Gender, Masculinity and the New Economy

Lois Weis
University at Buffalo, USA

Abstract

This paper examines the 'remaking' of white working class masculinities in the latter quarter of the twentieth century. It draws on ethnographic data gathered at two points in time in order to interrogate the relation of macro-economic and social relations on individual and group identities; to excavate the social psychological relations 'between' genders and races, as narrated by white working-class men; and to explore the nuanced variations among these men. Addressing theoretical, empirical and methodological issues associated with these studies, I argue that the remaking of the white working class can only be understood in relation to gendered constructions within itself, the construction of relevant 'others', as well as deep shifts in large social formations.

Introduction

Amidst cries of 'farewell to the working class' (Gorz 1982), and the assertion of the complete eclipse of this class given the lack of 'direct representations of the interaction among workers in American television' (Aronowitz 1992, p. 194), I offer *Class Reunion* (Weis, forthcoming a) – a volume targeting and explicating the remaking of the American white working class in the latter quarter of the twentieth century. Arguing that we cannot write off the white working class simply because white men no longer have access to well paying labouring jobs in the primary labour market (Edwards 1979), jobs which spawned a distinctive place for labour in the capital–labour accord (Hunter 1987, Apple 2001), or assume that this class can only be understood as a tapestry that works easily across ethnicity, race and gender (Bettie 2003), I explore empirically and longitudinally the remaking of this class both discursively and behaviourally inside radical, globally based economic restructuring (Reich 1991, 2002).

Beginning in 1985 with my ethnographic investigation of Freeway High (*Working Class Without Work: High School Students in a De-Industrializing Economy*: Weis

1990), and culminating with intensive follow-up interviews with these same students in 2000–2001, I track a group of the sons and daughters of the workers of 'Freeway Steel' over a fifteen-year time period. The original volume – *Working Class Without Work* – explored identity formation among American white working-class male and female students in relation to the schools, economy and family of origin, capturing the complex relations among secondary schooling, human agency and the formation of collective consciousness within a radically changing economic and social context. I suggested in the volume that young women exhibited a 'glimmer of critique' regarding traditional gender roles in the working-class family and that young men were ripe for New Right consciousness given their strident racism and male dominant stance in an economy that, like that immortalised in the justly celebrated *The Full Monty* and the BBC serial *The Missing Postman* (Walkerdine, Lacey and Melody 2001), offers them little.

Now, fifteen years later I return to these same students as they (and we) meet in *Class Reunion*, a study firmly lodged in what Michelle Fine and I call 'compositional studies' (Weis and Fine, forthcoming) – a theory of method in which analyses of public and private institutions, groups and lives are lodged in relation to key economic and social structures. Through a careful look at the high school and young adult years (ages 18–31) of the sons and daughters of the industrial proletariat in the northeast 'rust belt' of the United States, I track the remaking of this class through careful and explicit attention to issues that swirl around theories of whiteness, masculinity, representations and the new economy. Fine and I have put forward a triplet of theoretical and analytic moves as a signature of our work (Weis and Fine, forthcoming): deep work within one group (over a fifteen-year time period in this case); serious relational analyses between and among relevant bordering groups; and broad structural connections to social, economic and political arrangements. Reflecting this, I argue that the remaking of the white working class can only be understood in relation to gendered constructions within itself, the construction of relevant 'others' – in this case African Americans and Yemenites – as well as deep shifts in large social formations.

Changing economies, changing gender

Here I focus on a slice of the larger study, namely the varying ways in which white working-class men remake class and masculinity in the context of massive changes in the global economy. Data gathered at two points in time – during the men's third year of secondary school in 1985, and again at the age of 30–31 in 2000–2001 – enable me to interrogate the relation of macro-economic and social relations on individual and group identities; to excavate the social psychological relations 'between' genders and races, as narrated by white working-class men, and to explore the nuanced variations among these men. Here we see identities carved in relation, in solidarity and in

opposition to other marked groups and, most importantly, in relation to what the economy 'offers up' over time. It is in the push and pull of these men both within hegemonic high school valued masculinist forms and the currency of such forms in the economy that we can begin to understand the remaking of the white working class. Significantly, for white working-class males in the United States, struggles to assume symbolic dominance in an ever-fragile economy sit perched on the unsteady fulcrum of racial and gender hierarchy (Weis, forthcoming a).

Stretching to situate themselves within the post-industrial world, young white working-class Freeway men continue to force their selves in relation to three primary definitional axes: 1) an emerging contradictory code of respect toward school knowledge and culture not in evidence in key previous studies of this group, but one which rests fundamentally on the form of school-based knowledge rather than its substance; 2) a set of virulently patriarchal constructions of home/family life which position future wives in particular kinds of subordinate relationships, and 3) constructed notions of racial 'others' (Weis 1990). I argue here that it is the ways in which individual white working-class men position themselves and are positioned vis-à-vis these three major axes over time that determine, to some extent at least, both where they individually land fifteen years after high school and the broader contours of the white working class. Specifically, in the case of the men, it is in pulling away from what is defined within high school peer groups as normative or hegemonic masculine cultural forms that we begin to see young men move toward adulthood. Tracing the push and pull of hegemonic masculine cultural forms as defined in high school, I suggest here that it is within this push and pull as lived inside the new global economy and accompanying tighter sorting mechanisms that we can begin to understand both the generalised shape of what I call the new working class and individual positions within this class as well as potentially outside of it.

Work on masculinities has become increasingly popular into the twenty-first century (Jackson 2002) and, as Connell notes, there has been a 'great flowering of empirical research on masculinities' (2000, p. 24). Central to this work, according to Jackson, are 'four tenets: 1) masculine identities are historically and culturally situated, 2) multiple masculinities exist, 3) there are dominant hegemonic and subordinate forms of masculinities, and 4) masculinities are actively constructed in social settings' (2002, pp. 39–40). As Kenway and Fitzclarence argue (1997), 'Hegemonic masculinity is the standard-bearer of what it means to be a "real" man or boy and many males draw inspiration from its cultural library of resources' (pp. 119–120, as cited in Jackson 2002, p. 40). Jackson further states:

> Hegemonic masculinities are located in a structure of gender/sexual power relations, and within these, boys define their identities against

> the Other (Epstein, 1998). Gay masculinities feature in the 'Other' category as does an attachment to 'the feminine' (Kenway and Fitzclarence). Evidence suggests (see for example Epstein, 1998) that undertaking academic work is perceived by young people as 'feminine' and therefore, if boys want to avoid the verbal and physical 'abuse' attached to being labelled as 'feminine' or 'queer,' they must avoid academic work or at least they must appear to avoid academic work (academic achievement itself is not necessarily a problem for boys, but being seen to work is a problem). (Jackson 2002, pp. 39–40)

The young men I worked with in the mid 1980s are no exception here, although, as I argued in *Working Class Without Work*, there was no overtly oppositional behaviour lodged against school knowledge and culture, unlike in previous investigations of this population (Everhart 1983, Willis 1977). Nevertheless, while the young Freeway boys exhibited an emerging contradictory attitude toward schooling and school culture (in other words, they thought they 'needed it'), they embraced only the form of such knowledge and culture rather than its substance. In point of fact, young men who embraced the valued masculine form in the mid 1980s did little to no school-based work, either in school or out, just enough to 'get by' or 'pass' (Weis 1990). This, paralleled with deep assertions of both white and male superiority in relation to a constructed 'other' (all women, Yemenites and African American males, and gay men, in particular) were defining characteristics of hegemonic masculine form in this white working-class community and school in the mid 1980s (Weis 1990). Reflecting on the lads, Willis offers:

> It is important to appreciate that the anti-mental animus of the counter-school culture, while highly relevant in opposing and penetrating the demands of the school, also continues to orient and help direct the attitudes of 'the lads' – like a soldier's courage in the absence of war – long after the transition and across the board. This 'locking' impels them towards a certain kind of culturally mediated experiential set of meanings throughout their lives. There will certainly be future situations in which these attitudes and practices produce worthwhile 'payoffs,' but the danger is that the whole world might henceforth, be divided into two – the mental and the manual. (2000, p. 42)

Drawing upon his well-known notion of cross-valorisation, Willis notes 'a further twist':

> The anti-mentalism and masculinity of the lads become intertwined, fused, in their sense of themselves. A manual way of acting in the world is also a manly way; a mental way is effeminate. These two things

> reinforce and lock each other into, if you like, 'a market masculinity' on the one hand and a 'patriarchal manualism' on the other – mutually producing a locking of dispositions and sensibility, which may quite literally, last a lifetime. (2000, p. 44)

Whether the 'locking' of masculinity and anti-mentalism lasts a lifetime or not is, of course, an empirical question, and one that relates directly to *Class Reunion*. While not designed explicitly as a study in masculinity per se, and therefore not centrally located in all current debates on masculinity, recent scholarship informs my work in key ways. Given kaleidoscopic changes in the global economy, changes which hit the former industrial proletariat the hardest (read, largely white men), the remaking of the class is tied in key and critical ways to issues that swirl fundamentally around masculinity as well as the wages of whiteness and a remaking of the feminine, which is treated elsewhere (Weis, forthcoming b). Like the 'missing postman' in the BBC serial of the same name, who wanders about delivering his last letter before being laid off, 'many men can only see loss ahead of them and cannot face what feels like a loss of manhood and feminisation, or, what Cohen and Ainley (2000, p. 83) call the loss of "musculatures of the labouring body"' (Walkerdine, Lacey and Melody 2001, 21). It is within this context that I see and hear the Freeway youth with whom I worked in the 1980s grow up.

Here, for illustrative purposes, we meet two men who have stayed in Freeway or the immediately adjoining working-class suburb (other patterns will be explored in *Class Reunion*, forthcoming). Emblematic of the majority of Freeway men, they work in what might be thought of as an assemblage of both 'new' and traditional working-class jobs; such jobs being paralegal, electrician, warehouse worker, highway toll booth collector, foreman of the high school maintenance department, hospital technician, credit card collector, pizza supplies delivery person, worker at a muffler shop, among others. Some of these men, those who remain closest to normative white working-class masculinity as constructed in high school, fall more centrally in the 'hard living' category flagged by investigators several decades ago (Howell 1973). Others, those who tend to move off the space of hegemonically constructed white masculinity, fare better, establishing for themselves more 'stable', or, to use Howell's term, 'settled' lives. Significantly, it is in the movement off the space of white working-class hegemonic masculinity – that masculinity that emerged in relation to the old industrial economy – that now encourages this stability, since more 'settled' jobs tend to be those associated with schooling (read feminine) and those traditionally coded as feminine (such as nurse, paralegal, hospital technician). Such jobs also demand, to a great extent, a partner who earns nearly comparable money if one wishes an economically non-marginal lifestyle under terms generally offered to children of the former industrial proletariat in the new economy.

In addition, under this scenario, child rearing requires the ongoing time and attention of both parents, since both men and women are working full-time in the paid labour force and, generally speaking, working-class families both cannot afford day care and simultaneously do not trust it, feeling that the children should be reared in the home, 'not by some stranger' (Zinsser 1991). Arguably this reflects the type of paid child care available in working-class communities as well as the fact that working-class women have staked out child rearing as something that is both their responsibility and that they 'do well' – claiming it as their own gender-bounded creative space. Under the current economy, and assuming that child rearing is still largely lodged in the home (even if it is not, the same point holds for day care arrangements), such child care must be patched together and carved out of the non-paid labour time of both parents, including who drops the children off at school, tends to younger children in the home, picks them up at grandma's, takes them to after-school hockey (a very popular luxury, particularly for male children in cold climate working-class communities), and so forth, dependent on the age of the children. Stay-at-home mothers can no longer be counted upon to perform all of this unpaid labour. Thus the carefully imagined rendition of a wife's future domesticity as lodged in high school white working-class hegemonic masculinity must be held in check at some point and re-articulated in action if 'settled' working-class lives are to be attained under the restructured economy.[1]

At the heart of this repositioning and, I would argue, remaking of the entire white working class, is the reconstruction of male–female relations and, most importantly in light of high school desires in the case of young men, the re-articulation of appropriate and valued masculinity. It is, though, not simply the verbal re-articulation of masculinity that is at issue here, as virtually all of the men *verbally* express a desired form of gender roles and relations that are wholly different from those expressed in high school (Weis 1990). Virtually no man re-interviewed in 2000–2001 suggests that he currently values the gender regime he envisioned in 1985. The important question here is the extent to which these men actually *live* gendered relations that enable a 'settled' new working-class lifestyle. Those who are unable to live and accomplish gender as a set of relations vastly different from those of their parents and grandparents are, I argue, the new 'hard livers' in a restructured world economy which, as noted earlier, hits the former industrial labouring class in particular kinds of ways (Reich 1991, 2002).

Women, and even some men, tend to conceptualise this lived re-articulation of gender as a giving up or not of 'the partying kind of life'. In other words, those who are seen as being able to 'settle down', much the same way Lilian Rubin's (1976) respondents offered in the 1970s in her classic *Worlds of Pain*, are seen as those for whom the new economy will work. It is, though, far more complex than the giving up or not of

the 'partying life'; rather, 'settled living' is now fundamentally bound to lived re-articulations of gendered forms and the ways in which such forms enable what becomes a stable and valued working-class existence. Ironically then, gender once again is the fulcrum on which forms of working-class life balance, but in wholly new ways than enacted under the old industrial economy. It is those men who are willing and able to transgress the constructed working-class gender categories and valued masculinity of their youth for whom the new economy can produce 'settled lives'. It is, in point of fact, only those men who engage in school, coded as compliant and feminine (Jackson 2002, Connell 1989, Reay 2002, Martino 1999, Willis 2000, Arnot, forthcoming, Mac an Ghail 1994, 1996, Martino and Meyenn 2001) and enter into and maintain partnerships/marriages with individuals who earn as much money if not more than they do, who can be other than 'hard living' in this newly minted class fraction. In this latter regard, a domestic partner need not necessarily be a lover – one of the men has formed a working domestic liaison with his sister, for example, and they live together, pooling human and economic resources to raise their children, ages three (his, whom he is devoted to and sees constantly although the boy lives primarily with his former girlfriend) and nine (hers; her boyfriend left her before the child was born and he has no contact with the daughter). My point here is that the thorough colonisation of the public sphere by men, as well as men's imagined total domination of women in the home/family sphere as envisioned by Freeway working-class boys in the mid 1980s, must be reworked if men are to be among the 'settled' working class.

This was not true in the past, since the male family wage could, at least in principle, support and maintain 'settled' family life. If nothing else, men and women could imagine and behave in terms of the possibility of family life as tagged to male earning power wherein men could obtain the secret guarantees of earning the family wage: 'sacrifice – reward – dignity' (Willis 2000, p. 93). Embedded in this past, of course, is the fact that women had few options in the paid labour force, a situation that is markedly different today. Neither the available 'family wage' for men nor the relative lack of paid work for women characterises today's economy, and not a single man in the early 2000s whom I interviewed suggests that it does. Some men, however, behave as 'new' or radically altered working-class men, irrespective of their private thoughts, thus transgressing gendered borders articulated in previous generations, and some do not. Those who do not may or may not have additional deeply rooted problems, such as alcoholism, drugging and so forth, which may or may not lie at the heart of their inability to enact a necessary new masculinity. Those who enact this reformatted masculinity may also have problems with drinking and drugs. Nevertheless, their lived and reformulated masculinity at this moment in time, irrespective of such problems, allows them to purchase a home, raise their children, earn part of a living family wage, purchase a car or two, buy hockey skates for their

sons, and even have extra money with which they can add an outdoor deck or a fireplace to their home by doing the manual labour themselves with help from their similarly positioned new working-class buddies – buddies who have the manual skills in many cases of the old working class (carpentry, cement pouring, electrical wiring and so forth). All of this, however, is wholly dependent upon having a partner with whom one can merge money – a partner with whom they also share the day-to-day, minute-by-minute work of parenting upon the birth of children. Without this duality of male–female public sphere-generated income as well as work around the domestic sphere, the 'settled' life with its accompanying and valued (partially class-coded) material and social goods – including homes, fireplace pits, wet bars, motorcycles, recreational vehicles (RVs), dirt bikes, cabins for hunting, professional football and hockey tickets and so forth – simply could not be accomplished. The 'settled livers' – those men who are able to stake out stability in the new working class – thus challenge, through their day-to-day lives, traditional gendered boundaries and definitions deeply etched in prior working-class hegemonic masculinity and working-class family life more generally, as well articulated by the young men in the mid 1980s when I first worked with them.

This does not mean that all is well with gendered relations in the family and community, a point that I explore at great length elsewhere (Weis, forthcoming a, Weis forthcoming b). What it does mean, though, is that in the traditional white working class, hegemonically forged masculinity offers a linchpin around which individual men with whom I worked swirl as they grow into adulthood. Thus the located 1980s cultural form of masculinity, one tied in specific ways to the industrial economy, offers a point of departure as men move forward in a wholly restructured world economy. It is in the movement forward – the nature of departure and/or stability *in relation* to the original form rather than the original form per se – that we can see a template for future lives. This set of departures/stability must, though, be theorised in relation to what the economy has to offer men and women in the late twentieth century and into the twenty-first. It is, then, the collective youth cultural form (here the hegemonic form of masculinity which many others have noted as well) and later individual movement in relation to this form (one forged dialectically in relation to the old industrial economy and the gender-based bargains within this old economy for the working class) that offers powerful material as we work to understand the world of the new working class. More importantly, of course, this all sits underneath and in relation to massive realignment of the global economy, which touched off this entire set of negotiations to begin with, as well as tighter and more clearly articulated sorting mechanisms related to formal schooling. Given that formal schooling in this class fraction is traditionally coded as feminine, this speaks volumes about the gendered fulcrum upon which so much of the remaking of the white working class rests.

Here we meet two men who are emblematic of the split detailed above. Unlike some of the other men re-interviewed in 2000–2001 (Weis, forthcoming a), both remain in and around the Freeway environs, and it is arguably the case that both are part of the 'new' white working class, a class descended from the traditional proletariat but no longer embodying its same features. Clint is currently a 'hard liver' and John is not. Although very similar in high school in terms of their attitudes toward school, school-based behaviour, academic track location, daily activities and expressed masculinity, John now lives a new masculine form, one which enables/promotes both the shared form of a family living wage and the accomplishment of child rearing. Clint, in contrast, embodies the opposite. While giving lip service to a desire for women to work outside the home (in contradiction to what he said in high school), and seeing himself as thoroughly on board with respect to new gendered locations and relations, Clint does not, in fact, live his verbally expressed new masculine form at all. We hear from John first:

John: I own this home. My sister-in-law actually lives upstairs. Last year, my wife worked full-time. So we needed a babysitter. And she [sister-in-law] was living rent free, but she's babysitting for us. That's as much as you're going to pay for day care. Sam's in school, so now we don't need a babysitter….

I'm an O.R. (operating room) tech. I work at St Paul's Hospital in surgery. I set up cases – cases as in surgery. And assist the doctors, and then when we're done, you clean up. Yesterday I was in a craniotomy from eleven until six. And okay, it's five-thirty, I'll go to lunch now. Or like, when we do total joint, do a total knee replacement, or a total hip replacement, and there are people that have been working there for twenty years that don't know how to do those. When I started, I was ambitious, I guess. I mean I would be bored just doing little piddly stuff all day long, you know, that's the downside of it, is that I'm always busy.

Lois: And how about your wife? What does she do?

John: My wife is an ultrasound technologist at St Paul's also. She started working … actually, I found out that there was an opening, and I told her about it. She got the job. I used to work with her other sister, her eldest sister. I used to work with her. Ultrasound is part of x-ray…. [When I got out of high school] I joined the Air Force. I was in the Air Force for about three years, and I did this in the Air Force…. I was on the one hospital with the one doctor. So I went back to

school at Midway [a local two-year school] to broaden my base. My brother-in-law's trying to get me into GM [General Motors]. Hopefully around Thanksgiving I'll know what my chances are. It'll be a skilled trade, which I'll start off making seven dollars more an hour. I mean, I like what I do; I'm good at what I do: I don't get paid for what I'm worth. You know, especially the way I get abused every day. You know, there's six, seven people sitting around doing nothing. And I just get done with this big case, and 'Okay, John, go do this now. And John, can you stay later? John, can you come in earlier?' It's not worth it….

I'm really underpaid. I mean, when I help this doctor, he's going to make, you know, they earn their money from all the training and the years and years and years they had to do this stuff. I understand that. I mean, the nurse's making, you know, twenty, twenty-four dollars an hour. She's sitting on her ass. She didn't check the case. She didn't set up the case. She opens it up and sits down. She preps the patient. I understand that. And then, she does nothing until the case is over unless I tell her to give me something. She makes twenty-four dollars an hour and I'm making fourteen dollars an hour…. If I get into GM I'm hoping that my wife can go part-time. I can only work so much, you know, so she went full-time. Yeah, she wants a car … and I got my little car out front.

Lois: Is it fair to say it's been tough financially?

John: Well, I can't say that because I've been a lot worse off. You know, when my parents first got divorced [when he was fourteen], living with my mom, I mean, she couldn't do for me what I can do for my kids now. I started working when I was fourteen years old so I could buy my school clothes, so I could get a new pair of sneakers. These kids don't have to worry about that. We just spent three hundred dollars on Tom on his hockey. And then it's like another hundred and fifty so he can join this league he's in now. You know, that's expensive. But, whatever.

Lois: Can you describe a typical weekday in your house? Like, you get up in the morning…

John: You know, Sue gets up about six; gets in the shower. She gets up, wakes up Tom [13-year-old stepson]. Tom gets in the shower. Me and

> Sam [son, age five] get up at seven. And Sam will watch *Pokemon* until seven-thirty. By that time, Sue's gone and Tom is gone. I make him [Tom] lunch, and they go. You know, Tom catches his bus at seven-thirty. Sue has to be at the hospital at seven-thirty. And then I'm with Sam, you know, feed him, get him dressed, brush his teeth, make him lunch, go sit out on the porch at eight o'clock, wait for the bus. Then I come back after he goes on the bus. I come back and then I'll shower, and, you know, make the beds and eat something, make myself lunch, do the dishes; basically clean up the house before I go to work. And I get home at six o'clock. You know, if there is no real dinner made, I'll just scrounge around for whatever. And Tuesdays and Thursdays, Sue's at the gym working out. She belongs to Jack [Jack's Gym]. I find something to eat. And then, you know, do what needs to be done, got to do laundry; I mean, clean up the house, give him [Sam] a bath, whatever. When it was summertime, cut the grass, go outside, screw around with the kids for a couple hours, you know. Depends on what's going on. I have to go out and do whatever.

Lois: Were you raised in one of those homes where the dad kind of expected…

John: [He interrupts me] The dinner every night? Yeah, that's what it was. My mom never worked up until my dad got laid off. You know, my mom stayed home and cooked and cleaned or did the laundry. Ironed the clothes and made dinner every night, yeah.

John had some hard years. When he was in high school, he lived in a now condemned building after his parents were divorced. Soon after the divorce, his seventeen-year-old sister became pregnant and lived with them until the baby was born. Working at a pizzeria below his apartment for his entire teenage years, John had no illusions about what the future held. He told me fifteen years ago that

> College prep is the only thing to do. Well, around here, cause there's nothing else. Everything's going down south. Like any kind of good jobs, a better education's what you're gonna hafta need unless you plan to sweep the floors someplace the rest of your life. And that ain't really gonna be my style. (John in 1985)

Most of the fifteen–sixteen year old Freeway boys expressed similar notions about the value of schooling when I knew them in the mid 1980s. They did not, though, act

upon this new valuation, as most did virtually nothing in high school except 'get by' through minimal studying and copying one another's homework, engaging in the most low-level form of education, but certainly not its substance. What this did mean, though, is that for the moment the overt and boisterous opposition to school noted by previous investigators of this group was not apparent. This spilt valuation of school, then, emerged in sharp evidence during high school years and was a core element of valued white working-class masculinity in the 1980s. In this sense, white working-class young men mirror what we find in many studies of African Americans, wherein schooling is valued and not valued at the same time (Ogbu 1974, 2003). White working-class youth in high school at least verbally valued schooling for what they thought it could get them. They did not, though, *act* on the positive end of this set of understandings. In fact, most participated in the bare form of schooling, rather than engaging its substance.

As a young adult, John is amongst the new working class. He owns his home, and has one son and one stepson. He no longer lives in Freeway, but in a white working-class suburb immediately adjacent to Freeway, having bought a home four blocks from the Freeway border, a home that puts his children in a different set of schools. As we see, though, his stable or 'settled' new working-class existence, which he values highly, is wholly dependent upon his breaking away from hegemonically constructed white male masculinity. He went into the service, gained some skills, and, upon leaving the Air Force, immediately went back to a two-year college for an associate's degree, engaging finally in the substance side of the form–substance split with respect to education, which neither he nor the vast majority of white working-class male youth did while they were in high school. In this sense, he crosses over what Willis calls the 'anti-mental animus' embedded within white working-class masculinity, reaching over the mental–manual split as it cross-valorises the feminine/masculine. Here it is significant that John is in what might be seen as a traditionally female field – hospital technician – although he carefully differentiates himself discursively from the female-coded nursing arena. Although skilled, he earns only fourteen dollars an hour, substantially less, in his mind at least, from what he could earn at General Motors. His settled life is thus wholly dependent on his own job (which can be coded as traditionally female) coupled with that of his wife (ultrasound technologist). It can be assumed that she earns approximately the same money as he does, or perhaps even more, having earned an associate's degree the same year he did from the same college.

Most noteworthy are his responses to questions about domestic labour. Unlike his father, 'who expected dinner on the table every night at 5 p.m.', John takes full responsibility for much of the household-related work, stating that his wife 'works too'. John gets his son ready every morning for school, makes lunch for his thirteen-

year-old stepson, makes the beds, makes himself lunch, does the dishes, cleans the house before he goes to work, and often makes dinner because Sue is not yet home. Instead of expecting to be waited on after sacrificing himself through continual giving of his labour power (the secret guarantee of the family wage: sacrifice, reward, dignity), John lives domestic life as a partnership wherein both adults need to participate if they are to purchase a house, maintain a home, encourage the children to play hockey, own two cars and belong to Jack's Gym. While all this is not, of course, necessarily what his wife would say about the domestic arrangements (a great deal of research notes the double burden of women as women enter the paid labour force), it is nevertheless obvious that John moved off centrally located working-class masculine space in order for this all to be accomplished, although using traditionally masculine space in the form of the armed services to catapult him out of Freeway and into a new settled working-class life. Ironically then, traditionally hegemonic male space (armed forces) can act as a bridge to the enactment of a new masculine form – a masculine form different from the old working-class hegemonic masculinity and one that is demanded in this class fraction if a man is to be other than 'hard living' in the restructured economy.[1]

John knows that his settled life is still highly precarious. Life is incredibly expensive and he senses the fragility of his current domestic arrangement. Most importantly, though, he had to invest in a new form of masculinity in order to make this all work. Stretching beyond talk about shared responsibly, John engages in the day-to-day labour associated with his settled working classness – a set of arrangements far from centrally located and valued masculinity forged under conditions of the capital–labour accord.

In stark contrast to John, Clint lives largely the same life he did in high school, never straying far from the masculine space occupied and expressed as one valued for the future during his secondary school years:

> Clint: My parents basically still live there [house where he grew up]. Well, I still live there too. And back and forth between there and my girlfriend's…. Now I'm working on cars, doing the same thing [that I did in high school]; that's what I'm doing for a living. I'm running a Deltasonic [car wash] now. I'm on contract with them.
>
> Lois: I'm going to show you a picture of yourself from high school.
>
> Clint: Man, that was a long time ago. Guess my hair was kind of short [now it is in a pony tail]. Kept in touch with a lot of the same people I got there [written down underneath the blurb in his senior yearbook

picture]…. I was in trouble in high school. We always had a good time. Out partying all the time. Not going to class. We were good at that. Ah, we might have gotten thrown out of the parking lot a couple of times [for smoking cigarettes or marijuana]. We had a lot of good times though. Man, I haven't looked at these books in years. Actually, we all still do the same thing when I see all these guys. Go out and party. Especially Bruce [who I interviewed also] and T. J. Bruce more than anybody though. We just go out drinking, go to a ball game, whatever. Watch a [car] race. We went to a wedding a couple of weeks ago. That was a wild one. Bruce couldn't go though. His girlfriend was there. He couldn't go. He was watching the kid. That's an iffy situation there….

I just did what I had to do to graduate. That's about it. One of them 'get it done, get out of here' kind of things. Everybody just wanted to graduate, get it over and done with and get out of here. That's the way we all ended up being. They [the school] wanted you to stay in school though…. You think about it now and maybe I shouldn't have rushed that much. And then you look back now and see all you do is get up and go to work, go home, go to sleep, get up, and go to work, go home. Especially the way I work, ten hours a day. Seven-thirty to five thirty, Monday through Friday, and seven-thirty to two on Saturday. I don't necessarily stay all those hours, but it's the hours we're open. Right now I just manage it. The last eight years I was doing it; the last two years I haven't been really doing it that much. Since I screwed up my back, I haven't done it at all. I did that back thing in April [this is November]. I blew out a disc. Lifting something. And then I went to work back in June and then I pinched a nerve like two weeks ago. I was going to take some night course just for – I was going to go into welding…. I don't know. It was a thought. I'm going to have to see what happens with my back. If I don't go back to work soon, it's possible I might lose this job. That's why I'm going back after I go to the doctor tomorrow. I'm gonna go back Monday just for the fact I don't want to lose my job.

Lois: Can you describe your money situation now compared to when you grew up?

Clint: Right now, not very good without me working. I'm still waiting for a Comp check. I do all right. I live with my girlfriend but, like I said, it's back and forth. I don't own a house. I didn't buy a house yet. My

> girlfriend has an apartment. Her seventeen-year-old daughter lives with her. She's divorced … I go wherever I want, whenever I want. She don't like the fact that I just bought a fifteen thousand dollar motorcycle. She likes the bike. It's just she thinks I should've bought a house instead. I wanted it [the bike] so I went and bought it…. We been fighting a lot lately, so I don't know how much longer this is going to last. Just the fact that I come and go wherever I please, do whatever I want. Nobody tells me what to do. I just do what I want is what it comes down to. You know, like that. The last straw will be, let's see, what is today, the second? I give it another week when I tell her I'm leaving for Atlanta to go to the race [car race]. That'll probably be the icing on the cake. But, that's one of them things. Nascar race. Winston Cup car race. Last race of the year in Atlanta. Me and a couple other guys are going. We were at a friend's house. The guy who got married – we were at a friend's house and everybody started talking about it and the next thing I knew my phone rang and [he said] 'I already called, I looked it up on the computer. I called tickets and we're going. You going?' And I said 'sure'. So she don't know about it yet. She's not going to be happy. We've been together since '92. She works at Unibase, a uniform company. She works in the warehouse.

Unlike John, who was very similar to Clint in high school, Clint remains largely on high school constructed masculine space. He spends most of his time with the same individuals he partied with in high school and, by his own admission, engages in largely the same activities: drinking and smoking grass. 'Out partying all the time' as a teenager, his life has not changed much except for the fact that he can now legally drink and he puts in many hours working at the local Deltasonic car wash. Sounding much like men of the old industrial working class (Willis 1977, Sennett and Cobb 1972), he now regrets not putting more time into school, suggesting that 'Maybe I shouldn't have rushed so much.'

Clint rests within what I call the new working-class 'hard livers' – bouncing back and forth between his parents' house and that of his girlfriend, not sure how long he will have a job, spending a great deal of time in bars with his buddies from high school (whom I also interviewed and who are in the same sketchy position both in wage labour terms and in terms of their domestic life), and just generally doing 'whatever [he] wants', not feeling himself to be accountable to anyone or anything. While Clint certainly does not valorise patriarchal gender relations in the same way he and virtually every other Freeway young man in the mid 1980s did when I knew them, and he indeed recognises that his sister works at American axle on the assembly line

and 'works harder than most guys I know', contributing to a 'settled' working-class lifestyle in her own family, Clint has been unable and/or unwilling to move himself into that space that would allow a 'settled' working-class lifestyle for himself. He has not gone on to school, still coding it as boring, repetitive and docile (in other words, feminine), is firmly planted in the anti-mental animus with regard to his own labour, thereby living a form of 'patriarchal manualism', and does not participate in a particular kind of domestic life in which resources, both human and material, are pooled. Clint, then, has stayed largely within masculine space forged and valued in high school, unable and unwilling perhaps to facilitate an alternative trajectory – a trajectory that demands a different lived stance vis-à-vis gender than that fantasised about and enacted in secondary school.

Conclusion

I am suggesting here that the reconstituted working class in America is living a newly created divide between 'hard' and 'settled' livers, one resting on the fulcrum of gender definitions and relations. Like Connell (1995), then, I am affirming different masculinities, but noting that the nature of such masculinities can shift markedly over time. Peering at the 1985 Freeway boys and looking at these same individuals as men in 2000–2001, we see that the ways in which they position themselves in relation to high school hegemonic masculinity has a great deal to do with where they end up fifteen years later. All the young white men meet the harsh economy they feared they would while in high school – just five or so years after the major steel plant closed in Freeway, a closure that hit the white working class in the area hard. As Reich (1991, 2002) and others argue, the old industrial sector is gone, and with it the kinds of jobs that pit working-class males in a routine manner against the brutality of heavy industry. It is in the push and pull with adolescent axes of identity development that Freeway men stake out and are able to stake out adulthood. It is a combination of structural forces 'determining', to some extent, the shape and form of the economy and culture with the ways in which individual men take up positions within this set of structural pushes and pulls.

This set of theoretical understandings challenges both structural and culturally rooted theories of reproduction. Mechanistic notions of reproduction of the economy, culture and the individual obviously will not do here given massive economic realignment. But neither do more culturally based theoretical understandings. What I am suggesting here is not only that collective cultures emerge dialectically in relation to structures, as Paul Willis (1977) suggests, but that there are elements within these collectively based cultures, in this case masculinity, as well as individual negotiation of the elements over the years that set the stage for later relations and sensibilities. It is in the struggle with such collectively based cultures on a more individual level that adult lives begin to play

out in a drastically changed economy.

In this way, too, we can begin to understand the lived reconfiguration of the entire class. This is not to say that large structural determinations are not there. Surely they are, as I have noted repeatedly with respect to the changing global economy. It is equally not the case that collectively based youth cultures are irrelevant to future life possibilities and the broader shape of society. I agree with Paul Willis (1977, p.1) that we cannot assume a 'continuous line of ability in the occupational/class structures', but rather 'must conceive of radical breaks represented by the interface of cultural forms' – cultural forms which are, to some extent at least, under the control of those who produce them. Nevertheless, it is in the ongoing and ever-changing interaction between these two major sets of forces (structural and cultural) that the individual ultimately begins to stake out his or her future. In the case at hand, it is in the reinforcement and/or pulling away from what is defined within high school peer groups as the hegemonic white working-class masculine form that we begin to see how young people, in this case young men, move toward adulthood. Ultimately this enables us to trace the movement and emerging contours of the new white working class under a wholly restructured global economy. Ironically, as we see here, while the old industrial order rested upon a stable gender regime, it is the unsteady fulcrum of gender (roles, definitions and hierarchy) that lies at the very heart of reconstituted white working-class life.

Author's note

A version of this paper was originally delivered as a keynote address at the meeting of the Australian Educational Research Association, Brisbane, December 2002.

Notes

[1]The idea of the armed forces as a space that enables/encourages a new masculine form is embedded within a number of the Freeway male narratives. I will take up this point at great length in *Class Reunion* (Weis, forthcoming a).

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