like me
whose choice was rolling pin or factory.
An absurd vice, this wicked wanton
writer's life. (Cisneros 1987, p. x)

¹ Indeed, when Beatty describes her difficult customer Louise, mentioned earlier, she claims 'I know her faded rose blouse and lumpy / wool skirt say: working class: apart' (Beatty 2002, p. 32).

Cisneros eschewed domestic labor represented by the rolling pin and physical labor as a factory worker, but, interestingly, her casting off of these options is described using a verb that conjures the factory: ‘Winched the door with poetry and fled. / For good. And grieved I’d gone / when I was so alone’ (Cisneros 1987, p. x). That Cisneros ‘winched the door with poetry’ suggests that she does not leave the working-class behind when she departs to become a writer. Her poetry is her work. Despite this connection, it was a struggle to carve out a new option, one that brought a sense of loneliness and pain.

In her poetry Wanda Coleman expresses the difficulties of her writing life as an African-American working mother and often stresses the differences between her experience as an artist and those of other poets with different, more privileged, subject positions and material conditions. In one section of *Mercurochrome*, ‘Retro Rogue Anthology,’ in the words of Malin Pereira from her article on that section, ‘Coleman supplants, corrects, appreciates, extends, and critiques many of the poems in a 1969 anthology titled *The Contemporary Poets: American Poetry Since 1940*, edited by Mark Strand, as well as other poems by recognized poets of the modern period’ (Pereira 2014). Pereira’s article focuses on how Coleman’s poems claim a space in the American poetic canon, but the poems also emphasize the challenges and realities of a working African-American woman poet. In one poem after Allen Ginsberg’s ‘A Supermarket in California’ titled ‘Supermarket Surfer,’ Coleman’s speaker is not shopping for images like Ginsberg’s was, but more mundane ‘pudding and citrus-free hand lotion,’ does not find Whitman in her 2am shopping trip, declares ‘hang ten toward checkout is a certainty,’ while Ginsberg’s speaker somehow never passes the cashier (Coleman 2001, p. 194; Ginsberg 1982, pp. 182-83). Coleman concludes the poem on a more solitary, somber note than that of Ginsberg’s:

the only Walt here is Disney
the pork chops are killing me
i am a nobody angel
my heart is a frozen delicacy (Coleman 2001, p. 194).

Although, as Pereira also observes, there is unmistakable reverence for Ginsberg and his poetry in Coleman’s poem, Coleman stresses the differences between the material conditions she experiences and the ones that Ginsberg did (Pereira 2014). Hers offers lackluster goods and does not end by communing with a poet mentor. It takes care to emphasize the material concerns that keep her grocery shopping thoughts more down to earth than Ginsberg’s. Also, as we’ve seen in Beatty’s and Cisneros’s poems, there is a sense of isolation here. The speaker doesn’t feel the immediate connection with writers past and present or with other shoppers in the store.

Embodied Resistance

Work’s effects on the body are addressed by all three writers, as we can see in Coleman’s ‘Identifying Marks,’ a poem that lists the physical marks on the speaker’s body, most of which can be attributed to the stresses of a life as a working-class woman writer. These include the writing-related finger callus from ‘pencils & pens held too firmly’; ‘assorted dark splotches’ from ‘stasis dermatitis,’ caused by ‘acute and/or / chronic stress’; pregnancy stretch marks; multiple scars from fights with lovers including a ‘puffy right lip’ from a ‘drunk louisianan boyfriend who stole ten dollars from purse’; a spot under an eye from a ‘severe skin eruption following employer’s threat to fire / & sudden expected return of estranged second husband’;

and finally, ‘shadows circling eyes,’ undoubtedly resulting from the stress that all of these mark-leaving experiences caused (Coleman 1987, p. 198).

Beatty emphasizes how working-class women’s bodies are commodified in the workplace. In ‘The Waitress Angels Speak to Me in a Vision’ the waitress speaker describes ‘4:00 am flashbacks of men / trying to put their hands on me, regulars / who think they own me,’ showing how sexual harassment haunts victims (Beatty 2002, p. 55). In ‘Shooter’ the speaker dreams of shooting multiple men who harassed her on the job, including a customer who ‘asked about [her] ‘hole,’’ a ‘cook who grabbed me from behind in the restaurant kitchen,’ a ‘boss who gave [her] a ride home wanted a blow job/pushed [her] head down,’ and a ‘restaurant manager who told [her] to grow a thicker skin & wear a skimpy uniform’ (Beatty 2008, p. 14). This imagined revenge violence recalls Cisneros’s speaker’s actual violent act in ‘Las Girlfriends’ when she kicks a man in the butt because he tried to grab her friend’s.

Yet, in the poetry of all three writers, the body of the woman speaker is most often described in terms of her own physical pleasure. Part of this reveling in pleasure seems to push against notions of ‘the good girl,’ as we see in the titles of Cisneros’s poetry collections *Loose Woman* and *My Wicked Wicked Ways*, but there is also an element of reclamation in the descriptions of pleasure, claiming their bodies, the experience of inhabiting their bodies, as their own, not as objects to give men pleasure or as vessels to perform work to uphold capitalist society. This reclamation and celebration of sexuality is particularly significant because of the pejorative ways that working-class women’s sexuality has been stereotyped, often as promiscuous and lacking moral standards. The ‘classy vs. trashy’ dichotomy frequently employed when describing women’s sexuality illustrates this stereotype as does research that suggests a class dimension in the phenomenon of slut-shaming². Racist stereotypes and religion-based cultural norms further impact the expression of sexuality for many working-class women of color. Instead of self-repressing by avoiding the subject of sexuality in their poetry or trying to combat these stereotypes with reactionary portrayals of chastity or purity, Beatty, Cisneros, and Coleman assert sexual agency in a way that underscores working-class women’s personal autonomy.

Cisneros’s poems unapologetically celebrate sexuality and pleasure, as we see in the speaker’s self-description in ‘Loose Woman’: ‘Rowdy. Indulgent to excess. / My sin and success— / I think of me to gluttony’ (Cisneros 1995, p. 113). In ‘Christ You Delight Me,’ the title playfully, subversively blending sex and religion, the speaker revels in the memory of encounters with a lover and declares that, despite being away from the lover, she has to ‘hunker / My cunt close to the earth, / This little pendulum of mine / Ringing, ringing, ringing’ (Cisneros 1995, p. 133). Boldly owning her indulgences, Cisneros asserts her body as her own while flouting traditional expectations of womanhood, including passivity and chastity, especially pronounced in Latino/a culture. As Laura Paz describes in her article analyzing Cisneros’s prose:

The traditionally ‘proper’ role of a Mexican woman is to be submissive to the male figures in her life, to be sexually inactive, and to take care of the home and children. A woman who breaks out of these constraints is someone who is considered a whore—a woman whom men will use for sex but will never marry. [...] [Cisneros]

² ‘‘Good Girls’’: Gender, Social Class, and Slut Discourse on Campus’ by Elizabeth A. Armstrong, Laura T. Hamilton, Elizabeth M. Armstrong, and J. Lotus Seeley, 2014, *Social Psychology Quarterly*, vol. 77, no.2, pp.100-122, explores the role of class in slut-shaming, concluding that women from higher social classes have more sexual privilege and are not as harmed socially by it.

employs such archetypes not to instruct girls on how to behave properly, but rather to question society's construction of them, and in turn, a Mexicana's sexuality. (Paz 2008, p. 12)

Cisneros's speaker in 'Loose Woman' does not conform to these archetypes, nor is she a woman who is being used by anyone. She acts on her own desires as she sees fit, defining her own identity.

Racist historical narratives characterized African-American women as hypersexualized. According to several theorists, efforts by African-American women to combat these harmful stereotypes, including the promotion of Victorian morals, eventually led to 'a 'politics of silence' by black women on the issue of their sexuality' (Hammonds 1994). Angela Y. Davis identifies African-American women blues singers, figures that she links to the working-class, as positive, independent models of black female sexuality. Davis characterizes the blues singers as 'emphatic examples of black female independence' who 'assert[] their right to be respected [...] as truly independent human beings with vividly articulated sexual desires' (Davis 1998, p. 20). Wanda Coleman frequently references and invokes women blues singers in her poetry, including Billie Holiday in 'Lady Sings the Blues 1969' when the speaker claims, 'i haven't been conceived yet / haven't been born / yet Lady Holiday is singing my blues' (Coleman 2003, p. 11). And, notably, Coleman's depictions of sexuality recall the sexual agency that Davis identifies in the blues women's songs, as we can see in 'To an Interloper.' Coleman's speaker tells the interloper who wants to romance her 'you are a foreigner here. / this is my skin' (Coleman 2001, p. 143), asserting her agency and independence. The speaker explains, 'the heat that cracks and dries your consciousness / is my breath on my lover's chest. you have no claim here' simultaneously acknowledging her desirability and denying the interloper access to her body (Coleman 2001, p. 143). The speaker commands respect from others while celebrating her sexuality.

By actively seeking pleasure, the poets' speakers resist a numb existence, which the stresses of working-class life, compounded by the stresses of being a woman or a woman of color in a patriarchal society plagued by racism, can lead to. Kathi Weeks describes the connection between the American work ethic and prizing of heterosexual marital monogamy under U.S. capitalism:

One of the most persistent elements of the work ethic over the course of US history is its valorization of self-control in the face of the temptations and what Daniel Rodgers characterizes as a faith in the 'sanitizing effects of constant labor' (1978, 123, 12). This same productivist asceticism, which was designed to encourage work discipline and thrift, has also served to animate the ideal of heterosexual marital monogamy' (Weeks 2011, pp. 164-65).

Weeks also unpacks the gendered uses of the word 'tramp,' a male tramp challenges the American work ethic and a female tramp poses a threat to the institution of heterosexual marriage (Weeks 2011, p. 165). The portrayals of sexual pleasure in the poets' work then, most describing sex outside of marriage or not defining the nature of the relationships between lovers, resist the confines of capitalism in addition to challenging gender and cultural norms.

In 'Ostinato Vamp' the speaker, who claims that she is 'the daughter of earthquakes / dissonant and disruptive' is a threat to capitalist society in many ways. (Coleman 2003, p. 32). Indeed

one definition of the word ‘vamp’ is ‘a woman who uses her charm or wiles to seduce and exploit men,’ a more cunning version of the female tramp Weeks describes (*Merriam Webster* 2018). The speaker repeatedly claims that she stole, a true offence to the capitalist system, ‘from god-sliding hypocrites,’ ‘shysters given / judgeships, panderers governing media, sanctioned gamblers’ among other figures who abuse the system of capitalism for their own gain (Coleman 2003, p. 32). Coleman’s refrain of ‘i stole’ is particularly clever as the titular words ‘ostinato’ and ‘vamp’ both refer to a repeated musical phrase, a defining characteristic of the blues and jazz. ‘Ostinato’ has etymological connections to ‘obstinate,’ which is apt since persistence is required to combat those who use their money and power to oppress (*Merriam Webster* 2018). Later, the speaker describes herself and her lover as ‘ready to fornicate,’ but in the next line a parenthetical describing the drudgery of work appears instead of a description of their sexual encounter, implying that the sex itself is an escape from ‘a bad season spent chained to a filing cabinet / bosses like dogs barking for important files / the rain of empty talk riving the intellect’ (Coleman 2003, p. 32). This act of sexual pleasure is form of rebellion against the limitations of work as well a return to and reclamation of the body and the mind, a celebration of, as the speaker puts it in the poem’s ending, ‘[her] splendid rock-and-roll’ (Coleman, 2003, p. 32).

Two poems in Beatty’s *Boneshaker* that depict the speaker reveling in sexual pleasure involve speeding away from her job (waitress in ‘Going Deep for Jesus’ and cashier in ‘Speaking Corvette’) in/on a vehicle (motorcycle and corvette, respectively) with a love interest, both working-class men. The poems depict the jobs and certain realities of the speakers’ lives, including a ‘run-down apartment’ and her mother’s house, as things to escape from, things that stifle pleasure. In ‘Going Deep for Jesus,’ the speaker even wants to forget her name. Sex is something that helps the speaker, as she wryly describes, ‘come / back to my self’ (Beatty 2002, p. 7). Sex is a way to become in tune with herself and her body. The speaker ‘decided god and orgasm / were the same thing’ and that ‘if god were here, she’d shove down / like a two-stroke in a rainstorm, she’d let it fly’ (Beatty 2002, p. 8). These moments of physical pleasure, orgasm and speeding down a road on a motorcycle, are figured as transcendent, and though the speaker longs to escape her job and her material conditions, she doesn’t long to escape Pittsburgh, the place where she is from. The speaker characterizes sex as an attempt ‘to shotgun a moment, to split open / our lives until / we were the mills, we were the fire’ (Beatty 2002, p. 8). The speaker longs to embody the spirit and energy of the place, she just wishes that her life in that place afforded her a better quality existence.

Carving a Space

All three poets express the need for boldness, invoke images of aggression, destruction or violence when describing the process of writing and claiming a space in the writing community. Coleman writes about the difficulty for women writers to be considered equals by male peers in ‘Poetry Lesson Number One.’ The speaker describes a group of male writers who hang out at a café and notes that ‘[n]o / women were / allowed at that table unless being schemed upon, or of / exceptional beauty’ (Coleman 1987, p. 15). The speaker ‘boldly intruded’ on their group and gave them poems of hers to read, which impressed one of the poets so much that he declared, “‘You *are* a writer, young / lady. As good a / writer as a man!’” And though the 19 year old speaker is elated by the praise, goes home ‘glowing in the dark,’ the gender discrimination that women writers face is stressed even in his attempt to compliment the speaker (Coleman 1987, p. 15).

In 'Obituary,' a poem modeled after Denise Levertov's 'The Springtime,' Coleman's speaker laments unread poets, those that are excluded from the writing establishment. She links their unheard verses with the demands of work: 'the gut-rending / sound of cogs grinding and poets / felled silent' (Coleman 1987, p. 207). Reworking Levertov's closing lines: 'The rabbits / will bare their teeth at / the spring moon,' (Levertov 1979, p. 82), Coleman imagines a future, aggressive act of the true yet unread poets, revolutionary and defiant: 'eking out a space at the mean / end of time. They will bare their / teeth and spring at the moon' (Coleman 1987, p. 207). As Pereira notes, Coleman transforms Levertov's 'spring,' an adjective describing the moon, referencing a season, into an active verb, indicating the struggle necessary for the ignored poets to have their voices heard (Pereira 2014).

In 'Loose Woman,' Cisneros casts the poet-speaker as an outlaw, indeed as '*la desesperada*, most-wanted public enemy. / My happy picture grinning from the wall' (Cisneros 1987, p. 114). She does not conform to traditional notions of womanhood and aligns herself with rebellious figures of the past, including witches. Words are figured as weapons to combat those who disapprove of her life choices. When the angry 'mob' arrives, 'they wobble like gin' when the speaker 'open[s] [her] mouth' (Cisneros 1995, p. 112). Although the poem is a diatribe against limiting societal expectations of women, it can also be read as an *ars poetica*. The disapproving 'they' of the poem can be interpreted as patriarchal culture, but it can also be seen as the writing establishment from which Cisneros feels estranged. In this context, the poem's closing lines 'Ping! Ping! Ping! / I break things' show her mission as a writer to break down barriers (Cisneros 1995, p. 115).³

Beatty expresses her exasperation with the poetry establishment several times in her body of work, including 'Shooter' in which the speaker fantasizes about shooting, among other men, 'the famous poet who said there are no great women writers' (Beatty 2008, p. 14). In the epistolary poem 'Dear American Poetry' from her 2013 book *The Switching Yard* Beatty expresses frustration with the homogeneity of the influential annual anthology *Best American Poetry*: 'I see you're publishing: / straightman/straightman/white white white how / nice,' and declares 'I'm bored to death' (Beatty 2013b, p. 46). Beatty responds to this boredom with sexually aggressive claims, 'your sonnet is impotent / and I / have a hard-on,' and declares 'I was once fucked by an intellectual in iambic pentameter: / my hand was better, and more responsive' (Beatty 2013b, p. 46). Although a hilarious take-down, Beatty's suggestive lines undercut the 'best' in the title *Best American Poetry*. That poetry just doesn't do it for her; it's certainly not the best she's ever had. And, although her 'hand' is an obvious reference to masturbation, it can also be read as her work penned by her own hand. She sees her work as superior, more 'alive.'⁴

It is true that changing attitudes and feminist agitation opened more doors to women writers, but to this day women face more difficulty in the publishing industry. Economic conditions, class biases and racial discrimination compound those struggles. Karen Kovacic explores these struggles in her article 'Between L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E and Lyric: The Poetry of Pink Collar Resistance.' She points out that certain practices in the poetry world, including constraining critical (often binary) categorization, keep these poems and poets on the outskirts. She points

³ For an alternative reading of this passage in the context of a discussion of how Chicana writers have responded to portrayals of women in Rodolfo 'Corky' Gonzales's *I Am Joaquín*, see Leigh Johnson's 'Unsexing *I Am Joaquín* through Chicana Feminist Poetic Revisions' (Johnson 2015, pp. 72-78).

⁴ Beatty's 'Dear American Poetry' was first published in *Court Green* in 2011 (Trigilio & Trinidad 2011). Ironically, two years later another of Beatty's poems 'Youngest Known Savior' was included in *Best American Poetry 2013* (Duhamel & Lehman 2013).

out the relevance of working-class women's poetry in the current economy: 'Surely, in a so-called 'post-industrial' economy like ours, pink-collar poetry deserves a literary category of its own and a criticism alert to its aims' (Kovacik 2001, p. 34). Although I agree with Kovacik's sentiment that working-class women's poetry deserves greater recognition and critical attention, I resist the term 'pink-collar' since it invokes gendered stereotypes that working-class women writers reject. The term is too limiting, especially as it often refers to service work, a category of labor that now comprises the majority of the working-class jobs in the United States, jobs held by people of all genders. In an interview with Mary Kate Azcuy, Jan Beatty expresses concern about her poetry being categorized and claims that in 'poetryland [...] labels are used mercilessly to oppress' (Beatty 2013). Like Beatty, I am hesitant to assign more labels to working-class women poets. I would not like to see them pigeonholed or further marginalized. Instead, thinking back to Samantha Bee's segment on neglected members of the working class, it would be preferable to see more attention paid to their work so that when the subject of working-class poetry is broached, readers and critics think of poetry written by women as readily as they do poetry written by men.

As Beatty, Cisneros, and Coleman have repeatedly demonstrated in their poetry, working-class experiences and perspectives enrich art. It is lamentable how the working-class is exploited, disrespected, and, especially in the case of working-class women and people of color, too-often ignored. This mistreatment and neglect harms our society as a whole and narrows our worldview. In light of the recent presidential election, scholars who study working-class issues are planning more conferences and producing more publications, journalists are penning more think pieces. Because of the misleading over-coverage of working-class white men that is out of scale with reality, scholars and journalists need to consciously balance their coverage and focus their attention on working-class women and people of color, not only out of a sense of fairness or to more accurately represent society, but also because we all have so much to gain from their perspectives.

Author Bio

Carrie Connors, originally from West Virginia, is an Associate Professor of English at LaGuardia Community College of the City University of New York. She has published and presented on recent American poetry, including the chapter 'Bursting at the Seams: Exploding the Confines of Reification with Creative Constraints in *Sleeping with the Dictionary*' in *Reading the Difficulties: Dialogues with Contemporary American Innovative Poetry*. Her scholarly interests include poetry and politics, working-class poetry, as well as humor in poetry. Her own poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Kestrel*, *Quiddity*, *RHINO*, *Steel Toe Review*, *The Monarch Review*, and *Little Patuxent Review*, among other publications.

Bibliography

- Beatty, J. 1995, *Mad river*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh.
Beatty, J. 2002, *Boneshaker*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh.
Beatty, J. 2008, *Red sugar*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh.
Beatty, J. 2013a, 'Interview with Mary Kate Azcuy', *Heart Journal*, viewed 20 January 2018, <heartjournalonline.com>.
Beatty, J. 2013b, *The switching yard*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh.
Beatty, J. 2017, *Jackknife: New and selected poems*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh.
Cisneros, S. 1987, *My wicked wicked ways: Poems*, Vintage, New York.
Cisneros, S. 1995, *Loose woman*, Vintage, New York.
Cisneros, S. 2018, *Sandra Cisneros*, viewed 20 January 2018, <www.sandrakisneros.com>.

- Coleman, W. 1987, *Heavy daughter blues: Poems and stories 1968-1986*, Black Sparrow, Santa Rosa.
- Coleman, W. 1998, *Bathwater wine*, Black Sparrow Press, Santa Rosa.
- Coleman, W. 2001, *Mercurochrome*, Black Sparrow Press, Santa Rosa.
- Coleman, W. 2003, *Ostinato vamps*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh.
- Daniels, J. 2005, 'Work poetry and working-class poetry: The zip code of the heart', in J. Russo and S. L. Linkon (eds), *New working-class studies*, ILR Press, Ithica, pp. 113-136.
- Davis, A.Y. 1998, *Blues legacies and black feminism*, Pantheon Books, New York.
- Duhamel, D. & Lehman, D. (eds) 2013, *Best American poetry 2013*, Scribner, New York.
- Ginsberg, A. 1982, 'A supermarket in California,' in D. Allen and G.F. Butterick (eds), *The postmoderns: The new American poetry revised*, Grove Press, New York, pp. 182-83.
- Hammonds, E. 1994, 'Black (W)holes and the geometry of Black female sexuality', *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, vol. 6, no. 2-3, 1994, p. 126+, viewed 5 June 2018
<http://link.galegroup.com.rpa.laguardia.edu:2048/apps/doc/A17250598/GLS?u=cuny_centraloff&sid=GLS&xid=5a333a5d>.
- Full Frontal with Samantha Bee* 2018, television program, TBS, New York 17 January.
- Johnson, L. 2015, 'Unsexing *I am Joaquín* through Chicana feminist poetic revisions,' in L. McCullough (ed.), *A sense of regard: Essays on poetry and race*, University of Georgia Press, Athens, pp. 72-78.
- Kovacik, K., 2001, 'Between L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E and lyric: The poetry of pink-collar resistance', *NWSA Journal*, vol. 13, no. 1, pp.22-39.
- Lauter, P. 2014. 'Working-class women's literature: An introduction to study', *Radical Teacher*, vol. 100, pp. 62-76.
- Levertov, D. 1979. *Collected earlier poems, 1940-1960*, New Directions, New York.
- Levine, P. 1991, *What work is*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York.
- McInnis, J.C., 2014, 'Writing around the edges: A praise song for Wanda Coleman', *Callaloo*, vol.37, no. 2, pp.189-193.
- Merriam Webster 2018, *Ostinato*, viewed 6 June 2018,
<<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ostinato>>.
- Merriam Webster 2018, *Vamp*, viewed 28 March 2018,
<<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/vamp>>.
- Nelson, C. 1989, *Repression and recovery: Modern American poetry and the politics of cultural memory 1910-1945*, The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison.
- Paz, L., 2008. "'Nobody's mother and nobody's wife': Reconstructing archetypes and sexuality in Sandra Cisneros' 'Never Marry a Mexican'", *Human Architecture*, vol. 6, no. 4, pp.11-27.
- Pereira, M., 2014. 'A seat at the front of the bus of American poetry: Wanda Coleman's 'Retro rogue anthology' in *Mercurochrome*', *Hecate*, vol. 40, no. 1, p. 97+.
- Trigilio, T. & Trinidad, D., 2011, *Court Green*, vol. 8.
- Wayman, T. 1983, *Inside jobs: Essays on the new work writing*, Harbour, Madeira Park.
- Weeks, K. 2011, *The problem with work: Feminism, Marxism, antiwork politics, and postwork imaginaries*, Duke, Durham.
- Zandy, J. 1990, *Calling home: Working-class women's writings, an anthology*. Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick.

Brutal Youth: Colin MacInnes and the Architecture of the Welfare State

Simon Lee, University of California

Abstract

Colin MacInnes' London trilogy is known for its prominent focus—unusual in British fiction of the time—on class and racial conflict in mid-century London. Comprised of *City of Spades* (1957), *Absolute Beginners* (1959), and *Mr Love and Justice* (1960), the trilogy plots the complicated enactment of the new welfare-state's reconstruction strategies from the post-war resurgence of slum clearance, to the forced evictions of suburban migration, to the development and erection of alienating council flats. In doing so, MacInnes offers a distinctive take on Londoners' responses to these strategies, demonstrating the way mindful urban planning was shouldered aside by quixotic and hurried resolutions. As part of a vibrant wave of mid-century British writing sensitive to issues of class, race, and gender, MacInnes' fiction scrutinized post-war urban displacement as it happened and without any of the benefit of hindsight. This article, then, highlights the distinctively nuanced perspectives that socially-attuned and class-conscious literature can offer in terms of understanding the tangible impact of space on social stratification.

Keywords:

Architecture, Gentrification, Immigration, Rehousing, Colin MacInnes, The London Novels

Introduction

In a 1971 letter to his publisher, British author and journalist Colin MacInnes floated several potential topics for future writing projects. One topic, listed simply as 'Urban Architecture,' offered to contrast the living spaces of London's post-war architects and planners with the kinds of living spaces they designed and produced for the working poor. Ever the proponent for the marginalized, MacInnes' proposal was transparently caustic, with him remarking that 'I would guess many [developers] live outside the areas they are 'improving'.' (MacInnes 1971). Ironically, the hypothetical questions raised in his proposal were the kind of questions that his early novels had already addressed. Questions such as do modern tower blocks 'become vertical urban slums faster than the older houses they replaced?' and 'What is the social life, if any, in a block holding 200 or more families?' MacInnes' London trilogy not only responds to such concerns but reveals the capacity for the journalistic style of fiction popularized in the late 1950s and early 1960s to offer both critique and analysis of architecture and urban development. Comprised of *City of Spades* (1957), *Absolute Beginners* (1959), and *Mr Love and Justice* (1960), MacInnes' trilogy voiced the concerns of displacing urban communities four years prior to sociologist Ruth Glass' coining of the term 'gentrification' and its entrance into the cultural lexicon. As part of a vibrant wave of mid-century writing sensitive to issues of class, race, and gender, MacInnes' fiction confronted post-war urban displacement as it happened and without any of the benefit of hindsight. This article, then, argues for the uniquely

nuanced perspectives that socially-attuned literature can offer in terms of understanding the tangible impact of space on social position and subjecthood.

MacInnes' trilogy is perhaps best known for its prominent focus on class and racial conflict in mid-century London. In all three texts, gritty, urban realism merges with the immediacy of journalistic observation to provide a socially adroit and experiential reflection of a particularly turbulent moment in British history. Yet, since the trilogy is also preoccupied with concerns of geography and space, there is work to be done to fully articulating MacInnes' skepticism of mid-century urban planning and the post-war rehousing programs informing the narrative's more overt themes.⁵ The trilogy elucidates the complexities of the new welfare-state's reconstruction strategies, from the post-war resurgence of slum clearance, to forced evictions and suburban migration, to the development and erection of alienating high-rise flats. In doing so, MacInnes offers a charged perspective of Londoners' responses to these strategies, underscoring the way conscientious planning was shouldered aside in favor of quixotic and hurried resolutions. While MacInnes' trilogy heralds the need for social change, it also indexes the complications associated with imposing structure onto a dynamic metropolis, suggesting that even the author's pluralistic sympathies are innately unsustainable.

The setting of the three texts recount the development of British post-war reconstruction by not only narrating the experiences felt by Londoners at the time, but also through the spatial movements that the texts produce in relation to the city. *City of Spades* addresses issues of racial prejudice and tension surrounding the wave of immigration from the West Indies that followed WWII and continued into the 1950s.⁶ The story, largely set within the slums of the capital, stages the initial phases of urban gentrification, yet posits a hopeful, pluralistic London through the integration of two diverse characters. Here, MacInnes moves the reader into the city and down into the sanctuary of subterranean demimondes to simulate the mid-century immigrant experience. *Absolute Beginners* picks up where *City of Spades* left off, introducing a diverse series of teenage characters in search of a new, similarly progressive way of living in the urban metropolis. The text advances analogous concerns of race and class put forth in the first novel while portraying citizens who are increasingly alienated by their environment—be it in their own war-torn neighborhoods, or through displacement into the newly-constructed high-rises on the outskirts of the city. Here, MacInnes' narrator is granted a superior mobility, and the text depicts the horizontal movement out of the city toward the peripheral tower blocks of the mid-century building boom. In *Mr Love and Justice*, the narration moves into the tower blocks themselves, and what follows is a stark plummet down the ladder of social status. Here, MacInnes dramatizes the reality of the rehousing experience posed as a solution to the city's social problems, underscoring the way that such environments only serve to perpetuate the same concerns they sought to eliminate. All three texts represent a city that is struggling to regain its footing following attacks from the war, but one that also enunciates its unique position as poised for reconstruction—both socially and topographically speaking. Given this, the trilogy recounts a milestone in British urban history.

⁵ Thrift & Williams (1987, p. 19) registered a lack of critical analysis around the intersection of space and class, yet progress has been made in the social sciences. Literary analysis, however, is only just beginning to catch up.

⁶ It is worth noting here that that the racialized use of the term 'spade' emerged in the Harlem Renaissance, with Claude McKay's novel *Home to Harlem* (1928) using the phrase to reference Black people through slang (O'Conner & Kellerman 2009, p. 128). Although there is good reason to believe that MacInnes fetishized Black identities—specifically given his sexual preference for young black men—both his fiction and nonfiction articulate his full support of a diverse Britain in the post-Windrush era. Despite this, contemporary readers have condemned his use of the term and questioned his motives for doing so vociferously.

As Bentley (2003b, p. 149) points out, MacInnes is a relatively marginalized writer, often omitted from surveys of 1950s writing. In addition, criticism of the trilogy tends to centered on the more evident themes of race and class in his texts, emphasizing plotlines and offering supplementary hypotheses as to why MacInnes is ignored (Blodgett 1976; McKinney 2006). McLeod (2007) reads *Absolute Beginners* by assessing the role of the Thames in the text, locating the river as a metaphor for the fluidity and dynamism of London's citizenry by drawing connections to MacInnes' own insider/outsider status. Bentley (2003a) examines MacInnes' narrators, showing how the author develops an idiosyncratic subcultural voice through *City of Spades*' creative interplay of narration as well as through the slippage of vernacular in *Absolute Beginners*. In a parallel article, Bentley explores the tension of MacInnes' writing on race, noting how his work 'provides an attempt to record or 'speak' in the authentic voice of a 1950s black subcultural identity' while acknowledging that 'this representation stems from a white cultural perspective, resulting in a paradoxical artificial construction of an 'authentic' black voice' (2003b, p. 166).⁷ Goulding (2010 online) argues that MacInnes' stylized representation of the Notting Hill riots is lacking, mainly due to the text's insensitivity to the diversity of experience, claiming that the author 'is unwilling to acknowledge the economic and intra-racial background tensions and see the riots as merely Anglo-Saxon hostility towards the colored.' However, it should be noted that MacInnes' clouding of certain historical facts is part of the novel's stylization, allowing for the development of the journalistic voice rather than that of the voice of the historian—a voice that MacInnes specifically delegates to the narrator's father as a means to signify the paralysis of nostalgia.

Two recent articles consider the trilogy in terms of topographic shifts, both suggesting how MacInnes' writing replicates the kind of fluidity and dynamism of the city itself. Wiseman (2015, p. 35) argues that MacInnes celebrates the city as a palimpsest, a portrayal 'that is by turns sentimental, romantic, dreamlike and unapologetically subjective.' The kind of changes underway, Wiseman suggests, allow MacInnes to paint the city's instability as 'a sign of a healthy cosmopolitanism that should be valued above all other aspects of the city' (2015, p. 44). In this regard, MacInnes' appreciation of the diversity is foregrounded but perhaps at the expense of the trilogy's sharp critique of social cleansing and urban displacement. Derdiger (2016) explores the connection between architectural development and MacInnes' work more explicitly, focusing specifically on the way British post-war redevelopment aimed to capture a sense of hope identifiable in MacInnes' writing. Yet, Derdiger's article is limited to *Absolute Beginners* and its naively optimistic narrator, linking the utopian ethos of Brutalist architecture to the development of council housing projects. The ethos of Brutalism as developed by Alison and Peter Smithson, however, was quite removed from the kind of housing actually produced by the London County Council during this time. Furthermore, MacInnes' skepticism of new architecture was laid bare in *Mr Love and Justice* as well as in texts like *London, City of Any Dream* in which his assessment of Brutalist-derived architecture was unambiguous. Still, Derdiger is right to draw such links between MacInnes' work and architecture as evidenced by the texts' representation of space as well as representation seen in his nonfiction and correspondence. Yet, there is still a need to tend to the root concerns of racial and class tension prominent in 1950s and 1960s London: the flawed handling of urban planning and division—a topic to which MacInnes gives us more than enough to chew on.

⁷ Bentley's (2003b) analysis goes deeper than most in terms of race in MacInnes' work, as critics tend to simply acknowledge MacInnes' investment in the topic but stop there. However, MacInnes' personal dedication to issues of race and class is complicated, and, although it should not be overlooked when discussing his work, its complexity situates it as beyond the purview of this particular article.

It should be noted that MacInnes' own relationship to the city plays a key role in comprehending these texts in that, despite being born in war-torn South Kensington, he lived in Australia from the ages of five to sixteen, which, upon return, placed him into a uniquely insider/outsider role. Consequently, his relationship with the city was both one of love and hatred, emphasized through his recollection in Erwin Fieger's *London, City of Any Dream* that 'Beneath the hard, wide Australian sky, and living a far less pampered life than in the tottering fastness of bourgeois Kensington, I was taught to despise the ancient mother town . . . and I partly succeeded in doing so' (Fieger & MacInnes 1961, p. 13). This incongruity is echoed in several of his characters but can also be registered through the uncertainty the trilogy expresses toward the direction in which London is progressing. While MacInnes makes his sympathies known throughout, the texts allow space for hesitation, both expressing hope for the rehousing plans underway as well as suspicion of them. As such, the novels might be read as MacInnes' exercise in working out his relationship to the city inasmuch as the city appears to be working out a relationship to its own citizenry.

Throughout the trilogy, MacInnes illustrates that, within Britain at the time, there was a tacit and complex desire for transformation—a concern that is distinctly observable in *Absolute Beginners* through scenes like the narrator's initial meeting with Mickey Ponderoso, a Latin-American immigrant stationed in the capital who studies 'the British folk's ways in the middle of the century' (24).⁸ This transformative desire is made evident when Ponderoso asks about the country's 'position,' referring to the decline of the British Empire and attempts to rebuild a sense of cultural identity, to which the narrator responds that 'her [Britain's] position is that she hasn't found her position' (26). The immediacy of this wish for a new England permeates the trilogy through continual references to dire conditions, such as the narrator's subsequent description of Napoli: 'I tell you, you've only got to be there for a minute to know there's something radically wrong' (47). Whereas each novel speaks to discrete aspects social instability, what is most consistent is the chronological recounting of the shift taking place in relation to London's urban development. In this sense, the author establishes his representation of the evolving cityscape as a barometer through which to evaluate the successes and failures of London's post-war reconstruction plans.

Yet, upfront, MacInnes expresses a noticeable ambivalence toward the nature of these plans, articulated through various characters' responses of optimism that are then contrasted with a grim reality of the way developments emerge. For example, the narrator's father in *Absolute Beginners* expresses assurance, stating, 'Just look at any of the 1930s buildings! What they put up today may be ultramodern, but at any rate it's full of light and life and air. But those 1930s buildings are all shut in and negative' (35). However, this optimism is clearly undermined by the depiction of the alienating high-rises that form the oppressive backdrop in *Mr Love and Justice*. MacInnes expresses this sentiment in his nonfiction also, noting in *London, City of Any Dream* how 'in all this building of rural New Towns to take the superfluous Londoners, and of semi-skyscrapers all over the central areas, there has been a deep social error that may prove fatal unless checked in time' (Fieger & MacInnes 1961, p. 24). As urban spaces and architectural progress take on such a central role in the trilogy, it is helpful to gain a historical sense of how such an urgent desire for transformation emerged, and how rehousing programs were implemented in a manner that originates such ambivalence.

⁸ For the sake of clarity, all page references to *City of Spades*, *Absolute Beginners*, and *Mr Love and Justice* come from *The Colin MacInnes Omnibus* (2005) in which all three texts are collected.

The Need for a New London

The damage incurred through the WWII bombing of London, and the subsequent need for housing reconstruction that followed, initiated a shift in approach toward a more immediate mode of urban planning than what had come prior. From 1940 to 1941, air raids conducted by the German Luftwaffe had targeted several British cities, but it was the capital that received the most concentrated damage—specifically the attacks that began on September 7th in which the city was bombed for the next 76 nights with only a single day of respite. In London alone, the bombing resulted in more than 20,000 deaths, and by October of that same year, the Blitz had left 25,000 citizens homeless and seeking shelter. The initial damage was felt most notably in the East End of the city, but by September, the attacks had moved West, spreading out into suburban areas, and culminating in the most expansive attack on October 15th. This devastation produced an instant need for reconstruction, the responsibility of which fell into the inadequately-equipped hands of local authorities, who, beginning with a series of makeshift shelters, failed to consider any long-term solutions beyond what was immediately required. But as these shelters barely even scratched the surface of the problem, post-war development began to look toward new agendas and strategies for rapid rehousing and repair within the capital.

At the time of this bombing, slum-clearance projects were ongoing, addressing rising concerns of over-congestion and pollution. Increasing through the 1920s, they culminated in the 1930 Slums and Housing Act, which saw the establishment of a systematic agenda of clearance that lasted up until the beginning of the war. Fundamentally philanthropic, the galvanizing of slum-clearance programs coincided with the emergence of Liberal welfare reforms indicative of the shifting tide of British politics in which the conventional wisdom of 1930s laissez-faire economics gave way to the more socialist and left-leaning trajectory of Clement Attlee's Labour Party (1945-1951). Stemming from the 1942 Beveridge report, the kind of post-war altruism that formed under the new governance spoke to the national desire to preserve a communal British spirit. As Bullock (2002, p. 11) observes, reconstruction as a municipalized project was underway in other areas like education and health reform, so architectural reformation offered a tangible, material response to rebuild the physical landscape while addressing the more abstract notion of a national identity. This was to be accomplished through an itinerary of reconstruction where architectural planning would encompass the conservation of the past and merge it with progressive, forward-thinking design to reaffirm Britain as a leading world power.

City of Spades and Strategies of Gentrification

City of Spades tells the parallel stories of Johnny Fortune, a newly-arrived eighteen-year-old Nigerian meteorology student, and Montgomery Pew, a twenty-six-year-old white welfare worker, recently appointed to the role of Assistant Welfare Officer in the Colonial Department and in charge of handling Fortune's case. MacInnes places these counterpart narratives in alternating succession to contrast the two characters' experience of the city, but also to register a number of potential similarities, suggesting how two seemingly-different worlds might integrate—a gesture that denotes the author's desire for a culturally progressive London in contrast to the racial tensions that existed. In this first text, racial integration is addressed in a frank manner, forming the central component of the narrative through the technical choice of splitting the narration along color lines—one that might be read as emblematic of the desire to progress to a more pluralistic identity. Yet, for all its emphasis on the problems of racial integration, it is difficult to read this text without considering the role that the urban

environment plays in perpetuating such anxieties of difference, as well as the creation of spaces in which assimilation might occur. Indeed, MacInnes uses setting as a mechanism through which to examine the two narrators' experiences of the city by placing them both into new, alien environments: Fortune within an unfamiliar milieu that will inform his questionable vocation; and Pew, within a new vocation that affords him access into a new social world. In this sense, both are topologically balanced in the narrative, but also in the form of the text itself. However, as MacInnes demonstrates, even when the narrators' paths cross and their experiences conflate—as made perceptible in the closing scene—the balance is considerably tipped in Pew's favor, corroborating the narrative's prominent critique of racial inequality.

In this text, MacInnes paints a vivid picture of reconstruction's inability to address the needs of its populace, signaled early in Fortune's portentous disappointment with the reality of post-war London: 'And I must say at first it was a bad disappointment: so small, poky, dirty, not magnificent! Red buses, like shown to us on the cinema, certainly, and greater scurrying of the population than at home. But people with glum clothes and shut-in faces' (13). Many of the tenements are described as reduced to rubble, whereas others are in states of severe dereliction. Despite this, a number of these bombed-out buildings are still inhabited by key figures of the criminal underground that Fortune becomes associated with: Billy Whispers' dilapidated Brixton home is surrounded by urban decay, 'much like one tooth left sticking in an old man's jaw' (26), and the home of Muriel and the Hancocks—largely anonymous within the uniform tenements of Maida Vale—is also depicted as crumbling to the ground. At the time of the novel's setting, slum clearance had long since been interrupted by WWII, and pocket areas of the city marked for assistance through repair or rehousing were abandoned in lieu of the high-rise building boom generally considered a more expedient and economical method of addressing the issue.

Hanley (2007, p. 51) posits that early attempts at slum clearance were mostly altruistic, in which 'two generations of slum dwellers were lifted from cellars and tenements into seemingly vast new houses that lengthened their lives and transformed those of their children.' The significance of this moment, she adds, is that it provided a glimpse of the London City Council acting in a way only previously seen by charities in that the wellbeing of the city's inhabitants was of utmost importance (2007, p. 56). However, a mid-century swing toward a more conservative governance with market-driven economics in mind shifted clearance policies away from philanthropic ideals toward a more entrepreneurial project in which possible commercial development plans could also be taken into consideration while attempts were still being made to rehouse. Marcuse (1986, p. 154) traces the social effects of such a shift, noting that 'Both abandonment and gentrification are directly linked to changes in the economy of the city, which have dramatically increased the economic polarization of the population. A vicious circle is created where the poor are continuously under pressure of displacement.' He continues to note how 'abandonment of an entire neighborhood occurs when public and/or private parties act on the assumption that long-term investment in the neighborhood, whether in maintenance and improvements or in new construction, is not warranted' (1986, p. 154). The result was that, rather than repairing obliterated neighborhoods for repopulation by their original inhabitants, approaches emerged by which to bleed an area of both inhabitants and cultural identity—especially in areas deemed desirable for future commercial interest. Withholding assistance based on bureaucratic process, it seemed, would do the trick. For MacInnes, this deprivation (a theme that all three of the novels respond to in various ways) was tantamount to the demise of the city's spirit in that the effect of gentrification—be it through abandonment or displacement—is to deprive the city of its heart-beat' (Fieger & MacInnes 1961, p. 25). Yet, the setting that MacInnes presents in *City of Spades* appears not only abandoned, it seems that

through the implementation of various forces, social cleansing has begun in that the inhabitants are forced to go elsewhere or simply die where they are.⁹

One way this process seems to occur is through the funneling of significant amounts of incoming migrants into such areas as a means to overcrowd them and to stoke antagonism.¹⁰ Fortune's arrival into the city, despite his ability to pay for better accommodation, places him straight into a welfare hostel that Pew describes as 'quite dreadful,' to which the upper-class BBC journalist, Theodora Pace adds, 'It probably is. All hostels are. They're meant to be' (35). This premeditated unpleasantness is underscored when Pew informs Fortune that the reason he would not find any other accommodation is because of racial prejudice still rampant at the time (17). Furthermore, as a region designated for both abandonment and overpopulation, it necessitates forms of escape. Fortune's friend Hamilton, for example, has fled the area and now lives in the suburb of Holloway in a quiet residence owned by another Nigerian. But the triumph of his 'escape' is undermined as we learn that, upon leaving, he took his prior escape mechanism along with him—the heroin addiction he had developed while in the city. In this sense, drugs mark a getaway for those who cannot physically escape the squalor and hopelessness. Furthermore, demimondes arise in the shape of underground clubs and other leisure spaces such as The Sphere, The Moorhen, and The Cosmopolitan dance hall—all spaces that Pew suggests Fortune avoid as a way to stay out of trouble. Yet these are spaces that are also rendered unstable as part of clearance endeavors, prone to police raids and shutdowns due to 'moral degeneracy' (122), metaphorically aligning them to the crumbling environment in which they operate. Consequently, even refuge within self-created sanctuary is under the thumb of the forces of gentrification bearing down upon it.

MacInnes advances this theme of abandonment and entrapment throughout the trilogy, but in *City of Spades*, it is most noticeable in portrayed attempts to displace the migrant characters resulting in a disheartened Fortune's return home at the novel's close. But this urge to displace is not limited to characters who bear the brunt of racial prejudice; even Pew himself experiences the imminent mechanisms of gentrification and capitalist growth within parts of the city marked for commercial redevelopment. Lund (1996, p. 42) indicates how the 1957 Rent Act sought to deregulate rent control within desirable neighborhoods as an experiment in free market economics, and this is reflected in Pew's recounting of the legal battle he and Theodora faced when attempting to remain in their Regent's Park flat in which the landlords viewed them 'like twin birds in an abandoned dovecote, and sat waiting . . . for our deaths—or for some gross indiscretion by which they could eject us' (33). As Wood (2012, p. 48) states, following the Rent Act, the humane treatment of citizens took a sharp turn away from the philanthropic aims of pre-war rehousing plans, instead becoming embroiled with potential commercial redevelopment led by 'an increasing reliance on the private sector and market forces.' Therefore, MacInnes makes it apparent that the transformation of the city at the hands of malevolent developers is color blind, and that inner-city areas suitable for future commercial

⁹ During the time of MacInnes' writing, the term 'gentrification' was not yet in common usage. Although the practice can be identified throughout history, it was not until the mid-1960s that the term was codified by British Sociologist Ruth Glass while writing about then-contemporary London—specifically the displacement of the working class to Islington. Thus, MacInnes' depiction is impressive considering that the phenomenon had yet to be reified, granting these texts an additional notion of import in that they exemplify the experience of gentrification that Glass developed.

¹⁰ This trend is recognized by Williams (1986, p. 60) who remarks that neighborhoods that experience these waves of immigration become 'host communities, serving as models for assimilation into the country.' This leads, however, to a degree of antagonism in that both the neighborhood and its local politics are essentially reconstructed. This is most prominently shown in *City of Spades*, but it plays a central theme to the tensions that undergird MacInnes' concerns.

development, exercise this displacement regardless of ethnic make-up. This, of course, can be understood as another gesture of racial integration on behalf of the author in that it breaks down the racial divide, forming instead an ‘us against them’ approach between the disenfranchised citizens and the larger establishment.

These impulses to leave the city with no concrete options of where to go permeate the text, resulting in the development of zones of perpetuated crime such as Brixton, the East End, and Fortune’s place of residence—The Immigration Road that he describes as ‘the queen of squalor’ (113). Furthermore, they result in the disillusionment that MacInnes traces from the transition of Fortune’s buoyant optimism to the breaking of his spirit following his imprisonment in which he emerges ‘a rather bitter and less kindly person’ (233). MacInnes’ depiction of this entrapment (most prominently demonstrated in *Mr Love and Justice*) is conveyed through the desperate acts committed by many of the characters that keep them within a vicious cycle of criminality, but is perhaps most poetically rendered when Fortune and Muriel briefly ‘escape’ from the city on a boat ride up the Thames, taking in privileged views of London from outside of the slums, only to be bluntly reminded by the boat’s operator that they will be returned exactly where they came from once their ride is over (106).

Structurally, *City of Spades* dramatizes the way redevelopment has turned to a strategy of abandonment by keeping the narrative perspective grounded within the slums themselves. At this time, high-rise development as a proposed solution to many of these issues had long been in effect, but the novel keeps their depiction largely hidden in order to further amplify the impression of limited windows of opportunity. Yet, the notion of the urban environment in a transitional and progressive state is unmistakably foregrounded through the text’s stressing of racial integration via the assimilation of the two disparate characters’ worlds. This conflation is most saliently observed in one of the few depictions of architectural progress in which MacInnes’ own ambivalent relationship to redevelopment can be identified as concealed within a passage narrated by Pew:

The eighteenth-century houses looked graceful, mouldering and aloof. Beside an electric power station, that had intruded itself among them, I stopped: and wondered whether the time had now come to ‘cut out’, as Johnny Fortune might have said, from the society of the Spades. *They* were wonderful, of course—exhilarating: the temperature of your life shot up when in their company (152, emphasis added).

Here, MacInnes renders his subject ambiguous, with the reader left unsure if ‘they’ refers to the eighteenth-century houses or the inhabitants of ‘the society of the Spades.’ Given his interest in spatial manifestations of class, the conflation does not seem accidental.

But if you stole some of their physical vitality, you found that the price was they began to invade your soul: or rather, they did not, but your own ideas of them did—for they were sublimely indifferent to anything outside themselves! And in spite of their *joie de vivre*, in any practical sense they were so impossible! ‘They’re dreadful! They’re just quite dreadful!’ I shouted out aloud, above the slight hum of the dynamos (152-3, emphasis in original).

As the paragraph continues, so does the conflation in that Pew appears to be discussing the society, but it also reads as a commentary on the way post-war housing emphasized surface and over substance. Given that this passage is bookended by references to technological

development, MacInnes renders the paragraph's subject intentionally ambiguous by switching the focus from architecture to Fortune to the members of the society, making it difficult for the reader to comprehend whether or not Pew is thinking about the integration of post-war rehousing, or the assimilation of immigrant races into a new conception of the city. Given that Pew's job has provided him with a privileged opportunity to mingle with ethnic cultures, in addition to his own experience of the incipient forces of gentrification, MacInnes' conflation of the two subjects as signifying the need for progressive change is undeniable. By maintaining this slum-based perspective, what *City of Spades* hints at but does not portray with the same clarity that the subsequent novels do, is the appearance of a rehousing strategy—the result of an intense bureaucratization of urban development that leads to the advent of a new style of architecture—one whose characteristics, for better or for worse, will transform the experience of London.

Absolute Beginners and Bureaucratic Utilitarianism

Prior to the Labour Party's majority rule, the country saw little support for urban development, due in part to Winston Churchill, who viewed extensive reconstruction as futile while the war was still in effect. Yet pressure from the public, charity organizations, and the drafting of the 1940 Barlow Report,¹¹ led to the implementation of a central planning commission whose specific role was to address the city's post-war devastation and develop new solutions immediately. Given the public's new emotional investment in redevelopment as a way to renovate British character and demonstrate bureaucratic welfare-state ideologies, the Barlow report also led to the appointing of John Reith and the Ministry of Works—a department specifically focused on the appropriation of property and Government building projects,¹² who, for guidance, turned to a variety of reconstruction and development groups comprised of disparate individuals from an array of professional backgrounds (Bullock 2002, p. 12). With each group bringing an assortment of ideas to the table, a funneling of creativity led to the circulation of pamphlets, resulting in the 1943 establishment of Reith's Ministry of Town and Country Planning—that Bullock (2002, p. 14) recognizes as the most developed bureaucratic expression of a national planning system at that time.

1942 saw the creation of the Dudley Committee—a program ushered in by the Minister of Health seeking to evaluate living conditions and post-war housing standards in concert with national planning strategies. Housing redevelopment was reevaluated in consideration of botched plans following WWI in which strategies of urban planning had failed, largely due to an inability to sufficiently consider topography in relation to reconstruction, resulting in criticism that 'new housing . . . lacked any vestige of community' (Bullock 2002, p. 16). With large sections of the populace in desperate need of rehousing, combined with a new focus on spatial logistics and infrastructure, pragmatic solutions of prudence and speed were once more stressed as priorities for Reith's disparate think-tank, which inevitably failed to produce any cohesive solution (Bullock 2002, p. 19). All of these mounting concerns would need to be addressed as a whole—and the best approach to do so, it seemed, would be through the implementation of an all-inclusive state-run urban redevelopment program that favored inexpensive, swift construction, could alleviate the mounting pressure of mass-rehousing, and

¹¹ Formed by Neville Chamberlain in 1937, the 1940 report of the Barlow Commission on the Geographical Distribution of the Industrial Population was, at least in part, responsible for an investigation of urban density that inevitably influenced governmental intervention and instigated a system of planning to address post-war concerns. In other words, it signified a new bureaucratization of rehousing strategies.

¹² This was later to be renamed as the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works in 1962.

whose form would mirror the British population's desire to appear traditional as well as forward-thinking.

As the war drew to a close, discussions in the field architecture had turned toward to more utilitarian concerns, partly due to an emerging tension between an older generation of architects and a younger school that drew its inspiration from forward-thinking and avant-garde designs. Amongst these younger architects was the Modern Architectural Research Group (MARS), founded in 1933 and affiliated with (and later thought to be the British wing of) Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne, or CIAM (1928-1959)—itself a collective of international architecture and planning congresses. The MARS group subscribed to the utilitarian and functionalist ethics laid out by the work of CIAM forerunners, Le Corbusier and Walter Gropius, focusing on material, production, and standardization—a machinic approach that stood in stark contrast to the more hand-crafted architectural design that had existed prior. Although many of the group's large-scale plans never made it beyond the proposal table, their affiliation with the editorial board at the *Architectural Review* allowed for several independent ideas to go into circulation, raising questions about what the new British architectural design should resemble. So, prior to incipient gentrification depicted in *City of Spades*, a notable shift can be determined from a government whose involvement with redevelopment had been lax to the development of an overly-bureaucratized series of redevelopment programs that looked toward avant-garde planning and utilitarian design for inspiration. Consequently, architectural enterprise appeared as the resolution to a number of the country's problems through strategies of rehousing that, over the next two decades, would move the citizens of war-torn London up and out of the city center.

In *London, City of Any Dream*, MacInnes discusses Hampstead and Highgate—topographically elevated regions situated about five miles northeast of the urban center, noting that, despite the cleaner air, 'The Thames is far away: distantly visible . . . as a silver, winding nerve; and far away from the river a Londoner may lose his center of human gravity' (Fieger & MacInnes 1961, p. 27). MacInnes, clearly, is skeptical of potential alienation of urban displacement, but 1962—the year that Fieger's book was released—represented the mid-point of London's high-rise building boom, marking MacInnes' pointed criticism of rehousing programs as relatively prescient given that the country's collective hatred of such buildings had not yet fully calcified. While MacInnes' aversion to the London City Council's development plans was fully realized, for much of the country, the jury was still out as to how effective they would be. Consequently, reading the trilogy simulates not just the trajectory of government rehousing programs, but also the course of public expectation from the buoyant optimism of governmental solutions to the nightmarish result of such solution's implementation. Despite the urban abandonment of *City of Spades*, there is a sense of hopeful optimism that permeates various characters and continues on into *Absolute Beginners*, before arriving at the suburban desolation of *Mr Love and Justice's* concrete city. The displacement into mass housing—housing that Hanley (2007, p. 11) labels as 'holding cages for the poor and the disenfranchised'—is chiefly what MacInnes tackles in this intermediary text; yet he expresses a degree of optimism that speaks to a conceivable pluralism of London-in-transition through the use of a naïve, but hopeful voice in the form of the narrator. Whereas the spatial perspective in *City of Spades* is relatively myopic, here the reader is given a new standpoint that is as fluid and dynamic as the 'winding nerve' of the Thames itself.

In *Absolute Beginners*, MacInnes shifts to a more traditional narrative role of the single narrator, yet the voice he establishes in this text is especially striking in that it signifies a form of youth that is ultimately hopeful and optimistic of a future London where integration has become the

norm. A central theme, as indicated in the book's title, is the transition from one state into the next, portrayed most prominently in the unnamed narrator's evolution from the status of a teenager to an adult. Furthermore, the narrator has the ability to move sinuously through various regions of London that might ordinarily be considered dangerous or problematic given the tension in the air at the time. However, marking once more the most consistent representation of transition within the trilogy, *Absolute Beginners* speaks to the bildungsroman of the city itself, focusing on territory, displacement, and the alienation that results.

In contrast to the ground-level perspective of *City of Spades*, *Absolute Beginners* opens with an especially striking depiction of elevation, in which the protagonist and his friend Wizard are given a privileged perspective over the city:

But twisting slowly on your bar stool from the east to south, like Cinerama, you can see clean new concrete cloud-kissers, rising up like felixes from the Olde Englishe squares, and then those gorgeous parks, with trees like classical French salads, and then the port life down along the Thames, that glorious river reminding you we're on an estuary, a salt inlet really (11).

Considering its prominent place at the outset of the text, this passage is telling of the city's own coming of age in that the juxtaposition of new construction amidst the old is already underway, with the author registering an initial ambivalence through his description of the new high-rise developments as 'felixes'—otherwise known as VB-6 missiles. Furthermore, through the use of 'Cinerama,' this perspective—essentially elevated and outside of the city itself—inferes the kind of alienated distancing that forms a dominant complaint among those rehoused into the 'concrete cloud-kissers.' Yet this passage also registers two separate ways of experiencing the city: when on the ground, it is a network of zones whose demarcation forms a territorial map of regions; but when viewed from above, those regions dissipate in favor of a more expansive survey of an unbroken, inclusive city that echoes Michel de Certeau's 'Walking in the City.'¹³ That the narrator experiences this deterritorialization early in the text denotes his own role as a figure who, when on the ground, can move from zone to zone with ease and whose documentary eye allows for a new perspective that is basically at street level but also has the capacity to sweep across the city, surveying the territories as a whole. In doing so, the narrator represents the author's conception of the contemporary flaneur through his forward-thinking approach to urban life.

In the same text, MacInnes further develops his emphasis of marked territory in a manner that speaks to the subdivision of the city for rehousing and gentrification purposes. Pimlico, conveyed as the 'dear old ancestral home' that the narrator no longer wishes to visit, is described as being 'killed off' through abandonment: 'It's dying, this bit of London, and that's the most important thing to remember about what goes on there' (45). But not only has the region been left to rot, MacInnes' account suggests that it has been hemmed in by surrounding modernity. Describing the triangular intersection of the rough Harrow road, the Grand Union canal, and the railroad out of the city, the narrator remarks that:

These three escape routes, which are all at different heights and levels, cut across one another at different points, making crazy little islands of slum

¹³ 'Walking in the City' is a chapter in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) in which de Certeau distinguishes between the experience of the city on the street level and one's ability to take in a city as a whole, be it through a map or a bird's eye view. For de Certeau, street-level navigation relies upon a series of cultural transactions that impinge on one another.

habitation shut off from the world by concrete precipices, and linked by metal bridges. I need hardly mention that on this north side there's a hospital, a gas-works with enough juice for the whole population of the kingdom to commit suicide, and a very ancient cemetery with the pretty country name of Kensal Green (46).

Clearly, this mirrors the transition in slum-clearance policy from the philanthropic project of the early 20th century, to the mid-century notion of designating areas for financial gain through passive gentrification. Given the Dudley Committee report's stressing of the need for infrastructure in redevelopment, Pimlico might represent an ideal location for the construction of council housing due to its links to the aforementioned transportation. Yet, as the novel depicts, this is an area that has simply been left to die, presumably taking its inhabitants along with it. However, whereas the bulk of *City of Spades* was very much tailored to a similar world of decay, the mobility of the central character in *Absolute Beginners* offers the additional view of gentrification already underway within the capital such as Suze and Henley's new Bayswater home in 'a trio of Victorian bourgeois palaces that have been made over into flatlets for the new spiv intellectual lot' (88).

Absolute Beginners also illustrates the way that some of the city's residents are displaced through rehousing policy, underscoring the psychological trauma and alienation that accompany such a process. When the narrator heads to the river to 'get a breather,' he stands in close proximity to a new development that he describes as 'high blocks of glass-built flats, like an X-ray of a stack of buildings with their skins peeled off' (41). And it is here that the narrator meets Edward the Ted—a disenfranchised Teddy Boy, enervated by the separation from his gang following the 're-owsing' of his mother into the new tower blocks. As the narrator interrogates Edward in true documentarian style, we learn that his old gang had been disbanded, decanted into the various new developments emerging around the city. MacInnes takes this opportunity to describe the once fearless Teddy Boy as broken down: 'At this point, our valiant Edward looked scared, and glancing about him at the flat blocks, which towered all round like monsters, he said, 'The click's split up'' (43).

Through a continued representation of neglect, even the character's own adopted home of Notting Hill is primed for redevelopment—the kind of redevelopment that today makes it one of the most exclusive post codes in the city. In contrast to Suze's fully gentrified home in Bayswater, the narrator describes his 'Napoli' as being in a state of disrepair that renders it almost uninhabitable: 'huge houses too tall for their width cut up into twenty flatlets, and front facades that it never pays anyone to paint, and broken milk bottles *everywhere* scattering the cracked asphalt roads like snow' (47). Yet it is the narrator's ability to poeticize such dereliction that echoes his privileged stance as both within and above the city through his journalistic outlook. And it is this progressive (albeit naïve) outlook—clearly a metaphor for integration—that charges him with a degree of fluidity, allowing him to pass from space to space unlike many of the other characters such as Edward the Ted, or even his own family, who are basically forced to leave or are trapped and left to die (as is the case with his father) within the confines of their demarcated zones.

This progressive fluidity, then, echoes MacInnes' hopes for a recuperation of his own experience of London. As the narrator reflects on his love for the city despite its negative aspects, he remarks that mobility comes through a form of mastery: 'if you can get to know this city well enough to twist it round your finger, and if you're its son, it's always on your side, supporting you' (80). Derdiger (2016, p. 58) argues that *Absolute Beginners* 'represents

London in the late 1950s as a site of a newly vertically built environment that enables potentially revolutionary physical as well as cultural mobility for a multiethnic and sexually diverse urban population' adding that the text 'revises interwar metropolitan writing and modernist tropes such as the flaneur to represent the promises of a newly mobile experience of London life.' Yet the narrator of *Absolute Beginners* seems to be somewhat of an anomaly, as a number of the characters represented—at least the characters who have transitioned out of youth—are clearly disaffected by their environments. MacInnes develops this disaffection much more in *Mr Love and Justice*—a text that sets mid-century rehousing and grim, institutionalized high-rise living as the target of its critique.

Cutting Corners: The Rise of Welfare-State Architecture

The initiation of an explicitly utilitarian design aesthetic within mid-century rehousing projects reflects the authoritative role established by the MARS group in the 1940s, but the thrust and dissemination of these designs is due, more so, to the group's association with the aforementioned CIAM—undoubtedly the most prominent and influential organization leading the way to a socialist model of architecture. Founded in 1928, CIAM spearheaded a turn away from the formal aesthetics of prior architectural movements, promoting instead what Frampton (2007, p. 269) lists as a pragmatic program of 'building rather than architecture' whose quality of construction was based not on craftsmanship per se, but on 'the universal adoption of rationalized production methods.' Yet, throughout its lifespan, CIAM drifted back toward an academicized heritage of formal canonicity, shifting away from initial socialist sympathies surrounding the quality of living standards to a conscious emphasis toward larger-scale city planning and into a final stage that, returning to a focus on formal design, sought to address the problem of the aesthetic sterility that grew out of the overly-serviceable and functionalist design. Throughout these shifts, CIAM's membership grew divided between those who favored the return to a more erudite 'establishment' approach, and those who viewed this return as a betrayal of early CIAM's socialist inclinations. The latter group, led by Alison and Peter Smithson (as well as Aldo van Eyck), whose critique held that later CIAM's focus veered too far from the emphasis on community and 'belonging' (Frampton 2007, p. 271), headed the schism of CIAM that resulted in the formation of the Team X splinter group and eventually developed into the parallel architectural movements of Dutch Structuralism led by Aldo van Eyck, and the New Brutalism, led by the Smithsons.¹⁴ But it was the prominent centrality of these splinter groups' ideas, circulated in leading journals of the time, that hypothesized a return toward architectural solutions to solve social problems—a concern that CIAM had clearly moved away from in its later years. Thus, the basis for the government-sponsored new architectural style drew inspiration from Team X, as it appeared that the Smithsons and van Eyck's designs spoke to analogous social concerns facing mid-century London: the concerns of mass rehousing; of the aesthetics of a modern identity; and of desire to reshape the social landscape in a more communal, assimilated manner. However, it is also during this period that political investment in philanthropic redevelopment became destabilized in anticipation of the switch in governance back to more conservative, market-driven imperatives.

¹⁴ Banham (1966) offers an expansive discussion of the way the Brutalist mode can be read as two sides of the same coin, tracing the development of the Smithson's ideas as they began to emerge in *Architectural Digest*. He reveals the way Brutalism finds its inspiration less in the mechanical organization of Le Corbusier's social units, and more in primitivism. Whereas Le Corbusier's Unité focused on the self-enclosed plasticity of the social condenser model (see footnote 13), the Brutalists considered the way their designs would interact with an existing milieu—an impetus conveyed by the Smithsons (1957, p. 113) in a contribution to *Architectural Design* in which they exclaimed that 'From individual buildings, disciplined on the whole by classical aesthetic techniques, we moved on to an examination of the *whole* problem of human associations and the relationship that building and community has to them.'

The architectural style of the high-rise that emerged during this time references the utilitarian traits of Le Corbusier's plans established in CIAM but refracted through the more Brutalist lens of the Smithsons. Dunleavy (1981, p. 57) indicates how, after 1945, innovation in rehousing design lost its importance in favor of a more pragmatic, massifying program of 'social responsibility' in which the design itself was thought to produce 'desired forms of social behavior.' These designs, Dunleavy adds, respond to a kind of housing that 'made no pretension to any significant architectural qualities' (1981, p. 57), and can be characterized as subscribing to the Brutalist mode of the Smithson's manifesto. Here, design is posited as unobtrusive by a repetition of geometry, in addition to expansive use of plain cement—not dissimilar to the designs that came from early CIAM. But, whereas earlier plans emphasized the sublime qualities of monumental cement, Brutalism sought a more transparent approach through minimalist aesthetics as a way to shift the emphasis from the buildings themselves to the kind of social relations they might foster. Banham (1966) suggests that the Brutalist style that developed—the aesthetic most clearly identifiable in much of the high-rise development of the post-war rehousing boom—is constructed on a series of social ethics, perhaps even more so than a specific formal approach. However, as shall be seen, when placed into the hands of council developers whose interests resided primarily in profit, such ethics were left behind leaving only the aesthetic to remain, resulting in buildings that proved to be woefully inefficient on a multitude of levels.

In January of 1955, as the result of a changing of the editorial guard, Alison and Peter Smithson's previously-scorned proposals of 'New Brutalism' were published in *Architectural Design* for the first time. Etching out a subcultural relationship to the dominant architectural model of social housing, the Smithson's manifesto encouraged a review of the socialist contribution of the International Style of Le Corbusier and CIAM, reiterating the redundancy of form alone, and calling for a return to early CIAM's ideologies. The Brutalist manifesto expressed frustration over the old guard's privileged role in the world of architecture as the 'establishment' and argued for the development of a modern style in which moralist and socialist attitudes could be integrated within the design itself. Banham (1966, p. 47) shows that, ironically, this integration of a strikingly-austere minimalism has its origin in poverty: 'they saw, in Mediterranean peasant buildings, an anonymous architecture of simple, rugged geometrical forms, smooth-walled and small-windowed, unaffectedly and immemorially at home in its landscape setting.' Further, the term 'Brutalist'—initially penned by Hans Aplund in response to housing plans by Swedish architects, Bengt Edman and Lennart Holm—is difficult to separate from the primitive sensibilities of Art Brut and Arte Povera, characterized also by Brutalism's reliance on béton brut, or unfinished concrete. In this respect, the Brutalist ideology can be read as a manner by which to merge the high art of the modern architectural style, with the everyday functionality and usage of common society—an impulse established by the Smithson's prominent role in the 1953 exhibition, *The Parallel of Life and Art* in which mass and high culture were intimately intertwined. While the incorporation of the Brutalist focus on minimal materials and béton brut facades, combined with the utilitarianism of Le Corbusier's Unité¹⁵ both signified the architectural schism taking place at that particular moment, it also finalized the move toward an efficient and expedient agenda for the City Council's rehousing needs through the development of buildings constructed from

¹⁵ The Unité d'Habitation is a modernist residential housing unit built close to Marseille at the end of the 1940s. In this design, Le Corbusier internalized his larger ideas for total urban planning, compressing them into one building. Designed to house all the amenities that habitation would require—including internal walkways designed to substitute the social space of streets—the Unité still functions and is considered a desirable place to live, but mainly due to its namesake more than the design itself.

prefabricated materials, demonstrating an austere utilitarianism which vetoed any flourish that might be identified as decorative. Alton West (1959) and the Loughborough Road Estate in Brixton (1953-57) best demonstrate these designs: futuristic, yet featureless cement slabs whose aesthetic basis can be understood as clear articulations of a Brutalist twist of the Unité. Whereas Le Corbusier sought to make his buildings machines for living, many of the Council's adaptations of the Brutalist aesthetic might be visually interpreted as little more than the packaging that a Corbusien machine might arrive in. And it is here that MacInnes' sociological concerns for such developments are laid bare in that the reader is moved from an environment in which these structures emerge on the periphery, to ones they are forced to inhabit.

Mr Love and Justice as Architectural Critique

Continuing the trajectory of *City of Spades* and *Absolute Beginners*, *Mr Love and Justice* depicts the move from the urban center to elevated, suburban high-rises in order to index the kind of problems they produce. The story deals with similar issues raised in the first two texts, but interrogates the role of race and identity within criminality by offering a white protagonist who succumbs to a corrupt world as a way to escape the mindlessness of his life. Loosely based on the experiences of MacInnes' friend Terry Taylor, the novel explores the binary of pimp and policeman by mobilizing the same structure of the alternating narrative used in *City of Spades*. In *Mr Love and Justice*, role reversal is prominent as the aptly-titled characters develop and their narrative paths converge with Mr. Frankie Love becoming increasingly attuned to social justice while Edward Justice attenuates his own sense of the law to accommodate his love for a woman from a well-known criminal family. As the story unfolds, the two men end up in what Gould (1983, p. 150) terms a 'shoot out' in which the characters are figuratively equalized as they find themselves to be neighbors in the same high-rise estate, equally alienated from the city.

In this text, MacInnes moves the action out of the city and into the vertical streets of the high-rise to place the reader into the role of the displaced protagonists to show how life within urban renewal programs can be uniquely grim and imprisoning. Here, the Teddy Boys of *Absolute Beginners* are institutionalized as corrupt and abusive police officers whose role is not to prevent crime, but to perpetuate cycles of it as job protection. For example, the detective-sergeant responsible for Edward's training prioritizes quantity of arrests over the quality of the conviction, noting that 'the longer you can keep a prisoner from his lawyer the better it's likely to be for your particular purposes' (98). His justification for this is apt given the novel's expansion of the homogenizing effect introduced in *Absolute Beginners*. Whereas prior, an intra-class social hierarchy may have been more pronounced, within urban redevelopment, a degree of leveling takes place in which disparate individuals seek to dominate one another as a response to the kind of subjugation experienced by all: 'you're alone in a cell with a man who you know for certain is evil and anti-social, well, you must establish your moral right to prepare him for punishment as best you can' (99). And establish a moral right he does, punching a harmless suspect 'five or six times very hard in an extremely dispassionate manner in the stomach' (54). Through the harmonizing of Love and Justice, the text highlights this point by presenting two incongruent characters who, under the auspices of the same environmental change, become increasingly indivisible. In aligning them as such, MacInnes moves his critical focus away class difference as the cause of social tension, instead allowing for a clear interrogation of space—specifically space created by woefully-inept bureaucracies whose motivation is one of quick, cheap fixes in which gentrified masses can be cleared from commercially viable areas under the auspices of social assistance. Consequently, the final novel

in the trilogy addresses social deviance, but shifts the focus away from the criminals themselves to illuminate the role that environment and government influence have in creating and maintaining a system of criminality.

Much of the rehousing development of this time was centered upon utilitarian repair work and reconstruction of existing structures that survived the Blitz, yet it was not until the 1950s that the influence of prominent architectural debates could be readily identified (Bullock 2002, p. 83). As a way to try and bridge the divide between a traditional British style and a forward-thinking aesthetic, initial post-war redevelopment projects featured in *Architectural Review* consisted of tenements that sought to merge the traditional British picturesque countryside with rows of three-story modernized blocks characterized by repetition of features and an austerity seen in Swedish modern architecture. Lionel Brett, skeptical of Le Corbusier's Unité, posed the question in a 1949 issue of *Architectural Review* asking how such a merging of tradition and modernity might translate into the monumental. Answering his own question, Brett praised the expansive designs of Pimlico's Churchill Gardens (1948-1950) and Finsbury's Spa Green Estate (1946-1950) as maintaining a modern aesthetic but diverging from the single-level repetition of Le Corbusier's plans, further delineating what would become a blueprint for post-war rehousing design (Bullock 2002, p. 89). Bullock adds that the distinction between pre-WWII developments such as Berthold Lubetkin's Highpoint (1935) and Spa Green is indicative of the shifting directions of modern architecture, with an increased emphasis placed on new materials and a greater sensitivity to tradition expressed in the use of surrounding land (2002, p. 89). But it was the 1949 reformation of the Housing Division of the City Council's architect department—with the development of the Ackroydon Estate in Wimbledon (1950-1953)—that served as the prototype for mid-century high-rise rehousing projects, crystalizing in the 1958 creation of Alton East Estate at Roehampton—widely considered to be the pinnacle of post-WWII rehousing. Constructed in two waves, with inspiration taken directly from Le Corbusier's Unité, the design, equal parts Soviet and Brutalist-inspired, incorporated monumental and austere towers within proximal location to the picturesque Richmond Park. Accordingly, both Ackroydon and Alton East received enthusiastic praise in *Architectural Review*, and the final model for mid-century social rehousing projects took form.

As part of the novel's attempt to socially equalize the two characters, MacInnes outlines supplementary reasons for the kind of displacement experienced by the disenfranchised characters of the first two texts. For example, because of the potential controversy that could emerge from their relationship, Edward and his fiancé are forced to find a sanctuary away from his beat,¹⁶ opting for a new suburban development which, for them, is a step down on the social ladder: 'The flats the girl had in mind were of more recent construction—one of those countless anonymous 1950 blocks which, in spite of their proliferation, have as yet entirely failed to transform London from what it still after years of bombing and re-building essentially remains' (70). Ironically, this turns out to be the same building that Frankie Love and his prostitute girlfriend opt to move into as a social step-up—an aspect of the text that, at least momentarily, appears to move toward the social condenser model of pluralist existence that MacInnes is invested in through his emphasis on the proliferation of the high-rise estate.¹⁷

¹⁶ Interestingly, this is not dissimilar from the subterranean enclaves formed in *City of Spades*, only the oppression that Edward faces is institutional and classist in that his fiancé is deemed substandard by the dictates of his environment.

¹⁷ The Soviet Constructivist style, based largely on ideas of avant-garde Russian aesthetics, is perhaps best summarized in the words of Alexander Bogdanov who posited that one of the driving forces of the Soviet style was 'to forge a new cultural unity from the material and cultural exigencies of communal life and production' (Frampton 2007, p. 160). With their country in a similar state of impoverished destruction following the Russian

Despite the early optimism of the planning stages, concerns about the way high-rise construction might fail to meet intended goals arose in tandem with the buildings themselves. Essentially beacons of modernism-lite, the physical manifestations of progressive British architecture that emerged in the building boom from 1950 to 1970 were almost universally derided.¹⁸ Essentially beacons of modernism-lite, the physical manifestations of progressive British architecture that emerged in the building boom from 1950 to 1970 were almost universally derided. This suggests a severe disconnect between the designs developed through the lineage of CIAM's socialist ideology, and the expedient, capitalistic implementation of such designs in which cosmetic features were adapted but the ethical considerations of social function were broadly disregarded as a means by which to cut corners. Dunleavy (1981, p. 84) states that the cost of construction of high-rise housing was commonly known to be astronomical prior to this development, but with the adoption of the minimalist and prefabricated aesthetics of Brutalism, costs were expected to drop. Yet one of the problems that emerged was that the design and construction of this new form of architecture cut material costs in areas where material costs should not have been cut. One of the most prominent buildings erected during this wave of construction was Ronan Point—a 22-storey block built in 1966 that borrowed many of the principles and aesthetics of the inexpensive 'streets in the sky' philosophy adopted by the London City Council. Only two years after its completion, a kitchen explosion caused a separation between the structural joints that connected the walls to the floors, and part of the building collapsed killing four people and injuring seventeen more. Although reconstructed using stronger supports, the building was demolished in the years that followed—an ironic reflection of the failed regeneration policies following WWI in which superficial repairs were enacted in lieu of long-term planning. But the similar design flaws associated with this wave of construction that left many of the buildings in states of physical dilapidation were a minor concern in relation to the social effect of alienation that the rehousing projects ushered in.¹⁹ As Dunleavy (1981, p. 95) continues to report, almost half of the citizens rehoused in London's development program would have moved back to the slums if given the chance. This is due in part to the physical conditions of the space and the dereliction that followed—a state that Hanley (2007, p. 103) refers to as 'mass-produced barracks.' She adds that, 'Experimenting with new building techniques in the 1950s and 1960s—a time of fecund optimism and a pervasive belief that science and technology would solve the problems inherent in trying to feed and shelter the world's growing population—was tantamount to experimenting with lives' (2007, p. 105). And in this respect, the towers became inverse panoptic totems—beacons of imprisonment whose physical façade would depict the misery that developed within as the *béton brut* exterior transformed from clinically clean to the dull, gray, and partially-rusted tone of neglect.

Civil War (1917-1922), ASNOVA (Association of New Architects)—a rationalist avant-garde professional group from the Vkhutemas school—developed a series of designs that merged pragmatic rationality with futurist thought. Their modernist projects from 1923 to 1935 sought to 'reconstitute the American skyscraper in a socialist form' through the preoccupation and inclusion of 'workers' clubs and recreational facilities designed to function as new 'social condensers'' (Frampton 2007, p. 172).

¹⁸ Leonard Downie Jr., while on leave from the Washington Post, wrote several articles on the state of British architecture during the 1970s.

¹⁹ It is worth noting here the 2017 Grenfell Tower fire in which a 1967 Brutalist-style housing block erupted in flames as the result of lax regulation and the kind of corner-cutting associated with mass housing construction of the time. 72 people are known to have died in the fire, and the incident is emblematic of the way low-cost development was favored over safety. Even the aftermath of the incident serves as a reminder of the way class and space intersect, often in tragic ways.

The concerns that MacInnes raised to his editor in 1971 about the state of modern architecture were clearly on his mind in 1960 in that *Mr Love and Justice* paints an equally grim picture of the estate that both Frankie and Edward move into, positing it more as social experimentation gone awry. Edward describes Kilburn as ‘equivocal’ noting that ‘As you walked through its same and peeling (though un-slummy) streets, the facades of the houses hinted, somehow, that all was not as it seemed behind those faded doors and walls’ (69). He adds how this façade has become a ‘chief feature of whole chunks of mid-twentieth-century London—as, indeed, of many of its inhabitants’ (70). Once Edward and his fiancé move in, he begins to notice that his neighbors keep to themselves, describing them as ‘potential inhabitants of some vast, imaginary jail’ (70). Similarly, when Frankie and ‘his woman’ move in, nobody questions their unmarried status, with his observation that ‘this state of affairs was far from unusual among the tenants as a whole’ (74). Whereas this plot structure serves to unite the two protagonists on the same plane, it is also indicative of the way that MacInnes anticipates Hanley’s claim that high-rise estates are essentially holding cells for a city’s outcast populace. Toward the end of the text, MacInnes advances this notion more explicitly by describing the actual prison cells that hold Frankie as mirror images of high-rise construction: ‘And these places are, to be sure, rebarbative enough . . . the nastiest thing about them being not that they have locks and bars, but that they are so utterly, fundamentally *utilitarian*’ (148, emphasis in original). MacInnes’ conflation of prisons with high-rise developments is unavoidable when the narrator—representing at this point the merged characters of Love and Justice—describes their alienating capacities as ‘making escape impossible to the prisoner and of filling his soul with lonely terror and foreboding’ (148). The imprisonment felt, in this situation, can be read as little more than a geographically-displaced version of the same alienation and disenfranchisement of the environs of both *City of Spades* and *Absolute Beginners* that stems from perceptible limits placed on social mobility, resulting in the turn to alternative social choices as an escape, signified by Frankie’s experience of monotony in which ‘time hung heavy on his hands and much ingenuity had to be expended in wasting it without total boredom’ (57).

Conclusion

That the Smithson’s architectural aesthetic was, in part, inspired by Mediterranean primitive hovels is both ironic and tragic given the kind of development sanctioned by the London County Council. As Dunleavy contends, the tendency for residents to go outdoors and socialize is what was greatly diminished in these buildings, resulting in an increase in respiratory problems. Mental health and emotional wellbeing was also hampered by the forced proximity of strangers in tandem with extreme elevation; and general safety became a concern for many residents whose children had little space to play except within the elevators or stairwells of the building itself. Given the design’s original intent to produce a more contented populace, when Banham remarks that Brutalism was more about ethics than a specific aesthetic, it becomes clear that what was incorporated into the rehousing plan was an aesthetic façade alone—a cheap, technological Band-Aid for a grand-scale social problem. Alienation from the city itself was amplified by the fact that many of the buildings constructed lacked basic amenities and the availability of resources such as public transportation and spaces of leisure. Consequently, vandalism and crime—the telltale signs of social and cultural neglect—soared, marking many of the developments as inherently dangerous, sealing the inhabitants within their flats. The cold, unwelcoming aesthetic of the designs only furthered this alienation, and, as Dunleavy (1981 p. 98) remarks, ‘Loneliness and social isolation [were] perhaps the most frequently cited adverse aspects of high-flat life.’

Whereas MacInnes' trilogy often conveys his skepticism of mid-century rehousing through imaginative fiction, in *London, City of Any Dream*, he drops all pretenses, condemning the shift from its philanthropic beginnings to free-market development stripped of cultural accountability. Following a lengthy survey of London's architecture that was razed for commercial development rather than restored for cultural sanctity, MacInnes maligns developers as vandals, holding them accountable for larceny of the city's spirit. Yet, as MacInnes often describes the city as a highly organic space, at times appearing to respond to its own citizens' desires, it would seem that attempts at any extensive structured organization associated with pragmatic urban planning would prove challenging—hence the kinds of disenfranchising problems symptomatic of high-rise and council estates to this day. But, given this, the question must be raised as to how MacInnes' own inimitable desire for a framework of pluralistic transformation could be read as distinctive? Whereas the malevolence of indifferent commercialism would be negated, any attempts at imposing structure onto a city as diverse as London will be bound for similar difficulties.

Author Bio

Simon Lee recently received his PhD from the University of California, Riverside, where he researches and teaches 20th and 21st-century British literature. His scholarship explores the ramifications of space and environment on class consciousness and his new book project, *Working-Class Heroics*, centers on the aesthetics of the kitchen sink realism movement of the 1960s. He has published on authors such as John Osborne, Alan Sillitoe, Shelagh Delaney, Nell Dunn, and Colin MacInnes in addition to publishing essays and articles theorizing working-class writing. He is currently developing articles on censorship in the British New Wave and the role of nostalgia in Sid Chaplin's Newcastle novels.

Bibliography

- Banham, R. 1966, *The new brutalism: Ethic or aesthetic*, Reinhold Publishing, New York.
- Bentley, N. 2003a, 'Writing 1950s London: Narrative strategies in Colin MacInnes', *City of spades and absolute beginners*, *Literary London: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Representation of London*, vol. 1, no. 2, viewed 12 January 2013, <<http://www.literarylondon.org/london-journal/september2003/bentley.html>>.
- . 2003b, 'Translating English: Youth, race and nation in Colin MacInnes's *City of Spades* and *Absolute Beginners*', *Connotations: A Journal for Critical Debate*, vol. 13, no. 1-2, pp. 149-69.
- Blodgett, H. 1976, 'City of other worlds: The London novels of Colin MacInnes', *Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction*, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 105-118.
- Bullock, N. 2002, *Building the post-war world: Modern architecture and reconstruction in Britain*, Routledge, London.
- De Certeau, M. 1984, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Derdiger, P. 2016, 'To drag out a rough poetry: Colin MacInnes and the new brutalism in postwar Britain', *Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 62, no. 1, pp. 53-69.
- Downie Jr., L. 1972, *Embattled London*, Alicia Patterson Foundation, Washington. <<http://aliciapatterson.org/stories/embattled-london>>.
- Dunleavy, P. 1981, *The politics of mass housing in Britain 1945-1975*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.
- Fieger, E. & MacInnes, C. 1961, *London: City of any dream*, Thames and Hudson, London.
- Frampton, K. 2007, *Modern architecture: A critical history*, Thames and Hudson, London.

- Gould, T. 1983, *Insider outsider: The life and times of Colin MacInnes*, Chatto & Windus, London.
- Goulding, S. 2010, 'Neighbors are the worst people to live beside', The 1958 Notting Hill Riots as Dramatic Spectacle, Drama as Analysis', *Literary London: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Representation of London*, vol. 8, no. 1, viewed 8 January 2013, <<http://www.literarylondon.org/london-journal/march2010/goulding.html>>
- Hanley, L. 2007, *Estates: An intimate history*, Granta, London.
- Lichtenstein, C. & Schregenberger, T. 2001, *As found: The discovery of the ordinary*, Lars Müller Publishers, Zurich.
- Lund, B. 1996, *Housing problems and housing policy*, Essex, Longman.
- MacInnes, C. 1961, *England, half English: A polyphoto of the fifties*, MacGibbon & Kee, London.
- . 1971, 'Letter to Reg Davis-Poynter', 22 October, Box 1, Folder 27, *Colin MacInnes Papers 1921 - 1976*, River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester.
- . 2005, *The Colin MacInnes omnibus*, Alison & Busby, London.
- Marcuse, P. 1986, 'Abandonment, gentrification, and displacement: The linkages in New York City', in N. Smith and P. Williams (eds), *Gentrification of the city*, Allen & Unwin, Boston, pp. 153-177.
- McKinney, D. 2006, 'The flesh failures', *The Believer*, vol. 4. no. 2, pp. 31-38.
- O'Conner, P. & Kellerman, S. 2010, *Origins of the specious: Myths and misconceptions of the English language*, New York, Random House.
- Smithson, A. & Smithson, P. 1957, 'Thoughts in progress: The new brutalism', *Architectural Design*, vol. 27, no. 4, p. 113.
- Thrift, N. & Williams, P. 1987, *Class and space: The making of urban society*, Routledge & Keegan Paul, London.
- Williams, P. 1986, 'Class constitution through spatial reconstruction? A re-evaluation of gentrification in Australia, Britain, and the Unites States', in N. Smith and P. Williams (eds), *Gentrification of the city*, Allen & Unwin, Boston, pp. 56-77.
- Wiseman, Sam. 2015, 'Searching for new states of being: The cultural energies and contested spaces of Colin MacInnes's London', *Literary London: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Representation of London*, vol. 12, no. 1-2, viewed 10 May 2018, <<http://literarylondon.org/london-journal/springautumn2015/wiseman.pdf>>.
- Wood, C. 1991, 'Urban renewal: the British experience', in R. Alterman and G. Cars (eds), *Neighborhood regeneration: An international evaluation*, Mansell, London, pp. 44-69.

I Was a Retail Salesperson: An Examination of Two Memoirs About Working in Retail

Brittany R. Clark, Ph.D. candidate, Pennsylvania State University – Harrisburg

Abstract

This article considers Barbara Ehrenreich's *Nickel and Dimed* (originally published in 2001) and Caitlin Kelly's *Malled* (2011) as representational narratives of working-class retail workers. The display of working-class experience in each work is considered in the context of the authors' lives and experiences, considering use of language, events and broader expectations of the working life of retail salespeople. Using Stuart Hall's concept of the 'Other' (2013) as a theoretical key point, the article also considers, for an American perspective specifically, how these workers are constructed in the broader ideology of the nation state.

Keywords:

Representation, Narrative, Other, Retail, Class Identity

Introduction

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) the three most commonly held jobs in the United States in 2017 were Retail Salesperson with 4.5 million employees, Food Preparation and Serving Workers (including Fast Food), and Cashiers which both have 3.5 million workers (Bureau of Labor Statistics n.d.). By comparison, Office Clerks, which was the fourth most commonly held job, comprised under 3 million employees. Despite this, work in retail is often overlooked in discussions about the working-class. However, two books in the early 21st century sought to expose what the working conditions in the retail trade were really like. Barbara Ehrenreich's well-reviewed 2001 book *Nickel and Dimed: On Not Getting by in America* became a standard-bearer of working-class literature for the grittiness and honesty about the lives of the working-poor. Ten years later, journalist Caitlin Kelly released her memoir *Malled: My Unintentional Career in Retail* detailing her own two years working in retail after being laid off from her job at the *New York Daily News*. While in some ways these books are important in their bringing to light often-overlooked aspects of retail work, they are also deeply flawed. A close reading of the texts through the concept of class tourism, and Stuart Hall's ideas about Othering will provide a framework to demonstrate how each author keeps themselves at a distance from the work they are doing when they enter the retail trade. Likewise, Augusto Boal (1993) provides an additional framework for approaching these works as performance, making them voyeuristic portraits of the working-class. Instead of exposing the realities of retail work, both works represent a form of class tourism due to each author's inability to separate themselves from their former privileged lives, and the Othering they engage in as they are unable to find much value in the work itself.

Nickel and Dimed and Malled

There are several notable similarities between Barbara Ehrenreich and Caitlin Kelly. Both make their living as authors and journalists, both began working in retail in their mid-50s, and both used their experiences as fodder for a book whose secondary intention was to expose the truth of what that work is really like. The biggest difference between their two books comes with the primary intention of each work: Ehrenreich's *Nickel and Dimed: On Not Getting by in America* was written as a piece of investigative journalism exploring the day-to-day lives of the working-poor, while Kelly's *Malled: My Unintentional Career in Retail* was intended as a memoir. Each received national attention as Ehrenreich's book became a *New York Times* bestseller and received several awards for its humanistic approach to the subject (Ehrenreich 2011, pp. 224), while Kelly's book led to major interviews with the *CBS Early Show*, *The Washington Post*, and Diane Rehm of NPR.

Both Ehrenreich and Kelly currently enjoy status as members of the white upper-middle class. Ehrenreich was born in Montana, and by all accounts watched her father achieve the American dream working from coal miner to middle-class respectability. Even though she holds a Ph.D. in biology from Rockefeller University (Ehrenreich 2011, 193), she today works as a freelance writer/activist championing causes like 'health care, peace, women's rights, and economic justice' (Ehrenreich n.d., para. 5). When *Nickel and Dimed* was published, she lived near Key West in Florida. Unlike Ehrenreich, Kelly was born to an upper-class family in Toronto and who, by her own account, began working as a journalist right after graduating from the University of Toronto (Kelly 2011, pp. 3). Today she lives just outside of New York City (Kelly 2018, para. 4).

In the introduction to *Nickel and Dimed*, Ehrenreich lays out how her book came to be: In 1998, over a dinner with the editor of *Harper's Bazaar*, she questioned 'how does anyone live on the wages available to the unskilled?' After suggesting that it would make for a compelling piece of investigative journalism, her editor proposed she be the one to explore the subject further. (Ehrenreich 2011, pp.1-2). What initially began as an article quickly turned into a book project when she decided she would visit three different cities. She 'stripped-down' her resume and then tried to subsist for as long as possible on whatever low-wage work she could find. Over the course of her investigation she lived in Key West, Florida where she worked primarily as a waitress, Portland, Maine where she worked as a maid, and Minneapolis, Minnesota where she worked as a retail clerk. She also decided that if, in that time, she could not afford to pay her housing cost or food, she would end the experiment (Ehrenreich 2011, pp. 2-5). While occasional references will be made to other parts of the book, this paper will largely focus on Ehrenreich's time spent in her last location, Minneapolis, working for Walmart. Ehrenreich's book has become so popular that at least two books were written in response: *Below the Breadline* by Fran Abrams, who attempted to replicate the experience in London, and Adam Shepard's *Scratch Beginnings* which attempted to imitate to refute the findings in *Nickel and Dimed* (Ehrenreich 2011, pp. 224).

While Ehrenreich started out intending to write an exposé on the life of the working-class, Kelly did not intend to write about her experiences when she began. After getting laid off from her job at the *New York Daily News* in 2006, she decided to apply for a job at the newly opened North Face store in a nearby mall (Kelly 2011, pp. 10-11). Over the course of two years, she worked one day a week at the mall in order to be able to continue her work as a freelance journalist. Two years after starting her new retail job she was able to quit to continue freelancing full-time, and published a book based on her experiences (Kelly 2011, pp.1).

Malled chronicles Kelly's first-time experience working in the retail industry and includes interviews with other former white-collar professionals who were hurt by the Recession and forced to take low-paying jobs in the service industry.

One of the reasons these projects became books, despite neither starting out that way, was because both authors seemed stunned that so little was written on the subject. The framing device of each book is their own experiences. Despite differences in genre, both include typical features of literary journalistic writing including interviews with experts, statistics, and analyses of larger social and economic trends. The language in each also suggests that both authors set out to expose what they felt was a largely underreported on, but surprisingly harsh, working conditions in the retail industry.

Class Tourism

Narratives about the working class can highlight issues they face in theory, although not always in practice. Diana Kendall, in her book *Framing Class*, which discusses media narratives of class, argues that 'these narratives are organizations of experience that bring order to events. As such, these narratives wield power, because they influence how we make sense of the world' (Kendall 2005, pp. 5). However, when the storyteller is discussing issues from a place of privilege, and is unable to separate themselves from that privilege in relation to their connection to those they are representing, the results can be harmful. The results can overgeneralize the actual conditions of society's most vulnerable and can Other the people they are supposed to be representing.

In both Ehrenreich and Kelly's books, their own privileged status remains inseparable from the rest of the content. While it would be inaccurate to say their experiences were not real or informative, their methods for approaching these experiences demonstrate that they are participating in a form of class tourism in their attempts to understand the experiences of those who do this job every day. According to the BLS, the statistics regarding the position of Retail Salesperson demonstrate that the makeup regarding race mirrors almost exactly the country as a whole, while for the position of Cashier all racial minorities are overrepresented – with African-Americans at 40% overrepresented and Hispanics or Latinos 30% overrepresented (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2018). Both authors are from an upper-class, white background which affects the ways they approached their new locations and jobs. In choosing where to work and/or live, for example, they often use their privileged status to pick places that would make them feel the most comfortable rather than out of necessity as is the case for most members of the working-poor. Additionally, the knowledge that their situations are temporary allows them to perform being working-class without fully escaping their privileged position in society.

Their own knowledge of themselves as authors adds to this performative aspect in their narratives. Augusto Boal, in his book *Theater of the Oppressed* states that in American theater 'it is always good to show that there are people in worse situations than ours — this reassures the more sensible audience, whose members easily give thanks for the financial ability that made it possible for them to buy theater tickets, or who feel thankful for their little domestic happiness, in contrast with the characters tormented by vices, schizophrenia, neurosis and other illnesses' (Boal 1993, pp. 187). Once both authors set about writing a book based on their experiences and decided the aim would be to expose the working conditions in the retail industry, they, consciously or not, determined who the target audience would be – not their temporary working-class colleagues, but those in a position of privilege like themselves. Even

as Ehrenreich ends her book by addressing many of the myths about the working-class in a way that both abdicates responsibility of the middle and upper-classes to do more to help, and continues to create a melodramatic narrative about low-wage work by, for example, comparing it to a dictatorship (Ehrenreich 2011, pp. 210). By treating this as entertainment both authors are simply reinforcing the status quo.

Taken together this makes them disingenuous representatives of those who work in retail regularly, while allowing them to present themselves as having had a real working-class experience. In paraphrasing Marx, Boal suggests, ‘knowledge... is revealed according to the perspective of the artist or of the social sector in which he is rooted, or which sponsors him, pays him, or consumes his work — especially that sector of society which holds the economic power’ (Boal 1993, pp. 53). As both journalists and members of the privileged class, they are able to get away with this type of class tourism because they are supposedly exposing the harsh truths about working in the retail industry. Kendall additionally states that ‘framing is an important way in which the media emphasize some ideological perspectives over others and manipulate salience by directing people’s attention to some ideas while ignoring others’ (Kendall 2005, pp. 5). In framing the narratives around themselves, both authors diminish the emphasis on the real issues facing the working-class, instead evoking our sympathy toward them and what they have gone through.

Kelly more obviously highlights her privileged status by stating early on that she has never worked in retail before, ‘Moving to the other side of the cash wrap... felt as disorienting to me as Alice might have felt when she slipped through the mirror into Wonderland... By moving to the other side of the register, I, too, entered a new world, one I had only glimpsed in passing since I was little’ (Kelly 2011, pp. 2). Despite needing a part-time job to supplement her income as a freelance journalist, she is unwilling to take on many traditional low-income jobs such as working for a supermarket or becoming a telemarketer. Seeing an ad for a newly opened North Face store located in a mall in an affluent area of New York City, she thinks this would be a good fit for many of the skills she has learned in her years as a journalist and through her extensive world travel (10). Michael Zweig in his book *The Working Class Majority* argues that ‘Advertising is based on getting us to identify a product with some characteristic we would like to have: sexiness, power, smarts, happiness, status. The ever more relentless introduction of advertising into every nook and cranny of our daily lives constantly reinforces a sense of identity through possessions that tends to crowd out other identifiers, such as class’ (Zweig 2011, pp. 48). In choosing a part-time job, Kelly, uses the only thing she knows about the industry: the reputation of the brand based on advertising. She believes that working for an upscale brand at a high-end mall will allow her a feeling of status that she could not get by working at a supermarket or a gas station, despite the job itself being in the same industry. While she might be embarrassed to be seen working for the latter by someone from her previous life as a serious journalist, the feeling is lessened by working for the North Face.

Later, during orientation with the other new employees, she learns that this method for choosing a low-wage retail job is uncommon, as many of her co-workers are coming to the North Face looking for a small step up the economic ladder, having worked in retail before. They have not chosen the North Face because of a presumed status about the brand, but because it offers similar work to the jobs they have held in the past while also being slight improvements on their previous positions, such as being out of the cold that comes with the meat department in a supermarket (Kelly 2011, pp. 21). She is also surprised to note that, for the first time in her life, she is ‘the visible minority’ as ‘the only Caucasian in the room,’ although she quickly glosses over this fact (Kelly 2011, pp. 20). Having never considered that this might be a

possibility when she joined this industry, however, demonstrates just how out of her element she is. This clearly demonstrates both her upper-class status and the privilege that comes with being white. She is approaching the job from a prestige perspective, while her co-workers are choosing it out of necessity. She has agency here, while her co-workers do not.

Although she begins her new job working two days a week she soon cuts this down to one day (Kelly 2011, pp.13). She chooses to only work Wednesday afternoons because it will allow her to maintain her freelance work full-time while continuing to have weekends off. The idea of a flexible schedule is particularly appealing to her as it lets her keep the job at arms-length, allowing her to consider it a distraction from her real life. 'I was grateful for a break... I'd already achieved enough success in my chosen field that a part-time, low-status job I considered temporary wouldn't exclusively define me' (Kelly 2011, pp.50). Kelly's book gives no indication that working one day a week is a common occurrence at the North Face, nor does she mention any other employees who have such a schedule. This framing of the work, the distance in which she places the job from her other life and the ability to be so picky about where and how often she works, further demonstrate the performative nature of her supposed representation of the lives of these workers. It creates the impression that she is neither serious about the work or presenting to the audience a realistic picture of what working in the retail industry is like.

While Ehrenreich dedicates more of her time to the project, there are a number of aspects to the way in which she conducts this research that indicate that she, likewise, is participating in a form class tourism. Unlike Kelly, she is not seeking work because she needed to supplement her income but taking on an investigative assignment to see what it is like to live as a member of the working-poor. Despite this, she is unwilling to completely dive into this assignment in the way many working-class people do every day, allowing herself both a buffer of cash up front and a car rented with a credit card in each new city because, 'I just figured that a story about waiting for busses would not be very interesting to read' (Ehrenreich 2011, pp. 5). By acknowledging this upfront she is prioritizing her own personal comfort above an accurate representation, while admitting that such buffers may not be common with those she is trying to represent.

More subtly, however, are her choice of locations. The first city she works in is Key West, Florida, located close to where she lives, and which she chooses, 'Mostly out of laziness' (Ehrenreich 2011, pp.11). This location she takes the least seriously of all the places she goes to work as she allows herself, 'occasional breaks from this life, going home now and then to catch up on e-mail and for conjugal visits (though I am careful to 'pay' for everything I eat here, at \$5 a dinner, which I put in a jar), seeing *The Truman Show* with friends and letting them buy my ticket' (Ehrenreich 2011, pp. 35). The choice of the word 'conjugal' here further suggests the lack of seriousness with which she is taking on her new role, as it evokes the image that her 'new life' is a prison sentence.

Her second location, Portland, Maine was chosen because she thought it would be easy for her to find work because the demographic was largely white (Ehrenreich 2011, pp.52). She chooses Minneapolis, her final location, because she assumed Minnesota was a liberal state, 'more merciful than many to its welfare poor' and only after discarding the idea of California (where she attended college) because of the heat in the summer. About this last location she states 'what I was looking for this time around was a comfortable correspondence between income and rent, and a few mild adventures, a soft landing' (Ehrenreich 2011, pp.121-122). This idea of a 'soft landing' and a 'mild adventure' is further demonstrated by her ability to house-sit for

an acquaintance for a period of time while she looks for work, rather than immediately jumping into the housing and job pools as she had in her other locations. This purposeful choice of locations is notable for a several reasons: it illustrates that she is using her privileged status as a member of the upper-class to pick locations that will make her experience easier or more pleasant (an ‘adventure’ even) and demonstrates that she is unaware that racial minorities are often overrepresented the types of low-wage positions she is searching for. Choosing places that will make her the most comfortable because they are the ‘whitest’ or most liberal therefore adds to the performative nature of her narrative and works against any authenticity she is purporting to represent.

Othering

The questionable presentation of a supposedly realistic experience is seen much more starkly, however, in the ways in which the authors position themselves both in their narratives, and in relation to their co-workers. Neither is able to completely distance themselves from their privileged status, and constantly refer back to their real lives as a gauge from which to judge their new experiences. Their previous life experiences, likewise, lets each feel as if they are able to speak-up on matters in which their co-workers are remaining silent. Stuart Hall discusses this practice of holding yourself at a distance as ‘Othering.’ He states ‘binary oppositions have the great value of capturing the diversity of the world within their either/or extremes, they are also a rather crude and reductionist way of establishing meaning’ (Hall 2013, pp. 225). While Hall is specifically talking about issues of race, his ideas can also be applied here in terms of class status. Both authors view their positions in retail and among the working-class as temporary, which allows them to feel separate from their co-workers and the larger system, even though to their co-workers they appear to be a peer.

The most clearly noticeable example of this is that neither Ehrenreich nor Kelly are able to completely let go of their other lives in devotion to their new positions. Hall claims that ‘stable cultures require things to stay in their appointed place. Symbolic boundaries keep the categories ‘pure,’ giving culture their unique meaning and identity. What unsettles culture is ‘matter out of place’ – breaking of our unwritten rules and codes’ (Hall 2013, pp. 226). That is, both authors see themselves primarily as a journalist first, temporary member of the working-class second. In his article ‘Sponsored and Contest Mobility in the School System,’ Ralph Turner states that ‘the elite aspirant must relate himself both to the established elite and to the masses, who follow different rules, and the elite itself is not sufficiently homogeneous to evolve consensual rules of intercourse’ (Turner 1960, pp. 864). Neither is able to acclimate to their new space, seeing it only as a temporary assignment. As such, they are still playing by the rules of the elites, unable to fully adapt themselves to the rules of their new jobs and temporary class status.

From the beginning, every new experience for Kelly is contrasted with her work as a serious journalist. Once she is hired at the North Face, she is shocked to learn that they are going to train her. ‘I’d never been *trained* before’ she states, before explaining that, in journalism, you are simply thrown into the job and expected to know how to do it (Kelly 2011, pp. 19). At first, many of her experiences in her new job are compared favorably to her previous work – she likes the fresh, clean layout of the brand-new store compared to the stingy offices of corporate journalism or lonely confinement of freelance work, for example (32). However, after a short while, it soon becomes apparent that she is in a whole new world, as when she receives her first name tag. ‘We were issued name tags... I’d never worn a name tag at work, only at conferences where I was an honored speaker whose words were taped and sold, sometimes even quoted back to me years later by a listener who found them helpful’ (33). Kelly is

constantly bringing up her pedigreed past – from her success as a journalist, to her ability to speak multiple languages fluently, to her frequent world travel. In this way she is unable to fully see herself in her new position as a retail clerk without elevating her previous, real, life. In many ways, she ultimately is unable to fully adapt to this new position where she must blend in instead of seeking the type of recognition she is used to.

For her part, Ehrenreich is often surprised that no one seems to sense that she is smarter than the typical applicant for low-skilled work (having earned a Ph.D.), and that people are rarely surprised when she reveals, before quitting each position, that she is really an undercover journalist. In her final chapter – ‘Evaluation’ – she states ‘You might think that unskilled jobs would be a snap for someone who holds a Ph.D.... Not so.... Every one of the six jobs I entered into in the course of this project required concentration, and most demanded that I master new terms, new tools, and new skills... None of these things came as easily to me as I would have liked; no one ever said, ‘Wow, you’re fast!’ or ‘Can you believe she just started?’’ (Ehrenreich 2011, pp.194). Unlike Kelly who views all of her new experiences through the lens of her previous life, Ehrenreich wants someone to notice that she is different from her co-workers. In the middle of a shift at Walmart, bored by the tedious nature of doing the same thing over and over again, she thinks, ‘Yes, I know that any day now I’m going to return to the variety and drama of my real... life. But this fact sustains me only in the way that, say, the prospect of heaven cheers a terminally ill person; it’s nice to know, but isn’t much help from moment to moment’ (187). By simply mentioning the fact that she has a Ph.D., Ehrenreich is unconsciously distancing herself from her temporary co-workers. It is unclear why she believes that skills she learned earning her advanced degree in biology might help her in low-skill work, as she also doesn’t likely use those skills in her regular job as a journalist who focuses on economic issues. She brandishes the degree as a reminder to the audience that her situation is temporary, and that she will soon be back to her regular position among the elite, contradicting the idea that she is actually experiencing what it is like to be a retail worker and a member of the working-class.

Additionally, neither is able to see themselves in their co-workers. Kelly seems unaware that she is thinking from a place of privilege when she remarks ‘I’d never spent time, socially or professionally, with anyone who had a visible tattoo... who traded the names of their favorite ink artists the way my friends mentioned that of a chic Kensington hotel or a great West Village colorist’ (Kelly 2011, pp. 57). Having initially applied for the position because of an assumed status of the brand and location of the store, she is frequently shocked to learn how vastly different her experiences are from those of her coworkers. Hall discusses this kind of stereotyping as ‘part of the maintenance of social and symbolic order. It sets up a symbolic frontier between... the ‘acceptable’ and ‘unacceptable,’ what ‘belongs’ and what ‘does not’ or is ‘Other,’ between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders,’ Us and Them’ (Hall 2013, pp. 248). By pointing out that many of her co-workers bear the distinguishing signifier of a tattoo, Kelly is setting up a distance between them. Hall continues ‘[stereotyping] facilitates the ‘binding’ or bonding together of all of Us who are ‘normal’ into one ‘imagined community;’ and it sends into symbolic exile all of Them – ‘the Others’ – who are in some way different – ‘beyond the pale’... it classifies people according to a norm and constructs as the excluded as the ‘Other’” (Hall 2013, pp. 248). Kelly is highlighting the spectacle, or the features of her co-workers that, in her view, distinctly separate herself from her co-workers. However, in a long middle section of the book, she attempts to demonstrate that she is not alone in her plight by interviewing other former white-collar professionals who were forced to take work in the retail trade due to the Recession.

In contrast, in every location Ehrenreich works she finds she is frequently unable to understand the supposedly naïve dedication many of her coworkers have to their employers. At Walmart, when one of her coworkers confides that she was unhappy doing a task, not because it was tedious, but because she felt like she was wasting the company's money by not accomplishing anything productive, Ehrenreich remarks 'To me this anger seems badly mis-aimed. What does she think, the Walton family is living in some hidden room in the back of the store, in the utmost frugality, and likely to be ruined by \$21 worth of wasted labor?' (Ehrenreich 2011, pp.180). Through the implication that she knows something that her co-worker does not, she highlights both her privileged status and the temporariness of her situation, separating herself from those she is working with for only a short period of time. Turner argues 'By thinking of himself in the successful future the elite aspirant forms considerable identification with elitists, and evidence that they are merely ordinary human beings like himself helps to reinforce this identification as well as to keep alive the conviction that he himself may someday succeed in like manner' (Turner 1960, 859). This is not to argue in favor of blind corporate loyalty, but rather that, because she has no long-term investment in the job as her co-worker might, Ehrenreich is unable to see the value in the work, and to understand why her co-worker might take pride in her job.

As the authors view their place in the retail world from a distance, both feel as if they are able to speak-up about issues when their co-workers are largely silent. Kelly states 'I felt safe speaking up [in monthly meetings] because I worked only one night a week... So, while others examined their shoes or their manicures or giggled to one another during the meeting, I'd ask Joe about missing equipment or the lousy lighting in the stockroom. Most of my coworkers, it seemed, didn't care or didn't want to risk looking difficult' (Kelly 2011, pp. 172). Similarly, seeing that other service workers in Minneapolis have gone on strike, Ehrenreich goes out of her way to approach her co-workers on break to discuss the possibility of forming a union at Walmart. On doing this, she remarks 'The truth, which I can't avoid acknowledging... is that I'm just amusing myself, and in what seems like a pretty harmless way... someone needs to flush out the mysterious 'we' lurking in the 'our' in the 'Our people make the difference' statement we wear on our backs. It might as well be me because I have nothing to lose' (Ehrenreich 2011, pp. 185). With no real stake in the job, Ehrenreich is unable to see how something that amuses herself might cause backlash for her co-workers, particularly at a store as notoriously anti-union as Walmart. This inability to see themselves as a real part of the team at their stores, seems to give them permission to stir the pot in ways that they, from their place of privilege, see as being favorable to those they are working with. Neither is able to discern the importance or precariousness of the job for their co-workers, instead suggesting that the reason they are not standing up for themselves is out of disinterest.

In some ways, this distance which both authors keep from their co-workers and their temporary jobs taken in conjunction with the idea that each was attempting to write an exposé on working in the retail and service industries gives both works a voyeuristic feel. According to Turner 'While mass esteem is an effective brake upon over-exploitation of position, it rewards scrupulously ethical and altruistic behavior much less than evidence of fellow-feeling with the masses themselves' (Turner 1960, pp. 860). While on the job, both authors make attempts to relate to their new co-workers and their experiences. However, in writing about those experiences in the way they do, they demonstrate that they are class tourists, spying on the daily lives of the working-poor, while safely maintaining the 'insider'/'outsider' dichotomy. Their privileged status and the fact that each has a 'real' life to return to is inseparable from the authentic moments they experience on the jobs.

Conclusion

Representational narratives are important because in many ways it is how we filter our own experiences and the experiences of others. Kendall notes that ‘understanding how the media portray the different social classes in our society is important, because studies have shown that the attitudes and judgements of media audiences may be affected by how the media frame certain issues’ (Kendall 2011, pp. 4). When those narratives are guided by the process of Othering or a version of class tourism, however, it can lead to over-generalizing the experiences of groups like the working-poor. While Barbara Ehrenreich’s *Nickel and Dimed* and Caitlin Kelly’s *Malled* may come from a place of good intentions, their inability to truly see themselves in the lives of their co-workers, and the performative nature with which they approach these experiences means that their books present a voyeuristic view of the working-poor rather than a deep exposé on the difficulty of retail work. In a society that highly values the idea that anyone can achieve upward mobility like the United States, the perpetuation of such disingenuous portrayals of the working-class experience only furthers the problems these authors claim to address because they are maintaining the invisible barriers between the classes.

Author Bio

Brittany R. Clark is a Ph.D. candidate at Pennsylvania State University – Harrisburg. She received her MA in Humanities (with a focus in creative writing and writing pedagogy) from Pennsylvania State University – Harrisburg in 2015, and a BA in English from Western Michigan University in 2008. Currently, she is working on her dissertation which examines how representations of retail workers in popular culture shape cultural perceptions about the job and who does it. She has previously published a creative non-fiction essay online at *Work Literary Magazine*.

Bibliography

- Abrams, F. 2002, *Below the breadline: Living on the minimum wage*, Profile Books, London.
- Boal, A 1993, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, Theatre Communications Group, New York.
- Bureau of Labor Statistics. n.d. *Charts of the Largest Occupations in Each Area, May 2017*, United States. viewed 7 June 2018, <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/area_emp_chart/area_emp_chart.htm#>
- Bureau of Labor Statistics 2018, *Labor force statistics from the current population survey: employed persons by detailed occupation, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity*, viewed 7 June 2018 <<https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm>>
- Ehrenreich, B. n.d., *About Barbara*, personal website, viewed 27 March 2018, <<http://barbaraehrenreich.com/barbara-ehrenreich-bio/>>
- Ehrenreich, B. 2011, *Nickel and dimed: On not getting by in America*, 10th anniversary ed., Picador, New York.
- Glor, J. 2011, ‘Malled: My unintentional career in retail, by Caitlin Kelly’, *CBS News*, 15 April, viewed 22 March 2018, <<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/malled-my-unintentional-career-in-retail-by-caitlin-kelly/>>
- Hall, S. 2013, ‘The spectacle of the ‘other’’, in S. Hall, J. Evans, & S. Nixon (eds.), *Representation*, 2nd edn, Sage Los Angeles, pp. 215-287.

- Kelly, C. 2018, *About*, personal website, viewed 27 March 2018, <<https://www.lib.uts.edu.au/sites/default/files/attachments/page/InteractiveHarvardUTSGuide.pdf>>
- Kelly, C. 2011, *Malled: My unintentional rareer in Retail*, electronic book, Penguin, New York.
- Kendall, D. 2011, *Framing class: Media representations of wealth and poverty in America*, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Lanham, MD.
- Luberecki, B. 2011, 'Wise words from a retail renegade: Caitlin Kelly, 'Malled: My Unintentional career in retail'', 10 April, viewed 20 March 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/express/wp/2011/04/11/wise-words-from-a-retail-renegade/?utm_term=.26f10ff4d45f>
- Shepard, A. 2009. *Scratch Beginnings: Me, \$25, and the Search for the American Dream*, Harper Perennial, New York.
- Turner, R.H. 1960, 'Sponsored and Contest Mobility and the School System', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 25, no. 6, pp. 855-867.
- Zweig, M. 2011, *The Working Class Majority: America's Best Kept Secret*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY.

Reframing Solidarity: Company Magazine as Family Album

Courtney Maloney, Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design

Abstract

We are witnessing a time of shrinking labor unions across the globe. Among member states of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, rates of union membership have declined from 30% in 1985 to 20% today (McCarthy 2017). In the U.S., the current rate is just 10.7% (Yadoo 2018). We have seen along with this the concomitant reduction in working-class and middle-class standards of living. Technological, political, and economic factors have impacted this change, but there is a cultural dimension to it as well. From the moment industrial unions in the U.S. gained power, corporations began to counter working-class solidarity with alternative narratives that emphasized individualism, domesticity, and leisure. This article illuminates such efforts with a reading of one particularly sophisticated example from the mid-twentieth century, in which a steel corporation's company magazine used workers' own participation and self-representations in an effort to reorient notions of solidarity toward an identification with the corporation as family.

Keywords

Working-class self-representation, company magazines, photography, solidarity.

Introduction

For as long as there has been a working class, the notion of solidarity has powered the way working-class people come together to make their lives and communities better. Unions, at their best the institutional embodiment of this notion, have been and continue to be instruments through which working people fight for better jobs, job security, higher standards of living, and public policy that benefits the majority of people instead of corporations and the wealthiest citizens (Bivens et al. 2017). In the U.S., the recent success of the West Virginia teachers expresses the power of solidarity, while a case before the Supreme Court, *Janus v. AFSCME*, suggests its precariousness. The cultural dynamics of solidarity are highlighted in both of these examples. In West Virginia, a risky illegal work stoppage drew on a history of labor militancy in coal country (Robertson & Bidgoodmarch 2018). At stake in the Supreme Court case is whether workers should be required to help support the union that represents them. If the plaintiff wins, workers will be able to opt out of paying administrative fees to their unions, presenting what economists call the 'free ridership' dilemma and a likely drop in union resources (Thomson-DeVeaux 2018). If the union is legally obligated to fight in workers' interests no matter what, why should they pay? Both cases raise the question of how solidarity is fostered and undermined.

During the past 34 years in the U.S., the percentage of unionized workers has been cut nearly in half, from 20.1% in 1983 to 10.7% in 2017 (Yadoo 2018). With that has come greater wage inequality and lower standards of living for working-class and middle-class people (Freeman et al. 2016; Mishel et al. 2012; Shambaugh et al. 2017). A factor precipitating this decline is the concentrated effort corporations and their wealthy beneficiaries have sustained to undermine unions politically and culturally. One form of the cultural approach has been the company magazine, which addressed workers and proliferated in the U.S. alongside the growth of industrial unions. Looking back on worker-centered publicity from the days when unions were relatively strong can provide an indication of the kinds of cultural approaches corporate America took in efforts to push back on working-class identity and solidarity, and may shed some light on the multifarious ways today's corporate hegemony has been accomplished.

From the moment many working-class people achieved mass power through industrial unions, corporations worked to undermine the foundations of identity and solidarity that unions depend on. In the U.S., industrial unionism became possible on a large scale due to political reforms put in place during the Great Depression, and corporate pushback gained momentum after World War II. According to Elizabeth Fones-Wolf, the business community 'sought not only to recast the political economy of postwar America but also to reshape the ideas, images, and attitudes through which Americans understood their world. Employers hoped to restore the public's allegiance to an individualistic ethos that had been shaken by the travails of the Depression' (Fones-Wolf 1994, p. 285). Company magazines can be understood as an ideological tool in the corporate box. They have long been used by corporate publicity and advertising departments to represent a particular vision of the corporation to its employees, and a particular vision of the workers to themselves. While these magazines were often started with a stated goal of building 'communication' and increasing 'understanding' between management and the work force, the communication typically ran one way, from the company to its workers, and the goal was not so much that the company understand its workers, but that those workers understand the company and their position within it. This essay will look at a magazine with a more nuanced approach, one that solicited worker participation in its effort to reorient the notion of solidarity from workers' collective action toward a middle-class individualism centered around nuclear family and leisure activities.

The magazine we will be looking at, *Men and Steel*, was published in the U.S. by the Pittsburgh-based Jones and Laughlin Steel Corporation (J&L). The history of labor relations in steelmaking is key to understanding the emergence of this and other company magazines in the industry. From 1892, when the Homestead lockout effectively ended organized labor in the mills, until 1937, when New Deal reforms enabled the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) to re-organize the entire industry, individual workers were at the mercy of corporate prerogative. Despite periodic efforts by workers to unionize, most notably during the Great Steel Strike of 1919, steelmakers retained absolute control over workers, on the job and in the civic life of the many company towns that surrounded mills throughout the country. The steel corporations used all manner of repression to maintain their supremacy. It was not until 1935, when the CIO-supported organizing drive in steel began in earnest, that workers mounted a successful opposition. The industry giant, the United States Steel Corporation, recognized the CIO-affiliated Steel Workers Organizing Committee as the bargaining agent for its workers in March of 1937. The new steel union was strengthened after a successful strike in 1946 for wage increases to counter post-war inflation, and by the 1950s, the union had built up the power to effectively combat corporate interests on the shop floor and in national politics. Steel company magazines emerged in the 1930s to combat the threat of CIO organizing, and by the late 1940s

and 1950s had become an important way for companies to address a powerful workforce. J&L began publishing *Men and Steel* in 1947, ten years after the successful organizing drive.

This is also the same year that Congress passed the restrictive Labor-Management Relations Act (popularly known as Taft-Hartley) that put numerous limitations on the activities of unions and significantly curbed their power. The assault on organized labor continued throughout the decade in anti-union ‘right to work’ campaigns at the state level, and culminated in the passage of the Landrum-Griffin Act of 1959. Although many of the ‘right to work’ campaigns failed, both labor reform acts effectively limited workers’ ability to organize, and undermined the security of unions once established.²⁰ In steel, according to Jack Metzgar, ‘the battles would be fierce but civilized,’ fought with words, numbers and ideas instead of guns and clubs. During the post-war years, the steel industry resisted every advance the union demanded, but yielded bit by bit until, in 1956, the Steelworkers had everything they had wanted (Metzgar 2000, p. 53-54). The union was indeed powerful, as was organized labor throughout the country. But none of this was a given. Metzgar describes the situation of the Steelworkers in 1959—verging on the longest steel strike in history—as ‘hostile.’ Despite a superficial cordiality, every contract negotiation brought labor and management head to head, both struggling to win public opinion to their side. This dynamic also played out on the national level, as conservative business leaders led a fight for ‘labor reform’ that masked a challenge to the legitimacy of unionism per se. *Men and Steel* was founded within this political context by J&L’s new president and chairman of the board Admiral Ben Moreell, who had a reputation for good labor relations. Thus, we can see the magazine as both a cultural front within this nation-wide anti-union attack, and an effort to foster amicable relations between the corporation and an empowered adversary. A close reading of the inaugural issue unpacks some of the magazine’s rhetorical strategies.

‘To the Employees and Shareholders . . .’



Figure 1

In a personalized, signed letter introducing the first issue, Moreell established the publication’s goals of communication and understanding (fig. 1). Unlike many company magazines, which were addressed to employees, *Men and Steel* addressed employees and shareholders alike. In his letter, Moreell identifies himself with a ‘we’ that includes the producers of the magazine and addresses shareholders, workers, and management in the third person. He begins by explaining that ‘our purpose is to establish a medium whereby we can bring to the attention of employees and of shareholders pertinent facts and the views of the management with respect to the past, current and future operations

²⁰ Specifically, Taft-Hartley banned closed (union only) shops, allowed states to ban union shops, and enabled Congress to issue injunctions against strikes with national impact (Serrin 1992, p. 246). Landrum-Griffin prohibited all secondary boycotts, drastically limited organizational picketing, and forced cumbersome requirements of conduct and disclosure on unions (Fones-Wolf 1994, pp. 276, 257-284). See also Metzgar 2000, pp. 29, 54, 88, 74-77, and 227.

of the Corporation.’²¹ Here, workers and shareholders are presented as equally important members of the audience. Moreell does not pretend that employees and shareholders have the same role in the company: ‘We believe that the shareholders, who are, in fact, the owners of this Corporation, should have such information as may be necessary for them to gauge the efficiency of our operations and the propriety of management’s actions in the conduct of the business.’ Implied is the notion that although shareholders own the company, as audience members they are on par with workers because, like them, they can glean all the information they need about the doings of the company from this magazine. This is, of course, misleading—shareholders received much more privileged information about the corporation than workers did, through annual reports and the like. Moreell continues the parallelism nonetheless: ‘We believe, too, that our employees have a vital interest in the operation of the Corporation and that they are entitled to know the essential facts concerning our operations and our plans as they may affect the welfare of employees.’ Both workers and shareholders enjoy the right to know of the company’s activities, and both will be equally well served by this new publication.

Moreell continues by reminding readers what is at stake:

All employees are interested in the security of their jobs and in the ability of the Corporation to continue to pay salaries and wages which are in keeping with recognized American standards of living. . . . We believe that unless we can establish the Corporation on a firm foundation of security which will permit us to compete successfully in this highly competitive industry, we will fail in our obligations to our shareholders . . . and to our employees.

Ordinarily, when corporate propaganda reminds workers that their livelihoods depend upon the company’s security, it functions as a veiled threat that gains by labor could in the long run undermine the competitiveness of the enterprise, and is meant to dissuade workers from disruptive practices such as strikes. Here, the phrase ‘unless we can establish’ suggests that there is a pressing danger to the company, and may be referring obliquely to the major strike only a year past. In this case, however, with shareholders receiving the same message, the reminder seems less one-sided; shareholders may have to be prepared to make their own sacrifices in the interests of J&L’s security, in the form of reduced dividends.

With so much at stake, Moreell intends ‘that the information with respect to the operations of the Corporation, contained in these bulletins, shall be as complete as practicable.’ He assures readers: ‘it is my purpose to discuss our Corporation problems with you, fully and frankly, in future issues.’ It is this promise of frankness, of honest communication, of articles that did not merely tout the corporation but addressed ‘problems’ as well, that clinches the sense of unity on the part of the two reader groups and also sets the stated goals of *Men and Steel* apart from those of comparable publications, in which puff pieces and company progress narratives hold sway.

The majority of informative news pieces in the issue does conform to the progress narrative model established by prior company magazines, Moreell’s promise of frankness notwithstanding. As was typical in steel industry magazines, safety was a favorite topic. One article was devoted to announcing a safety essay contest, and another proclaimed ‘Otis Wins

²¹ This and all following quotations from the Admiral’s welcome letter are from *Men and Steel*, November 1947, inside the front cover. For access to these issues of *Men and Steel* I thank Donald R. Inman and the Beaver County Industrial Museum in Darlington, Pennsylvania.

Safety Awards,’ and was illustrated with photos of a banquet. Another article carried the headline ‘Accident prevention—an important management function.’ This statement reflects a new attitude on the part of management, as well as Moreell’s personal preoccupation with the topic, in contrast with the more typical approach in which workers bear all the responsibility. The article outlines safety programs management has instituted, including helping to organize the National Safety Council.²² Other articles advertise a new product used in oil exploration, ‘known by the unique name of “Integral Joint Rolled Thread Shot Hole Casing,”’ and the way ‘J&L Utilizes Employee Thinking Power’ through a suggestion/reward program. Finally, readers are kept apprised of management personnel changes, and in a recurring feature ‘This is What We Did,’ the company presents its records for production tonnage.²³

Although positive stories are the norm, two articles in this issue stand out as exceptions and seem to support Moreell’s claim to ‘discuss our Corporation problems with you, fully and frankly.’ One, headlined ‘Problems We Face in J&L: The Challenge of Our Blast Furnace Relining Program,’ seems to get right down to the difficult business of addressing company troubles. However, readers braced for the worst might be cheered when they realize that the so-called problem is that ‘demand for steel has continued to be greater than the supply.’ This is the kind of ‘problem’ that keeps both workers and shareholders happy. The difficulty is that relining the blast furnaces, a necessary maintenance routine, reduces the number of available furnaces for production. The article then describes fluctuations since V-J Day that have resulted in delays and shortages, illustrated with a graph. Readers are assured, however, that ‘no stone will be left unturned to keep our production at the highest possible level during this period of peak demand for steel.’²⁴ In this instance, the frank confrontation of J&L’s ‘problems’ resulted in an upbeat promotional account nonetheless.



Figure 2

²² Ibid., pp. 9-11.

²³ Ibid., pp. 15, 16, and inside the back cover, respectively.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 14.

The nature of the contrast between article headline and content is reversed in our second example. Headlined ‘We Move Ahead,’ this article seems to promise the typical progress narrative. Illustrated on page one with an impressive panorama of J&L’s Pittsburgh works, the image and title together seem to proclaim a glorious future for the company (fig. 2).²⁵ However, the following seven pages of text do not meet these expectations. Although the article is all about improvements being made in various plants, the tone is defensive:

It is currently popular with some people to insist that the steel industry is not moving fast enough—that productive capacity must be increased rapidly to meet assumed demands. How this could be accomplished within the near future in the face of fuel and scrap shortages, which are curtailing production in existing plants, has not been explained.

As it continues, the narrative even begins to sound a little gloomy: ‘Like the farmer who starved his family to save potatoes for seed the following spring, the building of new steel making capacity might likewise starve many businesses for the very steel which they were being denied in order to achieve an eventual increase in production.’ This is the lead article, and a long one. It goes on to discuss various phases of production—coal, iron ore, the central boiling house, blast furnaces, flat rolled products—where the company is facing difficulties and addressing them by expensive improvements. The author repeatedly emphasizes how much money was being spent: ‘The expenditures for which this corporation is committed represent the maximum effort that can be made at this time to improve our properties and continue their operation at peak production levels.’ By the end, the unfortunate author sounds quite put upon; if he has not alienated his readers with the defensive tone, he may well have their sympathy for being so beleaguered.²⁶ As if in tacit admission that this article was a bit of a downer, it is immediately followed by a full-page cartoon with the caption ‘Plant Improvements Push Production Up.’

Addressing company problems in this way is a nuanced approach to drawing workers into an identity with the corporation. Instead of merely playing on employee pride by associating readers with a great and powerful enterprise, J&L tries to have it both ways. Paying attention to points at which the company struggles humanizes the corporation, and also sparks a reader’s awareness to considerations beyond his or her own needs. Perhaps the editors hope that in reading about the vast expenditures the corporation is making to improve plant facilities, unionists might feel less compelled to dig in their heels for that extra 18 cents per hour when the next contract negotiations roll around. This may be wishful thinking on the company’s part, but there is a possibility that including workers in discussions of J&L’s problems could increase their sense of investment in the corporation’s affairs, and make worker-readers feel privy to some of the information previously only available to shareholders. At the very least, they may be less inclined to feel condescended to.

In addition to the informative articles about corporate activities, the first issue of *Men and Steel* exhibited a personal side. At the very center of the magazine, on pages numbered 8A-D, a section detailing local news was inserted into each issue of the periodical. This would be a

²⁵ Ibid., p. 1. The photograph is ‘Steel at Twilight,’ made by Arthur d’Arazien in 1947. This image ended up circulating rather widely, within the corporation and without, over many subsequent years, and marked the beginning of a long a productive relationship between the photographer and J&L.

²⁶ The article is credited to A. A. Archibald, Assistant to Vice President, Plant Development and secretary of the Plant Development Committee.

recurring feature in *Men and Steel* through April 1952. So, while pages one through seven and nine through 16 were the same for all readers at J&L work sites across the country, varying numbers of lettered pages at the center address specific localities, for instance Aliquippa, Pittsburgh, McKeesport, or the Otis works in Cleveland. The special section for Aliquippa includes news about recent promotions, three workers who are the first graduates of a new apprenticeship program, several retirements, and a meeting of the labor-management committee. These pages are copiously illustrated with photos, including a nice portrait of one old-timer retiring, a group shot of people gathered for a promotion ceremony, a picture of the apprentices getting their cards from their supervisors, and a picture of the cards themselves. There is also a two-page ‘meet the staff’ spread (fig. 3). Headshots of each staff member are arranged in a circle, within which are printed little bits of personal information—hobbies, etc.—about each person, including their job in the mill.²⁷



Figure 3

The inclusion of these local sections is key to the balanced dynamic of the magazine, and becomes even more important in subsequent issues. The special Aliquippa section in the first issue shows the personal side of workplace news, and functions to ground the reader in a sense of place and community. This effect would become even more personalized in subsequent issues, as workers took on greater involvement in the magazine’s content. However, even at this point, with the focus exclusively on the work-related news of the local plant, we can see how this feature of the magazine rounds out its rhetorical strategy. The three-pronged approach established in this issue—direct messages from the chairman himself, substantive informative articles on the business that are more than mere puff pieces, and a local section connecting specific mill sites to the greater whole—reveals *Men and Steel* to be a highly sophisticated public relations endeavor. Even so, the communication ultimately only goes one way, from the company to the readers.

²⁷ *Men and Steel*, November 1947, pp. 8A-D.

We shall see, however, that this dynamic rapidly becomes more complex. *Men and Steel* soon developed into a magazine with a high level of worker participation. Not only did the company represent itself through the magazine, but workers began to represent themselves, as well. This occurred in several different ways, such as the submission of original art work, but primarily through the medium of photography. This increasing worker participation immediately starts to change the tone of the entire magazine, and this change becomes evident in the very next issue.

‘They have said they like it, and we like their way of showing it’

The difference in tone between the second issue, which came out in December 1947, and the first was evident from the very first thing readers saw—the front cover. The cover of the November issue was a magnificent black and white image of a dramatic part of the steelmaking process in which molten metal is poured from a giant ladle into the open hearth furnace (fig. 4a). The December cover, in contrast, is a holiday photo—a staged image of young men singing on a set built to look like a snowy village street (fig. 4b). Unlike later issues, which always provide a credit and explanation for the cover photo, neither of the first two cover images is captioned in any way. Although the festive street scene on the December cover is easily explained by the holiday season, it also suggests a less businesslike tone, and this is reflected in the content of the issue.



Figure 4a & Figure 4b

Of course, much of the material is similar; there is the Admiral’s letter, again on the inside front cover, this month about safety. There is a big article about fabricating at the McKeesport mill, and the recurring features, ‘This is what we did’ and ‘Problems We Face in J&L.’ There is also the local section, although it is now much bigger—twelve pages, as compared to last month’s four. The news covered is also a bit different. Though still covering plant-related

personal news like retirements and awards, there is also more personal material from workers' lives outside the mill, such as birth and wedding announcements. There are more photographs in general in the section this month, a couple of which are from workers on vacation. One of these is captioned 'John Cohenour, soaking pit Millwright, with two "dandies" caught in the Trent River, Canada' (fig. 5).²⁸ The 'dandies,' of course, are two big fish, which Mr. Cohenour displays proudly.



Figure 5

Some insight about these changes can be gleaned from a section discussing the magazine itself: 'First Issue of Men and Steel Draws Reader Congratulations.'²⁹ The editors explain that 'Employees at the plants and in the offices have shown their interest by sending in stories and photographs to the Reporters and Editors of their own plant sections. They have said they like it, and we like their way of showing it.' The editors clearly encouraged reader involvement, and the readers responded. As they did so, the overall tone of the magazine lightened considerably between the inaugural and following issues. While the substantive articles remained substantive and the commitment to sharing 'Problems We Face in J&L' persisted, a lighter feeling came from more personal news and more photographs of individuals contributed by employees. Worker involvement in the early stages appears to have helped shape the form taken by the magazine.

²⁸ *Men and Steel*, December 1947, p. 8.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 15

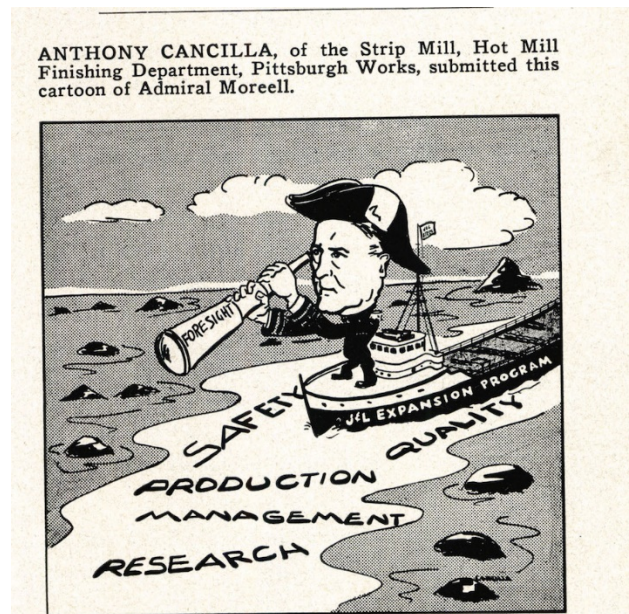


Figure 6

The most apparent mode of reader participation is through the contribution of visual materials. Sometimes these contributions came in the form of original artwork, such as this cartoon illustrating the chief executive's role in an on-going expansion project (fig. 6). In the majority of cases, however, readers contributed to the magazine by submitting photographs—most often, family snapshots. The impetus for this sort of participation is unclear; although editors did encourage it through special features at the local and company-wide level, it may also be the case that these features were suggested by readers, or at the very least inspired by contributions they were already making. For example, the third issue introduced two new features that encouraged readers to send in their photos. At the local level, in Aliquippa, the plant-based editors invented 'Camera Corner.' Presenting a worker-submitted photo, the editors explain, 'this is the staff's choice of the most interesting snapshot submitted this month. Each month, this corner will feature the most interesting snapshot received, with or without an accompanying story. All entries will be returned. Just turn your picture in to your department reporter.'³⁰ Although the editors do not elaborate on what they mean by 'interesting,' their choices suggest a particular interest in children. The first winner is a picture of a little boy in a cowboy suit on a pony, and subsequent winners are similarly domestic (fig. 7). The 'Camera Corner' feature complements and builds upon the employee participation that had already begun in the previous issue, increasing the number of personal snapshots in the local section. Local editors at other mill sites established similar features, such as the Pittsburgh local section's 'Pensioners' Photographs' column, featuring pictures sent in by 'old timers.'

³⁰ Ibid., p. 8-K.



Figure 7

The other photographic feature introduced in this issue was the company-wide 'Photo of the Month.' The feature is tied in with the recent organization of J&L Camera Clubs at several of the works, plants, and mines, in the hopes that 'selection of a 'Photo of the Month' might encourage the members.' Readers are assured 'the selections will be made by competent judges and will be reproduced when space is available—which it is expected will be quite often.' The contest becomes even more exciting when readers learn that 'the Corporation will pay \$25 for any photograph submitted that is used as a cover illustration for *Men and Steel*.' The editors go on to describe what kinds of photographs will stand the best chance of winning: 'seasonal pictures might be acceptable, but there is nothing so interesting to people as other people. Story-telling pictures of people, especially children, would make good covers for the magazine'³¹ Here again, the emphasis is on personal, leisure, and domestic themes.

³¹ Ibid., p. 17.

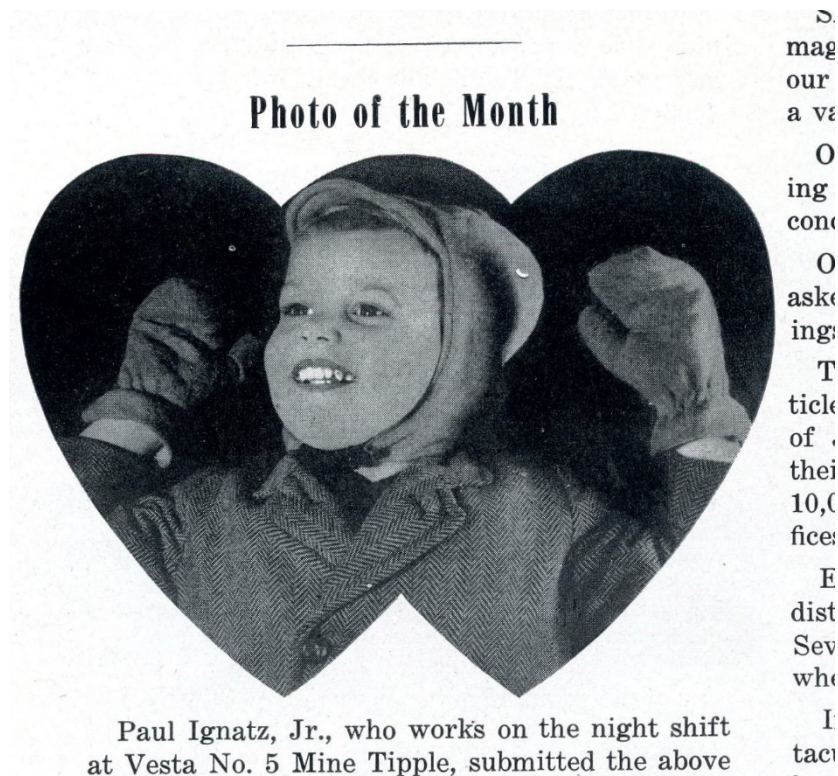


Figure 8

Readers responded readily. The very next issue, February 1948, features a ‘photo of the month’ that had been sent in by a worker from the Vesta #5 mine tipple (fig. 8). The picture was of the mineworker’s son. According to the editors, the judge ‘felt that both the appeal of the boy’s smile and the interlocked heart treatment made the winning entry particularly appropriate for St. Valentine’s Day.’ Unfortunately, the editors wrote, ‘the proportions of the photo would not permit its use as a cover.’ In March, the ‘photo of the month’ did end up on the cover; it was one of three baby pictures that had been sent in by Fred Engle, of the Pittsburgh Works labor department (fig. 9). According to the editors, Engle’s wife was actually the one who had taken the photograph, but the couple shared an interest in photography, and Engle was a member of the Pittsburgh Works Camera Club. Readers began submitting family photos for the cover competition regularly; in 1949 alone, fully one third of all the *Men and Steel* covers were ‘photo of the month’ winners focusing on domestic themes. Leisure was another favorite cover photo theme. In July of 1951 the cover showed two children playing with a garden hose (fig. 10). The August cover that year was one that a worker—a ‘Bottom Maker Helper’—had taken of McConnell’s Mills, a popular swimming hole near Aliquippa. In December, the winner was a ‘rougner’ in one of the mills, who had taken a festive photograph of his female neighbor, dressed for a skiing trip, posing amongst snow-covered trees.³² In addition, the local sections continued to get many snapshots of home and vacations, until at some points *Men and Steel* looked more like a family album than a company magazine (fig. 11 and fig. 12).

³² A ‘bottom maker’ relines the bottoms of ingot-soaking pits with coke dust to retard formation of oxide scale on hot ingots. A ‘rougner’ is in charge of taking the steel ingots and reshaping them into the proper semi-finished shape. For more information on these and other steel industry jobs, consult the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* at www.occupationalinfo.org.

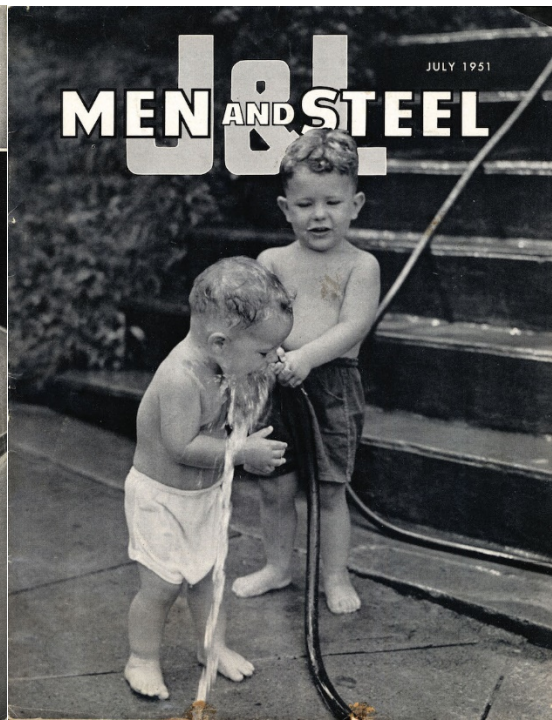
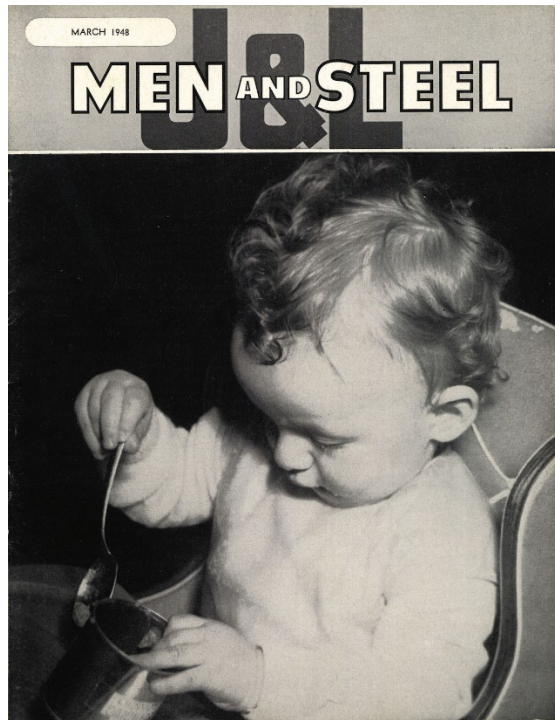


Figure 9 & Figure 10

W. Aaron Is Their Dad
The 'Eyes' Have It
Jimmie Looks Like His Dad
'I've Got a New Sister'
SOLORES BAINS SODOVOY
Little Joan Elaine Smiles
A Group of Relatives

W. Aaron Is Their Dad
 THIS fine pair of youngsters, Lucile (above) and Wanda, Jr. (below), call Wanda Aaron their daddy. Fred papa Aaron is a Shipman on the Continuous Packer, Tin Plate Department.

The 'Eyes' Have It
 SUELY VETRY, seven-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Vetry, Alliquipp, really does know how a nice little girl should look in a picture. Her father is a JCI, Pottsville and her mother is a Telephone Operator. She is the niece of Elizabeth Short, an Assorter in the Tin Plate Department in our Works Division.

Jimmie Looks Like His Dad
 JIMMIE FRANKS, whose devil-may-care expression passes him to be a regular boy, looks only red hot in his perfect resemblance of his father, Patrolman James Parker of the Alliquipp Works Division Fleet Guards, James, Jr., is a fourth grader at Laughlin School.

'I've Got a New Sister'
 THIS new pair of youngsters, Lucile (above) and Wanda, Jr. (below), call Wanda Aaron their daddy. Fred papa Aaron is a Shipman on the Continuous Packer, Tin Plate Department.

SOLORES BAINS SODOVOY, two-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Albert C. Soderby, Center Township, is a very happy little girl these days. The reason? She's got a new little sister who was born on December 29. The new sister, who has been named FERRIS, Marie, weighed six pounds, nine ounces at birth. The mighty proud father of the girl, is an Apprentice Benchhand in Alliquipp Works Division.

Little Joan Elaine Smiles

A Group of Relatives
 FROM left to right are Joan, Marib, Robert, and Mary Jo. Marib and Mary Jo are Harold Hestling's daughters, while Joan is his niece, and Robert is a nephew. Harold is the Shipper in the Wire Mill in Alliquipp Works Division.

Look what I See, Daddy!
 WE DON'T KNOW what little Charles Pomas, Jr. is looking at, but it must be interesting judging from his expression. He's the son of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Pomas and is six months old. His mother is employed as an Assorter in the Tin Plate Department. It's a good snapshot.

'Smile, Frankie, Smile'
 FRANK HELMS, JR., six-month-old son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Helms, really knows how to turn on the camera for a photographer. Frankie's father is employed in the Steelmen Table. The lad is the grandson of L. Helms, North Baker House. We hope you keep an smiling, Frankie.

A Personality that Shines
 THIS LOVELY "personality smile" belongs to cute little Kathy Jo Bards, three-month-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Jack Stone of Alliquipp. Her father is employed as a Machinist in the Tin Mill Machine Shop. Keep an smiling!

Meet the Johnston Twins
 WHICH ONE has the "fancy"? These pert little misses are the twin daughters of Mr. and Mrs. R. E. Johnston. The eight-year-old girls were born at the Pennsylvania Marine Hospital. Their father is employed in the Tin Plate Department.

Tom Has Two Birthday Gifts
 THREE YEAR-OLD Tom Choumont, son of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Choumont, had an especially fine birthday not too long ago. For gifts, he received both a baby brother and a baby sister. His father is employed in the Wire Mill as a Trencher. Keep an smiling, Tom.

Little 'Miss Bright Eyes'
 LOOK at the beautiful big eyes of little Betty Joan Follmer, seven-month-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James Follmer, Alliquipp. The pretty youngster, whose mother is the former Rose D'Agostino of Alliquipp, is the niece of Christy D'Agostino, Tin Plate Department; and Joe D'Agostino of the Maintenance Department.

Too Time for the Runkles
 HOLD EVERYBODY! It's too late for Dennis and Scott Runkles, whose father is employed as a Bench Clerk in the Fourth Department of the Tin Plate Department. Dennis is six years of age and Scott is not quite two. Look like fond!

She's now Two Years Old
 ELIZABETH BROWN, daughter of Joseph E. Brown, now is two years old and already is one of the cutest little girls in her neighborhood. Her father, who is very proud of his little girl, is employed in the Bleeding Mill Department as a Maintenance Man Helper.

A Pretty Picture—
 PRETTY as a picture is eight-month-old Kathleen Susan Cain, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Cain, Alliquipp. Her father is employed as a Stock Checker in the Tin Plate Department.

Figure 11 & Figure 12

The readers' photo section was not unique to *Men and Steel*, but the extent to which the magazine used readers' photos was. Also distinctive was the number of personal photos and family snapshots. A comparison with Republic Steel's magazine is illustrative (fig.13). This 'Favorite Photos' page from *Republic Reports* features photographs sent in by readers.³³ The

³³ *Republic Reports*, January 1948, p. 13.

contrast between this photo page and *Men and Steel's* Camera Corner (fig. 7) is striking. With the exception of the spoof 'Teddy,' featuring a dog in glasses and a mortar board, the photographs in *Republic Reports* are artistic compositions rather than portraits or family snapshots. Another point of contrast is who is submitting the photos. Each photographer is identified by name, and all but one are also identified by their position or department. In each of these cases, the employee holds a white collar, salaried, or managerial job. 'Winter Haven' was taken by J.P. Roth, from accounting; 'Farm Construction' was taken by 'Republic's agricultural engineer,' E.D. Anderson; 'Teddy' was taken by J.W. Lowry of General Office Purchasing, and 'Summer Blackout' was taken by Sherman Roney, assistant industrial relations manager.



Figure 13

This narrow cross section contrasts with the much broader array of readers submitting photos to *Men and Steel*. Although the latter employees are often identified simply by department, which makes it difficult to evaluate what kind of work they do, they are just as often identified by a particular job. Among the cover contest winners we have seen or discussed are a rougher, a bottom maker, and employees from the labor and metallurgical departments.³⁴ Contributors to the 'Camera Corner' example (fig. 7) include a metallographer, a metallurgical inspector, two crane operators, and a 'Tin House Turn Forman'.³⁵ Other contributors (fig. 11) include a patrolman in the plant guard, an apprentice bench hand, a shipper in the wire mill, a shear man, a tin plate sorter, and a bonus clerk.³⁶ A stock checker, a machinist, a tractor repairman, and a maintenance man's helper sent in baby pictures in yet another issue (fig.12).³⁷ With the

³⁴ December 1951, August 1951, March 1948 (fig.9), and July 1951 (fig.10) respectively.

³⁵ *Men and Steel*, March 1948, pp. 8-L.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, March 1952, p. 8-G.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8-F.

exception of the metallographer, metallurgical inspector, and turn foreman, these jobs are all wage-earning positions as opposed to salaried managerial or professional roles. We can see from this accounting that when *Men and Steel* looks like a family album, the family being projected is one consisting of mostly wage-earning employees. Although shareholders are supposed to be as much the audience of the magazine as the workers are, they do not participate in it in the same way—a close reading found no photographs submitted by shareholders printed in *Men and Steel*. This suggests that the *real* target audience for the company magazine is, like others in the industry, primarily wage-earning employees.

Conclusion

Working-class readers of *Men and Steel* represented themselves in the company magazine as family people with the ability to support hobbies and take vacations. This is a powerful, celebratory self-representation that reflects workers' hard-won victories: the income to support their families securely and with a relatively high standard of living, and a bit of leisure time to spend with them. At the same time, this emphasis on domesticity and leisure was overdetermined. When the editors solicited workers' photos, they did not ask for 'any photographs you want to send.' Rather, they encouraged, specifically, 'storytelling pictures of people, especially children.'³⁸ When readers looked at the editors' 'Camera Corner' choices for the most 'interesting' photograph of the month, they saw adorable pictures of babies and boys on ponies. Readers were not asked to bring in pictures of their work crew or their buddies from down at the union hall. Clearly, the magazine encouraged a domestic emphasis in reader contributions. In this way the company's purposes and the working-class readers' purposes dovetailed. Workers celebrated their achievement of security, free time, and a middle-class standard of living, while the company was able to promote safe working-class self-representation that appeared apolitical and images that were easily assimilated to the corporation's messages.

Men and Steel conveys the corporation's messages in a variety of ways, but was most explicitly ideological in the 'Admiral's Letter' section, which opened every issue from the magazine's beginning until Moreell's retirement in 1958. Often, Moreell would focus on issues specific to J&L such as plant safety, management changes, or the need to provide more dividends to shareholders.³⁹ Just as often, however, he would address broader political issues. In one column, entitled 'Jones & Laughlin and Politics,' he asserts, 'no employee of Jones & Laughlin shall, with respect to his employment, be penalized on account of or shall derive benefit from his political affiliation.' But at J&L, as well as elsewhere in the Cold War United States, there were limits to this political freedom. Moreell continues:

The only variation from this basic policy is where an employee promotes doctrines which are contrary to recognized American principles, or advocates policies and actions which are patently inimical to our national interests and welfare. In these cases, persistence in such conduct . . . will result in disciplinary action within the limitations of contracts and applicable laws.⁴⁰

³⁸ Ibid., January 1948, p. 17.

³⁹ Ibid., December 1947, July 1951, March 1952, February 1948 respectively.

⁴⁰ Ibid., March 1948.

This column appeared in 1948, only a year after Taft-Hartley amended the rights given to labor organizations by the Wagner Act and forced union members to sign anti-Communist affidavits (Wollman & Inman 1999). Essentially, a worker who avowed left-leaning politics did not truly have job security.

Moreell expressed his view on what constituted ‘American principles’ regularly, in both his columns and various other public venues. He was well-known as an economic and social conservative and devout Christian. Free enterprise and individualism were frequent topics of comment, and he would often speak of these values in moralistic terms and link them with Christian values. One ‘Admiral’s Letter’ is exemplary:

We at Jones & Laughlin believe in our free enterprise system because we believe in people. The basis of the free enterprise system is freedom for the individual to make his own choice on how he shall live his life. The importance of the individual and his personal liberty is the foundation stone of our concept of government as *servant* of the people—not their *master*. With this basic concept we have become a great nation because each person could enjoy the fruits of his own labor in the form of spiritual and material rewards [*italics original*].

Moreell goes on to share his belief that such premises were ‘based on the moral law of Christianity . . . [as] the teachings of Christianity invariably deal with the status of the individual. It is only the individual who can feel and live by religious faith. And it is only when individuals live by God’s moral code that they can obtain and enjoy life’s rich rewards!’⁴¹ By the end of the piece, Moreell has successfully equated free enterprise with the highest of authorities for religious believers: ‘God’s moral code.’

The ‘Admiral’s Letter’ column set the ideological tone of the magazine, and it is within this context that we must consider the meanings of the company magazine as family album. Workers were rightfully proud of their families, the recently increased free time that they could spend with them, and the bigger paychecks with which they could better provide for them. This is reflected in their enthusiastic participation in the company magazine, within which they represented themselves primarily through images of domesticity, leisure, and consumption. Workers see themselves in the magazine enjoying a middle-class standard of living—one that had been won by the union, but in the context of *Men and Steel* is associated with the corporation. The concept of individuality affirmed throughout the chairman’s columns and elsewhere in the magazine is reiterated in the workers’ snapshots, focusing as they do on the nuclear family to the exclusion of other forms of community and solidarity. Further, the idea of the nuclear family celebrated in so many of these photographs takes on a darker tenor when considered in relation to the relatively recent history of the non-union era. Because of the blacklist, workers with families were more vulnerable to company repression; they could not afford to lose their jobs, and therefore were more easily kept in line.⁴² The Taft-Hartley Act undermined the political freedoms asserted by the Wagner Act, and although it did not bring back the steel corporations’ own blacklist, it substituted a government-sponsored one (Hinshaw 2002). Workers with families still could not afford to express dissident political views. Seen in

⁴¹ *Men and Steel*, 4.9 (September 1951), 2. *Ibid.*, 2-3.

⁴² One US Steel worker’s recollections are representative of a widespread perception: ‘They went after the guys with families, the guys who couldn’t afford to lose their jobs. If you let them know you were afraid for your job, they owned you. They owned your job, and that meant they owned *you*’ [*italics original*] (Metzgar 2000, p. 33).

this light, the celebration of workers' families could have, for a few, functioned as a subtle warning, reminding them of what they stood to lose.

The company magazine as family album seems like it could have been a successful approach for the publishers of *Men and Steel*. It encouraged workers to represent themselves in a non-threatening way, promoting a vision of the corporation as an extended family of sorts. Workers' participation in the magazine undoubtedly fostered an increased sense of ownership in *Men and Steel*, and perhaps by extension a deeper sense of investment in the corporation. Potential effects on hearts and minds notwithstanding, there is no evidence that the magazine ultimately caused the workers to pull their punches. Union militancy continued throughout the fifties, despite the limitations put on organized labor by Taft-Hartley, culminating in the 116-day strike of 1959—the largest work stoppage in U.S. history (Smemo et al. 2017). J&L workers went out along with the rest of their union in 1959, although it must be noted that the family album character of *Men and Steel* had already disappeared by then. Citing the need to reduce expenses, the corporation minimized the magazine after the April 1952 issue, shrinking it in both size and content, turning it into a bi-monthly, and eliminating the special locally-edited sections.⁴³ Reader participation declined steadily thereafter.

Despite the brevity of this experiment, the family album era of *Men and Steel* is an example of the ways corporations used cultural representations to try to undermine labor solidarity. In the Admiral's introduction to the first issue, he expressed the hope that the magazine would foster among shareholders and employees 'a strong feeling of mutual interest,' and a 'more complete understanding between employees, shareholders, and management.'⁴⁴ It is likely that *Men and Steel* accomplished this more effectively than its steel industry cousins, the businesslike *US Steel News* and the more overtly propagandistic *Republic Reports*. It is also true that these goals, for all of *Men and Steels'* more democratic address to shareholders and employees together, were exactly the same as those of the other magazines. The 'strong mutual interest' Moreell refers to is a shared interest in the success of the corporation; workers' interests were not always identical to those of the corporation, yet the magazine set out to make it seem so. The treatment of potentially divergent material interests is subsumed into the warm and fuzzy category of 'understanding,' which works differently for employees than for shareholders. Shareholders' interests are promoted in the chairman's column and throughout the magazine; workers' interests are limited to cultural matters—home and family, fishing and sports. The 'understanding' workers were supposed to take away is that shareholders own the company, and what is good for those owners is good for everybody. Shareholders would have come to understand that workers love their families and value their vacation time. The idea of 'understanding' de-materialized the matter of 'interests,' and in that very process we can find the magazine's central purpose.

Author Bio

Courtney Maloney teaches writing and humanities at the Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design.

⁴³ The reasons for the down-scaling of the magazine are likely more complex than the mere need to reduce expenses. The format changed while the magazine was on hiatus during the 1952 strike; acrimony on both sides of this conflict may have influenced the decision to eliminate so much of the participatory quality. Additionally, the PR department may have diverted funds to support the commissioning of Roy Stryker, famous for the great Farm Security Administration photographic project of the 1930s, who was hired to create a documentary photo file for the company—a set of representations of workers that required less of their active participation.

⁴⁴ *Men and Steel*, November 1947.

Bibliography

- Bivens, J., Engdahl, L., Gould, E., Kroeger, T., McNicholas, C., Mishel, L., Mokhiber, Z., Shierholz, H., von Wilpert, M., Zipperer, B. & Wilson, V. 2017, *How today's unions help working people: giving workers the power to improve their jobs and unrig the economy*, Economic Policy Institute, 24 August, viewed 21 March 2018, <<https://www.epi.org/publication/how-todays-unions-help-working-people-giving-workers-the-power-to-improve-their-jobs-and-unrig-the-economy/>>.
- Fones-Wolf, E. 1994, *Selling free enterprise: the business assault on labor and liberalism, 1945-1960*, University of Illinois Press, Chicago.
- Freeman, R., Han, E., Duke, B. & Madland, D. 2016, *What do unions do for the middle class?*, Center for American Progress, 13 January, viewed 21 March 2018, <<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/economy/reports/2016/01/13/128366/what-do-unions-do-for-the-middle-class/>>.
- Hinshaw, J. 2002, *Steel and steelworkers: race and class struggle in twentieth century Pittsburgh*, University of New York Press, Albany.
- McCarthy, N. 2017, 'Which countries have the highest levels of labor union membership? [Infographic],' *Forbes*, 20 June, viewed 29 March 2018, <<https://www.forbes.com/sites/niallmcCarthy/2017/06/20/which-countries-have-the-highest-levels-of-labor-union-membership-infographic/#76a3ede933c0>>.
- Metzgar, J. 2000, *Striking steel: solidarity remembered*, Temple University, Philadelphia.
- Mishel, L., Bivens, J., Gould, E. & Shierholz, H. 2012, 'Collective bargaining fact sheet,' *The state of working America, 12th edition*, Economic Policy Institute, n.d., viewed 21 March 2018, <<http://www.stateofworkingamerica.org/fact-sheets/collective-bargaining/>>.
- Robertson, C. & Bidgoodmarch, J. 2018, 'All-in or nothing': West Virginia's teacher strike was months in the making,' *New York Times*, 2 March, viewed 8 March 2018, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/02/us/west-virginia-teacher-strike.html>>.
- Serrin, W. 1992, *Homestead: the glory and tragedy of an American steel town*, Random House, New York.
- Shambaugh, J., Nunn, R., Liu, P. & Nantz, G. 2017, *Thirteen facts about wage growth*, Brookings Institute, 25 September, viewed 21 March 2018, <<https://www.brookings.edu/research/thirteen-facts-about-wage-growth/>>.
- Smemo, K., Sonti, S., & Winant, G. 2017, 'Conflict and consensus: the steel strike of 1959 and the anatomy of the New Deal order,' *Critical Historical Studies*, Spring, pp. 39-73.
- Thomson-DeVeaux, A. 2018, 'Could The Supreme Court Really Bust Public-Sector Unions?,' *FiveThirtyEight*, 26 February, viewed 21 March 2018, <<https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/could-the-supreme-court-really-bust-public-sector-unions/>>.
- Wollman, D. & Inman, D. 1999, *Portraits in steel: an illustrated history of Jones & Laughlin Steel Corporation*, Kent State University, Kent.
- Yadoo, J. 2018, 'Union Membership Rate in U.S. Held at Record Low of 10.7% in 2017,' *Bloomberg*, 19 January, viewed 21 March 2018, <<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-01-19/union-membership-rate-in-u-s-held-at-record-low-of-10-7-in-17>>.

Breaking Through the Concrete Ceiling: Tradeswomen in the United States Tell Their Stories of Struggle and Success

Heidi E. Wagner, University of Wisconsin, Extension

Abstract

Today, women comprise about half of the United States workforce. Yet, they are still the majority of workers in the lowest paid jobs. In the construction industry, on-the-job training and unions have helped generations of white tradesmen acquire wages and benefits supportive of themselves and their families. This paper explores women's desires to gain careers in the building trades, where they currently represent approximately 3% of workers. Data gained from interviews with tradeswomen and others in the construction industry indicate that gender parity remains elusive. As opposed to classical economic theory and construction industry conventional wisdom positing that women do not want to work construction, or are not able, this essay explores barriers in place keeping tradeswomen from successful careers.

Keywords:

Tradeswomen, occupational segregation by gender, construction industry workforce

Introduction

The majority of United States households rely on women's wages to pay their bills (Lyles 2013). Yet women earn less than men for doing the same jobs, and they lose even more in wages due to gendered occupational segregation (Mastracci 2004). The jobs women most often hold—bookkeeper, office manager, teacher, and retail salesperson—pay less and offer fewer opportunities for upward movement than those dominated by men (Mastracci 2004). In fact, more than 80% of women are gainfully employed in only 71 of 400 occupations identified by the Bureau of Labor (Moccio 2009). A 2016 report titled 'Pathways to equity: Narrowing the wage gap by improving women's access to good middle-skill jobs' states, 'Even with some college or an associate degree, women's median weekly earnings for full-time work leave a household of one adult with two children in near-poverty.' (Hegewisch, Bendick, Gault & Hartmann 2016, p. 5). By contrast, work in numerous blue-collar occupations has allowed (mostly) men with high school diplomas, or even less education, to earn middle-class incomes. In building construction trades, on-the-job training and unions have helped generations of white men acquire wages and benefits fully supportive of themselves and their families. This paper explores women's desires to gain careers in those trades.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 made it illegal to discriminate against women when hiring, but there was more than a 10-year lag from the signing of that act until women—even

in small numbers—were admitted to building-construction unions and construction trade occupations. In 1976, a consortium of women’s groups sued the U.S. Department of Labor for failing to enforce equal access to jobs in the construction industry. President Carter responded by issuing affirmative action regulations establishing a goal for hiring women on construction projects that use more than \$10,000 in federal funds (Eisenberg 1998). The Carter administration set a goal of increasing the number of women to 6.9% of the workforce by the 1980s, with the aim for women to be 24% of the building trades workforce by 2000 (Eisenberg 1998). Thanks to this hiring goal and other programs supporting gender equality, women entered the trades in noticeable numbers in the late 70s, but, since then there has been no steady increase in the number of tradeswomen as an overall portion of the construction workforce (Moir, Thomson & Kelleher 2011).

Framing the research

Though women currently comprise just under half the workforce in the U.S., they are approximately 3% of building trade workers (United States Department of Labor (USDOL) 2012). Why this disparity? Classical economic theorists posit that women do not work in significant numbers in male-dominated jobs with higher earnings (including blue-collar occupations) because they prefer not to or are actually unable to do the work (Mastracci 2004). Kris Paap, a former carpenter’s apprentice, illuminates how ‘taste and preferences’ theory guides discussion when the construction industry considers diversifying the workforce:

In almost all meetings and publications dedicated to the increase of diversity in construction, one can observe that those who represent the industry as either employers or union representatives raise similar if not identical questions about the process through which this increase in diversity should take place. Specifically, they argue that nontraditional workers need to be *found* and *recruited* [emphasis in original]. . . . As sincere as these comments may be, even a perfunctory review of the industry’s history suggests that these questions are more the *product* [emphasis in original] of the true problem than a path to effective solutions (Paap 2006, pp. 103-04).

The segregation of ‘groups’ (identity categories of gender, nationality, race, etc.) within capitalist labor markets is not well explained by orthodox economic theory (Reich, Gordon & Edwards 1973). In *Breaking out of the Pink-Collar Ghetto* (2004), Sharon Mastracci argues that there are other reasons besides desire or a skills gap why women are the majority of workers in the lowest-paid jobs:

Labor markets themselves are social structures that cannot be analyzed separately from their contexts, and, therefore, are far more than the sum of individuals’ investments in their human capital. Individual workers exercise only so much agency in determining their labor market outcomes; decisions of employers and workers have a lot more to do with the prevailing structures of labor market institutions and the habits and customs therein (p. 14).

Similar to Mastracci’s statement regarding limits to an individual’s control over her or his labor market outcomes, my argument is that there are individual, institutional, societal, and cultural processes which work to exclude women from building trade occupations. Rather than change the behavior of the mythical ‘few bad apples,’ systemic change at the social and organizational level is still necessary. One way to do this is to reduce the effects of stereotypes in the

workplace and in larger cultural narratives feeding into supposed ‘occupational choice.’ As opposed to the idea of a woman’s distaste for construction, many women who have attempted to acquire work in the building trades, as well as men of color, find perplexing union representatives’ and employers’ lamentations over not being able to find people other than white men who want to work (See Eisenberg 1998; Martin 1988; Moir, et al. 2011). Behind the lamentations are, I would argue, five common sentiments or a gendered ideology that persists regarding women’s (lack of) participation in the building trades. These sentiments include the following:

1.) **There is something inherent about being a woman that causes women to not want to work construction.** The consequences of this belief intimate that a tradeswoman acts against her ‘inherent’ female desire, she is acting selfishly, taking a job from a man, just there to find a man (not a career), or she is not a real woman (often creating a context in which the label of ‘lesbian’ is intended as a slight).

2.) **Women cannot work construction because they will quit when they have children, or they are primary caretakers of children, and hence cannot fulfill the job travel and hour requirements.** Thus, a tradeswoman acts against the female responsibility of motherhood.

3.) **Women insist on ‘looking good.’** This includes being clean, smelling like flowers (fragrance), wearing dress clothes such as high-heeled shoes, and having one’s hair and nails done in ways appropriate for normative feminine expression. As some of these self-grooming techniques do not fit well with the construction workday, women won’t work construction because they don’t want to give up their ‘feminine’ appearance. Thus, a tradeswoman acts against femininity (i.e., she is ugly).

4.) **Women are weak and small and cannot handle the physical and technical aspects of the job as well as men.** A tradeswoman acts against prescribed ability and the notion that women are the ‘weaker sex.’

5.) **Women’s personalities are such that they do not want to and/or cannot handle the established construction worksite culture.** Thus, a tradeswoman wantonly enters a space where she is not supposed to be, that she cannot handle—hence, she is just a potential lawsuit.

The above pervasive narratives are translated in a myriad of ways by society in general, including by those who are gatekeepers of construction careers. The notions are used to undermine not just a woman expressing a desire to work in the trades, but the very idea of a tradeswoman. Hence, men and women on construction sites must (re)negotiate what they have been taught about a rigidly defined gender binary intertwining with job definitions.

For example, something that should be consistent and professional, such as conducting interviews with job applicants, has unsettled industry gatekeepers when women are the interviewees. Women have described their interviews for union apprenticeships or with contractor-superintendents as ‘non’ or ‘anti’ interviews. In Martin’s *Hard-Hatted Women* (1998), a sheet metal worker related the experience of finding out she had been accepted into an apprenticeship program while, in the same conversation, being told that women should not work in the trade. Nina Saltman, a carpenter, also described the following job interview experience:

When I got [to the jobsite] the next day, I got a speech that was becoming all too familiar. [Quoting the superintendent,] ‘Well, uh, er, we have had other girls work here before. (PUFF, PUFF on the cigar.) And, uh, er, they just haven’t been able to handle the work.’ TRANSLATION: We don’t really want you

broads here, but we're being forced to hire you. The other women couldn't take the abuse...will you? (Martin, 125)

Saltman described this as the 'Everywoman' speech—a speech suggesting a company had hired a woman in the past and it hadn't worked out, so it was questionable as to whether they should hire a woman again (Martin 1998). Hence, while the industry likes to present the idea of a neutral (read: equal) playing field, women have pointed to consistent discouragement from those in the industry concerning women even gaining entry-level positions in the field.

Methods

Women work in construction because of liveable wages, opportunity for advancement, the physicality of job tasks, and the tangible results of a day's labor, but they remain a severe minority of the workforce (Latour 2008; Martin 1998; Schroedel 1985). They continue to struggle with job acquisition, avoiding layoffs, gaining opportunities for training and promotions, and finding work environments free of gender and sexual harassment. Therefore, in exploring contemporary experiences of women in the building trades, my research was not concerned with finding women who might like to work construction, nor the type of personality a woman might have that could lead her to want to work in the building trades. Instead, I explore societal barriers, including ideologies and attitudes that keep women from equal access to trade careers.

My larger research project examined the policy tool of setting hiring goals for tradeswomen on construction projects, with a focus on publicly funded construction sites in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota, and Portland, Oregon. Here, I present analysis of interviews conducted in 2014-2015, along with observations and conversations with those in the construction industry, and documents including review of items such as websites, meeting minutes, and email exchanges referencing women in construction. Participants included tradeswomen, advocates (those whose jobs involve working for policy that supports tradeswomen, people of color, unions, and/or contractors), union employees, construction company employees, and government workers (see Table 1).

Table 1.

List of participants

ID	Gender	Race	Organization	TradespersonY/N
1	Female	White	Union	Tradeswoman
2	Female	AfricanAm	Union	Tradeswoman
3	Female	White	advocacy for industry	No
4	Male	AfricanAm	Government	No
5	Female	White	Union	Tradeswoman
6	Female	White	Union	Tradeswoman
7	Female	White	advocacy for industry	No
8	Female	AfricanAm	Government	No
9	Female	White	construction company	No
10	Female	NativeAm	Union	Tradeswoman

11	Male	AfricanAm	advocacy for trades workers	Tradesman
12	Male	AfricanAm	advocacy for trades workers	No
13	Female	White	construction company	Tradeswoman
14	Female	White	construction company	No
15	Male	AfricanAm	advocacy for industry advocacy for trades	Tradesman
16	Female	AfricanAm	workers advocacy for trades	No
17	Male	AfricanAm	workers advocacy for trades	No
18	Female	White	workers	Tradeswoman
19	Male	White	Union	Tradesman

Data collection

Purposeful, snowball sampling was implemented. Once participants were identified, interviews took place at a location suggested by the interviewee. Place of work and coffee shops were the most common meeting locations. During all interviews, notes were recorded on the researcher's laptop. Audio recordings were made for the slight majority of interviews and recordings were transcribed. One interview was conducted while the interviewee was 'on the go' and was only able to meet for a short time. Two individuals specifically requested not to be recorded and two, by decision of the researcher, were not recorded to add a layer of anonymity. Though the interviews were open-ended, individually-tailored guiding questions were used, such as: Why did you choose to work construction? What do you like about the work? What do you dislike about the work? Describe the process you went through to acquire work in this field. Who are your co-workers? What is being done to support women in construction?

Data analysis

Transcribed interviews, or interview notes, were initially coded by inductively created topics. Emerging categories included the following: advocacy, economy, harassment, hiring, hiring goals, pre-apprentice, race, tradeswomen, training, union, what-do-at-work, why-lack-diversity-why-need-diversity, and work-history-how-landed-job. Next, participant statements concerning women in the construction workforce were put into either the 'barrier' category or the 'intervention' category—how the participants discussed perceived barriers (i.e., anything that restrains or obstructs progress or access), and how they described positive interventions. Finally, the coded interview and document data (email exchanges, websites) was used to present a narrative regarding the lack of tradeswomen on construction sites (the barriers) and what needs to change to ameliorate that lack (interventions).

Findings

Going against the grain

Tradeswoman-participants found their way to construction work through a few different paths. Two individuals had fathers in the construction industry, both of whom worked alongside their

respective dads when young. One shared, ‘My dad was a contractor, and I grew up helping him. During college I worked in the field.’ Another participant, whose father was an electrician, stated, ‘I used to go to work with my dad as a kid. It wasn’t any jobsite that would hurt me. I’d put on receptacle covers, just stuff that kept me occupied and happy. I thought it was fun at eight years old.’ Other women said they found the work ‘by accident.’ One participant described acquiring basic skills from a trade school:

Accidentally. I signed up for culinary school . . . and got sent to the wrong place [building trades program]. . . . That was in 1977. I was getting a low-interest loan for school, and they said that they would only give that to me if I would go into nursing or foods or—what was the third one? Secretarial. So anyway, I just pushed it and got [into the building trades program].

Initially, this participant worked non-union construction jobs, but she joined a union when a friend of her father revealed the union wage: ‘I talked to [a union construction worker], and he told me how much money they made, and it was huge compared to what I was making, and I said, “Sign me up,” is what I said, literally, on the phone.’ Another woman, who now owns a construction company, said a friend in the field encouraged her to apply: ‘I just took a summer job as a union apprentice. A friend of mine who was doing it said, “It’s great money. You’re a strong woman from the farm. You can do it.” . . . So I signed up, and it was a job where they had to hire—it was a county job.’ Having a college degree and originally thinking of the work as a ‘summer pay check,’ the participant stayed in the industry. She found that she ‘loved it,’ in particular the combination of physical and mental challenges.

A different woman told of first meeting a tradeswoman when their children were at the same day-care:

There was a young lady—well, we had our children at the same day-care facility, and I know that she was always dressed in construction clothes, and I would ask her how did she get into it? And I really admired her. . . . In the morning, she’d be all clean. Then, when she’d come back to get [her children], there’d be dust and everything all over her. And I was just like, ‘Wow! I would love to do that.’

It took a move and a divorce before this participant found her way into construction work. One participant recounted how she didn’t begin working construction until her 40s. She lauded the life-altering effects of union wages and benefits, how she will have a retirement pension, how her health improved, and the positive impact of all the above on her family: ‘I saw the fruits of my labor. I saw how I could transform space. I could do that with a smile on my face. I was releasing a lot of endorphins. I knew it was the right job for me.’

Baseline requirements exist for any man or woman entering the construction field—physical strength and ability; a driver’s license, and usually, access to an automobile; often a willingness to work overtime, and sometimes, an ability to travel. One barrier to meeting baseline requirements that was discussed by a number of participants was the assumption that women are primary caretakers of children. The need to take care of one’s children has been a reason women leave the field, and childcare challenges can increase when overtime is required; but this issue is faced by any parents working jobs requiring overtime or hours outside of the nine-to-five workday.

In many cases, complete childcare responsibilities do not necessarily fall on the woman who works in the building trades. One tradeswoman had a husband who was a stay-at-home dad. Another woman remained conscious of her commute. If she were sent to a jobsite too far away, she would quit or request a different worksite. Using this tactic, she was able to remain consistently employed, since a union hall usually has multiple sites where members are working. In this case, the union and employers worked with the participant to keep her employed. Wanting to spend more time with family, the same individual turned down a supervisory job because it required taking work home at night. She noted it was years before she heard one of her male co-workers mention childcare: 'I have to say the first time I heard a guy say, "No, I can't stay late, because I've got to pick the kids up at day-care," I literally stopped in my tracks because it just was like the world had changed.'

A union employee echoed the sentiment about an unfriendly work environment for parents: 'Construction is not historically that patient with those kinds of things. [That] whole work-life balance thing doesn't seem to have travelled to construction yet. I think it's going to have to; I mean, an incoming generation of people is going to insist on it, men and women alike.' The construction industry likely needs to find better methods to support men and women who have young children. However, the workforce participation rate for women having at least one child three years old or younger is approximately 61% in the U.S. (Hegewisch & Hartmann, 2014). Hence, continuing to assume that all women have young children needing childcare, and that this is the reason women cannot work construction, is a false narrative. Women with young children most likely need to be in the workforce to support their family. Therefore, rather than using motherhood as a reason women cannot be successful in the workforce, a more beneficial approach for all who are primary caretakers of others would be public and workplace policies supporting family leave and childcare.

Tradeswomen and advocate participants discussed the need for self-confidence and self-efficacy when navigating the hiring process and job tasks. They described needing skills such as being a 'hard worker, arriving on time, working well with others, taking direction, giving direction, going above what is asked.' Women explained that they initially often observed peers, gauging at what level they needed to be working, e.g., considering how many boards they should carry or how fast tasks needed to be executed. In some instances, they felt they needed to be doing a little more than their male co-workers. One participant described her approach:

If I saw guys were doing it, I would just—I was a very—I can't think of what I'm trying to think of, but cognizant of how guys were working and would watch them to make sure that I did at least what they were doing, if not better. And so, if they were carrying 2x10s and beams and headers by themselves, then I was gonna do it by myself and even more so.

These tradeswomen self-identified their physical strength, knowledge, and work ethic as reasons they are successful. One woman stated, 'I haven't been laid off that often. That sounds like bragging.' Tradeswomen need this confidence to negotiate male-dominated environments because the empirical and anecdotal evidence finds tradeswomen do experience more layoffs than their male co-workers (Abaffy 2010).

Gender Preferences in Construction

Of course, by law, gender discrimination in the workplace is not allowed. Yet women struggle to even get hired in the trades, so the few women who are on construction sites often find

themselves the only woman or, at best, one of a handful. A tradeswoman said, 'At [one project], there were hundreds of workers, so maybe one to two other women were there. Some jobs, I don't see any other women.' Further, because the presence of a woman can threaten the ideal of construction trades work as inherently masculine (also see Denissen & Saguy 2014), women in this study negotiated the issue of their gender while working in the building trades. One tradeswoman stated, 'You have to fit in, but you don't want to be manly or aggressive. You want to keep your own identity.' Another woman described balancing 'not trying to be one of them' but needing to be 'close enough' for some level of acceptance: 'It took a bit—like I said, the time test. I would ride it out. As soon as they [men] got used to me, and that I wasn't trying to be one of them, and I was close enough that—and I could hold my own. I was a big, strong girl so they would accept me to a certain degree.' Arising in subtle and overt ways is an underlying question: 'How can one be a woman and an electrician, iron worker, plumber, or mason?' Hence, 'fitting in' on a crew usually requires an extra level of 'proof' that a tradeswoman could do her job. One participant stated, 'You have to show them [men] that you—whereas a man, they just assume that you can— can do the job. And a woman, it's assumed that she's there, you know, filling some quota. That's definitely a big difference.' Another tradeswoman acknowledged the extra layer of 'having to prove' herself but then said that, once co-workers saw she was a good worker, she was accepted: 'My experiences were not the same to begin with. That's because most of them [men] think "here's a girl."' Tradeswomen have to be good at their jobs because one woman's failure (or even just fatigue or making a mistake) is often not seen as an individual failure, but as a failure of all women's capabilities as construction workers. One participant who works on the office side of construction described a situation where a woman hire had not worked out for a company:

I had a hiring manager. I gave him a resume, and he said, 'Oh, that's a woman. I've already done that. I'm not hiring a woman again,' and his objections to that particular woman he had hired was that she was—she couldn't carry a ladder, she was short . . . the crew didn't take to her.

A tradeswoman described how she would not show any weakness or signs of injury. 'I never would take a hand, and I'd do it all by myself. I'd just go home really stiff. And if I cut myself or if I did anything, I was not gonna tell anybody. If I was stiff, if I was sore, if I was bruised, I was always fine.' This hiding of injury to seem tough is one safety issue that crosses genders as men in construction also need to appear 'tough.' Depending on one's trade, union membership status, and employer, there often are some accommodations for sick leave or worker's compensation. But if a man is injured on a construction site, it's not assumed that all men can't work construction because they'll just get injured.

Similarly to how men working construction might be considered 'hardy,' the women interviewed also hold themselves and other women to a 'toughness' standard. One tradeswoman said, 'I'm just thinking; there are literally some women who are so thin-skinned. What are they doing there? And there's other women that will just do whatever they're told and they'll just keep, you know, they'll never advance because they don't speak up for themselves.' Having to 'pull one's own weight' as a tradeswoman was valued by these participants not only in their own work, but also in evaluating other women at job sites. With few women in the field, any woman who enters the building trades and then quits, is laid-off, or is 'let go' feeds the cultural narrative that women cannot or do not want to do this work.

Addressing a Monoculture

A couple of participants I interviewed mentioned not sitting with the rest of their crew at breaks, and not having much to talk about with male co-workers. Women discussed struggles they had such as an often less-than-cordial work environment; one individual noted that construction sites are often ‘sink or swim.’ Another shared the experience of her first day at work:

I was pretty much a joke for a lot of people when I arrived to the jobsite. But they didn't know my strength. They saw my appearance, and they assumed my ability. I'm a woman and I'm old and I'm heavy. . . . I was told what to bring [by a training program] which was a source of laughter. They told me to bring a shovel, but not what type. I'd never been on a construction site. I loaded a concrete hopper for the first months. Cleaning and tearing down scaffolding—but they didn't know what I could do, so I was just in charge of clean-up, and then, almost everyone was young enough to be my son. I didn't take my breaks with them so I have no idea. . . . I was grateful to be there. It was a great exercise to be there. I had to dig deep. I've worked harder for a lot less money. I was 15 years as a battered woman; it's not hard to dig deep. I felt so vital.

Another interviewee remembered her early years working construction and how, even if she was invited to socialize, she remained aloof:

I was invited out for beers. I didn't go. You don't fraternize. You just keep your distance, and then it seemed to keep a nice respect. But then you don't have any friends either. . . . I would come home pretty quiet and, not only stiff, but didn't have anybody to talk to all day long or not much in common. So that could be a little bit of a drag.

The above circumstances require women to abide the daily experience of being the outsider in a monocultural work environment. The isolation a woman can feel, combined with all-male co-workers, and the work being tied to masculinity can make for difficult situations negotiating how to execute one's job tasks versus not threatening anyone's masculinity. One participant reported the following experiences:

I think there's a lot of guys that don't want to be outdone by a woman, outworked, and so sometimes there—this sounds so cliché, and I don't mean to be sexist, but sometimes there's an ego there that, if you bruise it, it just turns into like a competition or confrontation of some—I don't know. I have had some awesome partners [co-workers]. . . . But if you ever have a bad partner, you don't forget it. It's a constant struggle every day because you're not in the center of things like he is.

Among this monoculture, women often feel that co-workers or supervisors are hostile to even their presence at the jobsite. Another participant confided, ‘I have spent many sleepless nights thinking, “Am I going to be able to hold onto my job?” because there's a lot of people who don't want me there, and you start to wonder, why am I holding on to this? But sometimes, you just don't want them to win.’

Women who do not have family members in the industry, who are older, are not originally from the United States, who are lesbian, are a person of color, and/or are ‘feminine’ likely will

have more barriers with which to contend when working (or even attempting to work) in the building trades. A European-American tradeswoman expressed her frustration with the culture of maltreatment of ‘difference’ on jobsites:

I see how African Americans are treated, how lesbians are treated, and it is criminal the way Latinos are treated. If people are brought into the trades, it’s who you know, the connections you have, your social circles . . . instead of that you’d be judged on your work, on your output, but you don’t see that out in the trades. You see people set up to fail.

Intolerance of mistakes or being ‘set-up to fail’ for people who are not white men was mentioned by more than one participant. For instance, going from being an apprentice to a journey worker in the trades is a significant step, an acknowledgement that an individual has put in training hours and is a skilled person in his or her craft. This promotion has, too often, been elusive for people who are not white men (Moir, Thomson & Kelleher 2011). One African-American tradeswoman illuminated the challenge of getting this promotion, specifically for people of color:

I think the biggest thing why they’re not letting them in is because it’s the white male syndrome, where they think that they’re above and we’re below, and that they just don’t want us in those—they just don’t want us working next to them. They don’t want us making that same amount of money that they make.

A discomfort with ‘difference’ was discussed by the majority of participants. Advocates broached industry insularity, acknowledging that it’s not necessarily malevolent; it’s partially out of habit and fairly universal behavior. One discussion went as follows:

People tend to enter the construction trades, particularly on the union side, if they know somebody who’s in them. . . . Part of that is that union apprenticeships, unfortunately, they don’t get a whole lot of attention. So you almost have to know somebody to learn about them, but the other part of it is that it’s just you tend to refer the people around you for work.

To a certain extent, the industry has functioned like any other in its hiring and promotion processes, but it has guarded its monoculture more rigorously, resulting in a situation where tradeswomen must assert both their desire to do their job and their need for equal access.

The bias can be subtle. A participant employed in the office side of construction stated, ‘It’s things you wouldn’t think of, and it’s not always intentional. I just went on a tour of a site, and I brought my hardhat but forgot glasses. So they gave me a pair that was huge and falling down my face.’ The bias can seem understandable, simply confusion at finding a woman at work in the construction field. Another woman participant who works on the office side of the industry conjectured, ‘I think that’s a battle, that even the nicest people are perplexed when they’re confronted with something that’s not the norm.’ However, all of the covert and overt bias against women accumulates in workdays that, for tradeswomen, can be a constant struggle. Anyone who is different is expected to conform to or at least tolerate the crassness of this culture. For example, one individual who attempted entry into a trades training program for women was not admitted, being told she did not seem ‘thick-skinned’ enough. Meaning, the thick skin was not needed for construction work, but, rather, to negotiate worksite culture.

Discussion

I found tradeswomen who sincerely enjoyed their work. They value the combined use of physical and mental skills required for job tasks, and love being able to see the immediate results of their labor while working outdoors. They want to see more women in the field, and hold themselves and other women to high standards. Materializing, to some degree in the data, was the classical economic narrative declaring why people work the jobs they do. As in previous studies and anecdotal narratives, some participants did allude to the idea of women simply not wanting to work construction. Countering that narrative is, of course, empirical evidence of women's desire and efforts to create successful careers in the building trades. An employee at a tradeswomen advocacy organization that runs pre-apprenticeship training programs answered the common refrain that women aren't interested in or capable of building trades work: 'When people say women aren't interested, I'd point to the numbers of women that come in our door every year saying they are interested.' The non-profit has about one hundred women per year going into its pre-apprenticeship and other programs.

A few women interviewed had moved from building trades into other jobs within or linked to the construction industry—for example, working for a trade union or a non-profit tradeswomen advocacy organization. These types of career moves could be viewed as positive, and are career moves in line with the path some men take. When examining the experiences of tradeswomen, some findings from previous research resonated with participants—feelings of isolation, not fitting in, and having to repeatedly prove oneself. Since working construction is not initially presented to women when they are young, many find their way into the trades after earning college degrees or in mid-life when they need and are searching for a way to support themselves and family. In that fact alone, they are often different from their male peers.

The covert and overt bias against women impacts their workdays in the construction field. Others have researched the psychological effects of negotiating construction's male-dominated environment,⁴⁵ and here, too, isolation, stress regarding keeping one's job, or dealing with hostile co-worker(s) did negatively affect women participants. Hence, women are regularly left in the following double binds:

- 1.) Trying to fit into not just a male-dominated, but a masculine-dominated work culture, yet not being allowed to act too manly or aggressive.
- 2.) Having to be more than competent at the work, but not allowed to show up a male co-worker.
- 3.) Being collegial, but needing to keep a distance.

Since they are not 'in the center of things,' this outsider status can leave tradeswomen lacking workplace connections (social capital). Those informal workplace connections and support that people can find at work—friendships, someone who's got your back and will stick up for you when you're not there—can remain elusive. Finally, the lingering requirement (unofficial but ubiquitous) to supply 'proof' that one can be a woman and a construction worker speaks to a continuing rejection of women within the industry.

⁴⁵ See, for example, Goldenhar, Swanson, Hurrell, Ruder & Deddens' 'Stressors and adverse outcomes for female construction workers' (1998).

Conclusions

The United States remains a society where occupations are regularly identified with a specific gender (Hegewisch & Hartmann 2014). Persisting with the argument that women simply prefer to be clustered in low-wage jobs with little room for advancement is buncombe. True opportunity needs to be created for women wanting to work in construction and other blue-collar occupations. As the U.S. population becomes a white minority and as women continue to participate in the workforce in high numbers, other occupations, such as within the government at the local, state, and federal levels, have become more diverse (Hegewisch & Hartmann 2014). Those workforce demographic changes are adding a small amount of momentum to a long-standing movement attempting diversity in the building trades.

Affirmative action policy, which assisted in opening the doors to women in the building trades, is one option that can be used to continue supporting women who choose to become plumbers, masons, or electricians. Affirmative action is a controversial topic that takes on an extra layer of anxiety in the construction industry. Rather than acknowledging historical inequities leading to workforce segregation, employers in construction often portray lack of a diverse workforce as the *result* of a disinterest by all women and men of color (Paap 2006). Published in 2006, Greene's conclusion in *Blue-Collar Women at Work with Men* asserts, "The overriding social message is that women do not belong and cannot succeed in traditionally male, blue-collar jobs" (Greene 2006, p. 181). A new message needs to be sent to women that construction work is demanding, and women can meet these demands. As it stands now, a few tradeswomen are left constantly having to explain (prove) themselves and their existence on construction sites. A viable alternative to the low wages and lack of benefits characteristic of the gig and "independent contractor" economy, many trades occupations offer union membership, good training, wages, benefits, and opportunities for promotion. They are the types of jobs that provide for the U.S. working class's achievement of a middle-class life. Now, with baby boomers retiring and women working in a wider range of occupations, the time seems ripe for a significant renewed push in recruiting women into the building trades.

Author Bio

Heidi Wagner is an assistant professor in the School for Workers at the University of Wisconsin, Extension; 610 Langdon St. Rm 422, Madison, WI 53703; Email: heidi.wagner@uwex.edu. She earned her PhD in Design from the University of Minnesota and, previously, worked in the construction field as a project manager and carpenter.

Bibliography

- Abaffy, L. 2010, 'Skilled trades are tough to crack: Women fight to gain ground', *ENR*, October 18, viewed 1 May 2018, <<https://www.enr.com/articles/2835-skilled-trades-are-tough-to-crack-women-fight-to-gain-ground?v=preview>>
- Denissen, A. M. & Saguy, A. C. 2014, 'Gendered homophobia and the contradictions of workplace discrimination for women in the building trades', *Gender & Society*, vol. 28, no. 19, pp. 381-403.
- Eisenberg, S. 1998, *We'll call you if we need you: Experiences of women working construction*, ILR Press, Ithaca, NY and London.

- Goldenhar, L. M., Swanson, N. G., Hurrell, J. J., Ruder, A. & Deddens, J. 1998, 'Stressors and adverse outcomes for female construction workers', *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 19-32.
- Greene, J. A. 2006, *Blue-collar women at work with men: Negotiating the hostile environment*, Praeger, Westport, Ct and London.
- Hegewisch, A., Bendick M. Jr, Gault, B., & Hartmann, H. 2016, *Pathways to equity: Narrowing the wage gap by improving women's access to good middle-skill jobs*, Institute for Women's Policy Research, viewed 1 May 2018, <<http://www.voced.edu.au/content/ngv%3A73163>>
- Hegewisch, A. & Hartmann, H. 2014, *Occupational segregation and the gender wage gap: A job half done*, Institute for Women's Policy Research, viewed 1 May 2018, <<file:///C:/Users/Linsey/Downloads/C419.pdf>>
- Latour, J. 2008, *Sisters in the brotherhoods: Working women organizing for equality in New York City*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, NY.
- Lyles, L. 2013, 'Champions of women's work', *Work in progress, The official blog of the U.S. Department of Labor*, viewed 1 May 2018, <<http://social.dol.gov/blog/champions-of-womens-work/>>
- Martin, M., ed. 1998, *Hard-hatted women: Stories of struggle and success in the trades*, Seal Press, Seattle, Wa.
- Mastracci, S. H. 2004, *Breaking out of the pink-collar ghetto: Policy solutions for non-college women*, M. E. Sharpe, Armonk, NY and London.
- Moccio, F. A. 2009, *Live wire: Women and brotherhood in the electrical industry*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, Pa.
- Moir, S., Thomson, M. & Kelleher, C. 2011, *Unfinished business: Building equality for women in the construction trades*, Labor Resource Resource Center Publications, Paper 5, Boston, Ma., viewed 1 May 2018, <http://scholarworks.umb.edu/lrc_pubs/5>.
- Paap, K. 2006, *Working construction: Why white working-class men put themselves—and the labor movement—in harm's way*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY.
- Reich, M., Gordon, D. M. & Edwards, R. C. 1973, 'A theory of labor market segmentation', *The American Economic Review*, vol. 63, no. 2, pp. 359-65, viewed 1 May, <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1817097>>.
- Schroedel, J. R. 1985, *Alone in a crowd: Women in the trades tell their stories*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, Pa.
- United States Department of Labor (USDOL) 2012, Latest annual data. *Women's Bureau*, viewed 1 May 2018, <<http://www.dol.gov/wb/stats/recentfacts.htm#rates>>.

Occupying the Picket Line: Labor and Occupy in South Central Indiana

Dr. Joseph Varga, Indiana University Bloomington

Abstract

This article examines the relationship between a striking labor union and a local Occupy group in South Central Indiana in fall, 2011. It looks at areas of cooperation, tension, and coordination between the two groups within the context of Occupy/organized labor relations during the same period in other locations in the United States. The article examines attitudes of union members and Occupy participants regarding each other, unions, working people, class, labor law, strikes, and direct action. This work examines areas of agreement and mutual benefit between the striking union and the Occupy group, while also discussing the major areas of tension in the specific case in Southern Indiana and in other instances where Occupy groups and labor organizations came into contact. The article concludes with a discussion of major difficulties in the Occupy/labor relationship, and avenues of potential cooperation.

Keywords:

Strike, labor union, Occupy Wall Street, tensions

Introduction

‘We thought they were coming down here to do, well, we didn’t know what. We didn’t know what to expect.’ - Local 8093 member, on news that Occupy Bloomington activists were joining their strike.

‘I didn’t care about the union or the politics. This was working people with hungry kids. Let’s just be people helping other working people.’ - Occupy Bloomington activist.

On November 15, 2011, 50 members of Carpenters International Union, Millworkers Local 8093⁴⁶ in Oolitic, Indiana, unanimously voted to reject a contract offer from their employer, Indiana Limestone, beginning a strike that would last nearly two months.⁴⁷ When the millwrights and cutters of Local 8093 began their strike, they sought and received community and union support in the area. The union would also receive support from an unlikely source, one that had not existed when the local began this round of contract negotiations in August 2011. As the strike lengthened, Local 8093 would enter into an uneasy but relatively successful alliance with activists from Occupy Bloomington, a local manifestation of the Occupy Wall Street phenomenon taking place in the United States and Canada that fall (Berret

⁴⁶ In the US, ‘Local’ refers to a regional branch of a trade union.

⁴⁷ ‘Strike Update: David Versus Goliath in Lawrence County, Indiana’, Millworkers Local 8093 Press Release (Bedford, Indiana. November 20, 2011).

2011). Mirroring events in other cities such as Portland, Oakland, and New York, Occupy Bloomington (OB) and Local 8093 found common ground and a common foe in the struggle with Indiana Limestone. The two groups also found some of the same difficulties and tensions that became apparent in other attempts at Occupy/labor coordination (Wollen & Greenhouse 2011).

Tensions between labor unions and Occupy groups both mirrored long-standing areas of disagreement between organized labor and activist organizations and presented new versions of these older issues (Fletcher and Gasparin 2008). These tensions, in Bloomington and elsewhere, took three major forms: First, unions had traditionally worked within capitalist structures, while many Occupy participants tended to reject such structures in whole or in part. Second, Occupy groups made early and lasting commitments to bottom-up, non-hierarchical forms of organization that sought to be as inclusive as possible (in theory if not in actual practice), while labor organizations were viewed by many Occupiers as top-down, bureaucratic organizations with long histories of purging militants and radicals. Finally, labor unions were proscribed from certain activities by labor law, while many Occupy activists felt that legal limitations needed to be transcended, if not ignored entirely. Tensions also arose around questions of jurisdiction, militancy, and respect for autonomous actions (Wollen & Greenhouse 2011).

For U.S. labor unions in general, and the Carpenters Local, the breakout of Occupy Wall Street as a social movement came at a time of crisis and creativity. Having achieved densities of over 30% membership in private sector employment in the 1960s, unions had entered a long period of decline with the economic crisis of the early 1970s. By the Great Recession of 2008, union density in the private sector had been reduced to under ten percent. Technology, anti-unionism, and the opening of U.S. labor markets to global competition, combined to create a crisis for organized labor (Rosenfield 2014). As reaction to the Great Recession and its aftermath highlighted the growing gap in income inequality, many labor union members, particularly those working in well-established industries, were viewed by some members of the general public as a coddled elite (Blumgart 2010). Due to sustained attacks from the anti-union industry, many Americans viewed organized labor as, at best, just another 'special interest', or at worst, a major reason for the decline of the U.S. economy (Rosenfield 2014, p. 27-29). For their part, unions had responded to their own decline, and the 2008 crisis, in creative and diverse ways, by initiating diversity hiring, organizing among low-wage workers in sectors heavy with recent immigrants, and doing outreach to community groups (Luce 2014). While some of these efforts were attempts to revitalize the union movement through bringing in new members and new leadership, efforts were also made to restore American manufacturing, and return to the days of high-paying industrial labor that characterized the post-War (1945-1973) period (Herod 2018; Moody 2018).

Indeed, the long period of labor union expansion had redefined what it meant to be working class in America. The post-War period was a time of unprecedented prosperity for unions, and the United States in general. High union density helped not only union members, but workers in related industries and employment to achieve a higher economic and social status, and what appeared to be an ever-rising standard of living. While no accord ever existed between the capitalist firm and wage and hourly workers, private sector unionism became close to the norm, and the period saw narrowing levels of inequality. Union leaders and their rank-and-file increasingly achieved greater benefits, in pensions, health care, workplace safety, and skill training. Labor historians debate the specifics, but generally agree that large unions, such as the United Auto Workers and United Steel Workers, traded ideological battles over the control

of the production system for security and rising wages (Lichtenstein 2002). As Cold War tensions decreased in the 1980s and 1990s, business and political critiques of unions and their leadership shifted from accusations of ‘socialism’ to attacks on ‘union bosses’. By the eve of the 2008 recession, many people saw unions as sclerotic, bureaucratic, and only interested in the well-being of their narrow membership (Blumgart 2010). As well, unions had a long history of racial and gender-based tensions and exclusions. By the 2000s, union members were perceived as solidly middle class, able to afford vacations, second cars and homes, good health care, and comfortable retirements. As union membership decreased, a larger portion of the working public did not have access to these benefits, leading to increasing class tensions in the working class itself (Storch 2013).

Class tensions, and the meaning of ‘working class’, played out in the relationship between Occupy and unions, and within Occupy groups. Debates over what constituted working class membership, what it meant to be working class, and what role workers played in historical development, have a long history in the U.S., as in other capitalist systems (Katznelson & Zolberg 1986; Aronowitz 2003; Olin-Wright 2015). Many of these tensions were played out within social movements, and during labor actions, from the Homestead Strike⁴⁸ to the war in Vietnam. Occupy participation in labor union actions highlighted long-standing tensions between labor unions and many labor movement activists. While most labor unions accepted the role of investment capital in the economic system and conceded the control of the means of production to ownership, and were organized hierarchically, Occupy groups, including Bloomington, were heavily influenced by the autonomist political theories of horizontalism promoted by David Graeber, Marina Sitrin, Dario Azzellini, and others (Graeber 2009; Sitrin and Azzellini 2014). While unions rightly trumpeted their lead role in establishing workplace rights, and achieving increasing living standards for their members, horizontal autonomists questioned unions’ acceptance of capitalist norms and imperatives, and often held that labor unions held back or restricted the more radical desires of their rank-and-file.

As these issues played out on larger stages in New York, Portland, Oakland, and elsewhere, South Central Indiana experienced the same challenges when Occupy and labor attempted to forge common ground. While the strike in Oolitic would prove an instance of successful cooperation, the overall alliance between Occupy and labor suffered from problems of distrust, differing goals and philosophies, and tensions over tactics and strategies. This article looks at the Indiana Limestone worker’s strike and other local instances of interaction between labor and Occupy in South Central Indiana within the context of regional and national debates over the goals of both groups, and tensions over tactics. It charts the high level of cooperation that occurred around the strike and the subsequent lessening of energy as Occupiers became involved in the struggle over anti-union laws and other worker issues in Indiana. This study shows how local, small-scale interaction organized around the 99% slogan failed to translate into sustained, effective action at a wider level.

In fleshing out the tale of Occupy Bloomington and Millworkers Local 8093, this research addresses several questions:

1. Why did Occupy group activists focus on labor and workers?
2. Why did labor see Occupy groups as potential allies?
3. What factions of Occupy activists distrusted unions and union leadership?

⁴⁸ The Homestead Strike of 1892 was a dispute between steel workers and the company they worked for in Pennsylvania. More information can be found here: <https://aflcio.org/about/history/labor-history-events/1892-homestead-strike>

4. How did working people, both in unions and without, symbolize the 99% of OWS rhetoric?
5. How did the goals, strategies and tactics of the two groups mesh at times, and come into conflict at others?

While answering these questions, three general points emerge: First, Occupy groups served as a disruptive force to business as usual in some labor struggles. Second, Occupy groups encouraged and built upon calls for a revival of direct action strategies within organized labor. And finally, the lack of any sustained, general alliance and agreement, and the lessening impact of Occupy groups since winter, 2012, appears to leave organized labor at a crossroads in the search for new alliances and directions (Gupta 2012). In carrying out this examination of an isolated instance of labor/Occupy cooperation, I highlight some basic tensions that led to temporary success, but long-term failure, on the part of both unions and Occupy groups.

Methodology

The majority of the research on both Occupy Bloomington and Carpenters Local 8093 was carried out by the author as a participant observer embedded with Occupy Bloomington and having access to local unions through academic and activist work with local organizations. As a relative newcomer to the area (2009) I had little connection to the eventual Occupy participants before the establishment of the encampment in September 2011. As a professor of Labor Studies, and as a long-time labor union member and activist, I had established multiple connections in the area with labor unions and the central labor council but had no previous interactions with Carpenters Local 8093. As an embedded participant observer, I spent approximately 300 hours at the Occupy encampment, and interacted with approximately 70 participants, and attended as many as 50 general assemblies. I kept field notes on the assemblies, and on the various working groups and activities, while conducting one-on-one and small group interviews over a three-month period.

While acknowledging the problems of bias in embedded participant observation, my connections with both radical activist groups and well-established labor unions, aided in maintaining a balanced approach to both Occupy and the Local. Being a participant observer in both Occupy and on the picket line provided me with the usual advantages of this method of research, the ability to observe and record behavior that is spontaneous and unscripted. As a key variable in the relationship between Occupiers and strikers was the attitudes of members of each group, participant observation allowed for the recording of organic statements, positions, and embodied actions not readily available in the interview setting. In addition, experience with labor actions such as picketing and leafletting, including actions that press the boundaries of legality, afforded me the opportunity to test the limits of what each group was willing to do in separate and combined activities (Li 2008).

I also conducted a series of interviews. For three interviews, I utilized a small group setting, meeting twice with groups of six to eight strikers, and once with eight occupiers. I also conducted individual interviews with four occupiers, and three union members. The interviews were not recorded. Notes were taken throughout. The group interview sections were structured, with a set of questions presented in advance to participants, and further questions arising during discussion. The individual interviews were less formal, and more free-flowing, in the form of conversation. Interviews with Occupy members took place in a neutral setting, while interviews with strikers were conducted at the union local's meeting hall in Bedford.

Utilizing these methods allowed for valuable insight into participant's attitudes and outlooks, but it was not without some of the basic problems involved with participant observation. For the Occupy group, several key members expressed early on in the encampment that they were uncomfortable with academic or journalistic use of their activism. Also, it was very difficult to spend the amount of time with a group of people under difficult circumstances, and not be affected by a developing empathy for their cause, which also matched with my own ideological outlook. For the Local, the long-established relationships between individuals made penetration difficult, as many strikers kept their feeling and observations within their closed circle of co-workers. Being identified as a professor at Indiana University also altered the relationship with many strikers, some of whom viewed the institution in less-than favorable light, while at the same time many were deferential, based in class performance. Observation research is also difficult to quantify in statistical tabulation, with results presented in the form of notes and essayistic writing. However, the advantages of participant observation in gathering insights otherwise unavailable, balance out the drawbacks. Ultimately, being embedded in both the Occupy group and in strike activities provided valuable insight (Hammersly 2006).

Labor Troubles

The Oolitic strike and the alliance between Local 8093 and Occupy Bloomington took place at a time of trouble for organized labor in Indiana, both in the immediate and long-term sense, with falling membership rolls over two decades, and widespread industrial job loss. Long-term, organized labor in Indiana had seen a steady decline in both union membership and in overall support (BLS 2011; Saad 2009). Indiana has a long history of union activity in the extractive industries (mainly coal and limestone), in railroads, and furniture manufacturing (Ayer 1963). But union density, and concomitant union culture, really develops in the aftermath of the Second World War, after military demands had re-shaped the state's industrial landscape (Ayer 1963; Cowie 2001). Beginning in the 1950s, Indiana made a relatively fast move from an agrarian to an industrial state, particularly in the southern regions. In the belt from Indianapolis southwest to Evansville, auto manufacturing, engine parts, tool shops and the mass production of consumer durables such as GE refrigerators and Whirlpool washing machines, brought industrial labor, and union organizing, to the region (Cowie 2001, p.58-66). Indiana experienced an anti-union backlash in 1957, when a new Republican majority, inspired by Cold War fears, and emboldened by a period of anti-unionism, passed the first 'right to work' law in an industrial state. The anti-Goldwater Great Society sweep of 1964 led to a new Democratic majority, and repeal of the anti-union legislation (Dixon 1998). But Indiana remained, and remains, a deeply divided state, with strong union culture in the northern industrial regions around Gary, Fort Wayne, and South Bend, and virulent anti-unionism in more suburban and rural areas.

In the current political climate, Indiana's unions have suffered a loss of influence linked primarily to declining numbers. The state followed national trends in the 1990's and 2000's, turning blue or red as the national mood shifted, reflecting the thin margins both major parties maintained. During the Bush administration, Indiana trended Republican at the state level, but attempts by Republican majorities to pass anti-union laws came up short. However, Republican Governor Mitch Daniels, elected in 2005, did rescind collective bargaining rights for state workers upon entering office, and embarked on a program of privatization and tax cutting. However, national trends brought Indiana into the Democratic column at the national level in 2008, by the slimmest of margins. Backlash against the Obama Administration over health care and other issues swept the state back strongly Republican in 2010, and the fight

at the state level over collective bargaining was on again, with the new majority introducing legislation aimed at restricting collective bargaining in both the public and private sectors (Varga 2013).

Indiana would eventually become the second industrial state to adopt anti-union 'right to work' legislation in the private sector.⁴⁹ While Indiana labor engaged in a spirited fight, the outcome was not surprising, given the political climate. By 2012, Indiana unions had lost 45% of their members since 1980 (BLS 2011), and public opinion, while not monolithic, did not favor strong unions. The economic recession that severely slowed the United States economy was still being felt in Southern Indiana in late 2011. As well, long-term de-industrialization and the lack of union jobs meant stagnant wages and few benefits for workers (BLS 2011a). As unemployment remained stubbornly high, Indiana workers, like workers in other areas, were less likely to demand higher wages and better working conditions (NELP 2012). It was in this climate of anti-unionism and economic insecurity that two events coincided: the emergence of the Occupy movement, and the strike by Indiana Limestone workers.

Occupy

The climate of economic crisis, along with increasing income inequality, spawned forms of resistance in the United States, culminating in the emergence of the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement in September 2011. This article will not attempt to explain or examine the causes and consequences of OWS but will focus on the local manifestation of OWS in Bloomington, Indiana, and discuss other instances of Occupy/Labor cooperative action. Yet it is important to note the timing of the emergence of OWS and the climate of activism that spawned the new movement. As income inequality rose to levels not seen since the 1930s, and corporate malfeasance was revealed as a major culprit in the economic crisis resulting in the collapse of the United States housing market (Taibbi 2010), no major successful, sustained movement of protest emerged from labor/progressive coalitions (Mintz 2009). This was not due to lack of effort, but is connected to the demise of union density, and the slow unraveling of the always-tenuous New Deal Coalition (Greider 2011). Indeed, to the contrary, the most visible responses to the Great Recession came in the form of the pro-corporate Tea Party movement, and the destruction of one of the most successful anti-poverty groups in the nation, ACORN.⁵⁰ It was in this climate, after a summer of planning sessions, that activist chose Wall Street as the locus of a resistance/refusal that would quickly coalesce around the taking and holding of public space, highlighting the gross inequities through the 99%/1% slogan (Berrett 2011; Weinstein 2011).⁵¹

In Bloomington, publicity concerning the actions of police during the OWS march over the Brooklyn Bridge (Sanchez 2011), combined with a strong local activist tradition, led to the calling a of a general meeting in People's Park, in the downtown business district, on the western edge of Indiana University's sprawling, limestone-building campus. On October 9, 2011, approximately 200 activists met in the park, which had been deeded to the city by a

⁴⁹ Indiana was also the first industrial state to pass right to work, in 1957. The law was repealed in 1964. See Marc Dixon, 'Movements, Counter-movements and Policy Adoption: The Case of right to Work Activism.' *Social Forces*. 87:473-500.

⁵⁰ Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now.

⁵¹ On Occupy Wall Street, there has been an industry of commentary and writing, but no comprehensive reviews, to date. For origins, see David Graber 'Occupy Wall Street Rediscovered the Radical Imagination' in *the Guardian*, September 25, 2011, a first-hand account.

local family, with the proviso that the space remained available to the people for acts of symbolic political speech (Sherman 2011). As with other Occupy sites, Occupy Bloomington early on committed to the open meeting General Assembly form, with an assembly format based on consensus process, operating without acknowledged or official leadership, in an open forum for sharing information, ideas and potential actions. Within a week, approximately twenty-five small tents were erected, as were a library, and eventually, a functioning kitchen and commons that were open to the public without restrictions.⁵²

While participants in Occupy Bloomington emphasized diversity, in practice, the Occupy encampment was predominantly racially homogenous. However, participants did come from a wide range of class backgrounds and had divergent levels of activist experience. The lack of racial diversity reflected both the demographics of Bloomington and the surrounding area, and the make-up of the student body at Indiana University. In accordance with the consensus of the group, no demographic information was collected during the period of encampment (September to January), but it is possible to sketch a rough picture of the make-up of the occupy group. At the peak of participation, Occupy Bloomington's General Assemblies, held nightly at 7PM, drew from 30 to 50 people. Four separate working groups (Action, Camp, Food, Planning) had member lists of twelve to twenty individuals. The eventual Labor working group would have over twenty names on its official list. The participants ranged in age from 16 to 70, with most falling within the 20 to 30-year-old group. They were majority white, with few people of color participating, and split evenly between male-identified and female-identified, with several non-binary members. In terms of social and economic class, the group was very mixed, with college students from upper middle-class families, and local residents whose families had worked in factories located in or near Bloomington. My own rough estimate would put the percentage of participants who would self-identify as working class at around 30 percent.

As the tactic of Occupation spread from New York, other Occupy groups began to develop what would be an uneasy, if sometimes fruitful, alliance with organized labor in various cities and regions (Bacon 2011). Occupiers in New York, Oakland, Portland, and other locations formed alliances with local labor organizations, but only after some hesitation. As New York labor journalist Ari Paul reports, 'When Occupy was conceived there was no outreach to labor. They were hesitant to even let unions be a part of it because they were seen as bureaucratic and short-sighted.' (Gupta 2012) Conversely, unions were wary of what Arun Gupta terms Occupier's 'congenital aversion to establishment politics.' (Gupta 2012) For many, the galvanizing moment came when union members, responding to calls from officials, rushed to defend the Zuccotti Park occupation from police eviction on October 14, 2011 (Turse 2011). However, two weeks previous, officials with the Transit Workers, SEIU, and Retail Workers had officially endorsed and embraced OWS and the Occupy general assembly (Tarleton 2011). Between early October 2011 and January 2012, coordinated actions involving labor unions, community groups, and Occupy activists took place in various locations and with varying degrees of success. In the West, Occupy groups from Oakland to Seattle joined in the fight for union rights on the West Coast Ports. The fight between Export Grain Terminal, LLC (EGT) and the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) had been long-standing, with the main issue being EGT's use of non-union truckers to move freight out of

⁵² Decisions and debates of the Occupy Bloomington General Assembly can be viewed at <http://occupybloomington.org/> which contains an extensive archive of working groups, meetings, and activities.

the ports. While the ILWU campaign had included direct action civil disobedience, the union was troubled when Occupy allies called for more militant actions and engaged in an attempted port shutdown unsanctioned by ILWU leadership.⁵³ While this article will not go into the many details of these actions and the tensions that arose, it will suffice to point out that accusations and harsh words were exchanged (Rohar 2011). In spite of the tensions, ILWU Local 8 officer Jack Mulcahy would state ‘The mobilization of the occupy movement, particularly in Oakland, Portland, and Seattle, and Longview were a critical element in bringing EGT to the bargaining table’ (EGT 2011).

Longview was but one example of tension, disagreement, and different visions and methods mixed with instances of effective local action. In another, in Maryland, the State AFL-CIO passed resolutions supporting Occupy encampments and declaring Occupy picket lines viable and legitimate. At the same time, as Brian Tierney reported, National Association of Letter Carriers President Fredric Rolando walked through an Occupy picket at the National Press Club without even acknowledging its presence (Tierney 2011). The basic tensions can be summed up in the statement of ILWU President Robert McEllrath, on the militant Occupy Oakland groups’ disruptions of port activity, ‘Support is one thing. Organizing from the outside groups attempting to co-opt our struggle in order to advance a broader agenda is quite another.’ (Wollan 2011) On the Occupy side, the ‘89%’ statements of the Black Orchid Collective, in which the 10% of workers represented by unions are excluded, exemplifies the more radical position (BOC 2011). But what really seemed to separate the two groups, at least at the level of union leadership, was the basic outlook on systemic change. While most unions continue to operate as part of the capitalist system, many Occupy groups struck an early and consistent anti- capitalist position, one at odds with most of organized labor. Locally, in discussions in the OB General Assembly and working groups, some participants expressed a deep distrust of union bureaucracies that worked in compliment with their equal distrust of political parties and most established advocacy groups.

In relations with local labor groups and other community activists, OB faced many of the same difficulties as other Occupy groups. Representatives of local unions and their allies, while for the most part sympathetic with the Occupy call to fight for the 99%, were also suspicious of the lack of leadership, refusal to issue statements, and strident anti-capitalist tone and positions.⁵⁴ In Bloomington, the Central Labor Council supported Occupy Bloomington with small financial contributions and supplied a portable toilet set-up for the park occupation.

Members of local unions attended rallies, marches and teach-ins, and expressed strong support for the attacks on the financial industry and corporate power. But union members and activists from more traditional organizations like Jobs with Justice and Transition Bloomington expressed confusion over the sometimes-hostile attitude toward what many Occupiers came to see as ‘liberal reform’ ideas. Still other local activists were dismayed by the general commitment of OB members to avoid electoral politics and focus instead on direct action.⁵⁵

⁵³ For the original solidarity statements regarding the EGT port actions: <http://occupytheegt.org/>

⁵⁴ Interviews and discussions by author with Liz Feitl of Monroe County United Way; Jackie Yenna, White River Central Labor Council; John Clower, South Central Indiana Jobs with Justice. November 12, 2011 in Bloomington.

⁵⁵ Based on participant discussions with activists in South Central Indiana Jobs with Justice, White River Central Labor Council, Transition Bloomington, and Bloomington Move to Amend, between October 15 and December 20, 2011, Bloomington.

For some Occupy Bloomington participants, worker issues exemplified the struggle of the 99%, and issues such as low wages, poor safety conditions, lack of collective bargaining rights, and the long history of struggle in the labor movement, were the subjects of discussions and informal and formal teach-ins. The Occupy Bloomington Worker Solidarity working group would eventually emerge from these meetings and several teach-ins on labor issues. The group formed a separate web presence and communication network from OB and coalesced around ideas to empower low waged workers, work with immigrant worker groups, and support labor unions when appropriate.⁵⁶ The group was loosely organized and leaderless and was searching for a rallying cause and point of action when news of the strike by a small group of limestone workers was reported in the local press. Four days after the strike commenced, Carpenters Industrial Council Mobilization Director Dan O'Donnell, working with Local 8093 in Oolitic, contacted labor activists in Bloomington, seeking support. Word quickly spread through the local network, and on November 21, five days into the strike, a contingent of activists, including nine members of Occupy Bloomington, joined members of Local 8093 in Oolitic for an early morning picket.

Strike

Local 8093 began their strike against Indiana Limestone Company on November 16, 2011. The Carpenters Local represented 50 workers whose main duties in the factory were moving and cutting the large slabs of limestone down to workable size for fabrication. It is dangerous work that requires skill, knowledge and experience. The towns of the Southern Indiana stone belt, Oolitic, Bedford, Stinesville, Ellettsville, and Bloomington, all contain quarries, and stories of men who died in them. Of the 50 men working at the Indiana Limestone Company's plant in Oolitic, over 70% had a relative who had also worked in the industry, and the vast majority had family who had lived in Oolitic or Bedford for several generations.⁵⁷ The collective bargaining unit was comprised entirely of males, and contained very few racial minorities, a fact that mirrored the demographics of the immediate surrounding towns (Ferrucci 2002).

The company had been locally owned, the property of the Johnson family, until its purchase by a private equity firm Resilience Capital Partners (RCP) in 2010. RCP, based in Cleveland, Ohio, is considered an industry leader in corporate acquisitions and mergers, specializing in buying 'distressed' local companies and preparing them for re-sale by lowering operating costs and selling assets. The firm had recently launched an industrial minerals 'platform', North Coast Minerals, and had been on a purchasing spree of stone, coal, and other extractive industries throughout the lower Midwest.⁵⁸ RCP had purchased a lead competitor of Indiana Limestone, Victor Oolitic, in 2006, after that company had been placed in bankruptcy by the Audex Group, another private equity firm. While there is no evidence of a consistent pattern of union busting in RCP's acquisition pattern, the company's stated goals are to bring profitability to distressed companies, often by reducing labor costs. Local 8093 workers

⁵⁶ <http://www.facebook.com/joseph.n.varga#!/groups/153296401439857/>

⁵⁷ Background and historical information on Indiana quarries is drawn from: <http://quarriesandbeyond.org/index.html>. No comprehensive history of labor struggles in the Indiana Limestone Industry exists as of this writing.

⁵⁸ Basic information on Resilience Capital Partners can be found at their website: <http://www.resiliencecapital.com/>

reported noticing a difference in shop floor management attitudes as RCP took over operations and brought new middle management to Indiana Limestone.⁵⁹

The workforce at Indiana Limestone reflected the demographics of Bedford, Oolitic, and Lawrence County. The members of Carpenters Local 8093 were all white, at least based on appearance. The workforce at the plant in Oolitic, which included members of two other unions, was all-male. From observation, the majority of strikers were over 40, with more than a decade of experience in limestone work standard. There were younger workers, and many came from families with limestone workers in past and current generations. The majority of strikers lived in Bedford.

Historically, Local 8093 members report that they considered the relationship between the company and workers to be typical, with some tension, but with an ability to reach compromise on most issues. Negotiators and union officials reported that contract talks were always hard, but amicable, and while strikes and lock-outs had been threatened, the only work stoppage occurred in the late 1970s.⁶⁰ The existing contract between Indiana Limestone and Local 8093 was set to expire on October 31, 2011. As the date approached, Local 8093 representatives claimed company officials ignored the unions repeated requests to negotiate, and it became apparent that management was determined to force a confrontation. The major issues for 8093 were not strictly economic but concerned the company's demand for concessions in work rules and conditions. Many strikers would subsequently frame the strike action as a question of respect.⁶¹ On substantive contractual issues, Local 8093 received a contract offer calling for changes in seniority rules, attendance policy, alterations of 'just cause' dismissal and discipline, in addition to a wage freeze and increases in health and pension costs. After unanimously turning down the offer, Local 8093 agreed to continue working and meet again in two weeks. On November 15, company negotiators presented their last, best and final proposal, identical to the rejected offer.⁶²

Feeling pressed, Local 8093 took a strike vote on November 15, which passed with over 90% approval. The strike commenced on November 16, with two picket lines set up, one at the main entrance, and another at a little-used rear gate. Millworkers Local 8093 were joined on the picket by members of the Machinist Local and the Stonecutters Local, meaning that the only function still in operation was the quarrying of large stone, carried out by members of the Laborers Local 741, who crossed the 8093 picket line, claiming 'Carpenters locals always cross ours'.⁶³ Local 8093 officials claimed 90% attendance on picket duty, and the picket line at the front gate received support from portions of the local community, in the form of hot coffee and honks from passing cars⁶⁴.

Picket duty for Local 8093 began just as winter settled in over the region. Strikers set up two lines at entrances to the plant, erected shelters, brought home-made signs, and settled in for the grueling work of picketing. During the workday, a presence of roughly 20-30 workers was

⁵⁹ Jerry B., Tim S., Ronnie W., Mike F. Interview by author. Bedford, Indiana, June 30, 2012.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Based on interviews with officers and negotiators of Local 8093, November 22, 2011, June 30, 2012, by author in Bedford, Indiana. Indiana Limestone Company refused to participate in interviews for this article. Three separate attempts were made to solicit information from ILC, on July 23, August 17, and September 5, 2012.

⁶³ President, Laborers International Local 741. Phone interview by author, November 22, 2011.

⁶⁴ Dan O'Donnell. Interview by author, Oolitic, In. November 24, 2012.

maintained at the two gates. Five days into the strike, Local 8093 picketers received their first strike support visit from a contingent from Bloomington, which included some members of CWA Local 2730, labor activists, and eight members of Occupy Bloomington. Carpenters Union officer Dan O'Donnell related an early reaction of the 8093 strikers to the arrival of the Occupiers at the site of the picket, Indiana Limestone's main facility located off of State Highway 37, 20 miles south of Bloomington. O'Donnell received a call from one of the picketers, reporting, 'Dan, you gotta' get down here. There's a girl with a ring in her lip'.⁶⁵ 8093 picketers were happy for the support, and the distraction of having new people on the line, yet tensions quickly developed over tactics. Shortly after arriving, OB activists directly confronted a flatbed truck leaving the plant with a load of limestone slab. As the truck attempted to make its way to the highway, OB members blocked its path and engaged in heated conversation with both the driver and the private security force ILC had hired for the strike. Several OB activists had become more accustomed to the confrontational style of public theater, while some of the OB activists with union experience had not taken into account the geographic context of southern Indiana, where local authorities and communities tend to side with management over unions.⁶⁶ After a consultation with union members who feared injunctions, Occupy activists agreed to abide by picket rules established by Local 8093, at least temporarily.

As the strike went on, other activists and community groups joined the fight. The local United Way chapter provided food from donations collected from local union groups and food banks. United Auto Workers Local 440 from nearby Bedford provided picket support, as did United Steel Workers members engaged in their own struggle in nearby Mitchell, Indiana, with C & M Conveyor. The main organizing event was a labor summit convened in Bedford on November 22, organized in part by CWA 4730 local president Bryce Smedley, attended by officers from six local unions and by a dozen local activists. While all participants in the summit agreed to continue to support picketing, ideas about how to bring negative publicity and other forms of public and private pressure were also discussed. It was from this and other meetings among non-Local 8093 activists that activities around Resilience Capital Partners, and local trucking companies and stone factories supplying replacement labor were coordinated.

The galvanizing issue that appeared to bring all factions in the alliance for 8093 together was Resilience Capital Partners. RCP provided a unifying theme for strike support for several reasons: First, RCP was the perfect corporate villain for union supporters in an area long struggling with industrial job loss and low wages. RCP's reputation for stripping and selling distressed companies galvanized the resolve of both 8093 members and Occupiers. Second, research about RCP's activities was coordinated between Occupiers, South Central Indiana Jobs with Justice and Local 8093, providing a common project off the picket line. Finally, for Occupiers and for the community of activists in Bloomington, Resilience fit neatly into the 99% rallying cry of Occupy Wall Street. As more Occupy activists and members of the Bloomington progressive community understood the nature of the dispute with RCP, the more they joined in to support 8093. Within the larger context of the assault on worker's rights, the faltering economy, and the attention OWS and offshoots had brought to the issue of the 99%

⁶⁵ Dan O'Donnell. Interview by author. Bloomington, June 8, 2011.

⁶⁶ Based on discussions between Local 8093 members, and Occupy Bloomington participants, Oolitic, November 21, 2011.

vs. 1%, Resilience Capital Partners presented pro-labor activists with an almost-perfect rallying point.

As the strike wore on, tensions between company representatives, strikers and a small contingent of workers crossing the picket line rose considerably. Two weeks into the strike, Indiana Limestone presented Local 8093 with a public relations gift when one of the strikers, Danny Stephens, was struck by a vehicle driven by a replacement worker as it passed the picket line at high speed. The popular and jovial Stephens suffered injuries to his shoulder and back, and police and the local sheriff refused to make an immediate arrest. Though local police and a sheriff investigated at the scene of accident and took testimony regarding the speed of the vehicle and the apparent malicious intent, the local prosecutor for Lawrence County refused to proceed with the case. The incident increased militancy on the picket line, and provided 8093 strikers with another rallying point, while providing union supporters with a tool by which to attack RCP. In response to the lack of official charges, 8093 called for a community support rally on the courthouse lawn in Bedford to demand justice for the injured Millworker (Lewis 2011).

The Bedford rally marked a high point of community solidarity for the strikers. Bedford has a mixed history of union activism and anti-union sentiment, and the turnout and enthusiasm of the crowd impressed many of the striking union members and stiffened their resolve.⁶⁷ The rally also attracted union members from around the area, non-labor activists, local press, and academics from Indiana University. Several speakers used the occasion to highlight how the demand for justice for Danny Stephens and the strike by 8093 were linked to larger struggles then underway over union rights in the State, and over inequality nation-wide. The incident also galvanized the picket line for 8093 members, and convinced some members, and their new Occupy allies, that redress through the legal system was not forthcoming. It was during this period that private, informal conversations and planning took place for activities meant to intensify the struggle with ILC. In the informal talks, union members and Occupy activists conferred regarding the possibilities for actions that were not sanctioned by the union leadership (Lewis 2011b).

In the face of legal restrictions of union activities on picket lines, Occupy supporters undertook several actions that were intended to raise the level of engagement and militancy on the line and elsewhere. In addition to photographing security guards, provoking the guards, photographing and interfering with trucks and replacement workers, a contingent of occupiers, approximately 15, arrived early one morning and set up tents, the symbol of Occupy, along the main entrance. With tents in place, black-garbed occupiers strategically interfered with the entering vehicles of company management. As Dan O'Donnell reports, strikers noted the fear this provoked, as management 'freaked out'. O'Donnell felt it was this particular action that introduced a measure of uncertainty into management's view of the strike,⁶⁸ bringing in an unknown element whose reputation was no doubt heightened by images of Occupy confrontations then occurring in New York, Oakland, and other locations.

In addition to the Bedford rally, several other events were organized to promote solidarity, bring community support, and apply pressure to the company. On a very cold December morning, Bloomington's 'Raging Grannies', a group that performs anti-capitalist song

⁶⁷ Interviews with participants

⁶⁸ O'Donnell interview, June 8.

parodies, entertained the strikers to their obvious delight. Local supporters wrote opinion pieces and letters to the local paper highlighting the ‘David and Goliath’ nature of the fight. And in one of the most important actions of the coordinated struggle, South Central Indiana Jobs with Justice (JWJ) worked with Cleveland JWJ and Debra Kline to carry out a boisterous demonstration at the corporate headquarters of RCP in Cleveland. Kline and her contingent, which included participants from Occupy Cleveland, attempted to deliver a letter demanding negotiation, and held a noisy demonstration with placards and a bullhorn that attracted press, RCP management, and police.⁶⁹

The main solidarity event was the fundraiser organized by Occupiers on December 17. The event raised more than \$2,000 for Local 8093, and increased solidarity between OB members and Millworkers, who mingled, drank, and danced late into the evening (Lewis 2011c). Held at a pizza bar in Bloomington, the event attracted members of the IU faculty, local political figures, activists from a variety of local organizations, and local musicians who supplied free entertainment. Organizer Jason S. summed up the feeling of many fellow activists and Occupiers, ‘I didn’t really care about the union politics, and the Occupy stuff. I just wanted to help people. These are my people, I’m a working-class guy, and my folks are all workers. I just wanted to bring everyone together and help out. I want my kid to grow up in a better world.’

With the holidays nearing, activists and strikers needed to maintain enthusiasm, and escalate the fight. Occupy activists and some strikers continued direct actions and picket line resistance. Occupiers made public their plans to picket the trucking company that was crossing the 8093 picket line, and the small limestone companies supplying replacement workers.⁷⁰ Several activists also made plans for actions at a local church attended by ILC managers. As these attempts at escalation proceeded, in late December, Indiana Limestone came back to the table. Within days of the resumption of negotiations, it became apparent that the company was looking to settle, and strike action de-escalated. While the official settlement occurred in early January, the intense phase of the strike was over before New Year.

Looking back on the strike and settlement, Dan O’Donnell feels that the alliance with Occupy Bloomington had made a difference, ‘Occupy Bloomington did help, definitely.’ He also cited growing community support, particularly as they capitalized on the 99% rhetoric dominating the news, and the heightened profile of struggling unions in Indiana in the face of anti-union legislation at the Statehouse. But O’Donnell is quick to point out that the striking Millworkers and their union supporters won the strike. While the Laborers 741 members and some non-union stone workers had crossed the picket line, O’Donnell knew that many non-union stone workers in the area had refused to work at ILC for the duration of the strike:

‘We heard through the grapevine that some workers at a non-union mill were commanded to cross our picket lines or they’d be fired. Still they refused to cross. They’d worked with some of these guys. You don’t have to be in a union to understand that crossing a picket line is about the dirtiest, lowest thing a man can do. You don’t have to be in a union to know right from wrong.

⁶⁹ Debra Kline. Phone interview by author, June 25, 2011.

⁷⁰ Most of the activities that Occupy members engaged in regarding strike support were organized publicly through the OB and OB Worker Solidarity Working Group.

Most working class people, once they understood what the millworkers were fighting for, supported them'.⁷¹

For many of the Occupiers, the strike experience functioned as a school of labor relations and union practices. With some exceptions, Occupiers had never been on a union picket line, and while many OB participants came from Indiana's working class, few had any connection to the southern Indiana region below Bloomington. Car rides to and from the picket location included discussions of the National Labor Relations Act, Taft-Hartley, the legal environment in which unions operated, and the heroic past and challenged present of labor unions in the United States. Two areas received particular attention and served as effective pedagogic devices: first, Occupy participants were originally perplexed by the actions of the Laborers Union. Why would they cross 8093 picket line? The other main area of interest was in the legal system that defines and frames union activities. As mentioned, the first morning that Occupiers joined the picket line became a lesson in what an injunction was, and what strikers could and could not do on a picket line. As the strike continued and potential actions were discussed both between Occupiers and union leaders and between them and some of the more ambitious rank and file, Occupy activists received valuable lessons in how the legal system constrains union activities once workers receive official recognition as a collective bargaining unit. This had two effects for most Occupy participants: it brought them to a somewhat more sympathetic view of union leadership, yet also led many to question the ultimate value of the NLRA legal regime.⁷²

Aftermath: Indiana Workers

Energy generated by strike support, and education around workers' issues, was substantial, and activists in the OB Workers Solidarity working group hoped to sustain and expand both. Group members expressed interests in the plight of undocumented workers because of their lack of legal protection, temporary workers struggling to get by without benefits, service workers toiling for low wages for employers like Wal-Mart, and Indiana's efforts to roll back union rights with a 'right to work' law. Members also expressed considerable interest in non-union forms of action and organizing, in more radical forms of unionism such as the IWW,⁷³ and in worker cooperatives and alternate forms of work and collective production. The Oolitic experience solidified them in their determination to aid working people distressed by the current economic system and increased their knowledge regarding the function of unions. At the same time, the experience also reinforced for some their pre-existing beliefs that working people would never get their fair share under the existing labor relations system, and that labor unions often served as a brake on the potential militancy of workers⁷⁴.

In an effort to maintain the momentum of the Oolitic actions, OB Worker Solidarity members sought out other issues through which to lend support to working people's struggles. Several took part in the pro-union rallies that commenced with the convening of the new legislative session in Indianapolis in early January 2012. Events at the Statehouse quickly highlighted again Occupy/organized labor tensions. As the new legislative session prepared to open, Indiana State police officials announced new rules meant to severely restrict public access to

⁷¹ O'Donnell interview, June 8.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Industrial Workers of the World.

⁷⁴ Notes and interviews from meetings of the Occupy Bloomington Worker Solidarity Working Group between December 20, 2011 and January 15, 2012.

the legislative hall, just as anti-union legislation was set for procedural votes (Bradner 2012). As Occupy and other activists made hurried plans for direct action civil disobedience, labor officials at the statehouse made it clear that they had no intention of using such tactics and were determined to keep their members' behavior orderly and strictly within the law.⁷⁵

Occupy Bloomington participants who attended the initial rally, and subsequent events at the Statehouse, remarked on their disappointment at the lack of more radical action, and the seeming lack of creative energy, 'It all seemed very top down,' said OB activist Cooper C. 'They lined up, walked around, a few people yelled, and there were bland speeches. All of it tame, no call for real change. The working people we saw seemed angry, but nobody was doing anything with the anger.' OB activists initiated banner drops, anti-capitalist chants, and encouraged militant action, to little avail. 'There just seemed to be no energy' said Jason W., 'Everyone seemed kind of ready to go home when they got there. If the system is screwing you, you're not going to win fighting by its rules'.⁷⁶ After the free-flowing exchanges and sharing of ideas on the Oolitic picket line, the statehouse rallies, and other union-sponsored actions such as an SEIU rally against WellPoint in Indianapolis, seemed to OB activists as top-down, lacking in creative autonomy, and largely ineffective. Subsequent events involving the right to work law struggle further increased OB cynicism and decreased enthusiasm for union support. The decision by Indiana labor leaders not to hold a major demonstration at the Super Bowl in Indianapolis, five days after the passage of the anti-union law, convinced many OB activists that cooperation with unions was a dead end if the goal was systemic change. Ed V., a union member and OB activist, claimed, 'The unions were scared, they didn't want to offend people. Offend people? They were worried about that while we're losing our rights!'.⁷⁷ The experience of OB activists at the Statehouse and in several subsequent union-sponsored events, including a health care demonstration in Indianapolis in April, convinced some of the most active members that unions were moribund, tame, and unlikely to spark the wide-spread systemic change many of them sought.

Occupy Bloomington organized a day of action for May Day, 2012, including a call for a general strike, as did many other Occupy groups around the country. While the call for a general strike, both in Bloomington and other locations, did produce valuable dialogue about what general strikes entailed, most experienced labor organizers recognized its prematurity, and the call served to highlight the stark differences in approach developing between some occupy groups and labor activists. Occupy May Day activities in several cities included hopeful measures of cooperation and coordination, and the re-establishment of the relevance of May Day as a day of militant action were seen by many as a positive sign (Smith 2012). But tensions remained and even escalated in some locations. In Chicago, May Day and anti-NATO actions included tense confrontations between Occupy activist determined to radicalize what they saw as ineffective actions, and other march organizers, while the numbers in some cities for May Day marches were lower than expected (Harkin 2012). In Bloomington, there was no tension during the OB May Day activities between unions and OB activists, mainly because no coordinated activity was planned or attempted. Five months after participating in support of a successful strike, it appeared Occupy/labor solidarity in Bloomington had been put on hold, at least for the time being.

⁷⁵ Based on notes, interviews and participant observation, Indianapolis State House, January 6, 2012.

⁷⁶ Interview by Author, January 7, 2012.

⁷⁷ Ed V. Interview by author, January 10, 2012.

Lessons Learned

When asked if his experience with the Local 8093 strike had changed his opinions of labor unions, Charlie P., an Occupy participant, responded with an emphatic answer: ‘Yes, I think less of them. I think they hold workers back and don’t represent them. They tamp down the righteous anger workers feel when they are screwed by the system’.⁷⁸ A long time self-described progressive activist, Charlie feels that union leadership does not do a good job educating their members on how the system is set up to keep them from achieving their goals. ‘They don’t teach their folks about Wall Street, and the 1%, about Citizens United, and how rich lobbyists right the rules and game the system. A lot of the guys on the Oolitic picket line supported Ron Paul. Ron Paul!’ For Charlie and other OB activists, participation in the Oolitic strike was both exciting and educational. For some activists in OB, the strike action confirmed their pre-existing beliefs that unions were bureaucratic, passive, and unable to lead the fight for a new system. For some, like Charlie, they represented the existing system. ‘If we’re going to take back our system, our country, we’re not going to do it playing by the 1%’s rules. Unions play by the rules, for the most part.’

For Charlie and other OB participants, the Oolitic experience was mixed. Many felt the solidarity of participating in the struggle, but also experienced some misgivings and frustrations. Charis H., a very active OB strike supporter, remembers when OB first got involved in the strike. ‘I just went. We were involved in so many things in November, foreclosure, homelessness, keeping the park encampment going, I was just like, ‘hell, I’ll go’.’ But she also thought, upon learning more, that the strike was perfect, a 99% issue. ‘It was all there, the local industry, used to be a family operation, limestone tradition in the area. These guys all had, like, five kids, and the moms stayed home. Then there was Resilience, pure evil’. Charis, like other OB participants, grew very fond of the strikers, and forged several relationships that outlasted the strike. ‘They were cool folks, just like us. Man, when we were all hanging out at Max’s (the 12/17 fund raising event), everyone was dancing, drinking, there was no difference’⁷⁹. Like others, Charis and Corrine C. felt the tensions from what Dan O’Donnell called OB’s ‘punk rock aesthetic’. Corrine: ‘I think when you spend time with people, they start to see that even if they still think your kinda’ strange, or at least they have to pretend they do, they start to see that you are all struggling the same way. You have to talk with people, hang out with them, listen’.⁸⁰ As the strike wore on, Charis recalls a change in the all-male, all white Millworkers: It was strange being there with an all-white, all-male, all-straight crew, but I remember after a while, some guy made a remark about ‘some faggot’ or called something ‘gay’ and turned to us right away and apologized’. Some OB activists were troubled by the situation in other ways. Jackie W., a single mom struggling to get by, saw it odd that she was traveling to Oolitic to support the strikers. ‘I mean, I’m making nothing, waiting tables, and these guys are making at least \$15 an hour. I mean, they are not rich, but I got nothing. Not that I didn’t think it was the right thing to do.’ Asked if she thought the millworkers would support her on a labor dispute, she said ‘Oh, I think they would. I think we all understood, it’s the same fight’.⁸¹ Others were not so sure. Several OB activists mentioned the Laborers, and how local unions often fought each other. They also remarked that most union officers saw their role as working as partners in the capitalist system. Still more had concerns about the sexism and racism that would spring up in the picket line banter.

⁷⁸ Charlie P. Interview by author, Bloomington, June 23, 2012.

⁷⁹ Charis H. Interview by author. Bloomington, June 27, 2012.

⁸⁰ Corrine C. Interview by author. Bloomington, June 23, 2012.

⁸¹ Jackie W. Interview by author. Bloomington, June 23, 2012.

For Occupy Bloomington as an ongoing movement, the main tension was ultimately internal, and reflected the problems that occurred in other Occupy encampments. Aside from the obvious problems of maintaining a physical presence in public space, and remaining open to all participants, the group failed to increase participation over time, and suffered from a loss of resources. Occupy Bloomington, as a movement, and as a group of activists, did not articulate a clear set of goals, in keeping with the horizontal structure of most Occupy groups. This led to disillusionment among some participants who were more attuned to traditional repertoires of social movement activism. OB never applied for a permit to occupy the public park they claimed and maintained a rigid separation from local political groups. As an example, when a local Democratic Party group attempted to set up an information table at the fundraising event for the strikers, they were aggressively asked to desist, and complied. Finally, the critique of many in OB, that unions were bureaucratic organization designed to restrain worker activism, ignored much of the radical history of unions, and the constraints placed on them as legal entities.

And what of Local 8093 members and their feelings about their Occupy allies? What did the Millworkers think of the 99% campaign and Occupy Wall Street? 'I knew it was going on,' said Jerry B. of Local 8093 of OWS, 'And I supported it in general. Yeah, the bankers are screwing us. But then, it started to seem like it was just some kids doing the latest thing, you know, like, 'I'll camp out''. But Jerry also told how the involvement of OB in the strike, and the emphasis that OB members made on the 99% issue, caused him to do more research on the larger system and on Resilience. 'I saw it more after I started looking in to it. JP Morgan, Resilience, they all do the same thing. They rig the system. Rush Limbaugh ain't telling me that, Michael Moore is'.⁸² Tim S. an officer in 8093 and a millwright, said he was aware of OWS, and 'counter culture in general', from his own children, in their late teens and early twenties. 'I know all about dressing in black and that, it doesn't bother me. I also know how rotten this system is for working people, so I agreed with OWS, sure.'

What about the questions of solidarity in action and cooperation in fighting the company? Jerry B. tells a story of the day Danny Stevens was hit by the vehicle on the picket line. It was early in the morning, still before sunrise when the local police and sheriff arrived:

'And the cops started in with, 'well, maybe this picket line is dangerous', and we were telling them 'no, we got it all under control, everything is fine', when I see on cop looking over our shoulders, and he says 'oh, yeah, then what the hell is that'. And it's about ten OB people, and they got their arms locked, marching toward us. I knew they saw cops and lights, and their ready to throw down. I was like, 'oh, no, we don't need this'. But they just joined us peacefully. I calmed the cop down. I think it was all in the way people saw the Occupy folks, as some sort of radical bunch. I guess they are, though'.⁸³

After the initial appearance of OB activists, and the agreement about picket line behavior, there was little dispute on the line itself. Local 8093 officers and members had no stated issues with the strident anti-capitalist rhetoric utilized during the strike by OB members, provided it served the purpose of furthering picket solidarity. For their part, OB activists were willing to accept views that did not match their own, regarding the capitalist system, free

⁸² Tim S. Interview by author. Oolitic, IN. December 6, 2011.

⁸³ Jerry B. Interview by author. Oolitic, IN, December 6, 2011.

enterprise, and even unions, provided that Local 8093 members remained overall respectful and cognizant of differences.

The major problem lay not in strategy or tactics, but in overall goals and long-term cooperation. For most Local 8093 members who expressed a view, the battle between RCP/ILC and their union was not just local but linked to the larger system. The same was clearly true for OB activists, who quickly saw the plight of the Millworkers as part of the struggle for the 99%. But as the strike wore on, conversations on the picket line and elsewhere revealed the limits of the solidarity over long-term cooperation. As with many local unions, 8093 begins each meeting of their local with the Pledge of Allegiance, anathema to most OB activists. Issues around nationalism, capitalism and consumerism became apparent during the course of the strike. One particular incident was during a discussion with 8093 members about fund raising for Christmas presents for the striker's children. OB members were debating over whether to use the money to purchase gifts or simply hand it over to the strikers. One 8093 member suggested buying gift certificates to Wal-Mart. When this suggestion was conveyed in an OB General Assembly, it set off a heated discussion that included vows by some not to participate if Wal-Mart was to be involved, and counter-claims of elitism. For many of the strikers interviewed, it was not that they did not understand the role Wal-Mart and similar companies played in the low-wage economy, but rather that choices were limited, both geographically, and financially.

Conclusions

The coordinated actions between Local 8093 and Occupy Bloomington participants were a short-term success. In spite of tensions and some areas of concern, OB provided valuable and useful support to the local in the form of picket activity, public pressure, innovative tactics, and funds. The profile of the local strike was raised considerably by public actions and organizing provided by OB and activists from the Bloomington community. Members of Local 8093 considered the strike a 'win' for the union and attributed the support of OB and other groups crucial to the outcome.⁸⁴ OB and 8093 consider the cooperation between the groups to have been a positive experience, and members of both groups expressed willingness to act together in future struggles should the opportunity arise.

However, enthusiasm both nationally and locally for Occupy as a movement had receded by the time of this writing. While May Day did see a swell of coordinated activity and Occupy groups and labor unions were still in various stages of alliance, organized labor and Occupy groups were facing severe tests of their strength and durability as fall 2012 elections approach. As efforts to weaken unions intensify, and Occupy groups continue to search for ways to re-energize, the immediate prospects for what many viewed as a sustainable if uneasy alliance appears doubtful. Even if a revived OWS movement were to emerge, it is hard to see a successful long-term alliance between a committed anti-capitalist group and a union structure that functions within the constraints of the status quo (Gould-Wartofsky 2015).

The Local 8093 strike was a unique set of events in a particular context that led to a successful alliance between seemingly unlikely partners. OB brought awareness of the struggle between the 1% and 99%, and its connection to Local 8093's strike as representative of a wider struggle of workers in a system of increasing economic inequities. The Local's battle with Resilience

⁸⁴ Jerry B. Interview by author. Oolitic, IN, December 6, 2011.

Capital Partners, a private equity firm, brought to the fore what OWS had claimed regarding American capitalism, temporarily capturing the imagination of local activists and bridging the cultural and social gaps between union leadership, the rank and file, and Occupy activists.

What is clear from the reaction of Local 8093 members, and from the subsequent rejection of direct action tactics by Indiana labor unions in the ‘right to work’ fight at the state level, is that Occupy activists’ methods and tactics, as well as their overall goals, disrupted the normal functioning of organized labor, and increased conversation about the relative merits of direct action tactics. In the case of the local strike in Oolitic, unconventional tactics such as tent set-ups, remote pickets, and confrontational picket line tactics, pushed some rank and filers to support more radical action while promoting serious discussion of how to conduct a strike. The reaction and subsequent narration of the events of the strike by Local 8093 members clearly show that OB activists introduced an unknown element into the struggle and disrupted business as usual. The same can reasonably be said for the EGT/ILWU action, where Occupy efforts to shut down ports on the west coast and reach out to union militants provided a disruptive, if not always positive, force. Introducing confrontational direct action tactics seems in line with calls to revive the strike and re-energize organized labor. As well, in informal conversations in and around the picket line, OB activists’ insistence on a strident anti-capitalist stance introduced a different element to many union members accustomed to viewing their roles as part of a successful, if somewhat unjust, capitalist system.

Revisiting the five research questions posed earlier, the experience of Occupy Bloomington and Local 8093 suggests that the two groups viewed each other as united against a common enemy, if only temporarily, and in limited ways. OB core activists saw the struggle of working people as intrinsic to the battle against corporate domination, while union members recognized the common enemy in a corporate system that had replaced local ownership with private equity, demanded give-backs, and showed an increasing lack of respect for their roles in the workplace. The most common measure of agreement and mutual recognition for the duration of the strike was the slogan, ‘We are the 99%’. Both groups felt that their struggles, collective and separate, represented the longer battle over resources between wealthy elites and working people. In the end, it was this common ground that caused each group to accept, temporarily, the differences and limitations of the other. Ultimately, the differences over long-term goals and strategies brought the groups into, if not conflict, then a mutual dissolution of their period of cooperation. For the Millworkers, the end of the strike returned the struggle to the shop floor, and their local community. For Occupiers, the struggle against capitalism, and systemic injustice was not contained by such temporal or geographic limitations.

Cooperation and coordinated action between labor unions and activist groups concerned with labor-related issues has a long and complicated history in the United States. As well, labor unions are not monolithic, and have changed over time to meet changing conditions. As Eric Foner (1984), in his seminal article ‘Why is There No Socialism in the United States’ points out, American workers have taken forceful, often radical action, in defense of their class and rights, just often not in the ways that activists and theorists would have predicted or desired. While no independent labor party has existed for any appreciable length of time, labor unions and their leadership have worked both within the political party system, and outside of it, to advance the cause of the working classes. This process has often taken the form of radical direct action, such as the sit-down strikes of the 1930’s, while also involving actions, such as support for overseas military engagements, that have alienated more left-leaning groups. While labor unions have been hurt by radical actions of supporters, such as the anarchist Berkman’s disastrous intervention in the Homestead Strike, unions have also taken actions,

such as the Teamster involvement in the farm worker's campaigns, that have alienated supporters. There have been instances of successful and sustained solidarity between labor and social movements, such as union support for the civil rights March on Washington, while at the same time, individual unions have discriminated against people of color, women, and LGBT members. Occupy actions involving support for organized labor encompassed both the positive and negative aspects of this history of solidarity and fragmentation.

Ultimately, the types of solidarity actions between labor unions and more decidedly radical groups such as OWS and its off-shoots that may be successful might be actions similar to the 8093 strike: limited in duration, focused on an easily identifiable foe, with coordinated actions that allow for autonomy while respecting each groups positions and restrictions. Organized labor will continue to struggle with declining membership and legal and political challenges into the foreseeable future. Unions will continue to search for ways to invigorate their memberships and expand their influence. While most large unions and umbrella organizations remain attached to a mainstream political party, it seems doubtful that long-term alliances with stridently anti-capitalist groups such as Occupy Wall Street would be sustainable in the long run.

Acknowledgments: The author wishes to extend deep thanks to the members of Carpenters Local 8093, and the members of Occupy Bloomington, for putting up with me and making this work possible.

Author Bio: Professor Varga is Associate Professor of Labor Studies at Indiana University. He is a former union truck driver with the Teamsters, and a long-time labor activist. His current research involves deindustrialization in the American Midwest, and the related changes in political alliances and attitudes.

Bibliography

- Aronowitz, S. 2003, *How class works: Power and social movement*, Yale University Press, New Haven.
- Ayer, H.M. 1963, 'Hoosier labor in the second world war', *Indiana Magazine of History*. vol. 59, no. 2, pp. 95-120.
- Berrett, D. 2011, 'Intellectual roots of Wall Street protests lie in academe', *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 16, viewed 1 December 2017, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Intellectual-Roots-of-Wall/129428>.
- Black Orchid Collective 2011, 'Longview, occupy, and beyond: Rank and file and the 89% unite', viewed 1 December 2017, < <http://blackorchidcollective.wordpress.com/> >.
- Black, S. 2005, 'Community unionism: A strategy for organizing in the new economy', *New Labor Forum*, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 24-32.
- Blumgart, J. 2010, 'Is organized labor a special interest group?', *Generation Progress*, April 28, viewed 1 December 2017, <<http://genprogress.org/voices/2010/04/28/12495/is-organized-labor-a-special-interest-group/>>.
- Bronfenbrenner, K. & Hickey, R. 2004, Changing to organize: A national assessment of union organizing strategies, In R. Milkman & K. Voss (eds), *Rebuilding labor: Organizing and organizers in the new union movement*, Cornell University Press/ILR Press, Ithaca, NY, pp. 17-60.

- Bureau of Labor Statistics 2012, 'Unions 2011', U.S. Department of Labor, viewed 1 December 2017, < https://www.bls.gov/bls/budget2012_enacted.htm >.
- _____'State Wages Estimates: Indiana', U.S. Department of Labor, viewed 1 June 2018, < https://www.bls.gov/bls/budget2012_enacted.htm >
- _____'Unions 2010', U.S. Department of Labor, viewed 1 June 2018, < https://www.bls.gov/bls/budget2012_enacted.htm >.
- Burns, J. 2011, *Reviving the strike: How working people can regain power and transform America*, Ig Publishing, New York.
- Cowie, J. 2001, *Capital moves: RCA's seventy year quest for cheap labor*, The New Press, New York.
- Early, S. 2011, *The civil wars in U.S. labor: Birth of a new workers movement or death throes of the old*, Haymarket Books, Chicago.
- Fantasia, R., & Voss, K. 2004, *Hard work: Remaking the American labor movement*, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Ferrucci, K. 2004, *Limestone lives: Voices from the Indiana stone belt*, IN, Quarry Books Bloomington.
- Fletcher, W. & Gasparin, F. 2008, *Solidarity divided*, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Foner, E. 1984, 'Why is there no socialism in the United States?', *History Workshop*, no. 17, Spring, pp. 57-80.
- Gould-Wartofsky, M. 2013, *The occupiers: The making of the 99% movement*, Oxford University Press, Cambridge.
- Graeber, D. 2009, *Direct action: An ethnography*, AK Press, Chico, CA.
- Greider, W. 2011, 'The end of new deal liberalism', *Nation*, January 5.
- Gupta, A. 2012, 'Occupy's challenge: Reinventing democracy', *Salon*, February 27, viewed 1 December 2017, < https://www.salon.com/2012/02/27/occupys_challenge_reinventing_democracy/>.
- Hammersly, M. 2006, 'Ethnography: Problems and prospects', *Ethnography and Education*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 3-14.
- Herod, A. 2018, *Labor*, Polity Press, Malden, MA.
- Katznelson, I. & Zolberg, A. 1986, *Working class formation: Nineteenth century patterns in western Europe and the United States*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- Kroll, A. 2011, 'Occupy Wall Street, powered by big labor', *Mother Jones*, October 5, viewed December 2017, < <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2011/10/occupy-wall-street-labor-unions/>> .
- Lewis, M. 2011a, 'Occupy Bloomington collects money, toys, for striking Limestone workers', *Herald Times*, December 10.
- Lewis, M. 2011b, 'Union members, supporters, gather in Bedford', *Herald-Times* December 16.
- Lewis, M. 2011c, 'Striking Limestone workers receive community support', *Herald-Times*, November 20.
- Lichtenstein, N. 2002, *State of the union: A century of American labor*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- Luce, S. 2014, *Labor movements, global perspectives*, Polity Press, Malden, MA.
- Mintz, P. 2009, 'Outrage greets Wall Street bonuses', *Bloomberg Business Week*, January 29.

- Moody, K. 2017, *On new terrain: How capital is reshaping the battleground of class war*, Haymarket Books, Chicago.
- National Employment Law Project, 2012, 'The low wage recovery and growing inequality', *Data Brief*, August 2012, viewed 1 December 2017, <<https://www.nelp.org/publication/4050/>>.
- Ness, I. & Azzellini, D. 2011, *Ours to master and to own: Workers control from the commune to the present*, Haymarket Books, Chicago.
- Nissen, B. 2003, 'Mutual aid and union renewal', *ILR Review*, vol. 56, no. 3, pp. 552.
- Opp, K. 2009, *Theories of political protest and social movements: A multidisciplinary introduction, critique, and synthesis*, Routledge, New York.
- Plotke, D. 2012, 'Occupy Wall Street, flash movements and American politics', *Dissent*, August 15, viewed 1 December 2017, <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/online_articles/occupy-wall-street-flash-movements-and-american-politics>.
- Rohar, E. 2011, 'West Coast Port shutdown sparks heated debate between Occupy, unions', *Labornotes*, December 12, viewed 1 December 2017, <<http://labornotes.org/2011/12/west-coast-port-shutdown-sparks-heated-debate-between-unions-occupy>>.
- Rosenfield, J. 2014, *What unions no longer do*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge.
- Rosenthal, A. 2012, 'The war on organized labor', *New York Times*, February 2, viewed 1 December 2017, <<https://takingnote.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/02/02/the-war-on-organized-labor/>>.
- Saad, L. 2009, 'Labor unions see sharp slide in public support', *Gallup*, September, viewed 1 December 2017, <<https://news.gallup.com/poll/122744/labor-unions-sharp-slide-public-support.aspx>>.
- Sanchez, R. 2011, 'More than 700 arrested in Wall Street protest', *Rueters*, October 2, viewed 1 December 2017, <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-wallstreet-protests/more-than-700-arrested-in-wall-street-protest-idUSTRE7900BL20111002>>.
- Sherman, J. 2011, 'The Radical History of Bloomington's People's Park', viewed 1 December 2017, <<http://my.firedoglake.com/porchpile/2011/11/21/the-radical-history-of-bloomington%e2%80%99s-peoples-park/>>.
- Sitrin, M. & Azzellini, D. 2014, *They can't represent us: Reinventing democracy from Greece to Occupy*, Verso, New York.
- Storch, R. 2013, *Working hard for the American dream: Workers and their unions, world war one to the present*, Wiley-Blackwell Malden, MA.
- Taibbi, M. 2011, 'The people versus Goldman Sachs', *Rolling Stone*, May, viewed 1 December 2017, <<https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/the-people-vs-goldman-sachs-20110511>>.
- Tarleton, J. 2011, 'Four NYC unions explain why they are marching in solidarity with Occupy Wall Street', *Unionresource.org*, October 3, viewed 1 December 2017, <<https://indypendent.org/2011/10/four-nyc-unions-explain-why-they-are-marching-in-solidarity-with-occupy-wall-street-on-wednesday/>>.
- Tierney, B. 2011, 'Connecting Occupy to union struggles', *Socialist Worker*, December 1, viewed 1 December 2017,

- <<http://socialistworker.org/2011/12/01/connecting-occupy-to-unions>>.
- Varga, J. 2014, 'Dispossession is Nine-Tenths of the Law: Right-to-Work and the Making of the American Precariat', *Labor Studies Journal*, vol. 39, issue 1, pp. 25-45.
- Weinstein, A. 2011, "'We are the 99%' creators revealed', *Mother Jones*, October 7, viewed 1 December 2017, <<https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2011/10/we-are-the-99-percent-creators/>>.
- Wollan, M. & Greenhouse, S. 2011, 'With port actions, Occupy Oakland tests labor leaders', *New York Times*, December 13, viewed 1 December 2017, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/14/us/occupy-oakland-angers-labor-leaders.html>>.
- United States Energy Information Administration 2010, 'Annual coal report', *U.S Department of Energy*, Washington, DC, viewed 1 December 2017, <<https://www.eia.gov/coal/annual/>>.
- Yates, M. 1998, *Why unions matter*, Monthly Review Press, New York.

The Moral Economy of Department Stores' Working-Class and their Class Identity

Alejandro Marambio-Tapia⁸⁵, Universidad Católica del Maule, Chile

Abstract

Globalised capitalism has changed the landscape of the working-class in different ways both in the Global North and in the Global South, including identities, moral frames, working places, and livelihood strategies. However, these transformations do not imply the disappearance of the working class. Precarity and insecurity is expanding (Zweig 2016), even reaching the middle-class (Standing 2014), and the core of the social and economic relations between labour and capital pervades. In this article, I use data collected from two sources; firstly, 40 interviews with the head of households/budget planners of working-class families from two cities in Chile, Santiago, the capital, and Copiapó, a mining town in the North, and secondly, secondary data on class self-identification. I want to bring attention to different ways in which the working-class identity, culture and consciousness can be performed by the use of different categories in discourses which migrate from political or market sphere to the everyday lives of working-class families, in particular of those who work in the retail sector for big companies. A social structure is characterised by objective-material positions, but also by how this structure is portrayed, enacted and legitimised (Crompton 1997). Therefore, together with the structural conditions of a financialized consumption, low-productivity services economy and debt economy, these 'middle-classness' discourses make sense in the moral economy of the so-called 'services proletariat'.

Keywords

Moral economy, retail, class identity, working-class

Class transformations in the oldest neoliberal society

There are different perspectives for analysing what is particular to changes in the Chilean labour market in the last decades, and their effects on the working class. Certainly, the liberalisation and deregulation of almost any realm of society from the late 1970s has had an impact on the configuration of the labour market, accounting for changes in the relationship between labour and capital, higher education, and the orientation of the economy, which finally experienced a de-industrialisation during the 1970s and 1980s. I want to bring attention to different ways in which the working-class identity, culture and consciousness can be performed by the use of different categories in discourses which migrate from political or market sphere to the everyday lives of working-class families, in particular those who work in the retail sector

⁸⁵ - This work was supported by the Centre for Social Conflict and Cohesion Studies [CONICYT/FONDAP/15130009 COES].

for big companies.⁸⁶ A social structure is characterised by objective-material positions, but also by how this structure is portrayed, enacted and legitimised (Crompton 1997). Therefore, together with the structural conditions of a financialized consumption, ‘spurious tertiarisation’⁸⁷ (Kessler & Espinoza 2003), and debt economy, these ‘middle-classness’ discourses make sense in the moral economy of the so-called ‘services proletariat’.

Globalised capitalism has changed the landscape of the working-class in different ways both in the Global North and in the Global South, including identities, moral frames, working places, livelihood strategies. However, these transformations do not imply the disappearance of the working class. Precarity and insecurity is expanding (Zweig 2016), even reaching the middle-class (Standing 2014), and the core of the social and economic relations between labour and capital pervades. Despite some scholars (Bauman, 2004) underlining the moving to a consumer society the decadence of the productivity focus in postmodern society, the attack to class analysis in the academic analysis (Grusky, & Sørensen 1998), occupational positions remain relevant to analysis of social structure. Indeed, employment still is crucial for the accumulation of economic and social capital, and identities. This is not to deny that even in developing societies as Chilean, neoliberal capitalism has brought new differentiation guidelines as life-styles, symbolic aesthetisation and primary, consumption dynamics. Instead, it is important to look at the relationship between income and occupational classes in order to provide empirical evidence for criticizing the idea of this growing middle class and the trap of low-productivity services economy.

In 1973, a *coup d'état* brought about an authoritarian regime in Chile, controlled by the army. After a few years, a group of Chilean economists trained at the University of Chicago, devoted supporters of Milton Friedman, designed an ambitious plan of structural changes. These reforms were based on assumptions of self-regulated markets of the most idealised kind. Their principles enshrined the market as the only resource allocator, with no public deficit, and introduced cost-benefit criteria and managerialist techniques for the public sector. Nonetheless, this ‘free-market’ actually meant growing monopolies rather than fierce competition. From the late 1970s, the state was thoroughly dismantled and so was its relationship with citizens. This all began with a first wave of privatisations, and reforms to the educational system, health insurance, and the pensions system. The labour market and unions were also reformed to prevent collective action - indeed, all political activity was banned.

The social and economic reforms of Pinochet during the late 1970s and the early 1980s had a substantial impact in the social structure of Chile. The middle-class became fragmented in

⁸⁶ **A note on data & methods.** I used a mixed methods approach to research the economic life of working-class households in Chile. I conducted 40 interviews with heads of household from the services proletariat (department store sales persons, clerks, and call centre workers), the ‘traditional’ working class (transport operators, mining machine operators, frozen food packaging workers) and a statistical analysis of the Chilean Survey of Household Finances (SHF). The data gathered in the interviews with heads of households provided a detailed account of the material practices, moral assessments, justifications, and social meanings of ‘ordinary’ credit practices and indebtedness. I use a cultural approach to address class, social mobility, and interpretations of the socioeconomic structures. I based my research on two cities in Chile, Santiago, the capital, and Copiapó, a mining town in the North. The data deploys the families’ practices, know-how, skills, financial education, and motivations behind the use of credit; inequalities perception, and class consciousness. The moral economy of households is also featured in this data. The quantitative analysis led to describe in detail income trends and the stratification of salaries, debt, and expenditures.

⁸⁷ ‘Spurious tertiarisation’ (Kessler & Espinoza 2003) refers to the creation of job positions in services or tertiary sector which do not require skilled labour, and sub-employment via outsourcing of activities.

different groups according to their more or less integration or reluctance to the new socioeconomic and political circumstances (Atria 2006). A professional layer of those who work in the economic sectors that became more dynamic is followed by a layer of professional and technicians that were 'recycled' from public sector to the new bureaucracy of private healthcare, pensions funds, and insurances. Self-employed professionals, entrepreneurs, and the 'old-fashioned' middle class (Barozet 2006) were to some extent left behind by the new rules of the economy. The neoliberal reforms also changed the symbolic and material representations of what has to be done in order to go up in the social ladder. Educational qualification and the ability to progress in the same company during decades were replaced by entrepreneurial and business-like mentalities (Moulian 1998). As unions were tremendously weakened by new (de)regulations, collective action also give way to a more individual perspective of social climbing (Tironi 1999; Mayol, Azócar y Azócar 2010). As a result, working class culture was disarticulated.

The narrative of the Latin American 'new middle-classes' meaning groups whose income (US\$ 2 to US\$10 a day according to the World Bank) has pervade Economics (Ferreira *et. al.* 2012; Castellani & Parent 2011), but also *real politik*. Both state and the market address the 'middle-class' in their political and economic discourse, without providing a basic definition or boundaries of the group. Some political parties aim to seduce the 'middle classes', matching this hypothetical group with moderated political positions. At the same time, right-wing parties develop an anti-taxes discourse, appealing to the 'middle class', although income tax is paid only by the upper 17% of employed people. This argument has no relationship at all with a class struggle, insofar as this political sector is engaged with a 'classless society' discourse, supporting and defending the political legacy of the Pinochet's regime. Indeed, from the early years, the dictatorship fostered a discourse of upward social mobility through access to consumer goods. For instance, Pinochet's foundational speech at Chacarillas Hill, in 1977, promised one car for every seven inhabitants, and telephones and television for all. Similarly, decades later, in the democratic period, references to the increasing access to good and services of broad groups of the population (Tironi 1999) helped to elaborate the idea of a social empowerment as consumers of these groups, previously excluded. Electrical appliances, new cars and the 'invasion' of these new consumer tribes to the formerly elite's holidays places gave support to the cultural reassertion of entering the middle-class lifestyle for many. The idea of a middle-class replacing the working-class and the working-poor as the key subjects of the Chilean society looks more like an obsession in the media and the political discourse.

The Rise of Department Stores' Working Class

In developed countries, it has been suggested that credit helps the middle class to maintain their status (Trumbul, 2012; Burton 2008; Klein 1999). Moreover, people tend to be less supportive of distributional measures when they regularly rely on credit to leverage resources (Kus 2013). However, the expansion of a consumer culture in Chile has occurred through a 'democratisation' and 'retailisation' of credit, in which financial services have been increasingly targeted at lower-income, previously 'unbanked' groups. Retail businesses has already been signaled as common spaces for the contemporary working-classes (Nelson 2017; Stecher 2012). In Chile, supermarkets, but, specially, department stores, have emerged in last decades as the symbolic and structural intersection of consumption, credit and work for the working class. These families organize their routine consumption, how they finance it focusing a considerable share of their monthly income for repaying debts -in some cases, owing money to the same store which employs them. The circle is closed when some of these salespersons

rely on sales on credit -aimed at other working-class families-. The bigger the interest charged the larger the sales commission they received. Retail business has been one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the country, which has even expanded internationally, as a provider of goods and services of all kinds, and directly and indirectly employs nearby of 1,500 thousand people, 18 per cent of the labour force (INE 2017, CCS 2016).

As clear as any credit produces its corresponding debt, class has an objective measure here, corresponding with the objective position in the productive sphere and how a family make ends meet. Certainly, some changes in the material condition of life and transformation in the occupational categories of this working class have shaped their (lack of) of consciousness -as Nelson (2017) suggested for the case of isolated workers in supermarket, just one per aisle. This is portrayed in the moral economy these workers elaborated to justify their normalised use of credit, but also their sense of individual responsibility (and failure) instead of collective solidarity, dismissing any structural wrongdoing in their situation. This is related with the situated experiences of the working-class and how they can position themselves in the social conflict arena. Working class as an analytical category is under siege contested from culture i.e. moral, meanings, expressions (Marambio-Tapia 2017). Middle class is much better.

Table 1 Class System in Chile

Social Class	Socioeconomic Characterisation Survey (SECS) 2015	Market Research Association 2015, using SECS data	Socioeconomic Group
Elite	4,4	2,7	AB
Upper Middle Class	10,7	3,9	C1a
		8,2	C1b
Middle Class	9,9	16,7	C2
		28,6	C3
Services Proletariat	26,2	25,4	D
Working Class	33,3		
Precariat	15,5		

(Table source: prepared by the author)

The class system in Chile is not a univocal construction. Considering occupational categories the middle-class corresponds to around 20 per cent of the working population (see Table 1), whereas Services Proletariat plus Working Class amounts to almost 60 per cent. These numbers remains useful for academia and policy makers. However, according to market research companies and political marketers, the upper-middle-class corresponds to 12 per cent; the middle-class to 45 per cent; and the lower-class is 25 per cent. In 2017, an update of the latter state that the upper layer of the D segment should be considered 'middle-class' because their consumption capacity and orientations changed and became more similar to C3. C4 was the new proposed segment. The relevance of this categorisation is its saliency to the everyday enactment of social class. A number of households define and understand social classes based –roughly- in this scheme. This is not denying the weight of the actual material conditions but it helps to provide details about the empirical ways to understand (the working) class today.

Moral Economy and Class Identity

The moral economy approach is an approach that introduces norms and sentiments into economic action. It is not conservative since it grapples with issues of power and domination.

It is not naive and purely optimistic (Sayer 2000, 2003). Moral economy recognizes that, especially in, but not limited to, households, there are different motivations for each economic action, as for instance, in the moral obligation to provide to other members of a family.

Aspiration became a normative content after the economic growth and credit expansion in Chilean society from the 1990s onwards (PNUD 1998, 2002). Groups in Chile have developed different degrees of aspiration and different degrees of engagement with credit. In doing so, the varying meanings of indebtedness, and of the 'decent life', come about. The different meanings of the decent life, the different ways to achieve it, and the role of credit and debt in it, all essentially speak to the social changes in Chile in the last decades. The use of credit is behind the underpinning of the post-modern version of the 'right of subsistence' (Thompson 1971) in this case the 'right of having a decent life'; in a sense, that is also a moral claim. I use the frame of moral economy to explore the accounts that ordinary people use to justify past and present uses of credit, and how they deal with consuming and selling credit, as well.

Working, consuming and owing money to department stores inform the moral economy of workers e.g. providing justification for selling wide-known high-cost credit, normalising debt, enduring exploitation, and justifying their actions for the sake of family and the quest for a decent life. At the same time, being individually responsible, underestimating the role of their employers in their situation, inaction -only 11 per cent of grassroots political action in 2016 was performed by private sector workers, according to the Strikes Observatory, or in other cases being co-opted and turning their criticism to themselves, as a class. This enters the sphere of the moral economy when retail workers elaborate on the idea that *they* do social work for people who cannot get loans elsewhere or *they* teach people who do not know how to use credit or when they criticise other people's use of credit 'only to buy superfluous things'.

The emergence of retail as a new banking agent happened twenty years ago when one of the big players in supermarket sales launched its credit card aimed at lower income groups. New types of credit issuers emerged: supermarket chains, department stores, pharmacies and even shoe stores, whose common characteristic is that its main theoretical turnaround is the sale of goods and services, but that they currently dedicate most of its operations to financial activities, directly or indirectly related to consumption: insurance, consumer loans, mortgages, education, mutual funds, and savings. The main differences between retail and banks is the relative ease with which retail's financial instruments are accessed, since they include groups usually excluded from banking, because of their lack of income or being too financially risky: students, housewives, pensioned, and the other lower-income families. This comes with a price, which usually those who sign the contracts do not perceive: commissions, insurance and the highest interest rates in the market. As one of the department stores worker put it:

'The thing that happens with retired people is shamelessness. They are just leaving the till where they have paid, and people around them saying 'Hey Madame, I'm from the X bank and I am offering you a consumer credit with a very, very low rate', and the old lady thinks 'oh, it sounds good, I'll have some money'. After that, she has a huge debit in her payroll, every month. Therefore, I think we are ill-educated regarding cards and credit. At least, they must give some notions about it in high school'.

Credit expansion has had a broader impact in how socio-economic relationships have been negotiated and assessed in Chilean society. This includes ownership, control, self-

determination and management of credit and money on the one hand, and the dynamics, responsibilities and commitments of household members to each other on the other. Parents reinforce and assess their roles when using credit and the moral obligation of making a living is performed within families through credit when they feel obliged to use credit in order to perform their family roles. These practices contribute to the distinction of a particular moral economy in white-collar proletariat households -manufactured by the use of credit- and what is expectable (and what is not) from them.

Those who are standing on the two sides of credit -being indebted by cards and earning money by cards- are sure that the real business is credit. They usually distrust retail lenders since they take advantage of the disadvantaged. However, in the individual and particular case, they experience the paradox of producing sales and also debt aimed at people like them. Even more, they know that some colleagues at department stores succumb to store sales and buy just for the sake of buying, because items were cheap.

(How is the relationship between your variable income and sales on credit?)
'At least half of sales have to be with store card. If they pay using Visa or Mastercard, of course, the customer has his own benefit with his bank, but I win nothing. On the contrary, if a customer buys something in 36 instalments is fantastic!' - saleswoman in department store.

Another saleswoman thinks that cards are a solution for a lot of people who cannot afford some items; for example, a double size bed, one of the articles she used to sell, cost around USD 270 cash in-store, a cheapest one, and the minimum wage is USD 400 gross monthly; around 70% of Chilean workers earn less than USD 750 gross monthly, according to the data of the Household Finances Survey, 2014. For her, people do not have any choice but to get into debt. However, she is aware that department stores give credit to people who are not able to pay, but 'I as a vendor can't do anything to stop this'.

Anyway, I think things are slightly changing. For instance, here, no more cards are granted to housewives, at least since I am here. Whereas in Hites [next block department store], in a heartbeat, you get the card. They don't care, they want you to have their card. Because you can say 'oh, three instalments, cash price', but they do not pay attention to the fact that it's not only the three instalments, they charge fees, commission, and others, so eventually is not the price you thought. (Sighs) I don't know why this is not being regulated, but on the other side is always a personal choice. You leave it, or you take it.

There are different layers within the moral criticism to other people's indebtedness: individuals, social class, and the whole society. The connection between a sort of individual 'moral consumption' and the use of credit is at hand. The first and simple way to justify the use of credit is to reinforce the role of 'breadwinner' -and parenthood indirectly- and to declare using a credit only occasionally. Departing from that point, a criticism emerges towards those who fall into an 'immoral consumption', where priorities seem to be upside down. In some cases, the moral criticism goes beyond individuals and the boundaries of social class; credit is a social mechanism that definitely is the key element in the last transformations of Chilean society as a whole.

‘Credit has allowed the ‘average Chilean citizen’ to afford five days off in Varadero, Cuba, through 4 years of repayment. Narrative of success? No. A complete irresponsibility, but is because society demands that successful look, so they ended spending more than they have. They do not make plans, they endanger their future, just for living for today. ‘Tomorrow we will see’ or ‘God will provide us’ are the more likely phrases in this case, which support the critic to the use of credit in superfluous things, and in the use of credit as a tool for show display or demonstrate social mobility, but also a critic to the moral economy of provision, planning, and risk assessment’ - supermarket worker.

Jointly with other members of the working class and the post-industrial working class, a frozen food operator associates the overuse of credit with a new type of Chilean people. Along with the moral criticism is the observation of the loss of social identity, let alone class-consciousness.

‘Credit cards are a tool to be arrogant, to climb, to get things whatever it takes. I see this new Chilean type, and it is not quite likeable. I relate the use of credit cards with the need for being aspirational in a bad sense; I think this is the same kind of people who humiliate the Peruvian or Colombian people who come to work to Santiago. All the people pressured to achieve things. In the past, we were humbler; we had access to fewer things. Later, we believe in this fairy-tale of being the ‘Latin American jaguars’ thanks to credit and consumption, and we start to belittle our neighbour countries’

As Bourdieu (2003) put it, people are not forced to take mortgages but choose to do so according to what they see as normative aspirations. This normalised use of credit is conveyed by households through a frame of legitimate interactions, aspirations, and values. Eventually, they devise a moralising account of their relationship with credit. Class belonging, aspirations and social goals are also topics which emerge when the analysis of the practical uses of credit is on the table. Nonetheless from the working class, families in my research identified the use of credit with being part of the ‘middle class’. We cannot exclude the massive availability of credit from this analysis.

The social positions and the social distance is reaffirmed using the moral attributes of the economic practices, namely the use of credit and the indebtedness assessment. A moral criticism to the lack of authenticity in certain social groups is what is behind the most of these assessments. Any conspicuous consumption in the lower classes is penalised since it involves a wrongdoing in the use of credit. The display of ‘indebtedness power’ is less tolerated than the display of other economic capitals.

Head of households tend to normalise the use of credit, whether in their debt careers and/or their present management of credit. This normalisation operates both based in the moral economy of the household and the popular-pragmatic rationality they construct in the everyday practices of credit, according to my research. Experiences are shaped by a range of social-material relationships, markets, government, family, and so on. However, a substantive relationship between households and credit is imbued with a moral sense. Credit is seen in households as a ‘sensible act’ in situations where family bonds, projects, and survival are at stake. In some cases, discipline, responsibility, and order are essential in the ethics matrix of

credit users that prevents social drama; in other cases, notions of resignation and legitimation led to families to develop a sense of credit-smartness, diminishing the moral self-assessment of credit, leaving the moral judgement for assessing other people's debts.

Inevitability is found when consumption is moralised. In the same way, as some families speak proudly of their 'skills' to seize opportunities and produce their own arrangements with credit cards while other heads of household state that 'my family is not a store card family.' These not-store-card-family use credit by all means. Thus, they tend to process the use of credit from a very strict meaning of what is needed. There is a continuous line between self-restraint and embracement of in the use of credit, from the moralising of consumption perspective. People try to get out of credit, and they achieve that at least for short periods, which means that debt careers are moving pictures. No matter the disposable income in the household, credit seems to be embedded in the Chilean budgeting practices, to the extent that it is hard to imagine life without credit. Lower income families and older head of households construct more structural explanations about the inevitability of credit whereas younger people, or native-credit are less critical and more prone to find individual accounts for that. Eventually, credit practices and their moral justification is the verification of the lack of collective belonging: this new working-class experience their deprivation individually, without strong references to a social group or to another collective project. Instead, the only class reference they can made is to the need to be indebted which led them to think themselves as an 'everyone for themselves' middle-class.

Constructing class identity

Credit practices cannot be explained as merely macroeconomic phenomena, or only due to an expansion or creation of a specific market, which is certainly instituted in economic, politic, social and cultural processes. In the mass media, credit and debt are usually depicted as an individual isolated problem. Consumerism and over-indebtedness used to be depicted as perfect pair in the media and in some money advice service profligate is related with credit card practices. Frugality and prudence are values that work as a starting point of how credit is managed, how is embedded in shopping and credit practices, and how families try to domesticate the financialisation of consumption and household economic planning. This domestication represents another round in the encounter between market and non-market arrangements.

Retail workers, namely -department stores, supermarkets and so forth-, usually can consume, work and get indebted with the same company, due to the particular features of the Chilean expansion of credit. They are formal, flexible workers whose livelihood and mobility projects have led them to become highly indebted. Many of them consider themselves the 'strivers class' (Castillo 2014), being ex-poors, middle-class aspirants, and part of the so-called lower middle-class. They have not been as conspicuous as other smaller groups with higher cultural, economic and social capital. Owing to this, they are usually out of the academic line of vision and it has been suggested that they lack references to build their identity, and that would influence their political expression and representation (Barozet & Espinoza 2016). Their work environment is an extended structural reality, whereas with their different arrangements as consumers and household managers they deal with the financialisation of consumption, using both market and non-market rationalities. Despite being a large group of population, policy makers hardly address them directly –according to their own words- politicians appeal to them in a confusing way, and only the market has been proactive in targeting as the new 'new middle

class'. In theoretical terms, this discussion addresses the precariat and service proletariat discussion, and its relevance as a category to discuss the structural changes of Chilean society. This is a group so big that it would be decisive in any election. Therefore, it is salient its less explored political facet, to research its orientations, participation practices and representation status –unions, consumers movements, etc. - to try to assess whether this group is a threat of a pillar for the political and socioeconomic order. I propose an approach to social cohesion from the micro level, in the everyday practices, to investigate individual attitudes and orientations, and characterise the group in detail. By describing and explaining these orientations and practices, I will test the hypothesis about the self-identification as 'effort/strivers class' led them to embody the individualised society, and the making of the apolitical consumer subject. In this case, social cohesion would be only a residual outcome of individual relationships (Schiefer & van der Noll 2016) aimed to the acceptance of social order instead of the several potential and revealed conflicts around the perceived gap between the effort and the reward.

Services proletariat and working class families have normalised the financialisation of consumption in their everyday lives, particularly in relation to the use of credit and debt. They have not fully assumed the marketised role of financial citizens, but they have become used to living with the necessary evil of credit, mixing market rationalities with moral obligations and emotional claims. Indeed, households have been driven by the discourses and praxis that makes them solely responsible for their socioeconomic present and future, assuming the demands of self-determination and autonomy of the Chilean neoliberalism. They express unrest about discrimination and inequalities, at the micro and meso level, that make the achievement of their life projects harder or frankly impossible, for example, the collusion practices of different companies, department stores financial affairs, and the failure in the provision of transport and public utilities. However, they apparently do not articulate a voice in the public sphere. Are they the silent expression of the tolerance and legitimacy of the late capitalism (Lemiux, 2014)? In general terms, people prefer a state more involved in key areas like energy, education, health, and so on, which is certainly a political and ideological claim; nevertheless, when concrete policies are proposed, like pensions reform, the collective references lose prominence, so people are not willing to create a collective pension funds instead of individual accounts. Neoliberalism has permeated through, but it is neglected by people due to 'moral pressure' (Guzmán, Méndez & Barozet 2016). The big question is how to overthrow the normalisation of this moral economy, the force of the 'middle-class rhetoric' and the atomisation of the services proletariat, in order to improve their chances to mobilise political resources.

The main features characterising the Chilean post-industrial working class are low incomes, low power, low autonomy at work, and a lack of alternative assets to produce income. These services proletariat are part of the 'spurious tertiarisation'. The living standards of such groups have been subject to some structural improvement, but as one of them explained, this is due mainly to 'how easy is now get access to credit', compared to their parents' generation. The result is a persistent 'middle-class rhetoric' in how some members of the public construct their narratives of social mobility. I argue that this rhetorical narrative of social mobility in these groups has a relationship with their credit and budgeting practices. I wanted to bring attention to different ways in which the working-class identity, culture and consciousness can be performed by the use of different categories in discourses which migrate from political or market sphere to the everyday lives of working-class families, in particular of those who work in the retail sector for big companies.

Author Bio

Alejandro Marambio Tapia is Assistant Professor at the School of Sociology, Maule Catholic University and Associated Researcher at the Center for Social Conflict and Cohesion Studies, both in Chile. PhD in Sociology, The University of Manchester, UK. Research Interests: neoliberal subjectivities, credit and debt, households economies, post-industrial working class, consumption. email: amarambio@ucm.cl

Bibliography

- Atria, R. 2006, 'Crecimiento económico y estratificación social', en *Revista de Sociología*, no. 20, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Universidad de Chile, Santiago de Chile.
- Barozet, E. 2006, 'El valor histórico del pituto: clase media, integración y diferenciación social en Chile', *Revista de Sociología*, no. 20, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Universidad de Chile, Santiago de Chile.
- Bauman, Z. 2004, *Work, consumerism and the new poor*, McGraw-Hill International, UK.
- Bourdieu, P. 2003, 'Las estructuras sociales de la economía', *Siglo XXI*, Buenos Aires, Argentina
- Burton, D. 2008, *Credit and consumer society*, Routledge, NY.
- Cámara de Comercio de Santiago (2016), 'Tendencias del retail en Chile, Santiago', *Departamentos de Estudios CCS*.
- Castellani, F., & Parent, G. 2011, 'Being Middle-Class in Latin America', OECD Development Centre Working Papers, 305, 1.
- Castillo Gallardo, M. 2014, 'Clases medias y trabajadores frente a la política: sobre el ascenso electoral de la derecha en Chile', *Universum (Talca)*, vol. 29, no.2, pp.65-82.
- Crompton, R. 1997, 'Consumption and class analysis', *The Sociological Review*, vol. 44, no. 1, pp.113-132.
- Ferreira, F. H., Messina, J., Rigolini, J., López-Calva, L. F., Lugo, M. A., Vakis, R., & Ló, L. F. 2012, *Economic mobility and the rise of the Latin American middle class*, World Bank Publications.
- Filgueira, C. 2001, 'La actualidad de viejas temáticas: sobre los estudios de clase, estratificación y movilidad en América Latina', CEPAL, Serie Políticas Sociales, Santiago.
- Grusky, D. B., & Sørensen, J. B. 1998, 'Can class analysis be salvaged?', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 103, no.5, pp.1187-1234.
- Guzmán, V., Barozet, E., & Méndez, M. L. 2017, 'Legitimación y crítica a la desigualdad: una aproximación pragmática', *Convergencia*, vol.24, no.73, pp. 87-112.
- Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas 2017, Boletín Empleo Nacional, trimestre móvil FMA 2017, Santiago de Chile
- Kessler, G., & Espinoza, V. 2003, 'Movilidad social y trayectorias ocupacionales en Argentina: rupturas y algunas paradojas del caso de Buenos Aires', vol. 66, United Nations Publications.
- Klein, L. 1999, *It's in the Cards: Consumer Credit and the American Experience*, Westport, CT.
- Kus, B. 2013, 'Credit, consumption, and debt: Comparative perspectives', *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, vol. 54, no.3, pp.183-186.
- Lemieux, C. 2014, 'The Moral Idealism of Ordinary People as a Sociological Challenge:

- Reflections on the French Reception of Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot's On Justification'. The spirit of Luc Boltanski: Essays on the 'pragmatic sociology of critique, Turner, B. (ed), Anthem Press, London, pp. 153-172.
- Linkon, S.L. & Russo, J. 2016, 'Twenty years of working-class studies: Tensions, values, and core questions', *Journal of Working-Class Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 4-13.
- Marambio-Tapia, A. 2017, 'Narratives of Social Mobility in the Post-Industrial Working Class and the Use of Credit in Chilean Households', *Revue de la régulation* 22 | 2nd semestre / Autumn 2017, mis en ligne le 31 janvier 2018, DOI : 10.4000/regulation.12512
- Mayol, A., Azócar, C., & Azócar, C. 2013, *El Chile Profundo. Modelos Culturales De La Desigualdad y Sus Resistencias*, Santiago de Chile: Liberalia Ediciones.
- Moulian, T. 1998, *El consumo me consume*, Santiago: Lom.
- Nelson, W. 2017, 'Working in the unconscious masses: Inside a mega-retail store in the United States', *Journal of Working-Class Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp.88-94
- PNUD, Informe 2002, Desarrollo Humano en Chile, Nosotros los chilenos: un desafío Cultural, Santiago.
- PNUD, Informe 1998, Desarrollo Humano en Chile, Las paradojas de la modernización, Santiago, Chile/Marzo de 1998.
- Sayer, A. 2000, 'Moral economy and political economy', *Studies in Political Economy*, vol. 61, no.1, pp.79-103.
- Sayer, A. 2003, '(De) commodification, consumer culture, and moral economy', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, vol. 21, no.3, pp.341-357.
- Schiefer, D., & van der Noll, J. 2017, 'The essentials of social cohesion: A literature review', *Social Indicators Research*, vol. 132, no.2, pp.579-603.
- Standing, G. 2014, 'Por qué el precariado no es un concepto espurio', *Sociología del Trabajo*, vol. 82, pp.7-15.
- Stecher, A. 2012, 'Perfiles identitarios de trabajadores de grandes empresas del retail en Santiago de Chile: aportes psicosociales a la comprensión de las identidades Laborales,' *Psykhé* (Santiago), vol.21, no.2, pp.9-20.
- Thompson, E. P. 1971, 'The moral economy of the English crowd in the eighteenth century', *Past & Present*, vol.50, pp.76-136.
- Tironi, E. 1999, *La irrupción de las masas y el malestar de las élites*, Chile en el cambio de Sigl, Santiago, Grijalbo.
- Tironi, E. 1999, *La irrupción de las masas y el malestar de las elites* Santiago: Grijalbo, 159.
- Trumbull, G. 2012, 'Credit access and social welfare. The rise of consumer lending in the United States and France', *Politics & Society*, vol. 40, no.1, pp. 9-34.
- Zweig, M. 2016, 'Rethinking class and contemporary working-class studies', *Journal of Working-Class Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp.14-22.

Working-Class Culture as Political Participation: Reading Trump as Revolt Against a Middle-Class Public Sphere

Liberty Kohn, Winona State University, MN

Abstract

The 2016 election cycle and ensuing presidency of Donald Trump has been attributed in large part to his support among working-class whites (Gest 2016, p. 193; Tyson and Maniam 2016). Their reasons for support, however, are open to interpretation. This article will suggest that elements of Donald Trump's public communication style and ethos align with elements of working-class culture, language use, and knowledge construction. Trump's anti-institutional, anti-government rhetoric reifies these components of working-class culture because of institutions' and government's deep foundations in middle-class culture, language use, and knowledge construction—and the working-class's, especially the white working-class's, alienation from these institutions, with the result being anger or apathy (Lareau 2003; Jensen 2012; Gest 2016). These values are often embedded in a master narrative that defines white working-class life as one of victimization (Hochschild 2016; Gest 2016; Cramer 2016). The article next suggests that Trump's oft-used rhetorical framework of not just immigrants as threat, but of immigrants as protected and valued by institutions that overlook white working-class concerns (Gest 2016), opens up one possible persuasive framework to legitimate Trump's xenophobia and racism through white working-class attitudes.

Keywords:

Trump, Public Sphere, Participation, Middle-Class

Differences in Class-Based Ethos and Political Participation

Persuasion is not a textbook exercise, and what counts as *ethos*, as making one valid or credible, to use the perfunctory textbook definition, is open-ended. Scholarly definitions that move beyond simple textbook definitions of *ethos* point to *ethos*'s embeddedness in culture and identity. Michael J. Hyde defines *ethos* as a rhetorical construct that creates 'places where people can dwell with and for others' (qtd in Werner 2017, p. xv). Jansen Werner claims that Hyde's 'notion of ethos poses significant implications for the sociocultural function of rhetoric; in particular, it proposes that rhetoric cultivates the conditions through which modes of 'knowing' and 'being' take shape' (2017, p. 110). Considering not only a definition of *ethos*, but specifically a working-class *ethos*, Pierre Bourdieu's work on social class and habitus is often used to construct elements of a working-class *ethos*. Jeremy F. Lane (2000) states:

According to Bourdieu, the working-class ethos was based on the collective experience of material necessity; making a virtue of that

necessity, their ethical code valued ‘honesty’ and ‘straightforwardness’ over the niceties and formalities of bourgeois social convention [...]. Neither of these antagonistic visions was neutral or absolute, the classification and forms of behavior valued by one class would be rejected by the other as either too ‘vulgar’ or too ‘formal,’ depending on which class perspective was adopted. (p. 144)

We see in this early definition of class-based *ethos* a distinction marking the ‘dwelling place’ of the classes as either too coarse or too uncoarse, with an entire system of ethics, knowledge, and trustworthiness attached to these two poles.

Rhetoric scholar Nathan Emmerich (2016) moves *ethos* beyond everyday experience to class-based expectations and possibilities, the differing limits and possibilities constructed through social class. Emmerich theorizes that ‘classed differences in ethos result in class differences when it comes to the articulations of one’s ambitions, expectations, and possibilities presented by the future’ (p. 280). This idea of *ethos* as limits as the possibilities and impossibilities one constructs due to social class experience, defines *ethos* as a teleological construct. Ethnographer of working-class argument Julie Lindquist (2002) has similarly claimed that any means of persuasion is a ‘teleological process’ (p. 4). Lindquist’s ethnographic research suggested that this teleological process is the primary informant of *ethos* because *ethos* defines one’s ability to ‘participate’ (2002, p. 9). Thus, working-class *ethos* becomes not only preferred forms of labor or recreation, or the differences in class-based perceptions of the possible. Lindquist overtly defines working-class *ethos* as public, directly connecting to *ethos* the possible and preferred forms of participation as well as the limits of one’s ability to participate.

I’d suggest that to participate in the political process, the working class shouldn’t be expected to mimic middle-class *ethos*; the working class has its own *ethos* (Lindquist 2002, p. 9) that sketches the parameters and domains of preferred, agentive participation. In the case of the 2016 election, this working-class *ethos* based in language, experience, possibility, and preferred forms of participation was congruent with much of Donald Trump’s rhetoric. Trump’s public presentations provided perspectives and rhetoric that millions of working class Americans could see as valid, as including them, the working class, in a political and media world often built and policed through middle-class knowledge construction and language preferences.

Working-Class and Middle-Class Participation in a Middle-Class Public and Political Sphere

Clearly cultural differences affect *ethos* and the teleology of participation, which changes expectations for public and political rhetoric. The possible and preferred are constructed to great degree by available resources—resources connected to traditional markers of social class. These, in turn, deeply affect forms of participation such as political behavior and self-advocacy. Justin Gest’s book-length study of working-class whites in Youngstown during the Trump campaign evidences that ‘[m]uch of our knowledge of political behavior links the intensity of citizens’ political participation with their resources, in the form of income, education, and skills’ (2016, p. 11).

Gest’s book discovers a working-class disinterest in the common forms of agency defining the public and political sphere. Gest records working-class beliefs and actions based in political apathy or blaming immigrants and institutions who support immigrants and minorities over

hard-working white working-class folks. Thus, Gest's focus on white working-class beliefs and attitudes can be seen as harbingers of preferred political participation in the current political environment. Gest's finding of apathy and blame points toward cultural differences in how the working class wishes to participate publicly and politically. After all, most definitions of the public sphere based in empowerment and political agency maintain either the original assumptions of middle-class or professional class agency and empowerment, be it in Jurgen Habermas's original formulation of the public sphere based in the merchant class advocating for itself with regencies (Habermas 1989, p. 27), Warner's performance and identity theory that focuses on building a public inclusive to its own performed identity, communication standards, and style (2002), a theory that ignores power differences amongst stakeholders, or Hauser's theory suggesting that publics form around issues, not identities, but still require 'dialogue' (Hauser 1999, p. 67) that, I'd suggest, equates to middle class, debate-based, participation.

In these lines of public sphere scholarship, the public sphere and its concomitant political sphere is imagined as one in which all demographics and their communication is agentive; power is not accounted for. Concerning social class, Negt and Kluge argue that Habermas's merchants that created the public sphere ignored the proletariat in favor of a sphere where capitalists gathered to forward their interests (1993, p. 10), a critique still true today, albeit with major differences in twenty-first century working-class beliefs, attitudes, and forms of empowerment and participation.

A Tale of Two Public Voices

The working class is bereft of many resources, particularly middle-class education and achievement, which weakens the working-class's agency as dictated by the operations of the middle-class dominated public sphere. Barbara Jensen argues that 'A public voice, or elaborated [middle-class] code, requires a lot of education to learn well' (Jensen p. 81). Much as Gest points out that political participation, especially traditional political participation, is linked to availability of resources, Jensen suggests a resource such as advanced education is necessary to construct a valid 'public voice.' If lacking the resources to build this 'public voice,' the standard public and political spheres may be hard to enter, if one wishes to participate in such an alien environment at all.

Sarah Attfield (2016) has also commented on how working-class communication may be different from, and even unacceptable to, middle-class communication norms. Attfield argues that the working class seeks power in the tools that advance its cause, and the working class affords itself tools for participation that the middle-class may not. Importantly, middle-class respectability equates to being polite, calm, and avoiding coarse language, yet these forms of middle-class "respectability" when applied to working-class people [are] limiting and controlling' (p. 45). Attfield asks 'What happens when working-class people do not defer to their 'betters' and instead articulate their anger loudly and assertively?' (p. 46). Attfield's questioning of respectability acknowledges the relevance of impolite, uncalm, coarse language in public and political spheres and begs of a working-class means of participation that would factor for, and in fact, find empowerment and participation in, these 'non-respectable' features typically disdained in the middle-class oriented public and political spheres.

Media Bias and the Middle Class

The brash, uncalm, and coarse language that Attfield espies as potential working-class agency parallels the communication of Donald Trump, whose coarse speaking style was accepted, or at least forgiven, by many white working-class voters in 2017, but not by his many middle-class counterparts. Throughout the 2015 and 2016 campaign, the media predicted Trump's debate and speaking style would undermine his credibility, his *ethos*. In short, his coarse language was not proper participation.

This media and political sphere resistance to including or acknowledging 'coarse' public speaking was proven early in the primary season, when most Republican candidates believed that Trump's insult-based rhetoric and debate performance showing little knowledge of issues would not help him win the Republican nomination (Brown 2015). Later, Democrats repeated this mistake when they and the national media continued to believe that Trump's coarse communication style and hesitancy to attend some major debates, a decidedly middle-class structure, would disqualify him from winning the general election (Shepard 2016).

This inability of media to predict white working-class voters' preferences or acceptance of coarse language or debate standards points to, again, a public sphere of middle-class values that is, in this case, media disseminated and policed. Media language is essentially middle-class language—to use Attfield's description: polite, calm, and uncoarse.

Yet Trump used plenty of coarse language, from sexual insult to violence to cursing, as part of his public rhetoric. Trump's April 2016 tweet stated that if Hilary couldn't 'satisfy her husband, what makes her think she can satisfy America?' He also stated of an anti-Trump protestor, 'I'd like to punch him in the face' (Diamond 2016). Trump also cursed, saying, 'We are going to knock the shit out of ISIS,' (Trump as qtd in Schrock et al. 16) which added "'authenticity' to his tough guy performance' (Schrock et al., p. 16).

Why did so many pundits and politicians exclude Trump due to his coarse language? Media and entertainment operate on middle-class language, culture and knowledge norms: 'Even though the middle class is only about 35 percent of the workforce, almost every aspect of politics and popular culture, with help from the media, reinforces the idea that 'middle class' is the typical and usual status of Americans' (Zweig 2012, p. 41). The media are the major purveyors of 'proper' behavior, language codes, and related forms of expression. This middle-class bias can eliminate the ability for working-class members to see their culture acknowledged in popular culture or the public sphere: '[w]orkers are seen, when they are seen at all, as faces in a crowd or in sound bites, rarely as people with thoughtful things to say about their own condition in their country. In the media, the working class is truly the silent majority' (Zweig 2012, p. 58).

During Trump's campaign, however, this silent majority was vocal about Trump's rhetoric and delivery. There were early signs of differing expectations of language and knowledge construction in the public sphere. The daily newspapers during Trump's campaign were littered with quotes from his many working-class admirers. 'He speaks before he thinks,' (Frum 2016) they reported. 'He tells it like it is,' (BBC 2016) they suggested. These compliments certified his authenticity and truth-telling, despite Trump's overriding habit of making claims with no support, for failing the media's fact checks, and for his earning of Four Pinnochios, the equivalent of an unequivocal mistruth, on a near daily basis during his campaign (Senell 2017, p. 1).

Class distrust can outweigh party distrust, as we see from a white-working citizen of Youngstown's sentiment: 'The thing I like about Trump is that both sides hate him' (Gest 2016, p. 193). Both sides here can be interpreted as Republican and Democrat—both parties offer only middle-class representatives in the public and political spheres. Regardless of ruling party, institutions are dominated by middle-class values, language, and knowledge construction, and, despite ideological differences, institutional discourse can feel alien to white working-class voters. Gest's interviewee also captures how the working class is willing to forgive coarse language in the public sphere. The interviewee goes on to state that 'And in his odd, crude way, he makes sense. I know he's not a woman-hater and he's not going to reverse what liberalism has done for us the last 40 years. He just wants to get our country stabilized and back on track' (2016, Gest p. 194). This working-class analysis of Trump's public language does not critique through middle-class language codes. The interviewee is aware that Trump's speech is 'odd' and 'crude,' comparatively, but this speech does not disqualify Trump from the public and political sphere, as many middle-class media pundits predicted.

'I'd Rather Be a Peon Than a Boss': Differences in Working-Class and Middle-Class Culture

Barbara Jensen's *Reading Classes* captures basic cultural differences that cross behaviors, cognition, social-emotional relationships, and language use. She titles these, working class *Belonging*, and middle class *Becoming*. She states 'middle-class language and culture tend to promote individual achievements and competition between outstanding individuals, or people who 'stand out.' Working-class language and communities tend to recreate values of social connection, solidarity, and mutual aid' (2012, p. 55). Here, Jensen outlines the basic cultural values and systems of working-class life similar to Annette Lareau, whose long-term study of parenting strategies in homes suggested key differences in several elements that comprise culture and that point clearly toward Jensen's *Belonging* or *Becoming*. Lareau states that '[c]lass position influences critical aspects of family life: time use, language use, and kinship ties' (2003, p. 236). How one spends one's time, uses one's language, and develops relationships with family determines one's status as an individual seeking to individuate oneself (*Becoming*) or unify with the community (*Belonging*).

Belonging and *Becoming* contribute to differences in language use and knowledge construction. Jensen states that 'Different social classes influence their members with different *ways of knowing*. Middle-class culture, and the worldview it promotes, is driven by formal language and its lengthy, step-wise learning. It both reflects and recreates a culture that prizes individual achievement of excellence and the competition that will (supposedly) force the 'best and brightest' to the top' (2012, p. 73). However, for working-class culture 'the details of language are in the backseat rather than at the wheel. In fact, the vehicle of consciousness is not so much driven like a car down predictable avenues, as it is like steering a canoe over a body of water. [...] *Belonging* necessarily involves paying attention to and being part of the world around one' (2012, p. 76).

Jensen suggests an 'us versus them' sentiment amongst working-class communities. Jensen reminds that the working class is comprised of a number of cultures, but '[i]n working-class communities, 'them' describes not only the professional middle class (and enduring and cross-ethnic Other) but a variety of other 'thems' as well, and only one, very specific 'us'' (2012, p. 62). Katherine J Cramer's interviews with the rural, white working class in Wisconsin also uncovered an 'us and them' attitude. Cramer's interviews focused on a natural distrust of university educated, city-dwelling Wisconsin citizens, particularly public employees. Cramer

states that ‘Many rural individuals saw professors as urban and ‘them’ and believed they looked down on local, rural folks’ (2016, p. 131). Cramer also establishes the *us versus them* cultural identity framework by pointing out that ‘people talked about the public school teachers in their towns as outsiders, even if they grew up just a few towns away’ (2016, p. 131). Gest frames working-class Chicago similarly: ‘In their pubs and neighborhoods, our credentials are not achievements or affiliations, but rather the people we know who vouch for our credibility and character’ (2016, p. xi). Thus, greatly important to working-class culture, identity, and forms public participation is a framework of ‘us versus them’, which is not simply a rhetorical trope, but a facet of working-class culture that shores up working class *community*, distinguishing it from middle-class values.

This cultural facet of *us versus them*, of recognizing distinct differences in working and middle-class culture, aligns with the *us versus them* rhetorical tactics of Donald Trump (Schrock et al. 2017; Sennell 2017), but *us versus them* also offers the working class a familiar way to participate in the public and political sphere—a way that aligns with working-class culture and anti-institutional sentiment. Trump’s campaign rhetoric framed Trump’s opponents, especially Washington Elites, through an Us v. Them melodrama (Schrock et al., 2017, p. 10). For billionaire Trump, this may be a rhetorical tool, but this may not be merely a rhetorical trope to the working-class listener. Jensen notes of working-class participation that ‘what becomes central in communities of mutual aid is a shared consciousness, a *participation of identity*, a living in and through one another. *Me* and *mine* are replaced with *us*. Language is used to shore up a communal way of being, in intimacy beyond words’ (2012, p. 76). Importantly, Jensen connects the working class *us* directly to participation and identity—a form of participation and identity not highly valued in the middle-class public sphere where individuation from others is most important.

Excerpts from rallies demonstrate how Trump uses an ‘us versus them’ framework, wherein he is not a politician or privileged billionaire, but rather victimized by ‘them,’ the Elite, just as his audience has been. This framework typically contains a general summary of a situation, then a statement suggesting his outrage (designated with *italics*), which is often accompanied by changes in point of view (designated in **bold**) to intimate a shared victim status between himself and audience. Here is an excerpt of a Grand Rapids rally:

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.* (Trump qtd in Schrock et al., 2017, p. 11)

Trump uses the tactic and sequence again in the following from a rally in Buffalo: ‘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** [...]*’ (Trump qtd in Schrock et al., 2017, p. 11).

In the following Trump is speaking on the disastrous effect of NAFTA at rally, which again applies the us v. them framework: ‘We are living through the greatest jobs theft in the history of the world. . . *What **our** politicians have allowed to happen* to this area [...]. A disaster’ (Trump qtd in Schrock et al. 11). By not identifying other politicians as competitors, as equals, and with Trump not seeking to individuate himself from his equals (middle-class Becoming), Trump’s rally rhetoric piggybacks on working-class culture and uses of language based in shared identity, not verbal individuation.

Trump is not alone in using *us versus them* frameworks. Rather, he is a practitioner who often avoids positioning himself as equal, but individuated, from his competitors. An important element of participation and power is creating group identity: 'one essential element for working-class power is a clear idea of who the enemy is, whose power working class power is arrayed against' (Zweig 2012, p. 117). With continual resentment toward institutions, and despite changes in the political parties running the institutions that still leave the institution middle class, one can see that middle-class culture is clearly a large component of *them*. What Zweig's quote on working-class power may leave undefined, however, is that the working class, despite knowing who *them* is, may not wish to participate in ways identical to their middle class counterparts.

To evidence this claim of working-class participation differently, I'd like to move into the working-class workplace, where 'working-class life invites cooperation between 'people like us' versus the competitive 'them,' the middle-class and bosses (Jensen, 2012, p. 64). Jensen outlines the story of her 'bright and hard-working Aunt Luella,' who quit a supervisor position after just several days of being promoted after numerous years on the production line of a bakery. Aunt Luella stated of her reasons for quitting this supervisory position and returning to the production line: 'I'd rather be a peon than a boss' (2012, p. 64). Luella's supervisory position quickly ostracized her from her long-time friends, who were also her co-workers. Luella's move to a position of authority quickly moved her out of working class *us* and into *them*, 'institutional power' (Jensen 2012, p. 64). Aunt Luella quitting was a clear choice of Belonging over Becoming, and her choice is based not in language, but in working-class culture—the social ostracism that followed her a promotion that differentiated her from the group. Aunt Luella's final preference to be a 'peon' demonstrates that Luella is aware that she violated a cultural norm by moving to a position of authority. Her authority changed her way of participating amongst her peers.

Middle Class 'Hot Air': Social Class and the Value of Debate

Working-class participation develops from an assumption that an opinion is shared by all: 'assertion, if it is to be successful, must be a collective, rather than an individual act' and will 'emphasize the communal' (Bernstein 1971, p. 143). This collective agreement is what makes one's position valid. In opposition, middle-class speaking codes are far more elaborate because of the many considerations of middle-class language use. Middle-class codes are less linguistically predictable because they capture an individual's nuanced argument, what Bernstein terms 'the 'I' over the 'we'' (1971, p. 147)—that is, one's own unique viewpoint in a debate, the middle-class individual shaping society and advocating for oneself. Jensen similarly reports that 'middle-class groups used language and discussion to think and argue, to display individual ability, and to uncover the differences of opinion and debate within the group. The working-class groups used language and discussion to find agreement within the group to connect emotionally with one another. [...] Class differences in speech were consistent and profound enough to point to different cultures' (2012, p. 54).

This collective aspect of working-class culture can explain why working-class culture sees much debate as 'hot air,' as elites talking instead of doing hard work. Different concepts of labor dominate class scholarship (Bernstein 1971, p. 143; Cramer 2016, p. 135-36; Hochschild 2016, p. 61). Debate and difference are highly prized and expected in middle-class settings, but they are not expected or valued at the same premium in working-class culture, where everyone is viewed as agreeing upon how things are, the working-class collective view.

Trump's preference of campaign rallies, as well as atypical debate performances in which he didn't participate properly, can be linked to working-class language preferences. Rally rhetoric in particular allows Trump to make easy assumptions without elaboration, easily identify himself with the working-class collective, then avoid debate, argument, or nuanced policy statements typically expected of politicians practicing their middle-class uses of language for political participation. Trump has stated his own distaste for traditional political rhetoric, suggesting that most politicians speak 'as is they are speaking from a script titled 'How Boring Can I Possibly Be?' (Trump qtd in Robin 2018, p. 271). I would suggest, rather, that the middle class values debate as a form of participation far more than the working class, who often see debate as 'hot air.' This element of Trump's speaking style, too, aligns with working-class culture.

Differences in Ways of Knowing Between Social Classes

Knowledge construction depends greatly upon social class and one's exposure to education institutions. College education itself is a middle-class enterprise, with students indoctrinated into middle-class standards through such routine college practices as Freshman English (Bloom 1996, p. 654) and the freshman essay (Adler-Kassner 1999, p. 92), where language is evaluated according to middle-class values such as respectability, decorum, propriety, moderation, and temperance (Bloom 1996, p. 659-61)—qualities highly reminiscent of Attfield's middle-class polite, calm, uncoarse language. As Jensen argues, 'cultural capital is the invisible curriculum in colleges, much more than in high school; but there are no classes in it' (2012, p. 156).

Educational research has, for decades, clearly outlined what middle-class university expectations are: modern university education involves deliberately moving students through predictable stages of cognitive development (King and Kitchener 1994, p. 66; Moore 1994, p. 47). Educational research suggests that universities move students through clear stages of cognitive development: early in their development, college students exhibit early-stage dualistic thinking—everything is expected to be 'right' or 'wrong.' Students are expected to move beyond this and next acknowledge that a multiplicity of ideas and answers exist. However, in this second stage, students may not always apply the values necessary to distinguish quality arguments from poorly constructed arguments and opinions—any argument or opinion is equally good in this second stage. The individual is in a stage of 'quasi-reflective' learning in which they can identify and relate two abstractions, but they cannot make the two abstractions cohere into a quality argument (King and Kitchener 1994, p. 64).

In the third stage students should recognize stronger argument from weaker argument and navigate contextual relativism. Eventually, in the final stage, this results in mastery of discipline-specific critical analysis and the ability to take on a specific value set as an interpretive lens (Moore 1994, p. 47-49), all the while recognizing that the lens is one choice among many with strengths and weaknesses. This cognitive spectrum is inseparable from the rhetorical and ethical considerations that accompany the handling of increasingly complex information and ideas with real-world implications (Moore 1994, p. 46). Highly relevant to college-level critical thinking and communication is the foundational ethic of fact checking, deep analysis, and emotionless objectivity that dominate the preparation and speaking of the middle class in the professional, public, and political spheres. These lead to polite, calm, uncoarse language.

Yet Donald Trump continually flaunted these basic principles, even the lower level principles, of university education throughout his campaign without damaging his *ethos*. Eric Sennell's summary of Trump's rhetoric demonstrates Trump's ignoring of context, of fact-based evidence, and of careful consideration of claims. Sennell (2017) summarizes Trump's approach, saying

Trump's rhetoric of polarization delegitimizes opposing views and sources of information while simultaneously strengthening his ethos. His redirection shifts attention from his flaws and controversies to other narratives, preserving his ethos. His rapid delivery of information piques his supporters' partisanship and prevents careful consideration of any particular claim. Even if a claim is fact-checked and debunked, Trump often repeats the claim in an attempt to imbue it with familiarity and thus a sense of truth. Lastly, he decontextualizes his assertions so that they will be received differently than they otherwise might be. Combined, these strategies build and maintain an ethos of astonishing power. (p. 4)

Similarly, Minnix argues that populist rhetoric can be, and indeed Trump's is 'a discursive process of reducing complexity [...] (2017, p. 67). Political scientist Corey Robin argues Trump's intellectual penchant for contradiction may not trouble the conservative mind due to conservatism's tradition of contradiction, which is a 'counter to the simple-minded rationalism that was supposed to animate the left' (Robin 2018, p. 239). However, Robin states that Trump 'neither knows nor nods to this tradition' (2018, p. 240). Thus, Trump does not seem to have mastered the conservative system for critique; general mastery of such a system would be required to reach the third or fourth level of cognitive development outlined above. Robin states that Trump's 'whims are as unlettered as his mind is untaught' (2018, p. 245).

For one example of a lack of disciplinary thought according to evidence, Trump often promised to bring back the coal industry, particularly by rolling back EPA regulations. However, economists, experts, and even coal CEOs armed with statistics argued this plan would not help, as market forces, not regulation, has led to the coal industry's decline (Henry 2017). Trump's ignoring of expertise, especially in his own domain of business and economics, suggests Trump is not changing his claims or policy according to the forms of evidence one might encounter in universities, institutions, and similar research-based organizations, while others, even coal CEOs, are constructing knowledge through the university paradigm.

Thus, whether it is Trump's untutored form of argument and public rhetoric, the simplification of ideas through populism, or an extreme form of a whimsical, unpracticed, reactionary mindset, Trump does not play by middle-class's rules of knowledge construction. I am not claiming that the middle class always applies these rules, nor that the working class ignores context, facts, or investigation of claims. Lindquist has proven that argument and debate certainly happen in working-class environments (p.3). Rather, as the next section will evidence, the working class understands that the typical ways of knowing and speaking used by institutions are only one approach, and a middle-class one at that.

Gest captures the class differences in knowledge construction and participation in his Youngstown interview with a local working-class activist, Charlie Johnson. Johnson states, 'Many are happy to go to a meeting where [Councilman] Mike Ray hands out charts, gives a presentation, but doesn't actually do anything. Their eyes just glaze over.' (Gest 2016, p. 127).

The forms of participation—charts and presentations—are based in the knowledge construction of the middle class. The reaction to these methods of participation are two: glazed over eyes or not showing up to participate at all (Gest 2016, p. 127). Cramer's rural working class also suggests a difference in knowledge construction. Cramer states that 'many [working class] people perceived that their own wisdom was not book learning, but it was far more valuable and realistic' (Cramer 2016, p. 129). Cramer's interviews, however, push beyond this basic insight to reveal some other features that link rural, working-class attitudes to ways of knowing and anti-institutional sentiment. Cramer's Wisconsinites complain about their local knowledge not being requested or valued by the UW-Madison research teams, particularly their knowledge of the lakes and fish breeding season (2016, p. 126-27), road improvements that increased local safety but were denied because of environmental regulations (2016, p. 129), and a general feeling that legislators and the Department of Natural Resources 'had little actual understanding of the practicalities of everyday life in the Northwoods' (2016, p. 129). These claims relate directly to differences in knowledge construction, with Cramer's rural interviewees, all laborers in the working class, arguing that their knowledge is not validated or used by institutions. These examples also suggest that working class members are aware of the differences in knowledge construction.

Donald Trump's Knowledge Construction

While Trump is not the only public figure to use these rhetorical tactics that ignore context, use 'us versus them' frameworks, and delivery emotion over logic, I would suggest Trump is unique. The university's and the middle-class's rules of school were not necessary for, and therefore do not apply to and are unrehearsed by, a billionaire trust fund recipient who never needed books, education, or middle-class methods to make his riches. With Trump being only a Twitterer, not a writer, or even a book reader (Sheehan Perkins 2017), he hasn't spent the thousands of hours necessary to absorb the university and professional's way of thinking or expressing critical thought, or even correct grammar and punctuation, as witnessed, for example, in his many Twitter statements or letters to citizens that capitalize 'Nation' even when used as a common noun (Caron 2018). Trump never needed these middle-class tools, language, or ways of knowing. Thus, in his language and knowledge construction, and because of this unique background, I might term Trump a 'working-class billionaire' who is able to transform his wealth and status into a position that aligns uniquely with some facets of working-class culture, as distinct from middle-class culture, therein allowing the working class to recognize elements of working-class culture, finally, in the public and political spheres.

Institutional Alienation and Disempowerment

Many of these cultural features, whether based in language, thought, or behavior, connect to working-class feelings of institutional disempowerment and anti-institutional biases. These feelings of disempowerment begin in childhood and continue through adulthood. Importantly, they also suggest two different forms of participation, especially concerning advocacy with institutions.

Research (Lareau 2003) shows large differences in language use in the American home, including working-class parents talking to their kids less, as well as parents' verbalization being based to greater degree in commands, not negotiation. Working-class parents advocate less on their children's behalf, particularly with school. Working-class parents submitted to the power of the school, the institution, then complained privately, sometimes angrily, at the dinner table, feeling abused by the middle-class institution.

Lareau's research also captures how working-class parents didn't stand for children 'whining,' while middle-class parents saw 'whining' as practice debating, negotiating, and advocating for oneself. However, middle-class kids' lives were a whirlwind of practice talking with adults as equals through a never-ending series of teachers, coaches, and private lesson mentors. Middle-class kids negotiated with adults. Middle-class parents, with the fearlessness of entitlement, negotiated with institutional authority whenever their child received less than necessary to fully bloom into a future middle-class adult.

These differing relationships with institutions also distinguishes class-based participation—a middle-class participation that produces individuals that are comfortable with and who can easily advocate for themselves inside of institutions, and a working-class participation that feels observed by and disempowered by, rather than participating through, institutions.

Economist Zweig can be seen as commenting on the lack of agency of working class culture in a decidedly middle class public and political sphere. Zweig (2012) states,

When society fails to acknowledge the existence and experience of working people it robs them of an articulate sense of themselves and their place in society. We know from the vibrancy of other identity movements that to silence and leave nameless a central aspect of people's identity is to strip them of a measure of power over their lives. (p. 61)

Concerning working-class feelings of disempowerment, academia may be partly responsible for seeing working-class empowerment where little exists. Preeminent labor historian Jefferson Cowie's 'How Labor Scholars Missed the Trump Revolt' (2017) suggests a certain blindness to working-class realities that may be largely due to academia's chosen narratives that reify working-class agency. Feelings of agency toward institutions, however, are decidedly middle class, and perhaps middle-class academics' narratives have selectively grafted this middle-class agency too easily or too routinely into working-class studies. Historian Cowie states of his field and the Trump victory that,

We may have been blinded by the bedrock assumptions of our own field. Most labor historians, one way or another, and whether or not they concede it, remain children of the 'new labor history.' The field emerged in the 1960s and '70s from several sources: the political vision of the New Left, civil rights, and women's movements. [...] In place of institutions and economics, the new breed of scholars put culture, consciousness, community, agency, and resistance at the center of their analyses. [...] No longer intellectual pawns, the working class could have its own voice and reveal its own rich complexity. Liberated history, so the assumption went, would lead to liberated workers. [...] But this paradigm never quite escaped its origins in the political romanticism of the New Left that gave birth to it. (para. 5)

Cowie later reflects on how these values dominant in working-class scholarship were much different than his own working-class childhood:

Having grown up in a white, blue-collar, Midwestern household, I was long bothered by the fact that my experiences at home never jibed with the literature I read in graduate school. [...]The working-class universe I knew most intimately was one without romance or agency and with precious little discussion of movements or protest or anything of the sort. (para 8)

Cowie analyzes how academia, itself steeped in middle-class values, misrepresents the degree of working-class agency, or perhaps looks for it only in certain locations. This becomes detrimental when, for instance, the middle-class historian or politician grafts the quality and quantity of middle class agency and participation onto the mass of working-class members.

Racism and Xenophobia or Institutional Disempowerment?

Thus far, I've outlined how culture, knowledge construction, and agency with institutions are different between classes, and how this provided Trump an *ethos* often congruent to working class culture's preferences. Yet this does not wholly address the issue of race in Trump's working-class white demographic. Clearly the millions of members of the white working class who voted for Trump are not, as a demographic, xenophobic and racist, leaving one to wonder why Trump's xenophobic claims were greatly ignored or found acceptable enough to not disqualify him from office. Although many reasons are possible, and no scholar can untangle all various threads that threaten to treat the working class as a white homogenous entity, I'll suggest that Trump's use of an anti-institutional framework in which institutions support minorities, but not working-class whites, aligns with working-class beliefs and therein provides a powerful ethos, and perhaps logic, likely making Trump's xenophobic claims more palatable to a significant population of working-class whites.

Working-class whites feel marginalized by institutions and believe that institutions favor immigrants and minorities:

The individuals I surveyed and interviewed [...] believe ethnic minorities have been given social advantages at the expense of white working class people. [...] Politically, white working class people face a catch-22; should they complain about the promotion of ethnic minorities at their expense, they are labeled racists. Should they blame an economic model featuring expanding inequality and increasingly unstable employment, they are deemed to be lazy. (Gest 2016, p. 16)

One may interpret this catch-22 as a conflict where working-class whites, despite a lack of agency with middle-class institutions, are not recognized as marginalized, or as culturally different from the middle class, which has better resources to be upwardly mobile.

Without the availability of resources, strong feelings of reverse discrimination do factor into the working-class participation, especially in the Trump era (Gest 2016, Khazan 2016). Prior to Trump, the Obama administration built no strong narrative to counter the conservative narratives of victimization by big government and the victimization of the white majority (Lopez 2017, p. 191-94). Thus, the white working class isn't merely racist. Rather, its racism and xenophobia is often tied to its distant, cantankerous connection to institutions, institutions run by the middle class that, in the working-class view, redistribute hard-earned money to undeserving, lazy recipients, be they government employees (Cramer 2016, p. 18, 136; Zweig

2012, p. 170) or welfare recipients (Hochschild 2016, p. 61). For the white working class ‘government support symbolizes a certain badge of respect’ for minorities (Gest 2016, p. 168) that the white working class does not receive from the very same institutions.

Blaming Institutions as a Rhetorical Gateway to Acceptance of Xenophobia

Language differences, knowledge construction, and ‘us’ versus ‘them’ beliefs can create an anti-institutionalism to imply a ‘white’ working class under attack from American institutions and validate, to a degree, racism and xenophobia. Trump’s rhetoric can be overtly racist or xenophobic based solely in fear of the other, such as his comment equating Mexicans with criminality: ‘When Mexico sends its people, [...] They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people.’ (Trump qtd in Wolf 2018).

However, numerous examples of his rhetoric suggest *institutions* protect the illegal and undeserving at the expense of working-class whites. According to Trump, immigrants and minorities overwhelm our resources, and, despite this, *government institutions* protect immigrants, or *government institutions* do nothing while immigrants plunder jobs and resources, despite studies showing immigration leads to economic growth (Hoban 2017). Thus, Trump’s racist and xenophobic statements are often framed through an already existing anti-institutional attitude.

We see this framework in Trump’s April 2016 suggestion that institutions are protecting illegal immigrants and allowing them to use up resources at greater rates than citizens. Trump claimed that ‘illegal immigrant households receive far more in welfare benefits’ (as qtd in Kohn), despite the fact that ‘That assertion has been disputed by the conservative Cato Institute, which actually found that they are less likely to use welfare benefits than citizens—both in terms of frequency and dollar amount’ (Kohn 2016). Trump frames his immigrant bashing through institution bashing—immigrants use up American resources, and government agencies do not stop them. We see a similar use of anti-establishment rhetoric to set up xenophobia in a Des Moines speech in April 2017:

They’re not going to come in and immediately go and collect welfare. [...] I believe the time has come for new immigration rules which say those seeking admission into our country must be able to support themselves financially and should not use welfare for a period of at least five years. (Trump qtd in Register’s Editorial, 2017)

The *Des Moines Register* reported ‘raucous applause from supporters.’ The *Register* itself critiqued Trump, reporting that ‘with few exceptions, new immigrants cannot access welfare programs during their first five years in the U. S.’ (Register’s Editorial 2017) due to a law signed by Bill Clinton. Thus, even when law does not permit institutions to allocate resources to immigrants, Trump’s framework suggests institutions do so anyway, and xenophobia becomes framed through a rhetoric where institutions, particularly government, provide immigrants institutional badges while offering the white working class little help.

This rhetorical frame can be seen repeatedly in Trump’s speeches and comments, but also in his professional documents such as his immigration reform plan released during his early candidacy in August 2015. His report again uses a framework of institutions

allowing too many foreigners, who take up resources—in this case, good jobs that American institutions should be protecting.

We graduate two times more Americans with STEM degrees each year than find STEM jobs, yet as much as two-thirds of entry-level hiring for IT jobs is accomplished through the H-1B program. More than half of H-1B visas are issued for the program's lowest allowable wage level, and more than eighty percent for its bottom two. Raising the prevailing wage paid to H-1Bs will force companies to give these coveted entry level jobs to the existing domestic pool of unemployed native and immigrant workers in the U.S., instead of flying in cheaper workers from overseas. ('Immigration Reform That Will Make America Great Again')

Much like Trump's speeches, this policy statement suggests institutions are not helping Americans and instead have law and policy favoring immigrants. Many of Trump's short list of policy suggestions that follow in the 'Immigration Reform' document also use this framework of institutions favoring immigrants and minorities, not Americans. Trump's policies include increasing the prevailing wage for H-1B visas, a requirement to hire American workers first, and ending welfare abuse. Each implies institutions are favoring immigrants, minorities, and the undeserving, while American workers and citizens are the victims of such policies.

Trump's rhetorical framework can be glimpsed elsewhere. For instance, Trump's unevidenced claim that California allowed millions of illegal immigrants to vote in the 2017 election (Jacobs and Levine 2017). Here again, the institutions of the state of California are protecting immigrants, this time to despoil democracy and his victory of the popular vote.

Working-Class Participation in Context

My explanation of white working-class acceptance of xenophobia through an anti-institutional framework, a framework whose ethos is based in cultural differences from the middle class that include language preferences, knowledge construction, and feelings of agency, is neither stronger nor weaker than competing claims as to how race and social class function. The relationship of class to race is currently a major question in working-class studies (Linkon and Russo, p. 6), and many answers are possible beyond my own. Joan C. Williams' *White Working Class* (2017) outlines a number of possibilities, such as privileged whites not acknowledging their privilege (p. 63), the left dismissing white working-class 'demands on the grounds of white privilege' (p. 70), a feeling that no politician is fighting for the white working class (p. 64), an American welfare system that, unlike many European systems, aids those in poverty, but not those attaining a working-class or middle-class income (p. 13), a fear of economically falling in a global economy (p. 65), a fear enhanced by increased immigration to rural areas (p. 66) that working-class whites feel may affect their own future, and also their communities' futures (Zito and Todd 2018, p. 20). Returning to Attridge's idea of coarse language as empowerment, Williams suggests that for some, racist public rhetoric like Trump's is a 'poke in the eye to elites' (2017, p. 64).

I add to this list of explanations the following: the working class feels alienated from middle-class language, knowledge construction, and culture and has its own forms of these categories of public participation. The working class saw elements of itself in Trump's political

participation, if only through the recognition of the lack of middle-class standards typical of media and political discourse. Many of these middle-class standards also guide institutions, which the working class feels distant from and often victimized by. Trump's rhetoric often used a framework of institution as victimizer of the working class; this sometimes allowed Trump to use anti-institutional rhetoric as a gateway to argue for white working-class victimization through an existing general working-class distrust of institutions.

Concerning how to best answer the question of race and social class, David R. Roediger suggests that there is a 'tired assumption that white males are the working class' (1999, p. 189). He suggests that the 'key question, on such a view, is invariably how white, usually male, workers [...] will react and move' (p. 189). I would suggest that potentially different expectations of public participation for the working-class, constructed greatly by anti-institutional attitudes that align with Trump's rhetorical frame for xenophobia, comprises one way that many working-class whites decided to 'react and move' in the last election cycle, bringing new insights into a working-class public sphere with it.

Author Bio

Dr. Liberty Kohn is an Associate Professor of English at Winona State University in Winona, Minnesota. His research interests are public and technical writing, genre theory, and pedagogy. His scholarship has appeared in the edited collections *Class in the Composition Classroom* and *Technology in the Literature Classroom* as well as journals such as the *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, *Composition Forum*, *Journal of Interdisciplinary Humanities*, *Journal of Language Literacy and Education*, *Technoculture*, and more.

He also serves as Writing Center Director, founded Winona State's Writing Across the Curriculum program, and chaired the university's faculty development program. He is currently completing a book project entitled *Mapping Publics* that focuses on sustainability and market rhetorics in the public sphere. Liberty is also a first-generation, working class student from Southern Wisconsin.

Bibliography

- Adler-Kassner, L. 1999, 'The Shape of the form: working-class students and the academic essay,' in S. L. Linkon (ed.), *Teaching working class*, The University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, pp. 85-105.
- Attfield, S. 2016, 'Rejecting respectability: on being unapologetically working class', *Journal of Working Class Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 45-57, viewed 25 May 2017, <<https://workingclassstudiesjournal.files.wordpress.com/2016/06/jwcs-vol-1-issue-1-december-2016-attfield.pdf>>.
- BBC News. 2016, 'Election 2016: Trump voters on why they backed him', *BBC News* 9 November, viewed 10 May 2017, <<http://www.bbc.com/news/election-us-2016-36253275>>.
- Bernstein, B. 1971. *Class, codes, and control: theoretical studies towards a sociology of language*, Schocken, London.
- Bloom, L. Z. 1996, 'Freshman English as a middle-class enterprise.' *College English*, vol. 58, no. 6, pp. 654-675.

- Brown, L. 2015, 'Why Trump will lose', *U.S. News and World Report*, 11 December, viewed 1 May 2017, <<https://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/lara-brown/2015/12/11/donald-trump-wont-win-as-a-republican-or-an-independent>>.
- Caron, C. 2018, '“OMG this is wrong!” retired English teacher marks up a White House letter and sends it back', *New York Times* 27, viewed 1 June 2018, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/27/us/politics/trump-letter-english-teacher.html>>.
- Cowie, J. 2017, 'How labor scholars missed the Trump revolt', *Chronicle of Higher Education* 1 September, viewed 3 May 2018, <<https://www.chronicle.com/article/How-Labor-Scholars-Missed-the/241049>>.
- Cramer, K. 2016, *The politics of resentment: rural consciousness in wisconsin and the rise of Scott Walker*, U of Chicago Press.
- Diamond, J. 2016, 'Donald Trump on protester: I'd like to punch him in the face', *CNN* 23 Feb, viewed 28 May 2018, <<https://www.cnn.com/2016/02/23/politics/donald-trump-nevada-rally-punch/index.html>>.
- Emmerich, N. 2016, 'Ethos, eidos, habitus: a social theoretical contribution to morality and ethics', in C. Brand, Springer (ed.), *Dual-process theories in moral psychology: interdisciplinary approaches to theoretical, empirical, and practical considerations*, Springer, Amsterdam, pp. 271-96.
- Frum, D. 2016, 'Why Trump supporters think he'll win', *The Atlantic Monthly*, 29 July, viewed 28 April 2017, <<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/07/backing-donald-trump/493619/>>.
- Gest, J. 2016, *The new minority: white working class politics in an age of immigration and inequality*, Oxford UP, New York, Oxford.
- Habermas, J. 1989. *The structural transformation of the public sphere: an inquiry into a category of bourgeois society*, Trans. Thomas Burger, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Hauser, G. A. 1999, *Vernacular voices: the rhetoric of publics and public spheres*, University of South Carolina Press, Columbia.
- Henry, D. 2017, 'Coal executive: Trump 'can't bring mining jobs back', *The Hill* 27 March, viewed 28 May 2018, <<http://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/325891-coal-executive-trump-cant-bring-mining-jobs-back>>.
- Hoban, B. 2017, 'Do immigrants 'steal' jobs from American workers?', *Brookings Institute* 24 August, viewed 28 May 2018, <<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brookings-now/2017/08/24/do-immigrants-steal-jobs-from-american-workers/>>.
- Hochschild, A. R. 2016, *Strangers in their own land: anger and morning on the American right*. New Press, New York.
- Donald J. Trump.com, n.d., 'Immigration reform that will make America great again', viewed 28 May 2018, <<https://assets.donaldjtrump.com/Immigration-Reform-Trump.pdf>>.
- Jensen, B. 2012, *Reading classes: on culture and classism in America*. ILR/Cornell UP, Ithica.
- Khazan, O. 2016, 'The Precarious Masculinity of 2016 Voters', *Salon*, 12 October, viewed April 19 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/10/male-trump-voters-masculinity/503741/>.
- King, P. M. and Kitchener, K. S. *Developing reflective judgment: understanding and promoting intellectual growth and critical thinking in adolescents and adults*. Jossey-Bass, 1994.
- Lane, J. F. 2000, *Pierre Bourdieu: a critical introduction*, Pluto Press, London.
- Lareau, A. 2003, *Unequal childhoods: class, race, and family life*, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Lindquist, J. 2002, *A place to stand: politics and persuasion in a working-class bar* Oxford Press, Oxford, New York.

- Linkon, S. L. and Russo, J. 2017, 'Twenty years of working-class studies: tensions, values, and core questions', *Journal of Working-Class Studies* vol. 1, no. 1, 2, pp. 4-13, viewed 17 April, 2017, <<https://workingclassstudiesjournal.files.wordpress.com/2016/06/jwcs-vol-1-issue-1-december-2016-linkon-russo.pdf>>.
- Lopez, I.H. 2014, *Dog-whistle politics: how coded racial appeals have reinvented racism and wrecked the middle-class*, Oxford UP, Oxford, New York.
- Minnix, C. 2017, "'Globalist scumbags': composition's global turn in a time of fake news, globalist conspiracy, and nationalist literacy", *Literacy in Composition Studies* vol. 5. No. 2, pp. 63-83, viewed 3 February 2018, <<http://licsjournal.org/OJS/index.php/LiCS/article/view/170>>.
- Moore, W. S. 1994, 'Student and faculty epistemology in the college classroom: the Perry schema of intellectual and ethical development', in K. W. Pritchard and R. McLaren Sawyer (eds.), *Handbook of college teaching: theory and applications*, Greenwood Press, Westport Conn., pp. 45-68.
- Negt, O. and Kluge, A. 1993, *Public sphere and experience: toward an analysis of the bourgeois and proletarian public sphere*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.
- Robin, C. 2018, *The reactionary mind: conservatism from Edmund Burke to Donald Trump*, 2nd edn, Oxford UP, New York.
- Roediger, D. R. 1999, *The wages of whiteness: race and the making of the American working class*, Revised edn, Verso, London and New York.
- Schrock, D., Dowd-Arrow, B., Erichsen, K., Gentile, H., and Dignam, P. 2017, 'The emotional politics of making America great again: Trump's working-class appeals', *Journal of Working Class Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 5-22, viewed 10 December, 2017 <<https://workingclassstudiesjournal.files.wordpress.com/2016/06/jwcs-vol-2-issue-1-june-2017-schrock1.pdf>>.
- Senell, E. 2017, 'The art of polarizing *ethos*: an analysis of Donald Trump's campaign rhetoric', *Relevant Rhetoric*, vol. 8, pp. 1-21, viewed 3 May 2018, <<http://relevantrhetoric.com/TheArtofPolarizingEthos.pdf>>.
- Sheehan Perkins, M. 2017, 'Trump: 'I love to read'', *Business Insider*, 16 March, viewed May 15, <<http://www.businessinsider.com/trump-reading-level-habits-2017-3>>.
- Shepard, S. 2016, 'GOP insiders: Trump can't win', *Politico*, 12 August, viewed October 18, <<https://www.politico.com/story/2016/08/donald-trump-electoral-votes-gop-insiders-226932>>.
- Tyson, A. and Maniam, S. 2016, 'Behind Trump's victory: divisions by race, gender, education', *Pew Research Center* 9 November, Accessed July 23 2016, <<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/09/behind-trumps-victory-divisions-by-race-gender-education/>>
- Vance, J.D. 2016, *Hillbilly elegy: a memoir of a family and culture in crisis*, Harper Collins, New York.
- Warner, C. 2002, *Publics and counterpublics*, Zone Books, New York.
- Werner, Jansen B. 2017, 'Building a 'dwelling place' for justice: ethos reinvention in Martin Luther King Jr.'s 'Where Do We Go From Here?''', *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, vol.20, no. 1, pp. 109-32.
- Williams, J. C. 2017, *White working class: overcoming class cluelessness in America*, Harvard Business Review Press, Boston.
- Wolf, Z. B. 2018, 'Trump basically called Mexicans rapists again.' *CNN* 6 April, viewed 28 May 2018, <<https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/06/politics/trump-mexico-rapists/index.html>>.

- Zito, S. and Todd, B. 2018, *The great revolt: inside the populist coalition reshaping American politics*, Crown Forum, New York.
- Zweig, M. 2012, *The working-class majority: America's best kept secret*, 2nd edn, Cornell UP, Ithica.

‘A Little Crow in the Tree’: Growing Inequality and White Working-Class Politics in the U.S.

Lawrence M. Eppard, Shippensburg University

Arlie Hochschild, University of California, Berkeley

Richard Wilkinson, University of York

Abstract

There have been troubling trends in economic inequality, deprivation, and insecurity in the U.S. since the 1970s. This inequality and insecurity has left the American social fabric ‘fraying at the edges,’ in the words of Joseph Stiglitz. Scholars have recently begun focusing their attention on phenomena which are reflective of and associated with this fraying social fabric: the increasing economic insecurity and emerging ‘politics of resentment’ of the White working class in the U.S. This piece contains excerpts from interviews that Lawrence Eppard conducted with two important scholars, Arlie Hochschild and Richard Wilkinson, who have explored these issues in their work in different ways. The interviews touch on a variety of topics, including growing inequality and its social consequences, the role of government in addressing inequality, White working-class resentment, the impact of racism and sexism on White working-class attitudes and politics, the 2016 U.S. presidential election, political polarization, and dominant American notions of freedom. Much of the discussion focuses on Hochschild’s work in *Strangers in Their Own Land* and Wilkinson’s work with Kate Pickett in *The Spirit Level*.

Keywords

Economic inequality, white working class, politics of resentment, political polarization

Introduction

There have been troubling trends in economic inequality, deprivation, and insecurity in the U.S. since the 1970s. Today, these trends have resulted in levels of economic inequality not seen since the 1920s, with the top ten percent taking in almost half of all income and owning over 70 percent of all wealth (WID 2018). It was recently documented that the top one percent of income earners will earn 40 percent more in just one week than the bottom fifth will earn over the entire year, while the top 0.1 percent will take home more in less than two days than the bottom 90 percent earns in a year (Stiglitz 2013, p. 5). In addition to this grim reality, scholars have observed other troubling trends such as increasing extreme poverty, decreasing intergenerational social mobility, and stagnating or falling wages for many workers—despite an economy that grew over that same time period. The U.S. is now the most unequal country in the wealthy world, and ranks poorly relative to other wealthy countries on a variety of other related measures including overall poverty, childhood poverty, social mobility, and welfare generosity.

Signs of strain from this increasing inequality are showing up across many groups in American society including the much-talked-about White working class. Many working-class Whites live in areas that have experienced the ‘trauma of a simultaneous economic, social, and political collapse’ (Gest 2016, p. 10) over the last few decades. Many find themselves falling behind in an economy that has shifted toward more service- and technology-based jobs and requires more educational attainment, made worse by the decline of labor unions. Because of all of this, their wages and benefits have declined and they are experiencing more economic insecurity. A variety of negative consequences are associated with these strains, including declining labor force participation, lower marriage rates, troubling morbidity and mortality rates, and less social mobility, among others.

We focus on the White working class in this piece not because they have fared the worst—indeed, many non-White working-class Americans continue to fare much worse. Our focus on the White working class stems from their unique reaction to their growing economic insecurity. Growing inequality, in the words of Joseph Stiglitz, ‘has left the American social fabric, and the country’s economic sustainability, fraying at the edges’ (2013, p. 2). The reaction of working-class Whites is reflective of this social fraying. In the face of considerable economic challenges and in the midst of a significant demographic shift, a ‘politics of resentment’ (Gest 2016, p. 11) has emerged among this group. Many working-class Whites have scapegoated other groups for Whites’ perceived loss in status, placing blame on racial and ethnic minorities, immigrants, and women, among others. In addition, many have blamed the government, which leaves this population in a precarious position. Few other social actors or institutions possess the power and resources of the government to combat the negative impacts of forces such as globalization, deindustrialization, automation, and neoliberalism.

In this piece, Lawrence Eppard discusses growing inequality in the U.S. and its impact on the well-being and politics of the White working class with scholars Arlie Hochschild and Richard Wilkinson. This piece is based on excerpts from separate one-on-one interviews that Eppard conducted with these two scholars, rather than a conversation between all three. The interviews were conducted by phone during the spring of 2017 and have been edited and spliced together for this piece.

Growing Inequality and the Great Paradox

Lawrence Eppard: Richard, your book *The Spirit Level* that you co-authored with Kate Pickett touches on many of the most important themes running through your career of work on the impact of economic inequality on societies. Can you talk about what that book was able to demonstrate?

Richard Wilkinson: Our work in that book looks at the scale of income differences between rich and poor in different rich developed societies. We found that those income differences closely correlated with things like the level of violence in societies, the overall life expectancy of populations, child well-being, measures of the strength of community life, levels of trust, the proportion of the population in prison, and so on. A whole range of problems of that kind were worse in societies with bigger income differences between rich and poor.

That of course explains why the United States, which has the biggest income differences between rich and poor in the developed world, has amongst the lowest life expectancy among the rich developed countries, the highest imprisonment rates, the highest homicide rates, and the highest obesity rates. There is a whole raft of these problems which are not only more

common the lower you go on the social ladder, but also worse in societies with bigger income differences. The countries that do well, that have smaller income differences, are Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, The Netherlands, and Japan.

Lawrence Eppard: Arlie, your recent work in *Strangers in Their Own Land* really helps us to understand how growing inequality is playing out for the White working class in the U.S. Can you talk about what drew you to this project?

Arlie Hochschild: Americans are now more divided than we have been since the Civil War. We now live in geographic bubbles, in media bubbles, and in electronic bubbles. We look at the screens of our computers and, in a way, see our own selves reflected back. So we only talk to people who agree with us and mainly watch those TV channels with commentators who reaffirm our beliefs. And those on the liberal left are more enclosed in their own political bubble than those on the right.

I spent five years going into a cultural, economic, and political bubble that is as far right as the University of California, Berkeley is left—and in particular I was interested in trying to understand the world view of those who embraced the Tea Party. I wanted to go where the right-wing Tea Party had grown the fastest, and that was the South. And within the South, I wanted the ‘super South.’ In the entire region of the South in 2012, only a third of Whites voted for Barack Obama. In Louisiana, it was 14 percent. So that was the ‘super South,’ and that is why I landed there.

What brought me there was curiosity about the red state paradox. How could it be that across the nation, the poorest states—the states with the worst educational outcomes, the worst health outcomes, the most disrupted families, the lowest life expectancy, the states that receive more money in federal aid than they give to the federal government in tax dollars—how could it be that they also revile the federal government? That was the red state paradox.

Louisiana turned out to be an exaggerated version of that. At the time, Louisiana was the second poorest state in the union, with 44 percent of its state budget coming from the federal government. Yet there was widespread enthusiasm for the Tea Party and Donald Trump. So I thought to myself, ‘This is exactly where I need to be, because this is something I don’t understand.’

Going there was not just going to a different region, but also going to a different social class, the White working class. That’s who I found were the most enthusiastically in favor of Trump.

The Coming Storm

Lawrence Eppard: Arlie, you were witnessing the coming storm of White working-class resentment before a lot of other people realized what was happening. How aware were you of this development as it was happening, considering that you seemed to be in the midst of it?

Arlie Hochschild: In 2011 the Tea Party was on the rise and determined to block President Obama at every turn. Sometimes I felt like a little crow in the tree, you know? ‘Danger coming!’ It wasn’t hard to see in 2011. There was absolute gridlock in Congress. Already at that point the rhetoric was escalating. So it wasn’t hard to see.

I didn't foresee that Donald Trump would get elected. I did see the movement, and I could see it was growing, and right-wing resentment was not well understood. I didn't understand it. So in some sense I was a crow in the tree, seeing the storm getting bigger and closer, but not fully understanding the resentment. I was reading the *New York Times*, which was telling us all he wouldn't get elected [laughter]. I was in my media bubble.

Lawrence Eppard: When you were at the Donald Trump campaign rallies that you describe in *Strangers*, how did you think about them in the moment? Did you feel like they would turn out to be a historical footnote?

Arlie Hochschild: I did sense the excitement of those in attendance, like [Trump] was the match that lit the dry kindling that I had been studying all of this time. I did think it would start a movement, but I didn't foresee that the movement would take over the White House.

Lawrence Eppard: Richard, you have been examining inequality for a long time. For many of those years, economic inequality did not seem to be an urgent issue for many people. Then of course inequality exploded into the public consciousness with the Great Recession and the resulting social unrest. Can you talk about your experience as somebody who has been along for the entire ride, watching as the issue of inequality moved from the shadows into the spotlight?

Richard Wilkinson: I remember very well that, when talking about policy in relation to the problem of reducing the huge class differences in health, people would suggest inadequate policy responses—things like having less salt in school meals, and other nitpicky proposals. The Blair government established a lot of policies to reduce health inequalities. But they were nearly all policies that they obviously hoped would protect the poor from the health effects of being poor, but not deal with poverty itself. I used to feel almost rude in raising issues like income inequality. Compared to the fine detail of policy issues people usually thought about in relation to health, it was too big and crude an issue to talk about. Civil servants didn't feel it their job to think about things like that.

But I suppose the financial crash led to a much greater awareness of the scale of income inequality. It led to a greater awareness of what the bankers and CEOs were getting, and the knowledge that they often avoided taxes. That began to raise concern about inequality. The financial crash also undermined the idea that these people were brilliant and somehow deserved high salaries. The next major change was the Occupy movement. Both of those things have led to an enormous growth in the amount of attention that inequality gets in the media.

The Working-Class Squeeze

Lawrence Eppard: Let's talk a little bit about the problems facing the White working class—with the caveat of course that Whites are not the only working-class Americans struggling, or even struggling the worst. Some of the main problems highlighted by scholars who study this group have been the negative impacts of growing inequality on health and mortality rates, wages, marriage rates, social mobility, labor force participation, and a variety of other measures of well-being.

I think part of the resentment felt by White working-class Americans stems from the social mobility measures, the reality that the American Dream is stalling for many people and that inequality plays a role.

Richard Wilkinson: There are now two or three data sets which show that social mobility is lower in more unequal societies. The measure of social mobility used is almost always intergenerational income mobility, so it is really asking if rich fathers have rich sons, and if poor fathers have poor sons. What studies show is that in more unequal societies your father's income is much more important as a determinant of what happens to you than it is in more equal societies.

Lawrence Eppard: Arlie, so much of the 'deep story' you discuss in your book seems to be related to the stalled American Dream, stalled social mobility. Can you talk about the deep story?

Arlie Hochschild: The 'deep story' is a story that feels true about a salient situation. So you take information out of the deep story, you take moral beliefs out of the deep story, and what is left is just how a salient situation feels to you.

In the right-wing deep story, you are standing in line, as in a pilgrimage. At the top of the hill in front of you is the American Dream. You have been standing there a long time, your feet haven't moved, and you're tired. You feel a sense of deserving for that American Dream. You're middle-aged or older, you've worked hard, and you feel you have played by the rules.

Then, in another moment of this deep story, it looks like people are cutting ahead of you in line. And you think, 'Well, who are they?' And they are African Americans. There are women cutting in line. There are undocumented immigrants and refugees. You feel like you have been moved back in line, and that something unfair has been done to you.

In another moment you have Barack Obama, who you believe should be impartially supervising the line, but who is instead waving to the line cutters. He is sponsoring them and pushing you back. You've been forgotten.

In the final moment of this right-wing deep story, somebody ahead of you in line—someone from, say, New York or Los Angeles, who has a higher education than you—this person is ahead of you in line and turns around and says, 'You ill-educated, backward redneck.' And that is the last straw. Now you feel like a subgroup, yourself, like an ignored minority group, yourself. You feel that you have been stripped of honor, and in that state, you are looking for a leader to deliver you from this.

Lawrence Eppard: How much do you think this deep story resonates with White working-class Americans beyond the far-right folks you spoke with in Louisiana?

Arlie Hochschild: Well, there was a 39-point margin by which Whites without college degrees voted for Donald Trump over Hillary Clinton. That's pretty large. And in all my wanderings, I didn't talk to a White blue-collar person who favored Hillary Clinton. They just didn't feel spoken to.

Richard Wilkinson: Greater inequality makes status and class more important. It makes people lower on the social ladder feel even more disrespected and looked down on. Typically, groups deprived of status sometimes try to regain it by asserting their superiority to any more vulnerable group or minority.

It used to be said that the U.S. never had a strong socialist party partly because the White working class preferred to identify with other Whites than with poorer African Americans. My guess is that as income differences in the U.S. have widened further, poorer Whites have felt abandoned, and older ones have felt this as a loss of status. I think this may explain the rise in death rates among the less well-off and less well-educated older White population, a rise which is dominated by a rise in suicide and drug- and alcohol-related deaths. These causes speak of a sense of hopelessness.

My impression is that Trump was liked because he did not fit into the cultural Washington elite that people felt belittled by in class terms. Trump scored points because his language and what he said offended that elite. It was as if he managed to make people feel, falsely, that in class terms he was one of them, one of us made good.

Similar things happened in Britain during the Brexit vote, and I think that would not have happened if inequality had not increased so much.

Race and Gender

Lawrence Eppard: It is clear that racism and sexism play a central role in White working-class politics, as they do in the politics of all social classes. Whites' growing resentment is surely strongly associated with their negative reactions to reductions in racial and gender inequality, to Whites' perceived loss in status.

Arlie Hochschild: I think race is very fundamentally tied in with the belief that these people are being asked to give their hard-earned dollars to support people who aren't working, and are having too many children. That's been there for a long time. And I would often say, 'Well, didn't Bill Clinton dismantle welfare as we know it? Isn't there workfare now?' They would draw a blank on that. In fact, in Louisiana food stamp usage has gone up. Their focus was on those beneath them in social class, not on the one percent or Wall Street. They had some resentment about the one percent and Wall Street. But 99 percent of their resentment was focused down, not up.

Lawrence Eppard: Is this a uniquely American problem? Do you see differences between how the White Americans you spoke with react to economic inequality and view the government's role in addressing it, compared to, say, working-class Europeans?

Arlie Hochschild: I see two differences. One, Americans don't believe in government as fundamentally as Europeans do. So in the Norwegian right wing, for instance, they may say they love their government benefits, they just don't want them for Muslims coming into Norway or for immigrants in general. Whereas in the U.S. the right wing really doesn't want the government at all. It never has served us, we have the church. Just circle the wagons around family and church and we can do without government largesse. So that's a fundamental difference.

A second fundamental difference, with the people I came to know, is that they felt threatened by people born in the U.S., by 'insider intruders,' so by African Americans and women. Whereas in Europe it is much more about outsiders, the non-Christians, the Muslims. So there is overlap, but those are the two main differences I think between the European deep story and the American one.

Lawrence Eppard: The folks you talk to in the book, their understanding of racial inequality is certainly extremely flawed in many ways. Yet this doesn't really make them unique among Whites. There is a deep misunderstanding of racial inequality across American society, whether working class or not.

Arlie Hochschild: I know! It's very true. That's immediately apparent when we look at the premises implied in the deep story. In the story, Whites feel that African Americans are 'cutting in line' ahead of Whites. But throughout history, the very opposite has been true.

Those I wrote about—people like Lee Sherman or Mike Schaff, for example—they aren't mindful of the true history of African Americans. The whole conversation about race, as well as gender and sexuality, seems to have stopped a long time ago.

A conversation I had with Mike Schaff serves as a good example. Mike was born on a sugar plantation. His father was a plumber. He was the fifth of seven Catholic Cajuns. He worked putting boards down in a mosquito-ridden bayou that was used for platforms for oil drills. That's what he was doing at 15 and 16 years old.

I would ask him about race and how race enters into his feelings about politics. And he told me that he is a reformed bigot. I asked what a bigot was, and he said somebody who hates Blacks. And he said he never hated Blacks. And he said it is someone who uses the N-word. And he said he used to use the N-word but he doesn't anymore, and if somebody uses it on his Facebook page he unfriends them. Don't want that, insulting. 'But I don't like the R-word used,' he said, meaning redneck.

So I asked him what it was like in his school when it was integrated in the 1960s. And he said, 'Well, my first year of high school, there were two Blacks in the class, and the last year half the class was Black.' I asked him, 'So, did you make any new friends?' And you know what his answer was? There was a very long pause. We were out fishing, and there was this big long pause. And then he said, 'You're making me think.' And I thought, 'Wow, you haven't thought about this before?' It is as if the South sort of stayed where it was, while the rest of the country changed culturally.

Lawrence Eppard: In reading not only about the 'deep story' in *Strangers*, but throughout the rest of the book as well, I was overcome with this notion that, in addition to racism, sexism plays a crucial role as well. There seems to be a sort of crisis in masculinity in terms of the perception of where men fit into the modern economy, where men fit into a world concerned with reducing racial and gender inequality.

Arlie Hochschild: I came to feel that the people who were clinging to faith in Donald Trump and the right-wing generally were in an honor squeeze. They were facing up the hill in their deep story, and wondering how they were going to feel honor. Wondering how they were going to feel good about themselves. Thinking, 'Well, I have a job, but I haven't gotten a raise in two decades. Good jobs are closing down. Female-dominated, low-paid service jobs are the only kinds of jobs I could get if I am laid off at the plant.' So they weren't going to look for honor there.

Maybe they are the deacon at the local Pentecostal church, but religion isn't honored in the larger American culture. More and more people are secular. Then they look at region, maybe they are proud to be born in the South. Well, the rest of the world is saying that the South is

backward. So then they might look at race as something to feel proud of. But they say, 'Well if you say I am proud to be White, you are clearly a Nazi.' So you don't do that. They haven't gone to college, they haven't done that well.

In addition to all of these things, for men, there is this notion that, 'We're not needed.' Our partners don't need us for procreation, or even for sexual contact. New trends are making these men more dispensable. So what is there to be proud of? They felt that the spheres in which they can claim honor are declining. So they identify with a man in Donald Trump who seems to be restoring some honor associated with being a man, being tough, being a protector. Many of these people speak very highly of the military; there is something about that role of the man as protector. They very much yearn for some source of honor.

If you look at them holistically as a group of people looking for honor, they were kind of running out of it.

Inequality and Social Corrosion

Lawrence Eppard: Richard, you call economic inequality 'socially corrosive.' Could you expand upon that idea?

Richard Wilkinson: I think one of the most fundamental impacts of inequality is the damage it does to social relations. You can see that in measures of involvement in community life, the sort of measures that Putnam uses in *Bowling Alone*. You can see it in measures of trust. Community life weakens in more unequal societies and people trust each other less. The differences are actually quite large. In more unequal developed countries, levels of trust fall to about 15 or 20 percent of people who feel that they can trust most other people. Whereas in the more equal of the rich developed societies it rises to 60 or 65 percent of people feeling that they can trust most other people. It makes a huge difference.

There are also now papers which show that people are less willing to help each other in more unequal societies. Less willing to help neighbors, less willing to help the elderly, or people with disabilities. You also see the rise in violence, a very well-established pattern in violence. This is usually measured by homicide rates, which are higher in more unequal societies. One paper which looks at homicide rates in American states and Canadian provinces finds a tenfold difference in homicide rates per million population. This is closely related to inequality. There are now close to 60 papers looking at that relationship in different parts of the world.

So what inequality does most fundamentally is make that transition from trust, community life, and people's involvement with each other, to violence and fear and mistrust. It is a very clear pattern. Instead of a sense of shared identity, a shared well-being, you move to everyone being out for themselves. Life becomes a matter of getting as much as you can for yourself.

So that's what I mean when I say that inequality is divisive and socially corrosive.

Lawrence Eppard: When you talk about the impact of inequality on trust, you often mention the ability to feel safe in public, feel safe walking down the street. Can you talk about your own personal experiences with this, say walking in a city in the U.S. versus a more equal country?

Richard Wilkinson: I remember a time very clearly when I had been invited to dinner at a house near Boston. When I got there and knocked on the door, there was no answer. I wondered if maybe I had come on the wrong day or at the wrong time or something like that. And this was before mobile phones, or at least I didn't have one. Well, there was a kid playing in the yard in the house next door, and I asked, 'I wonder if I could use your phone?' I thought maybe I could ring up these people who had invited me. I remember the kid withdrew as I came towards him, even though I was in shirt sleeves and clearly not carrying anything that might be a weapon of any kind. And he went indoors, and his mother opened the door just slightly ajar. So I talked to her, and I explained to her my predicament, and she then handed me the phone outside rather than inviting me in to use the phone. All things that I thought very clearly expressed fear.

In the U.S., when you ask people for something on the street, you know they are fearful about what on Earth it is you want. In some societies, when you ask, 'Can you tell me the way to get to such and such a place?' you feel almost as if people are glad to have the opportunity to help. In other societies, there is an apprehension. You know, 'What's this person want with me?' A kind of worrying. I have noticed a number of times that people will sort of take a step back to slightly increase the distance. Things like that.

This fear, this mistrust, I think people know this for themselves.

America Divided

Lawrence Eppard: Many scholars have noted that the rise in political polarization has occurred concurrently with increasing inequality. What is your take on this development?

Richard Wilkinson: It does look as if greater inequality increases political divisions. Paul Krugman, in *Conscience of a Liberal*, points to research showing that. There used to be quite a big overlap in voting between Democrats and Republicans, and now in Congress there is almost no overlap at all. And I think the same thing was true early in the 20th century, in the 1920s and 1930s. Periods of high inequality are also periods of political polarization.

And it isn't just the right, it is the left as well. Some people suggest that Bernie Sanders might have won the last election had he been the Democratic candidate instead of Hillary Clinton. The support for somebody like Sanders, who calls himself a socialist, would be unimaginable in the ideology of the 1990s or the first ten years or so of this century.

This polarization is a reflection, I suppose, of how a majority of the population is dissatisfied with politics. And they turn both ways.

The long-term trends in income distribution in most rich developed countries in the 20th century follow a fairly standard pattern. You get high inequality in the 1920s, it starts to come down in the 1930s, and it goes on coming down until sometime in the 1970s. Then it bottoms out, and then you get a rise in inequality from 1980 onwards. So we are back to levels of inequality last seen in the 1920s. That is substantially related to the rise and then the fall of trade unions, the labor movement, social democratic parties, the fear of communism, and things like that.

There was a time when there was a strong countervailing voice in society—a belief that things could be run differently, that society could be qualitatively better for all of us. All of that collapsed, and the ideology of neoliberalism took over internationally and reigned almost

unchallenged. Although maybe we are beginning to see it being challenged again, it may take quite a while before any alternative vision and ideology has any chance of dominance.

Lawrence Eppard: Certainly a major part of the story in *Strangers* was about increasing political polarization.

Arlie Hochschild: In a way, I feel like I began my inquiry with the red state paradox but ended up with a blue state paradox. How could it be that the Democratic Party, the party of the working man and woman, isn't actually all that appealing to working men and women? There isn't a deep story that feels true to them.

To people in Rust Belt towns, to people in rural middle America and farming towns, to many people in the South, the impact of global capitalism has been very different than it is, say, for people across the bay here where I am in Silicon Valley. In Silicon Valley, all of those forces have been very positive and have provided many people in this area with an extraordinary amount of affluence and excitement. Here, jobs are plenty. That's very different from the experience of living in oil territory with highly automated plants. In those areas, unless you are an MIT chemist, you aren't going to get a job.

So class divisions, which have always been with us, have been exacerbated. People that have either already suffered, or who see that people in their social class are going to suffer, they're the ones who are the most anxious, and they are reaching for right-wing solutions. They feel that they are in trouble.

The Need for Government

Lawrence Eppard: Arlie, for many of the problems facing Americans, and certainly for many of the problems your participants in Louisiana face, government is an important part of the solution. Yet a government which plays a really active role in addressing social problems seems like a non-starter for your participants.

Arlie Hochschild: Yes, absolutely. Take belief in government with regard to pollution. When you ask people, 'Are the companies going to protect the environment from pollution?' They say no. I say, 'Okay, well what about individual groups?' And they say no. So I ask, 'Well, what would do it?' And they say 'government.' So there is a fundamental understanding that you do need government to get stuff done. But they have been exposed to a corrupt government [in Louisiana]. And this at least partly influences their view of government in general.

In Louisiana, oil dominates the politics in the state. The owners of oil companies are so rich they have basically bought the politicians. So they have the environmental agencies doing the moral dirty work of pretending to protect the people, but not really protecting the people. So people there are really angry at the government for taking their money but not doing anything with it. They feel that the state government is a model for the federal government. They don't think it is gonna help them. That's one piece of the problem.

The other piece of the problem is that the White men feel competitive with African Americans and with women. They feel, from their point of view, that the government has and will continue to misallocate funds to redress historically-caused inequities. They aren't at the bottom, but they fear they are heading to the bottom.

Lawrence Eppard: Richard, assuming a stronger social safety net is a major part of the answer to reducing inequality in the U.S., do you see any cultural barriers that would prevent such policies?

Richard Wilkinson: I think the spread of the neoliberal ideology, or free market fundamentalism if you like, has been so widespread that opposition to the state has become strong in a number of countries. And I think it has become stronger with inequality. People not only trust each other less, but they also trust government and institutions of different kinds less.

Expanding Our Notions of Freedom

Lawrence Eppard: To move forward, for all Americans to truly recognize the sources of our most pressing social problems and identify their possible solutions, I think we need a deeper cultural understanding of what true freedom means. Freedom not just in the negative sense of the government off our backs, but the positive sense as well, creating the conditions which enable people to fully develop their capabilities. Can you talk about this idea of expanding our idea of freedom, and how you conceptualize freedom?

Richard Wilkinson: I suspect a great many people think about freedom as if it is about freedom from government regulation. But things like health inequalities deprive large swathes of the population of more than ten percent of life expectancy. The effects of poverty and inequality are forms of structural violence and limitations on true freedom. These things affect the quality of life very deeply.

Crucial to human well-being is the nature of social relations, but inequality weakens community life and increases violence and mistrust. That affects us very intimately. There are studies that show if you are given the same exposure to infection, people who have more friends are much less likely to catch a cold. Wounds heal more quickly among people who are well-integrated socially. Studies of happiness show just the same thing—that people involved in community life with good relationships are happier.

So bigger income inequalities are huge restrictions on freedom. You not only see the consequences of inequality on measures of social cohesion, violence, and mistrust, but it has also been shown that more unequal societies spend more on what has been called ‘guard labor,’ on security staff, on prisons, and on police—people needed to protect us from each other. The higher levels of violence also mean that people fear walking home alone at night in big cities in more unequal societies. That’s an appalling and fundamental restriction on freedom that has little to do with the fear of bigger or smaller government as conventionally conceived. It is instead about the effects of inequality, the powerful restrictions on freedom caused by an unregulated ‘free market.’

We live closer to each other than ever before, and yet suffer so much from loneliness and the breakdown of social cohesion. We need to reduce inequality to tackle these problems. If Americans went to countries like Sweden and Norway they would feel more rather than less free.

We use our governments, or we should use them, for things that are in the best interest of our society. The British National Health Service is a popular and much loved example. So is the BBC. Examples accepted everywhere include the provision of education, sewerage, and roads.

Arlie Hochschild: We need to expand the symbol of freedom. We need to make red and blue understand freedom in a much fuller way. How free are we really if we are an extremely unequal society? I think inequality—whether it is class inequality, racial inequality, or gender inequality—makes us less free. I think work like Wilkinson and Pickett’s really raises the issue of how unfree we are if we come to tolerate inequality.

For me, it all became clear when I heard General Russel Honoré talking to a bunch of business people in Lake Charles. General Honoré is a four-star general, a hero of Louisiana. He is retired now, but he has become an ardent environmentalist. So he is talking to these business leaders and they are talking about ‘freedom, freedom, freedom.’ You know, freedom from regulation, freedom to start a business, freedom to make money. But they wanted nothing to do with environmentalism. So speaking to this group General Honoré said, ‘I saw a man in a boat on Lake Charles this morning. He had his line out and his bucket ready to pull out a fish. But that man is not free to pull out an uncontaminated fish.’ And I thought to myself, ‘This is brilliant.’ The General stretched the notion of freedom, which they had only applied to economic life, over to a different area of life: the environment. ‘Hey, you are free if you have renewable energy,’ or ‘You are free if you clean up the lake,’ or ‘You’re free if you have great schools,’ or ‘You are free if you have a trustworthy government.’

We are living in a dark moment in which the very idea of democracy, of a free press and independent judiciary, are being strongly challenged. Progress in defending democracy is not going to happen automatically. If you want to get involved, now would be the time.

Author Bios

Lawrence Eppard is an assistant professor of sociology at Shippensburg University, and his work explores American inequality beliefs and their social consequences.

Arlie Hochschild is professor emerita of sociology at University of California, Berkeley, and her recent work has explored current developments in right-wing politics in the United States. Hochschild’s scholarship is widely-read, and includes the now classic *The Second Shift*.

Richard Wilkinson is professor emeritus of social epidemiology at University of Nottingham, honorary professor at University College London, and a visiting professor at University of York. His scholarship explores the impact of economic inequality on societies. Wilkinson’s work is also widely-read, including the best-selling *The Spirit Level*.

This article is based on excerpts from separate one-on-one interviews conducted with Arlie Hochschild and Richard Wilkinson that have been edited and brought together for this piece. These interviews, along with interviews with several other leading scholars, will be included in a forthcoming book, *Poverty Insights*, by Lawrence M. Eppard and Mark R. Rank.

Bibliography

Gest, J. 2016, *The new minority: white working class politics in an age of immigration and inequality*, Oxford University Press, New York.

Stiglitz, J. E. 2013, *The price of inequality: how today's divided society endangers our future*, W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., New York.

World Inequality Database (WID) 2018, *World inequality database*, viewed 4 April 2018, <<http://wid.world/country/usa/>>

Linkon, Sherry (2018) *The Half-Life of Deindustrialization: Working-Class Writing about Economic Restructuring*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, Mi.

Review by Christine J. Walley

Sherry Lee Linkon's outstanding recent book, *The Half-Life of Deindustrialization*, is destined to quickly become a foundational text within working-class studies and a go-to reference for those from a variety of fields.⁸⁸ Building upon existing academic discussions of deindustrialization while also breaking new ground, the book explores what Linkon suggests is a working-class genre of writing and artistic practice – 'deindustrialization literature.' Although sometimes generated by former industrial workers, this genre is more often the province of their children or grandchildren, with additional works coming from those who have grown up in – or otherwise found connection to – the brownfields and ruins of former industry. Through this literature, Linkon explores the 'half-life' of deindustrialization: a recognition that deindustrialization is best conceptualized as a long-term process rather than an event and that its toxic residue persists in and shapes working-class lives and landscapes decades after the loss of industrial work.

In the first part of the book, Linkon offers literary analyses of texts – novels, plays, films, essays, poems – that struggle with the relationship between work and identity in past and present. The literature includes stories about the embodied work memories of a displaced Latina Cadillac worker, a comic horror novel about contemporary service workers in a box store overrun by zombie ghosts, and a Pulitzer-prize winning play in which African-American, white, and Latinx workers in a Rust Belt town wrestle with their relationships to each other and their diminishing life options. Such literature, Linkon argues, offers a window onto the complex subjectivities of those affected. While those of higher classes might puzzle over the seeming inability of displaced industrial workers to 'just get over it,' the increasingly precarious nature of contemporary work, and its relative inability to support the stable social worlds that earlier industrial jobs once had, ensures that memories of the past continue to haunt the present. This is not an uncritical nostalgia, Linkon argues, but rather a 'reflective' one that pivots around the duality of simultaneously remembering the dangers and difficulties of lost industrial labor and the even greater loss of meaning, identity, and socioeconomic stability in its wake.

Yet, Linkon cautions that we should not read deindustrialization literature as a genre of social or political resistance. She argues that the forces of global capitalism and neoliberalism remain distant in these accounts. This is, she suggests, both because individuals inevitably experience

⁸⁸ This review is indebted to discussion at *The Half-Life of Deindustrialization* panel at the Working Class Studies Association meetings (Stony Brook, New York, June 8, 2018).

larger forces through the particularities of everyday life in specific locales, and because the increasingly fractured workplace experiences brought about by economic restructuring and neoliberal policies disrupt possibilities for worker solidarity and working-class identity in ways that make it difficult to understand, much less act against, such forces. Given this relative absence in the deindustrialization literature, readers might wonder how to make sense of the recent activism of Bernie Sanders supporters, Fight for 15 organizers, and wildcat teachers' strikes. Is this gap because this newer activism and the authors of deindustrialization literature emerge out of different social spaces and experiences? Or is it that we need to make explicit the connections between the causes and ongoing fallout of deindustrialization *and* the growing inequality and work conditions that are engendering this new activism? Should creating such conceptual linkages be a central task for working-class studies moving forward?

Linkon's book is also valuable in its recognition of the diversity of working-class experiences within deindustrialization literature. Although she finished the first draft of her book before Donald Trump was elected President in 2016, election-year discussions of the 'working class' permeated the time when she was completing it. While this focus might have offered opportunities to address working-class realities after decades of neglect, Linkon notes that this attention was simultaneously undermined by the media's resurrection of a vision of the 'working class' as white, male industrial workers, despite long-standing recognition of working-class diversity among academics, unions, and others. Although the industrial or postindustrial experiences of white male workers are indeed well-represented in deindustrialization literature, Linkon also highlights literature that explores deindustrialization's impact on African-American and Latinx individuals and communities and underscores the ways in which race, class, and gender are co-constituted and negotiated in such accounts.

In the latter half of the book, Linkon moves away from literary analysis and explores 'cultural' understandings of deindustrialization in a broader, more anthropological, sense. In these chapters, she considers what deindustrialization literature can tell us about the material realities of living in the midst of deindustrialized ruins and landscapes, as well as how white middle-class commentators engage with such regions through what she refers to as 'rust belt chic' commentary. For Linkon, 'rust belt chic' can range from the highly problematic (i.e. marketing boosterism leading to gentrification and the 'ruin porn' visual aesthetic of industrial ruins shorn of human activity) to more thoughtful engagement with deindustrialized landscapes and communities (as found in the online magazine *Belt*, for example). Here, Linkon seems torn in her analysis. On the one hand, she wants to recognize the problematic aspects of some middle-class commentary, including what Kate Dudley characterized, in *End of the Line* (1994), as a tendency to view former industrial workers as a new kind of exotic 'primitive,' the dying remnants of a fading more 'authentic' world. On the other hand, she wants to leave space for positive middle-class engagement, suggesting that many middle-class rust belt chic commentators are themselves the grandchildren of former industrial workers or are members of the downwardly mobile 'creative class' who may empathize with economic displacement. Ultimately, it may be that the evocative cynicism of the term 'rust belt chic' is too narrow to suggest the diverse forms of middle-class engagement that Linkon wants to include. It may also be that further exploration of this topic will require ethnographic research along with literary analysis, suggesting possible future research topics for others.

In sum, *Half-Life* is a landmark book that creates much-needed bridges between two sets of literature and thinking: on the one hand, longstanding literatures on labor history, industrial work, and deindustrialization, and, on the other, academic literatures on globalization, service

economies, and newer forms of precarious labor. While the former are often associated with whites, and particularly white men, the latter are often linked to women and workers of color. Yet, an overreliance on the industrial/service work duality can blind us to the diversity of those who were displaced by deindustrialization and to the ways that prior forms of work and identity continue to ‘haunt’ the present. After all, it is economic restructuring and neoliberal policies that are rendering work – whether industrial, service, or even professional – increasingly contingent and precarious. (Remaining industrial labor itself is now often ‘temp’ work). The work/identity crises and ruined landscapes of deindustrialization have long been harbingers of these socioeconomic transformations, and we all need to hone our conceptual tools for understanding and interpreting such changes and what they imply for political action. As Linkon suggests, ‘working class or not, we are all living in the half-life of deindustrialization,’ and she proves to be an excellent guide to the literary works that suggest what living in such landscapes might mean.

Reviewer Bio

Christine Walley is Professor of Anthropology at MIT. Her project *Exit Zero* uses family stories to examine the long-term impact of deindustrialization in the United States. It includes an award-winning book with University of Chicago Press (2013), as well as a documentary film made with director Chris Boebel.

**Coles, Nicholas and Paul Lauter, eds.
(2017) *A History of American Working-Class Literature*, Cambridge University Press,
Cambridge, UK**

Review by John Lennon and Magnus Nilsson

A History of American Working-Class Literature contains 24 strong and thought-provoking essays relating to a wide range of subjects within working-class literature. Together they give a rich and multi-faceted picture of this literature's history, from the seventeenth-century authors of transportation narratives writing 'toward' a working-class literary tradition (p. 10) to contemporary authors writing about 'post-Fordist, global forms of flexible accumulation and exploitation' (p. 377). It's a wonderful introduction to the field that raises numerous important questions regarding the phenomenon of working-class literature.

What does the term 'working-class' actually mean, though, in the title of this collection? As anyone working in this field understands, *working-class* is a bloated term easily manipulated by academics (and politicians) to mean a variety of things. Nicholas Coles and Paul Lauter, who are important voices in U.S. working-class literary studies, attempt to define this term at the start of their introduction. They make a theoretically stringent argument about class, stating, among other things, that "'working class" is not usefully understood strictly as a category of identity,' but 'has more to do with structural conditions of work, property, and ownership than with pigmentation, bodily configuration, assumptions about gender, nationality, and ethnic identification, or even with the deadly realities, historical and current, of racism, sexism, and other forms of bigotry' (p. 2). This is an important point to be made so that class is not reduced to a junior partner in a triumvirate with race and gender.

When examining the whole of the collection, however, the concept of class—and especially that of the working class—is rather vague. 'How are the lives of the 99 percent different from those of the 1 percent?' the editors ask when discussing the 'experience of class in the United States' (p. 1). The responses by the contributors are varied. John Ernest, for example, argues that slaves constitute 'a working class' at the same time as he claims that 'the labor performed by enslaved African Americans, while certainly dominated by hard physical labor, actually included a broad range of occupations, some of which might be described as artisan or middle-class work' (p. 42). Another contributor, Peter Riley, argues that Walt Whitman belonged to the 'precariat' (p. 81). These ideas are certainly innovative but problematic as starting points for the history of American working-class literature.

Coles and Lauter also argue that this collection presents 'a history of the cultural work that most directly engages class as a lived phenomenon' (p. 1), and that working-class literature is primarily interesting as a *representation* of working-class *experience*: 'How is the historical experience of class represented in literature and in the other creative forms in our lives?' they ask (p. 1). This is also a view expressed in a number of the essays. Michelle Tokarczyk, for example, argues that what make the works of Tillie Olsen and Meridel Le Sueur speak to

readers are their ‘representations of working-class people’s lived experience’ (p. 262). This focus on literature as primarily a representation whereby readers can peer into the words and find authentic working-class experiences has been a common thread in working-class scholarship in the United States. While insightful, one result of this focus on literature as an ‘expression of experiences’ is that literature’s many productive dimensions are often obscured.

There are many dissident voices in this collection, however, that present alternatives to examining literature as primarily a representation; they open up new avenues of discussion in exciting ways. Alicia Williamson discusses domestic socialist fiction as a ‘site of contestation’ and ‘a venue’ in which alternatives to the existing social order ‘are being imagined’ (p. 152). She also offers a definition of ‘working-class literature’ as a form of something created by and for workers in order to ‘challenge existing wrongs and create new futures together’ (p. 161). Another strong example: Mark Noonan argues that ‘working-class books and periodicals . . . aim to win over readers to an ideological point of view,’ and that ‘behind working-class publications are assemblages of like-minded individuals determined to produce new ways of thinking or a new society altogether’ (p. 178). These chapters and others are interested in examining working-class literature as *literature*.

The best example of this willingness to challenge the focus on expressions of experience is an article by Michael Collins. He identifies ‘two competing tendencies in American working-class life writing’ (p. 199). The first one he calls ‘ethnographic.’ It frames ‘working-class life texts as expressions of an autonomous and discrete “culture,”’ and ‘imposes an institutional framework on the working-class voice in order to claim forms of expression as “representative” of a historicized group life’ (pp. 199-200). The second tendency Collins calls ‘performative’ (p. 200). It is a ‘literary-critical mode that pays attention to how life writing by working-class people comments self-reflexively on the conditions of its own production’ (p. 200). This focus on the productive capabilities of literature is evident when Collins argues that ‘working-class life writing’ should be seen ‘less as an authentic expression of a “culture,” an entity understood to exist objectively in the world free from the shaping influence of institutions and genres, and more as a series or cluster of literary *performances* that operate within, and against, generic expectations’ (p. 207).

Lawrence Henley’s essay on proletarian fiction is another wonderful illustration of this view of literary performances, arguing that ‘proletarian narratives recognize that their claims for representative status always compete with prior, and usually more powerful, agencies for representing and defining working-class experience and identity’ (p. 244). Amy Brady’s essay on workers’ theatre argues that the literature produces real and significant change in a society: ‘Because the desire to educate an audience about working-class concerns was antithetical to long-standing, traditional Western theatre practices, the workers’ theatre . . . can be said to have changed not merely the styles and content of theatrical productions but their very cultural purpose’ (p. 327). Along this line, Joseph Entin stresses literature’s capacity to contribute to the production of new understandings of class, arguing how a novel like Maxine Hong Kingston’s *China Men* ‘encourages us to see China Men as members of an American working class,’ but also ‘insists that class is transnational, shifting, and deeply riven by cultural and social differences and divisions’ (p. 381).

Other contributions also present complex definitions of class and its relationships to race and gender. One of the most interesting examples is provided by Bill V. Mullen who, in his essay about African-American working-class literature, treats African-American working-class history ‘as a part of general American working-class history’ and argues that this allows us to

‘understand both the particularity of experiences of racial oppression and the common core of experiences of working-class people that African Americans share’ (p. 265). Another interesting example can be found in Joseph Entin’s essay, in which it is argued that ‘much of what we typically consider “multicultural” literature is also working-class literature, concerned not only with race and ethnicity but labor as well’ (p. 378).

Coles and Lauter have done a wonderful job, therefore, of collecting and editing some truly excellent scholarship. We do, though, quibble a bit with their decision to define ‘American’ in the collection’s title in a ‘fairly traditional’ way (p. 2). Why, one wonders, adopt such an approach? Yes, working-class literatures are often situated nationally. But they are almost always affected by international currents such as the aesthetic/political impulses of the international labor movement, or writers being influenced by their international colleagues. While national literatures should be examined, why limit the influences at the nation’s borders? As Joseph Entin shows in his essay about contemporary working-class literature, both the working class and working-class literature are globalized phenomena; it should be examined as such.

This focus on ‘American’ results in general statements about working-class literature that are, in reality, very particular. For example, Christopher Hager argues—in one of the finest contributions to the collection—that ‘a classic problem in the study of working-class literature’ concerns whether or not there is ‘an essential gentility in the realm of the literary that is alienated from or alienating to the working class’ (p. 64). Hager also argues that ‘for many working-class people, the written page is a less comfortable venue for politics or philosophy than it is for better-educated people’ (p. 73). While this may be (or may not be) true in the United States, in other countries (for example, Sweden), literature is exalted among the working-class. This methodology of boxing working-class literature(s) into national categories has been under negotiation recently and we would have liked to see more of the authors, and this collection as a whole, consciously probing these boundaries as they follow the trajectories of international influence.

Despite these issues of framing, this is an excellent and important resource for academics working in the field as well as students who are beginning to learn about working-class literature. This collection should find a prominent position on many bookshelves. Unfortunately, due to the price of the book (\$112 hard cover / \$80 for e-book), *A History of American Working-Class Literature* will be priced out of many scholars’ and students’ budgets. We do hope, though, that the individual scholars will make their work available, as they are valuable contributions to the history of this vibrant literature and project new and rich avenues of scholarship.

Reviewer Bios

John Lennon is Associate Professor in English at The University of South Florida. His research is principally concerned with how marginalized individuals exert a politicized voice in collectivized actions. His monograph, *Boxcar Politics: The Hobo in Literature and Culture 1869-1956* (2014), University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, examines the hobo as a resistive working-class figure. He is currently at work on a new project examining conflict graffiti from a global perspective.

Magnus Nilsson is Professor in Comparative Literature at Malmö University, Sweden. His main research interest is working-class literature, which is the topic of his monograph

Literature and Class: Aesthetical-Political Strategies in Modern Swedish Working-Class Literature (2014) Humboldt University, Arcata, Ca. He is currently doing research on the relationship between comics, class, and politics.

Barrett, James R. (2017) *History from the Bottom Up & the Inside Out: Ethnicity, Race, and Identity in Working-Class History*, Duke University Press, Durham, NC

Review by Lou Martin

In his new book, *History from the Bottom Up & the Inside Out*, James Barrett calls on working-class historians to examine the subjective lives of working-class individuals—their identity, personality, and personal relationships. Barrett argues that such studies will lead to clearer understandings of workers' motivations, underscore their humanity, enrich the study of current subjects, and embrace the emotional experience of class as much as its material or political aspects.

Barrett begins by analyzing himself in an autobiographical chapter that considers the role of class, race, ethnicity, relationships, and especially religion in his early life and career. He reflects on growing up in a working-class family in Chicago, noting the profound effect the Catholic Church had on his worldview and the space he found to form friendships across racial lines, support the Civil Rights Movement, and later embrace the new social history.

In the next two chapters, he considers the personal lives of communists and how they affected and were affected by the movement. His close reading of their autobiographies reveals that they tried to excise the personal from their own accounts. This was truer of male autobiographers, but they all emphasized experiences that brought them to the movement and their role in furthering it. A more detailed look at their life stories, especially William Z. Foster's, reveals that the personal was actually subsumed by their activism, as they often had poor skills to navigate relationships, marriage, and parenthood, compounding their suffering during repressive periods.

The next two chapters explore the intellectual lives of well-read and well-traveled segments of the working class. A chapter inspired by Barrett's older brother Tom suggests several types of blue-collar cosmopolitans such as the working-class reader, the Pullman porter, and the radical. The second of these chapters details a collaboration between Harvard grad Hutchins Hapgood and the self-taught radical Anton Johannsen. Hapgood embedded himself in Johannsen's life and used their conversations for his 1907 book, *The Spirit of Labor*. Barrett explores this meeting of minds as a foray into the interior lives of radical workers.

Chapters 6 and 7 are perhaps Barrett's most influential essays. The first, 'Americanization from the Bottom Up,' previously published in 1992, argues that historians had oversimplified the Americanization of new immigrants from the 1880s through the 1920s, missing the more complex and dynamic process as immigrant workers encountered not only employers but older immigrants, radicals, and union organizers who offered competing versions of Americanism. New immigrants were constructing identities in the workplace and meeting halls and fusing older patterns of thinking with the new.

In 'Inbetween Peoples,' first published in 1997, Barrett and co-author David Roediger argue that native-born and older immigrants often located Eastern and Southern Europeans above

African and Asian Americans but below ‘white’ people. Their examination of laws, popular culture, slurs, union and employer strategies, and scholarship of the era reveal ambiguities and contradictions in the social construction of race and identity. One of the clearest messages new immigrants received was that it was highly desirable to be counted as ‘white,’ not a person of color. They variously identified with one or the other, but an attempt to determine which was more common would miss the multifaceted nature of their ‘inbetween-ness.’

Next, Barrett discusses the transformation of Irish American stage entertainment from the minstrelsy of the mid-19th century to more realistic turn-of-century depictions of urban, working-class ‘types,’ which often helped audiences make sense of their new environments. Self-deprecating Irish humor made caricatures more acceptable, but as working-class Irish Americans came closer to respectability in the early 1900s, they became increasingly offended by the caricatures of Irish immigrants.

In a final essay, Barrett explores the intellectual and political context out of which E. P. Thompson’s *The Making of the English Working Class* emerged and its influence on new labor historians in the U.S. Thompson’s understanding of class formation, which emphasized workers’ agency and their lived experiences, found a generation of historians eager for this very approach. Their efforts to apply Thompson’s concept and methods to the American scene initially led them to similar time periods and workers, but further studies revealed American workers’ tendencies toward fragmentation, the impossibility of separating the social construction of race and class, and the continual remaking of the working class. Thompson moved on to other subjects, but *The Making of the English Working Class* had put Barrett and his generation on a path to discover workers’ agency and emotions amid their relationships to power.

History from the Bottom Up & Inside Out challenges labor and working-class historians to widen their lenses to include more room for identities, emotions, and personal lives for their own sake but also to incorporate those understandings into studies of movements, politics, and power. The essays attempt to model this approach, and the results vary. ‘Americanization from the Bottom Up’ and ‘Inbetween Peoples’ are brilliant. I see them as the fruits of some three decades of new labor history, and they—along with others—point the way to more studies of the social construction of identity, race, and ethnicity that embrace nuance and complexity. The autobiographical essay as well as the contextualization of Thompson provide important insights into the evolution of the new social history. In particular, Barrett’s thoughtful reflections on his own intellectual development from reading Catholic children’s magazines to the University of Illinois Chicago campus to the Thompson seminar at Pitt are a wonderful model for others to consider how they came to their subjects, what they were searching for, and how their values and understandings in turn shape their fields.

The newer essays on the personal, emotional, and intellectual lives of the working class are first steps in a new approach and new subjects. His argument that historical studies should embrace these neglected topics is convincing, but I was not clear what I learned or what similar inquiries will yield in the future, especially given that these particular radicals marginalized the personal almost out of their lives. Yet, as an historian, it is exciting to begin reading an introduction and wonder, ‘How is the author going to pull this off?’ After reading *History from the Bottom Up & Inside Out*, I found myself asking, ‘How are we going to pull this off?’

Reviewer Bio

Lou Martin is an associate professor of history at Chatham University, a founder and board member of the West Virginia Mine Wars Museum, and author of *Smokestacks in the Hills: Rural-Industrial Workers in West Virginia*, 2015.

Ocejo, Richard E. (2017) *Masters of Craft: Old Jobs in the New Urban Economy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ
Viscelli, Steve (2016) *The Big Rig: Trucking and the Decline of the American Dream*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Ca.

Review by Colby King and Jacob Bibeault

Ocejo's *Masters of Craft* and Viscelli's *The Big Rig* both illustrate how working-class jobs in today's economy ain't what they used to be. Viscelli explores how truck driving is no longer 'one of the best blue-collar jobs in the US' (p. 9), while Ocejo focuses on 'how middle-class kids' take 'working-class jobs' made trendy through a sense of handcrafted authenticity (p. 129). Both books illuminate how perceptions of the work, particularly independent contracting and hip craft trades, obscure the unstable realities of jobs in these industries. Offering sociological analysis of the economic context in which these occupations are changing, both books highlight how good working-class jobs are increasingly scarce and available to only a privileged few.

Both books are based on ethnographic research about jobs in male-dominated industries. *The Big Rig* reveals how deregulation, independent contracting, and weakening worker solidarity has increased the precariousness of truck driving and eroded wages and benefits. *Masters of Craft* (which was nominated for the WCSA's 2017 CLR James Award) focuses on how some positions in particular service industries have been made hip by those doing the work and are, for now at least, providing some (typically male, white, and from middle-class background) workers more status and a better income than typically available from working-class service jobs. While characterizing contrasting trends in separate industries, together these books illustrate how both working-class work conditions and social identity are in flux. Both books also highlight how the make-or-break circumstances for workers in these jobs are the result of changing industry structures and the evolving demands of the new economy.

Taking a relational view of social class, Viscelli explains how the rise of independent contracting in the trucking industry has been associated with reduced worker solidarity, a decrease in wages, and a reduction in benefits for workers. Aligning with the American individualist ethos, independent contracting is often portrayed to potential owner-operators as a situation that provides the worker control over their work circumstances. They are told that by becoming the owner of their own truck, they will be able to steer their own financial destiny. As other reviewers of *The Big Rig* have noted, however, the book demonstrates how truckers are working harder but earning less (Harrison 2017, Upton 2017).

Viscelli explains that through these depictions, carriers have managed a ‘class project’ that obscures the history of industry practices that harm independent contractors. Coupled with instability and fracturing of the industry, he writes that ‘it is as if carriers continually wipe labor’s memory clean’ (p. 203). Individual contractors take on an ‘owner’ identity, although their circumstances as contractors in this industry do not correspond with rights to control production or appropriate profits—both definitional qualities of capital ownership. Together, this labor structure and cultural environment ‘obscures the sources and consequences of unequal class power in the industry, while it diminishes the potential for workers to exercise power on their own behalf’ (p. 204). In his review of *The Big Rig*, Ryan Haney, a unionized truck driver and member of Teamsters Local 745, calls on drivers to take on their own class project in response, one that ‘fortifies our remaining union power’ and disputes ‘the lie that workers can get ahead by competing with one another.’ (Haney 2017).

While Viscelli’s book examines deteriorating working conditions in an industry that once provided stable, well-paying (if not high status) jobs, Richard Ocejo’s *Masters of Craft* illustrates how some intrepid individuals have carved out niche higher-status positions doing work that is more commonly unstable and of lower status. *Masters of Craft* details how some young urbanites are making careers of ‘craft’ jobs, doing work that might otherwise be perceived as low-status service work. Often in businesses situated in gentrifying neighborhoods, the bartenders, barbers, butchers, and distillers that Ocejo meets explain how the unique nature of their efforts lends a crafted-by-hand quality to their products and services, elevating their cost and, by extension, both their earnings and their social status. Through Ocejo we meet owners and managers as well as employees in these businesses, but, beyond pointing out the fact that owners and managers can serve as gatekeepers to jobs in these industries, Ocejo does not interrogate the relational nature of their work positions. Rather, the focus is on the practices of refining their crafts and the sense that many owners/managers see their employees as protégés with whom they share a commitment to mastering their crafts. In an interview with *Marketplace*, Ocejo explains that the workers he studied ‘really reinvigorated [the jobs] with this sense of meaning, this sense of craft, and this idea that the process that they were going through was going to enhance the quality’ (Ryssdal 2017).

Importantly, Ocejo explains that, having come from middle-class circumstances, many of the individuals elevating these jobs to craft status chose their career paths from a range of options available to them. ‘They are young and free to choose whatever job they [want] . . . and often with college degrees in hand to give them choices’ (p. 18). He finds these workers love their ‘bad jobs,’ and many felt that work should be ‘pleasurable and meaningful’ (p. 18). The relatively privileged circumstances of many of those working these ‘bad jobs’ illustrates the book’s central and fundamental idea—these jobs are attracting people, oftentimes young, college-educated men, who adopt language and imagery that highlights the unique, hand-crafted (read: authentic, laborious, working-class) qualities of their labor. The products of this labor are primarily marketed to hip, middle-class, conspicuous consumers. The ‘authenticity’ of these products is used to raise prices and allure. You can observe that these workers are conducting their own class project, one that is making both the jobs and their products and services more niche, more exclusive, and more elitist.

Masters of Craft also illuminates the pivotal, nuanced role of masculinity in these craft jobs. The jobs require substantial interactive service work and skillful application of cultural repertoires. The rise in demand for friendly customer service interactions, frequently associated with feminine gender expectations, presents a conundrum for male workers, even in male-dominated fields. According to Ocejo, ‘these new elite manual labor jobs give men . . . the

chance to use their bodies directly in their work . . . as well as their minds, which grants them greater status in these jobs than they would otherwise have. . . . Men are thus able to use these jobs to achieve a lost sense of middle-class, heterosexual masculinity in their work' (p. 20). In Ocejo's book we see examples of workers going out of their way to reaffirm their masculinity while engaging in what might otherwise be considered feminine labor. For instance, the barbershop in the book represents a male preserve, and the barbers employ 'group banter as a masculine cover for the more intimate, emotional bodywork going on in the shop. . . . The masculine-coded banter they conduct . . . help[s] to hide the emotional labor they perform' (p. 92). As Nixon (2009) warns, men who are reluctant to take on this kind of emotional labor at work will likely struggle in the new economy, both to maintain employment and to affirm their masculine identities. In a way, the workers Ocejo observes are willing to do exactly what Nixon's (2009) respondents were reluctant or unable to do—'put a smiley face on' (p. 300). Men are overrepresented in all the jobs examined in these two books, and the characteristics of these jobs have important implications for gender and family. We see in both books that, in order to fit in, the few women in these jobs often put in additional labor, emotional and otherwise. From Ocejo's book, we see that in the contemporary economy, success seems to come to those workers most willing to adapt to the often-gendered expectations of emotional labor and self-presentation of service work, and also those who are young and willing to work odd shifts that are less conducive to family life. In Viscelli's book, we also see the toll that long hours of truck driving imposes on workers and their families.

Both books feature empathetic characters, and through them the reader finds engaging details and immersive depictions of the workers' occupational circumstances. Both books also provide meaningful context and critical insights that make the books appealing for casual readers or instructors considering books on working-class jobs in today's economy.

Tastes and gas prices change quickly, and those changes are largely indifferent to the circumstances of the workers in the relevant industries. Both books, then, are about the pitfalls of individualism for workers. In Viscelli's view, truck driving as an independent operator offers a false promise of ownership and control over one's work. Viscelli also recognizes that the changes he observes are not unique to the trucking industry, explaining that 'employment relations are being marketized for millions of low-skilled workers in dozens of occupations' (p. 206). Ocejo outlines how individuals can do very well for themselves, but success is dependent not just on hustle, or even willingness and ability to do interactive service work, but also their skill in styling themselves as hip purveyors of quality products and trendy services in a volatile marketplace. From Ocejo we can see how craft work offers higher status but also higher risk, making craft jobs less appealing to those without the options a college degree offers to fall back on. While *The Big Rig* charts the general decline in quality of work in one industry and *Masters of Craft* charts the improvement in quality of work for a few select jobs, both books highlight the continued erosion of solidarity and stability in working-class jobs in today's economy.

Reviewer Bios

Colby King teaches and studies urban sociology, social stratification and inequality, social class, work, and strategies for supporting working-class and first-generation college students. A son of a steel mill worker, in 2014 Dr. King organized Class Beyond the Classroom, an organization of BSU faculty and staff who support working-class and first-generation college students at BSU. He is also a member of the [Steering Committee for the Working-Class Studies](#)

[Association](#) and the [American Sociological Association's Task Force on First-Generation and Working-Class People in Sociology](#).

Jacob Bibeault is an undergraduate student at Bridgewater State University who is currently majoring in English and Secondary Education. He is a member of the Honors Program and took Dr. King's first-year honors seminar on social class. Because of this course, Jacob is now a minor in Sociology.

Bibliography

- Haney, R. 2017, 'Review: The big rig: Trucking and the decline of the American dream', *Labor Notes*, weblog, viewed 1 April 2018, <<http://www.labornotes.org/blogs/2017/10/review-big-rig-trucking-and-decline-american-dream?language=es>>
- Harrison, J. A. 2017, 'Book Review: The big rig: Trucking and the decline of the American dream', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 123, no.3, pp. 938-40.
- Nixon, D. 2009, "'I can't put a smiley face on": Working-class masculinity, emotional labour and service work in the "New Economy"', *Gender, Work & Organization*, vol. 16, no.3, pp. 300-22.
- Ocejo, R. E. 2017, *Masters of craft: Old jobs in the new urban economy*, Princeton University Press, NJ.
- Upton, R. L. 2017, 'The big rig: Trucking and the decline of the American dream', *Contemporary Sociology: A Journal of Reviews*, vol. 46, no. 6, pp. 723-25.
- Ryssdal, K. 2017, 'Is the craft movement making service jobs hip?', *Marketplace*, viewed 1 April 2018, <<https://www.marketplace.org/2017/05/25/economy/craft-movement-making-service-jobs-hip>>
- Viscelli, S. 2016, *The big rig: Trucking and the decline of the American dream*, University of California Press, Oakland.

Fasanella, Marc (2017) *Images of Optimism*, (with essay by Leslie Umberger and chronology by Paul S. D'Ambrosio), Pomegranate, Portland, Or.

Review by Janet Zandy

A reproduction in a book is no substitute for actually standing before a great painting, taking in its size, color, brush strokes, and the power of its intellect and emotion. This new book on Ralph Fasanella (1914-1997), the great narrative painter of the working classes, comes close to that visual, physical experience. So much more than a museum catalog or coffee table art book, *Images of Optimism* is charged with a palpable fusion of artistic expression and political consciousness. Designed with insight about the grand scale of Fasanella's epic paintings and the telling details of his visual narratives, tuned to the challenge of reproducing his vibrant colors and dark hues, this book opens working-class history and worker art to a new generation. If you detect a whiff of Gramsci's 'pessimism of intellect, optimism of will' in the title, you won't be disappointed.

Such curatorial labels as outsider, folk, primitive, regional, even self-taught, ill fit Ralph Fasanella's scope and political vision. In her Introduction, 'Ralph Fasanella: Lest We Forget,' Leslie Umberger, curator of folk art at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C., eschews such categories, choosing 'art of conviction' (p. 9) as a better descriptor. She begins by tracing Ralph Fasanella's roots in working-class immigrant culture. The son of Italian immigrants Giuseppe (Joe) and Ginevra Fasanella, Ralph grew up in working-class neighborhoods in lower Manhattan and the Bronx. A tough, mouthy, baseball-loving street kid, sent to reform school for minor juvenile delinquency, the young Fasanella observed and lived the economic schism between American promise and its peopled, lived realities. Umberger lists some of Ralph's jobs—'garment worker, truck driver, ice deliveryman, union organizer, gas station owner' (p. 7)—important details because Fasanella's art making and his consciousness of labor—its burdens and fruits—are inseparable. As an eight-year-old, Ralph helped his father haul ice blocks up narrow stairs to tenement apartments. Although Joe Fasanella left the family and returned to Italy when Ralph was 15, he remained in the imagination of his adult son, who painted Joe as crucified everyman nailed to an icebox with his own tongs. *Iceman Crucified #4* (1958) is not surrealistic horror, though. Like Fasanella's other great paintings, it is dialogic in its implicit understanding of the possibility of optimism—the brighter background colors of orderly neighborhoods in relation to Joe's foregrounded workingman's browns.

It was Ralph's mother, Ginevra, a talented garment worker and economic support for her family of six children, who exposed Ralph to political radicalism and labor struggle. His tribute painting, *Family Supper* (1972), centers her in her tidy kitchen, surrounded by her children, with coffee, pastries, fruit, and within its frame, the material emblems of their immigrant and personal lives—the ice tongs, sewing machine, clothes line, photographs, record player, stove with sauce simmering, and outside the frame, the neighborhood, the glimpse into the interiors of similar apartments, and above a narrow blue sky, tiny released pigeons and the ubiquitous water towers of New York.

Umberger's introduction provides a sturdy biographical and art historical context for the inseparability of Fasanella's life, politics and artistry. Rather than relying on words like 'crusade' (p. 9) and 'weapon' (p. 7), I wish she had paused over Ralph's intellectual formation and his reading,

since books, newspapers, and words are assertive revelatory details in his paintings. Fasanella was an intellectual from the working class as well as a great artist.

Imagine walking through a gallery to see an artist's exhibit in the company of someone deeply knowledgeable about the paintings and the painter. That opportunity and experience is what makes *Images of Optimism* so distinctive. Marc Fasanella, son of Eva and Ralph Fasanella, and named for Vito Marcantonio, progressive congressman representing East Harlem (1934-1950), is our narrator and guide. In writing 'Observations from the Artist's Son' and 'Afterword: Being Ralph's Son,' Marc Fasanella faced the challenge of orchestrating biography, art interpretation, labor history, political ideology, communal ethos, and historical events, as well as his own memories, to present his father's process and vision to an audience who may or may not have seen a Ralph Fasanella painting. This is an important, intergenerational book, especially for those willing to step away from the gatekeeping boundaries of museums and art history, and see, really look at, profound artistic expression infused with working-class historical consciousness.

Ralph Fasanella's formal schooling ended in the eighth grade. He never attended art school. He never aligned himself with New York art world currents and styles. He never separated manual labor from intellectuality. And he chafed against assumptions that working class people are stupid. Marc Fasanella recognizes his father's combination of 'outwardly working-class, straightforward simplicity and inwardly deep intellect' (p. 31). Ralph learned by participating in struggle—as a union organizer and as a volunteer in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in 1937 Spain. He learned by reading political theory *and* listening and respecting the workers he encountered in diners, factories, street corners, and shops. He learned by immersing himself in libraries and research, *and* living in the communities that were the subjects of his great history paintings, *Lawrence 1912—The Bread and Roses Strike* (1977), *The Great Strike (IWW Textile Strike)* (1978), and *Meeting at the Commons—Lawrence, 1912* (1977). Fasanella learned by looking at art, especially absorbing the techniques of the French Impressionists, the empathetic genius of Van Gogh, and the draftsmanship of Goya and Diego Rivera.

We have a rare glimpse of artistic process in Marc Fasanella's descriptions of watching his father paint. Marc was born in 1964 when Ralph was 50 years old and finally able to relinquish his service station to paint full time. (See *Happy and Bud's Service Station*, 1968.) Marc describes Ralph's 'articulation' as a self-taught painter: 'Ideological passion drove him to paint—not a passion for the art of painting, but a passion for the lives of the people. He painted energetically into the wee hours of the morning, fueled by cigarettes, coffee, and the power of his ideas' (p. 57). Marc takes us up close to the paintings themselves and his own (never quite finished) dialogue with them. Titles of paintings become subheadings for his reflective essay. I finally caught the pun of *Grand Union* (1955) as depicting not just a supermarket but a yearning for communal solidarity in the context of shifting modernity. Marc Fasanella recalls *Iceman Crucified #4* 'as a powerful presence in my life. I have come to love it as a family member' (p. 52). *Love Goddess* (1964) takes on a fresh resonance as seen through Marc's expanded consciousness: 'a hopeful painting, a utopian notion of human sexuality' (p. 59). Marc rightly draws critical attention to Ralph's conception of time, especially his disruption of linear time and his imaginative simultaneity of past and present, experiential, and historical time. *Images of Optimism* also includes lesser-known Fasanella paintings, the utopian vision of *Coney Island* (1965) and the later paintings of Maine bucolic vacations and ideal communities such as *Main Street: Dobbs Ferry* (1985).

Ralph Fasanella's art making was a great circuitry of connection. That circuitry was expanded thanks to the insight of union organizer Ron Carver. When the enormous *Lawrence 1912—The Bread and Roses Strike* was about to be sold to a private collector, Carver organized Public Domain and raised money, with the help and cooperation of the Fasanellas, to purchase that and other

paintings so that the public could see them. *Family Supper*, as one example, is now at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum.

‘Catch’ and ‘grab’ are Fasanella words. Marc *catches* that spirit. Ralph Fasanella is the ‘guy’ (another Fasanella word) you turn to if you want to grab a sense of how working-class lives play out on the street, in the factory, and at home—in extraordinary paintings. His optimistic vision, his long historical sense, and his kinship with those in struggle are crucial to the times we face today.

Author Bio

Dr. Janet Zandy is emerita professor at Rochester Institute of Technology. She is the author of the award-winning *Hands: Physical Labor, Class, and Cultural Work* and other books on American working-class culture.

Faue, Elizabeth (2017) *Rethinking the American Labor Movement*, Routledge, New York, NY.

Review by Joseph Varga

There is no shortage of scholarship on the demise and potential revival of the American labor movement. The acceleration of industrial relocation, the corporate and political assault on union rights, and the problems of an often moribund and fragmented labor movement have created a virtual cottage industry of books that attempt to explain labor's demise and prescribe solutions for rebirth and renewal. The results have been decidedly mixed, as union density continues to fall and the assault on workplace rights and on the social wage only seem to increase, backed now by a new populism that ignores organized labor and instead claims that the solution lies in still more corporate power and the empty promises of the "strong leader." It is, indeed, hard to imagine where organized labor goes from this low point.

Along with sociologists, economists, political scientists, labor educators, and labor activists, historians have been a strong voice in the often-contentious discussions of labor's past and future. Katz and Greenwald's 2014 edited volume, *Labor Rising: The Past and Future of Working People in America*, is one recent contribution from mainly labor historians, using the past to understand the present. As a leading scholar in the field of labor history, Elizabeth Faue was a contributor to that volume. With her latest book, *Rethinking the American Labor Movement*, Faue draws on her own widely praised feminist scholarship and on the historiography of writing on organized labor to synthesize the struggle of American workers for equity, rights, and respect. I am not certain whether the book truly qualifies as a "re-thinking" as the title suggests, but it is a skillful work by one of the best scholars on the topic. The book provides, in Faue's own words, "a short and accessible overview of the labor movement of the twentieth century." (2)

Faue's basic approach is two-fold. First, the book seeks to present the history of the growth and decline of organized labor in the United States in the context of the tension between organized labor's dual roles: as a social movement fighting for systemic change and as service organizations that represent members. Second, the book attempts to wrest the trajectory of labor's growth and decline from the "golden age" narrative of white, male industrial workers of the post-World War II period, and present a more complex picture that includes at all points the struggle of women, people of color, and the marginalized to find their place within the movement and its organizations. It does these both very well while presenting some of the big questions and events such as the Debs-Gompers debates over the labor question, the sit-down strikes of the 1930s, and the contention in the movement over strategies and tactics. Faue draws on a depth of knowledge and utilizes some of the best secondary sources available to labor scholars.

The book begins in the late nineteenth century with two chapters on the development of the craft unions and the struggle of the burgeoning industrial unions to achieve recognition and parity. These chapters successfully highlight the tension between labor as a social movement and as a narrow set of institutions representing skilled workers. The middle two chapters deal with the rise of the CIO and the rapid expansion of unionism while also highlighting some of

the failures of the labor movement to take advantage of the momentum provided by post-war prosperity. With its focus on raising the standard of living for the industrial workforce, organized labor missed many opportunities to expand its influence by representing the needs of the “diverse character of the labor force” (11) in the era of post-war prosperity. The final two chapters cover the hot ground in labor history scholarship, the rank-and-file rebellions of the 1970s, the rise of vehement anti-unionism, the influence of new social movements, and, finally, the emergence of the new global labor market. The book concludes with a brief discussion of contemporary labor struggles.

At its best, this book tracks skillfully between the various factions and approaches that make up the historical and contemporary labor movement and draws out the solidarities and tensions that have existed from the 1870s onward. The strength of the work is in presenting organized labor for what it is—a fractious coalition of interests with often-competing ideas and approaches to the same questions—not what those of us invested in it would want it to be. Faue presents organized labor and the labor movement in its rich diversity. Here the labor movement is not heroic or noble but conflicted and sometimes narrow, as often dispiriting as inspiring. The drawbacks of the book are few. Faue has a tendency to gloss over some of the worst shortcomings of key organizations. For example, there is little discussion of the details of the charges against Hoffa’s Teamster leadership and almost nothing on raiding and in-fighting between unions in the post-war period. While union racism is discussed, it could have been dealt with in more depth. The brevity of the work leaves out some events and details, like the battles over the 1968 and 1972 Democratic presidential nominations, that are important to a synthetic understanding of the history of labor.

But these are minor faults in an otherwise valuable work that always returns to the basic issues of working people and their struggle for a better life and decent working conditions. The book, based largely in secondary sources, provides an excellent overview of the labor movement as well as a fine bibliography of works on the topic. It would make a fine course book for undergraduate classes in the history of American labor. For labor scholars and activists who want to know where labor is going by knowing where it has been, this is a great place to start.

Reviewer Bio

Dr. Joseph Varga is Associate Professor of Labor Studies in the Indiana University School of Social Work. He arrived at IU in 2009 after receiving his doctorate in Sociology and MA in Historical Studies from the New School for Social Research in New York City. He has been involved with the labor movement for nearly four decades as a rank-and-file Teamster activist, shop steward, researcher, and organizer. Joe teaches undergraduate courses on the history of American labor and on the role of wage workers in the global economy.