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Three Essays on Local Social Orders

Beckwith, Cary

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THREE ESSAYS ON LOCAL SOCIAL ORDERS

Samuel Cary Beckwith

A DISSERTATION

PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY

OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation analyzes the role of local social orders in creating community, belonging, inclusion, and moral worth. It draws on survey, observational, and interview data to identify social processes that shape experiences of inclusion and exclusion. It engages these issues across three empirical settings: an oil boomtown, a live-audience television interview, and a sample of communal-living residences. Chapter 1 examines the distribution of "we-feeling," or a sense of belonging, within small groups, asking how an individual's position in a local status hierarchy influences his or her sense of belonging. Using data from the Urban Communes Project, it tests a theory in which a "high-status penalty" diminishes we-feeling for high-ranking individuals, leading we-feeling to concentrate in the middle of a status hierarchy. Chapter 2 uses a public embarrassment spectacle to isolate the role of conversational mechanics in Goffmanian face-work. In a televised interview between comedian David Letterman and actor Joaquin Phoenix, Letterman and Phoenix navigate conversational obligations and conventions in ways that threaten Phoenix's face by "scoring points" at his expense. These "conversation-mechanical points" facilitate content-based points that further damage Phoenix, demonstrating how the structure of talk works in concert with the content of talk in producing a ritual outcome. Chapter 3 explores sources of discontent among migrants to an oil boomtown in North Dakota, focusing on how masculinity shaped their experiences. Oilfield workers aligned their self-understandings and senses of moral worth with the local definition of masculinity. Many found it satisfying to think of themselves as doing a "man's job," but the demands of oilfield life subtly undercut many men's sense of independence and entitlement, thereby frustrating the masculine self-understanding they prized and adding to their discontent with their new surroundings. Together

these chapters highlight how social processes that create inclusion and exclusion are grounded in local social orders.

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Introduction

This dissertation analyzes the role of local social orders in creating community, belonging, inclusion, and moral worth. It draws on survey, observational, and interview data to identify social processes that shape experiences of inclusion and exclusion. It engages these issues across three empirical settings: an oil boomtown, a live-audience television interview, and a sample of communal-living residences. In each chapter, it establishes links between social structure, individual experience, and local order, with a focus on group and interpersonal dynamics.

Chapter 1 examines the distribution of "we-feeling," or a sense of belonging, within small groups. Specifically, it asks how an individual's position in a local status hierarchy influences his or her sense of belonging. Previous research has argued that we-feeling is positively related to a person's social status through a cumulative advantage process. This line of thinking appears in both the group processes and Neo-Durkheimian traditions. Chapter 1 proposes a different relationship between status and we-feeling and puts that theory to an empirical test. Members of a community may bear responsibilities on behalf of the group. High status, the chapter argues, can recast the responsibilities of group life as burdens if a person regards them as incongruent with her rank. This can dim one's feelings toward the group, acting as a "high-status penalty" that diminishes we-feeling for high-ranking individuals, leading we-feeling to concentrate in the middle of a status hierarchy rather than at the high end. This chapter tests this theory using data from the Urban Communes Project, a survey of 60 naturally occurring communities. The findings suggest that status-incongruent responsibilities can suppress the benefits of status at the top of a hierarchy.

Chapter 2 continues the first chapter's interest in social processes that create inclusion and exclusion. In contrast to the first chapter's focus on inclusion and exclusion as social-psychological experiences, this chapter treats them as ritual outcomes and focuses on the micro-interactional processes that produce them. This perspective identifies exclusion as a moral status that reflects ritual debasement. In Goffmanian terms, it reflects the absence or failure of "face-work" and a loss of "face" (Goffman 1967a). Although interaction rituals typically protect a person's face, face-work at times can take a competitive, zero-sum turn when one participant attempts to "score points" at the expense of others. Chapter 2 uses a public embarrassment spectacle to isolate the role of conversational mechanics in face-work. In a televised interview between comedian David Letterman and actor Joaquin Phoenix, Letterman and Phoenix unknowingly collaborate to embarrass Phoenix. Letterman and Phoenix navigate conversational obligations and conventions in ways that threaten Phoenix's face. These "conversation-mechanical points" facilitate content-based points that further damage Phoenix, who afterward described the encounter as a "beatdown." This analysis highlights the place of conversational mechanics in face-work and shows how the structure of talk works in concert with the content of talk in producing a ritual outcome.

The third chapter, like the previous two, focuses on group and interpersonal dynamics as they relate to inclusion and exclusion. Like the first chapter, it considers the relationship between social structure and the subjective experience of belonging, and like the second chapter it addresses the social bases of moral worth. It takes up these issues in the empirical setting of an oil boomtown in North Dakota. Beginning in the mid-2000s and accelerating in 2011, the oil-producing region in northwestern North Dakota received tens of thousands of migrants, mostly men, from across the United States. The work paid well, but my ethnographic research found a

social environment in which "most everybody hates it here." Chapter 3 focuses on the complex role of masculinity in shaping migrants' experiences. Oilfield work gave migrants an opportunity to embody and enact a masculine ethic, one that was cultivated by the hypermasculine environment of the oilfield. Workers aligned their self-understandings and senses of moral worth with the local definition of masculinity, and many found it satisfying to think of themselves as doing a "man's job." At the same time, the realities of oilfield life—long hours, little control over one's time, crude and makeshift living arrangement—subtly undercut many men's sense of independence and entitlement, thereby frustrating the masculine self-understanding they prized. This aspect of the work situation that they encountered in North Dakota—the centrality of an aspiration that they simultaneously struggled to realize—contributed to their sense of frustration and their overall discontent.

In addition to addressing common themes, the papers that comprise this dissertation share a common level of analysis in their focus on local social orders, and they demonstrate different approaches to studying them. Maynard (2014:213), drawing on Goffman's (1983) overview of the interaction order, has proposed that "there are three ways in which investigators examine local social order." He places these three approaches on a continuum. On one end, local order can be analyzed independently of social structure, a position often found in research inspired by the ethnomethodological tradition. This type of analysis is grounded in concrete situations and interactions, offering up what he calls "news from somewhere." On the other end of the continuum, a "conservative position" sees in local order the expression of external social structure, or "news from nowhere." Explanations that invoke dispositions or habitus exemplify this point of view. In between is a third position, a "loose coupling" of local order and social structure.

The chapters below sit at different places on this continuum. Of the three, Chapter 2 lies closest to the end of the spectrum that analyzes local order independently of social structure. But while it uses insights and methodology drawn from conversational analysis, its analysis of local order is not as situationally specific as some research in the ethnomethodological tradition; it is not strictly "news from somewhere." In drawing from Goffman's interaction ritual perspective, the paper explains the local order by drawing on concerns that transcend the situation. In this case, those are Goffman's concerns with "face" and the idea that the object sanctified by the rituals of everyday interaction is the self (Goffman 1967b:91). This concern stretches across individuals and situations; elaborating on Maynard's framework, one could say that this particular "news" is not so much from nowhere as it is from everywhere.

The analysis in Chapter 1 centers on the internal status hierarchy of each commune in the data set, and in this respect it too honors the insight that social order is locally constituted. It provides "news from somewhere," the somewhere being the particular communes in the data set. At the same time, the analysis does not analyze specific situations or practices. Its primary objective is to explain the distribution of the subjective experience of belonging, and to do so it invokes the local status order. In that respect, it shows that the experience of belonging is in part an expression of social structure. Unlike the "news from nowhere" perspective, however, the structure that the analysis invokes is not one external to the locality; it is not the macrostructures made visible in class-based dispositions, for example, but rather a local structure built on interpersonal relations and tied to the local interaction order.

Chapter 3, on discontent among oilfield workers in North Dakota, exemplifies the "loose coupling" perspective that sits between the two poles of Maynard's continuum. It points out social structural influences on the local social order while also showing local order enacted in

situ. It documents how local definitions of masculinity regulated migrants' behavior and shaped their self-understandings—news from a particular somewhere on the northern plains of the United States. But the news in this chapter also comes from non-local structural sources. Many oilfield workers brought with them attitudes, aptitudes, and self-understandings that resonated with the local definition. Furthermore, I argue that the experience of oilfield migrants was influenced by a tension between the aspirations encouraged by the local definitions of masculinity and the constraints imposed on workers by the industry's efforts to fill its labor demands. My argument, however, does not supplant local order with external determinants. Rather, it seeks first to ground the experiences of migrants in a local context first and then as a second step to take into account the external forces that situate those experiences.

In addition to demonstrating different analytical approaches to studying local orders, these chapters also show a range of methodological approaches available for addressing questions on this topic. Together the chapters in this dissertation highlight the local bases of social processes that create inclusion and exclusion.

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Chapter 1. Who Belongs? Local Status Orders and the Subjective Experience of Community

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Belonging is a central human aspiration, one that has drawn attention from sociologists and social psychologists alike. Who is likely to realize this aspiration? This chapter addresses that question by examining how "we-feeling" is distributed within small groups. Previous research has argued that the feeling of belonging is positively related to a person's social status through a cumulative advantage process. But high status can recast the responsibilities of group life as burdens if a person regards them as incongruent with his or her rank, and this can dim one's feelings toward the group. This chapter proposes that a "high-status penalty" diminishes we-feeling for high-ranking individuals, thereby concentrating we-feeling in the middle of a status hierarchy. It tests this theory using data from the Urban Communes Project, a survey of 60 naturally occurring communities. The findings suggest that status-incongruent responsibilities can suppress the benefits of status at the top of a hierarchy.

Few issues are as central to human identity, well-being, and fulfillment as the experience of belonging. The desire to belong has been recognized at least since Maslow (1943) as an important motivating factor in human behavior, and researchers have linked belonging with various positive outcomes for health and well-being (Jetten, Haslam, and Haslam 2012). Belonging is not a given, however, nor is it shared equally. As Keller (2003:5) has remarked, the particular challenges of the modern world impress on its inhabitants Camus's question, "Where can I feel at home?"

Who has a better chance of realizing this aspiration? This chapter examines that question in the context of *gemeinschaft*, Tönnies's ([1897] 1963) term describing a social environment characterized by face-to-face interactions, shared values, and collective goals; the closest English translation is *community*. Sociologists have described the experience of *gemeinschaft* as "we-feeling" (Cooley 1909; Kanter 1972; Vaisey 2007), a phenomenon that appears in settings where people value community and commit themselves to realizing it. We-feeling identifies the subjective experience of group membership—an enduring, trans-situational affective attachment that binds people to groups.

Previous research has proposed that the feeling of group membership is positively related to a person's social status. This line of thinking appears in both the group processes tradition (e.g., Willer 2009) and the Durkheimian microsociological tradition (e.g., Collins 2004), arguing in each case that a cumulative advantage process (DiPrete and Eirich 2006) links status and we-feeling. Research on group processes suggests that when group members confer status on an individual, he or she is likely to feel closer to the group, which can stimulate contributions that in turn garner more rewards. Neo-Durkheimian theory proposes that high-status individuals carry "emotional energy" that both reinforces their status and affirms their sense of group membership.

I argue that cumulative advantage does not fully account for the distribution of we-feeling. This chapter proposes that a "high-status penalty" can diminish we-feeling for high-ranking individuals. Groups often require contributions from their members, and a person's status position can shape his or her perception of what constitutes an appropriate contribution to the group. When the demands of group life do not align with a high-status individual's expectation of what contributions are appropriate for him or her, the individual may be less likely to form affective attachments to the group. This high-status penalty can lead we-feeling to concentrate not at the top of a status hierarchy but in the middle.

I test this proposition using data from the Urban Communes Project, a survey of 60 real-world, naturally occurring residential communities located in six American metropolitan areas. Communes are only one site for studying *gemeinschaft*, but they are a particularly strategic choice because of their manageable size and identifiable boundaries. The communes in this sample vary not only in their geographical location but in their enrollment, ideology, and commitment expected of their residents. The residents themselves were quite heterogeneous as well (Zablocki 1980).

Using these data, I investigate which commune residents report the highest levels of we-feeling relative to their housemates and why this is the case. I begin by situating my research within the sociological and social-psychological literature on belonging and status processes. After discussing two competing theories for how we-feeling might be distributed across a status hierarchy, I present four hypotheses and introduce the data and key measurements I use in my empirical tests. I present my findings and interpret them with respect to my hypotheses. Finally, I discuss the implications and contributions of this research for understanding the dynamics of group-level emotional attachment formation.

WE-FEELING: AN EXPERIENCE OF COMMUNITY

Social psychologists have described belonging as a basic human need (Maslow 1943) and a "core social motive" (Fiske 2010b). Sociologists, meanwhile, have recognized belonging as central to the community phenomenon (e.g., Etzioni 1996; Tönnies 1905). A contemporary manifestation of the desire to belong can be seen in the modern "quest for community" (Keller 2003; Wuthnow 1994).

Researchers have examined the subjective experience of belonging under various guises. Cooley's (1909:23) early formulation located we-feeling among "primary groups," describing it as "the sort of sympathy and mutual identification for which 'we' is the natural expression." Ethnographic research on communal living has highlighted an experience of "connectedness, belonging, participation in a whole, the mingling of the self in the group" (Kanter 1972:93). Recent studies have discussed it as "the experience of *gemeinschaft*" (Vaisey 2007), a sense of "collective self" (Brewer and Gardner 1996), "perceptions and feelings of social solidarity" (Molm, Collett, and Schaefer 2007), the affective component of "person-to-group ties" (Lawler, Thye, and Yoon 2009), or simply "identifying with the group" (Willer 2009).

These projects have studied social determinants of belonging at both the group level (e.g., Kanter 1972; Vaisey 2007) and individual level. Various factors have been proposed to explain it as an individual-level outcome. Research on social exchange has examined the conditions under which a sense of cohesion develops, identifying reciprocal and generalized exchange (Molm et al. 2007; Molm, Schaefer, and Collett 2007), the "jointness" of exchange (Lawler 2001; Lawler, Thye, and Yoon 2008), and cooperative exchange (Kuwabara 2011) as factors. Additional research has shown that conformity with group standards can enhance we-feeling (Irwin and Simpson 2013) and that a person's identification with a group increases in response to status

conferral (Willer 2009). A separate tradition theorizes that successful interaction rituals (Goffman 1967) create "emotional energy," the lasting experience of which is a sense of solidarity or feeling of group membership (Collins 2004).

We-Feeling in Context: Communal Living in the United States, 1974

This chapter uses communes as a research site for studying the experiential dimension of community. Communes have appeared across historical periods and around the world, often attached to a social movement promoting the benefits of communitarianism (Zablocki 1980). The data employed here were collected amid a decade-long resurgence in communal living in the United States. In comparison to earlier communitarian movements, this one differed in its emphasis on the interests of the individual (Bennett 1975). Kanter (1972:7) locates its basis in a "psychosocial critique" of modern society: "This critique revolves around alienation and loneliness, both social isolation and inner fragmentation. . . . Society is seen as pushing people apart and forcing them into narrow roles that do not express their total selves." Communes, by contrast, were places where self-fulfillment and self-actualization could take place, often promising to benefit their residents directly and personally.

In this context, we-feeling appears as a valued benefit to the individual, something that breaks the experience of alienation and isolation. This idea of we-feeling as a benefit implicitly motivates studies of group-level factors that lead some communes to nurture it more than others (e.g., Kanter 1972; Vaisey 2007). But where Vaisey's (2007) study, for example, measures we-feeling as a group-level attribute, comparing differences across groups, I examine it at the level at which it is experienced, namely the individual. Holding group-level degrees of *gemeinschaft* constant, I seek to understand why individuals within a group experience differing levels of we-feeling.

WE-FEELING AND SOCIAL STATUS

Communities are not exempt from the hierarchies and inequalities that pervade social life. A community may have its leaders, its favored or more successful members, or even its outcasts. Its unity "is always a differentiated and usually a competitive unity, admitting of self-assertion and various appropriative passions" (Cooley 1909:23).

Social hierarchies are a fundamental organizing principle of human social groups (Cheng and Tracy 2014; Magee and Galinsky 2008), functioning to solve problems of motivation, cooperation, and distribution (Anderson and Willer 2014; Berger, Rosenholtz, and Zelditch 1980; Simpson, Willer, and Ridgeway 2012; Willer 2009). Although social scientists have applied the term *status* to various rank-ordered phenomena (Cheng et al. 2013; Collins 2000; Martin 2009), researchers have made an effort to standardize its usage and distinguish it from similar constructs, in particular from *power*. Some consensus has emerged around conceptualizing status and power as dimensions of the more general phenomenon of social rank, with status referring to respect or esteem in the eyes of others and power referring to asymmetric control over valued resources (Blader and Chen 2014; Cheng et al. 2013; Fiske 2010a; Magee and Galinsky 2008).

Social hierarchies account not only for the distribution of resources, attention, and deference but also the distribution of subjective experiences. Status is associated with various affective states, both situational and trans-situational. Researchers have found, for example, that status position and status conferral yield positive socio-emotional experiences (e.g., Anderson et al. 2012; Huberman, Loch, and Önçüler 2004; Kemper 1991; Lovaglia and Houser 1996). Interaction ritual theory describes a process whereby, over time, those individuals with influence

and popularity coincide with those who carry enthusiasm, confidence, initiative, and pride (Collins 1990, 2004).

Previous work has suggested that status has a positive relationship with we-feeling. Research on group processes has theorized and found supporting evidence that group members who are respected and seen as prestigious by their counterparts will view the group more positively and identify with it more closely than those who are accorded less respect and prestige (Willer 2009). This can create a cumulative advantage process whereby those who receive status conferrals for their contributions not only identify more strongly with the group but also contribute more to it, which then generates additional positive feedback and reinforces identification. Interaction ritual theory (Collins 2004) proposes a similar association and logic of accumulation: Individuals who catalyze successful interaction rituals build affective attachments to the group at the same time that they garner popularity and influence, which then increases the possibility of their participating in further successful rituals.

I argue that this logic does not fully account for the distribution of we-feeling. High status can elicit respect and esteem, and under the right conditions this can generate positive feelings not just toward the individuals making those gestures but toward the group. High-status individuals may furthermore be favorably positioned to participate in solidarity-building interaction rituals. But high status can also shape a person's normative expectations about his or her proper role and participation in the group. This can recast the obligations and responsibilities of group life as burdens if the individual regards them as better suited for someone of lower standing. This in turn can foster negative feelings toward the group, thereby interrupting the cumulative advantage process that would otherwise elevate we-feeling.

This reasoning suggests that individuals at the top of a group's status hierarchy may experience a high-status penalty when it comes to belonging. It suggests they may develop negative feelings toward the group when they carry out responsibilities that they regard as unsuited for someone of their rank. Instead of enjoying more we-feeling than those immediately below them, high-status group members may actually experience less.

Hypotheses

I use the previous discussion to generate four hypotheses. First, I compare the high-status penalty argument with the null hypothesis of the cumulative advantage argument. I formalize each of these as follows:

Hypothesis 0: The higher one's status, the more we-feeling one will experience. Status has a positive, linear relationship with we-feeling.

Hypothesis 1: The higher one's status, the more we-feeling one will experience—but only up to a certain position in the hierarchy, at which point the relationship will reverse. Status has a curvilinear relationship with we-feeling.

I argue furthermore that high-status group members will experience less we-feeling if they shoulder responsibilities that they regard as better suited for someone of a lower rank. This yields two more hypotheses, one regarding high status–congruent responsibilities and another regarding high status–incongruent responsibilities.

Hypothesis 2: Among high-status group members, the more they bear status-incongruent responsibilities, the more their we-feeling will decline.

Hypothesis 3: Among high-status group members, status-congruent responsibilities will not diminish we-feeling.

In the remainder of the chapter, I put these hypotheses to an empirical test using data from the Urban Communes Project.

DATA

Sociologists and social psychologists have gathered much data on status hierarchies in small groups, but the bulk of it comes from experimental settings—in particular, experimental task groups (Martin 2009). We have less data on groups existing "in the wild," outside of a controlled environment. One exception is Benjamin Zablocki's Urban Communes Project (UCP; see Zablocki 1980; Martin, Yeung, and Zablocki 2001). Begun in 1974, the UCP sampled 60 residential communities, ten in each of six US metropolitan areas, each metropolitan area located in a different region of the country. A commune, as Zablocki (1980) defined it, referred to a household comprising five or more unrelated adults who live together voluntarily and with a collective identity. The UCP sent a researcher to each commune, who collected data through a combination of questionnaires, interviews, and observation. The data set includes data at the levels of individuals, groups, and relationships. I test my hypotheses on the 54 communes for which the relevant data are available.

I choose these data for other strategic reasons as well. In addition to being naturally occurring groups, the communes in this sample have the advantage of being relatively closed units. This solves the problem of whom to include in the survey frame, which would be a challenge in a community with more porous boundaries. Moreover, the communes in this sample represent considerable diversity at both the group and individual levels. They vary in size from 5 to 26 residents. They can be grouped into seven broad ideological types and represent further diversity within those types. Some commanded nearly all of their residents' time, while others

involved much less commitment. The individuals in the survey frame were themselves heterogeneous in their attitudes, beliefs, and values (Zablocki 1980).

KEY MEASURES

Although I use a number of variables in my models, I focus here on four of them: we-feeling, the dependent variable; status, the main independent variable; leadership tasks, an example of high status–congruent responsibilities; and chores, an example of high status–incongruent responsibilities. In this section, I describe each of these measures. I describe other variables as I introduce them into the analyses.

We-feeling

To measure we-feeling, I follow the lead of Vaisey (2007), who used data from the Urban Communes Project to create his own *gemeinschaft* index. Vaisey calculated individual-level we-feeling in the process of creating his group-level measurement. I create my index using the same questions, but instead of averaging the scores to build a group-level variable, I retain the individual-level measurements.

Five survey questions comprise the index.[1] In all but the first question, the responses were coded on a five-point Likert scale. When necessary, I have recoded responses so that a high score indicates a strong sense of "we." The questions include:

- "If you were offered $10,000 in cash by an anonymous donor to leave this commune, and never again live communally in this house or with any of these same people (spouse, children, relatives excepted), would you: (1) definitely accept the offer, (2) have to think about it, (3) definitely reject the offer."
- "I feel the people in the commune are my true family." (Answers were based on a five-point Likert scale, as were the answers to the following questions.)

- "Most people in this commune are more inclined to look out for themselves than to consider the needs of others."
- "I think that there is a very good chance that I will still be living communally 10 years from now."
- "No one in this communal household is going to care much what happens to me."

These questions capture several facets of we-feeling: an experience of belonging (agreeing that one's housemates are "my true family"), a positive evaluation of the we (disagreeing that housemates are inclined to look out for themselves), the antithesis of rejection (disagreeing with "No one cares what happens to me"), a binding agent that generates loyalty (rejecting the $10,000 offer), and a vote in favor of the communal experience in the abstract (favoring the idea of living communally 10 years in the future).

I am asking, ultimately, why some people score higher or lower on this index than their housemates. I calculate differences within communes by group-mean centering each individual's score. I then standardize the variable to compare across groups. Appendix A, Table A2 provides descriptive statistics for this variable as well as the other variables I use.

Status

I use the rank measurement devised by Martin (1998) for the UCP data. Martin modeled each commune's latent "pecking order," an ordered hierarchy of its residents, and retrieved a "score" for each resident that represents his or her position in that hierarchy. The model relies on answers to a question included in the survey's relational questionnaire: "Even the most equal of relationships sometimes has a power element involved. However insignificant it may be in your relationship with this person, which of you do you think holds the greater amount of power in your relationship?"

The variable that results has two notable strengths. For one, it has the advantage of being constructed from relational data. It is not based on a field researcher's assessment of the commune's rank order, nor is it based on the authority of a single housemate; rather, it accounts for the perceptions of all residents. For this reason it can be considered an objective measurement rather than a subjective one. Second, because the measurement is entirely contextual, it does not suffer from any selection bias. No commune can be said to have enrolled an unusual number of high- or low-ranking individuals since one's rank has no meaning except in the context of the commune itself.

Martin (2002:880) notes that this variable identifies an "individual's 'rank' in an *unspecified* system" (italics added) and that a person's position in this system "is translated into power when individuals interact." It remains an open question what dimensions of social rank this variable captures. A rank-ordering system that translates into interactional power—for example, one person's deferring to another's wishes—could in theory be based on individuals' relative control over resources or on their relative respect and esteem—in other words, their power or their status, as those terms are frequently defined.

I use an empirical test to specify this system. I analyze UCP data in light of research that examines character traits associated with status and power. In particular, I use the results of Fragale, Overbeck, and Neale's (2011) experiment testing how power-holders and status-holders are judged with respect to dominance and warmth. This research found that power-holders who lacked status were judged to be cold; anyone with status was judged warm. As it happens, UCP relational data include judgments of dominance and warmth. This parallel offers an opportunity to use Fragale et al.'s findings as a guide for interpreting which of these two dimensions of social rank—power and/or status—the variable expresses. My analysis finds that the variable does not

correlate negatively with judgments of warmth, implying that the variable captures the dimension of status and possibly power as well but does not isolate the dimension of power. Appendix B presents the results of this empirical test.

Based on this finding, I use this variable as my measurement of status. The variable has been standardized for comparison across groups and is expressed as a number between –1 and 1 (Martin 2005). A score of 1 implies high status. A score of –1 implies low status.[2] I refer to commune residents as high status, low status, or middle status as a convenient shorthand, although strictly speaking the variable is continuous rather than categorical.

Leadership and Chores

I propose leadership duties as a reasonable example of a responsibility that high-status residents are likely to experience as congruent with their self-understanding. I offer household chores as an example of a responsibility that high-status residents are likely to apprehend as status-incongruent. This is not to say that high-status residents have a single, identical experience of leadership or chores but rather that the labels *high status–congruent* and *high status–incongruent* adequately describe the majority experience.

The UCP relationships questionnaire asked each commune resident, "This week who did the following things?" followed by a list of actions. Respondents then volunteered the names of housemates who had done each of these things. I identify four actions as leadership actions. These include "called a meeting together," "confronted someone at a meeting," "made a statement of policy to the group," and "dealt with outside authorities." Likewise, I identify four actions as chores: "cleaned the bathroom," "cleaned the kitchen," "went shopping," and "did laundry."

To measure each resident's contribution to his or her commune, I mimic a strategy used elsewhere (Martin, Van Gunten, and Zablocki 2012; Yeung and Martin 2003) to measure attributions in the UCP network data. I calculate for each commune the total leadership attributions made by its residents. I then calculate for each resident the percentage of his or her commune's total leadership attributions that he or she received. I use the same formula to measure chore contributions.[3]

ANALYTIC STRATEGY

This chapter proposes that a group member's we-feeling is determined in part by his or her status position. The cumulative advantage argument asserts that not only does status foster we-feeling, but we-feeling can encourage contributions to the group that are rewarded with higher status. By this logic, we-feeling is not just the outcome of a one-way causal process but is part of a virtuous circle. A regression model that uses status to predict we-feeling can establish the positive correlation that this argument predicts, but it cannot purport to isolate the causal impact of status.

The high-status penalty argument, meanwhile, asserts that the status position of some group members makes them susceptible to processes that diminish their we-feeling. In this scenario, treating we-feeling as the dependent variable is consistent with the logic of the argument. Although the cross-sectional data cannot isolate the causal effect of any variable, they can nonetheless support the argument that this chapter advances if the results are in keeping with the expectations of the hypotheses.

I use ordinary least squares (OLS) regression to model we-feeling, which is constructed as a continuous variable. I find no strong or moderate correlations (Pearson's $r > .3$) between status and other variables. I include commune-level fixed effects to account for unmeasured

group-level variables that could influence we-feeling. Fixed-effects coefficients were not significant in any of the models except for one commune in two models.

RESULTS

Preliminary Analysis

What is the relationship between status and we-feeling? Do people of higher status experience more we-feeling? Or do those in the middle of the status hierarchy enjoy the greatest benefits? To answer this question, I compare two models that use a resident's status to predict how that individual's we-feeling will compare to his or her housemates'. One model posits a linear relationship between status and we-feeling, the other a quadratic relationship.

Table 1 shows side-by-side results of these two models. There is little question as to which model better fits the data. The linear model accounts for almost none of the variation in we-feeling. The coefficient of the status variable does not reach statistical significance, and even if it did its effect would be very small. The quadratic model, meanwhile, accounts for more of the variation, and all the coefficients are statistically significant at the $p < .01$ level. A comparison of the two models using the Bayesian Information Criterion confirms that the quadratic model fits the data better.

Table 1. Ordinary Least Squares Regression Modeling a Resident's We-Feeling as a Function of His or Her Status.

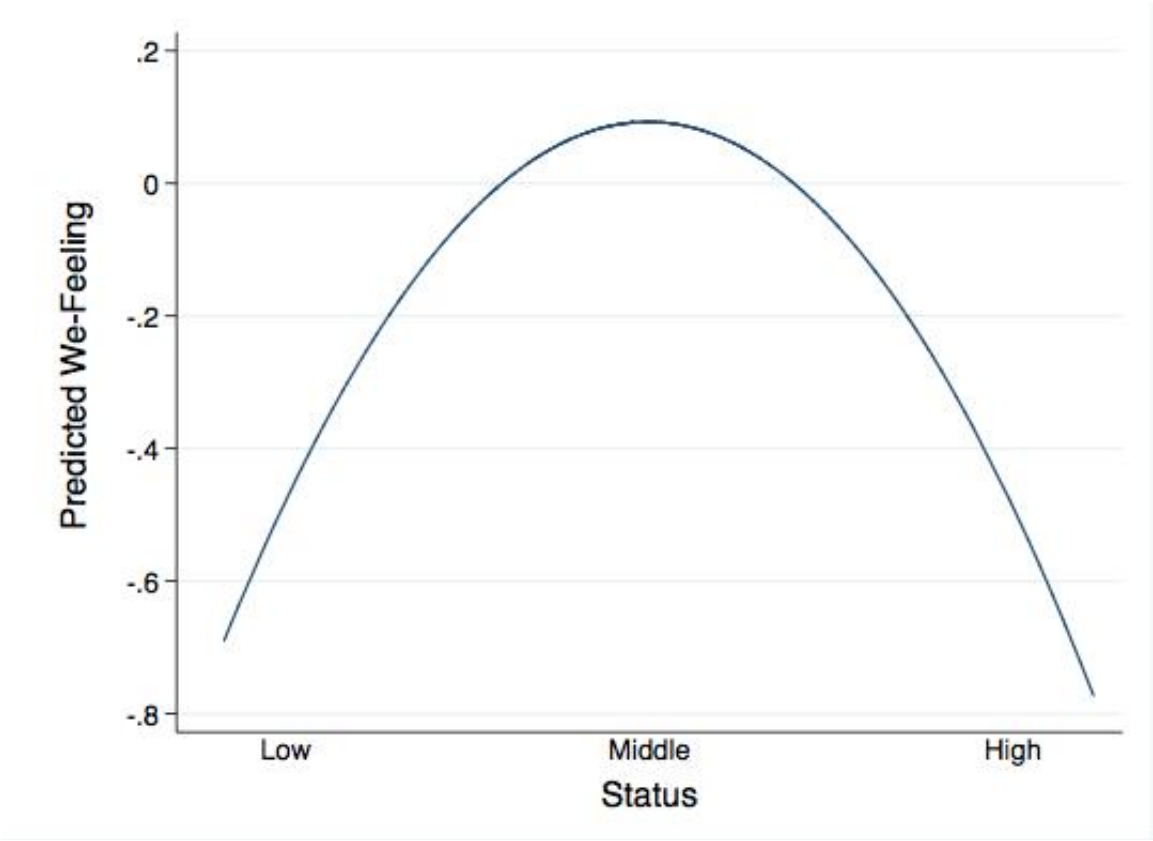
VARIABLES	Linear	Quadratic
Status	-0.10	3.97**
	(0.151)	(1.291)
Status^2		-0.99**
		(0.312)
Constant	0.20	-3.88**
	(0.577)	(1.404)

Observations	438	438
R^2	0.001	0.027
BIC	1524.3	1518.9

Standard errors in parentheses.
** p<0.01 (two-tailed test).

This is enough to reject Hypothesis 0, but does it provide support for Hypothesis 1? The quadratic model yields a negative coefficient for the status^2 variable, indicating an inverted U-shaped relationship with we-feeling. Illustration 1 shows this relationship. The residents who experience the most we-feeling, according to the model, are those whose status is just above the mean for their commune. This demonstrates provisional support for Hypothesis 1, that middle-status residents experience the most we-feeling.

Illustration 1. Predicted we-feeling by status: quadratic model.



Additional analyses

The results of this initial analysis are consistent with the high-status penalty hypothesis. The quadratic model predicts that middle-status residents enjoy the strongest experience of we-feeling, while their high- and low-status housemates have a diminished experience by comparison. But can we be sure that this effect is a result of a resident's status and not something else? UCP data offer the ability to test several potential challenges to this finding.

Having found reason to adopt the quadratic model, I now take that model and expand it. I add a series of new variables, which I explain in turn. These variables control for possible spurious associations between status and we-feeling. They also test other plausible determinants of we-feeling to see if the effect of status diminishes. Table 2 presents the results of this analysis.

Table 2. Ordinary Least Squares Regression Predicting a Resident's We-Feeling Relative to His or Her Housemates.

VARIABLES	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Status	3.97**	3.46*	3.34*	3.50*	4.04*
	(1.291)	(1.373)	(1.392)	(1.533)	(1.668)
$Status^2$	-0.99**	-0.87**	-0.86*	-0.92*	-1.10**
	(0.312)	(0.330)	(0.336)	(0.367)	(0.406)
Gender (female=1)		0.17	0.15	0.15	0.07
		(0.108)	(0.109)	(0.116)	(0.133)
Class background		0	0	0.01	-0.02
		(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.011)	(0.013)
Class $background^2$		0	0	0	0
		(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)
Age		0.02	-0.01	-0.03	-0.02
		(0.059)	(0.060)	(0.062)	(0.067)

Age^2		0	0	0	0
		(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Education		0.32	0.27	0.53	0.62†
		(0.316)	(0.315)	(0.341)	(0.354)
$Education^2$		-0.08	-0.07	-0.13	-0.15
		(0.086)	(0.085)	(0.093)	(0.095)
Length of residence			0.22	0.15	0.23
			(0.139)	(0.147)	(0.177)
Length of $residence^2$			-0.06	-0.05	-0.05
			(0.037)	(0.039)	(0.042)
Founding member			0.06	0.18	0.18
			(0.150)	(0.156)	(0.189)
Actively involved			0.37**	0.42**	0.15
			(0.127)	(0.134)	(0.149)
Working ties				0.12	-0.11
				(0.224)	(0.256)
Loving ties				0.52†	0.58†
				(0.300)	(0.315)
Exploitative ties				-0.53*	-0.62*
				(0.262)	(0.308)
Nonconformity					-0.01
					(0.188)
Constant	-3.88**	-3.50*	-3.16†	-3.97*	-3.71†
	(1.404)	(1.717)	(1.739)	(1.845)	(1.990)
Observations	438	427	419	371	250
R^2	0.03	0.04	0.07	0.15	0.30
Adj. R^2	-0.12	-0.13	-0.11	-0.05	0.04

Standard errors in parentheses.
** p<0.01, * p<0.05, † p<0.1 (two-tailed test).

Model 1 replicates the findings presented in the previous table. Model 2 adds controls for status characteristics—traits that are sometimes associated with status. Researchers have defined a status characteristic as "an attribute on which individuals vary that is associated in society with widely held beliefs according greater esteem and worthiness to some states of the attribute" (Ridgeway and Walker 1995:292). These attributes create expectations of competence, which in turn have important consequences in task-group settings.

Communes are not explicitly task-oriented; nevertheless, communal living does require many tasks to be completed. It's plausible that status characteristics influence a resident's position in his or her house's status hierarchy, and it's also plausible that these characteristics have a direct influence on we-feeling.

I include measures for four status characteristics in the model: age, gender, class background, and education.[4] This tests the possibility that what appears to be a relationship between status and we-feeling is actually spurious—that in fact, the relationship is between we-feeling and one or more status characteristics. I add quadratic terms for status characteristics that are measured ordinally as these could be linearly correlated with status. Model 2 shows little change in the coefficient for the linear or quadratic effects of status, suggesting that status is not a stand-in for these status characteristics.

Model 3 adds variables that test another potential source of spuriousness. These variables measure a resident's attachment to the institution of the commune, which is theorized to be important for the presence of *gemeinschaft* (Brint 2001). They include the length of the individual's residence in the commune, whether the individual was a founding member, and whether the individual considers himself or herself to be "one of the more active members of this commune."[5] It's plausible that these variables also bear on one's status rank. They thus introduce

the possibility of another spurious relationship between status and we-feeling: that a resident's attachment to the institution could influence the individual's experience of we-feeling as well as his or her status position.

I include a quadratic term for length of residence since the theory would expect it to be linearly correlated with status. Based on the results of Model 3, a resident's institutional attachments do not appear to be a source of spuriousness. While the variable for active involvement has a significant coefficient, the coefficients for status and status^2 diminish only slightly, and moreover they remain significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Model 4 adds an additional set of new variables, ones that could have a direct influence on we-feeling. These variables account for the quality of a communard's social ties to his or her housemates. The UCP's relationships questionnaire asked residents to answer questions about each of their housemates, including "indicate if the following are involved in your relationship with the person named above." It then provided a list of qualities that could describe the relationship. Choices included, among various possibilities, "work together," "loving," and "exploitative." This creates an opportunity to measure the quality of each resident's relationships along several dimensions. What portion of an individual's relationships does he or she consider loving? Exploitative? What portion of an individual's housemates does he or she work with—potentially a solidarity-building activity (Lawler, Thye, and Yoon 2000)?

From the responses, I calculate the portion of a communard's total ties that he or she describes as loving—his or her "loving ties."[6] In a similar way, I calculate the individual's percentage of "working ties" and "exploitative ties." Model 4 indicates that loving ties, the coefficient for which is marginally significant, accentuate we-feeling, whereas exploitative ties diminish it. The model also upholds the main substantive finding: The influence of status

position is undiminished, as indicated by the minimal change in the coefficients of status and status^2, both of which retain statistical significance.

Model 5 adds a variable measuring nonconformity, which could also have a direct influence on we-feeling. Belief in a common idea system or moral order promotes individuals' buy-in to a community (Brint 2001), and conformity with group standards can enhance we-feeling (Irwin and Simpson 2013). To operationalize this proposition, I use group-level data on the commune's ideology to identify a group standard with which a resident may agree or disagree. I identify as nonconformists those who profess an attitude that defies their group's ideology. For example, I consider a resident to be nonconformist if that individual lives in a Christian commune but expresses disbelief in God or considers his or her religion to be only slightly or not at all important.[7]

According to Model 5, nonconformist residents experience neither more nor less we-feeling than their housemates. Coefficients for the status variables retain their significance as well as their magnitudes.[8]

Moderation Analysis

The foregoing analyses support the high-status penalty hypothesis. To test Hypotheses 2 and 3, I model a resident's we-feeling as a function of the individual's status position moderated by the leadership and chore responsibilities he or she is credited with. I evaluate high-, middle-, and low-status residents as separate subgroups. I distinguish low-status residents from middle-status residents on the theory that chores and leadership may moderate status differently for low-status residents than for middle-status residents, with chores posing a threat to we-feeling in a context of low respect and leadership offering an extra benefit in such a context. I define a communard as high status if the individual's status score exceeds the mean for his or her

commune by more than one (commune-specific) standard deviation. I define low-status residents as falling more than one standard deviation below their commune's mean, with everyone else being defined as middle. I use middle status as the reference category.

Table 3 presents results of the moderation analysis. Model 1 predicts we-feeling in the absence of interaction terms testing the moderating influence of chores or leadership on status. The coefficient for high status, which is negative and significant, shows the penalty on high-status residents' we-feeling. Model 2 adds interaction terms. In this model, the coefficient for high status is not significant, but the negative coefficient for the interaction of high status and chores is. This suggests that chores account for the penalty. Furthermore, the negative coefficient for the interaction term is more than twice the size of the positive coefficient for the chores variable, indicating that the more a high-status communard shoulders the responsibility of doing chores, the steeper his or her penalty. Meanwhile, the model shows no evidence of a penalty on high-status residents' we-feeling on account of bearing leadership responsibilities. These results support the theory advanced in Hypotheses 2 and 3, namely, that a high-status penalty is incurred on account of the responsibility's incongruence with high-status expectations.

Table 3. Ordinary Least Squares Regression Predicting a Resident's We-Feeling Based on His or Her Status Position Interacted with Chore and Leadership Measures.

VARIABLES	Model 1	Model 2 No controls	Model 3 Controls w/o nonconformity	Model 4 All controls
Middle status (reference)	-	-	-	-
Low status	-0.32* (0.153)	0.12 (0.254)	0.16 (0.298)	0.11 (0.368)

High status	-0.32*	0.21	0.30	0
	(0.147)	(0.292)	(0.331)	(0.365)
Chores	0.51	2.24**	1.22	1.73†
	(0.609)	(0.739)	(0.830)	(0.885)
Leadership	0.30	-0.29	-0.55	-0.52
	(0.379)	(0.522)	(0.673)	(0.689)
Low status*chores		-5.00**	-4.20*	-3.98*
		(1.575)	(1.730)	(1.788)
High status*chores		-5.79**	-5.89**	-3.33
		(1.855)	(1.950)	(2.098)
Low status*leadership		1.54	1.26	1.37
		(1.430)	(1.555)	(2.007)
High status*leadership		0.75	0.46	-0.33
		(0.866)	(0.984)	(1.050)
Nonconformity				-0.16
				(0.191)
Constant	0.025	-0.07	-0.55	0.02
	(0.426)	(0.429)	(0.648)	(0.658)
Observations	438	438	371	250
R^2	0.02	0.06	0.16	0.30
Adj. R^2	-0.13	-0.09	-0.04	0.04

Standard errors in parentheses.
** p<0.01, * p<0.05, † p<0.1 (two-tailed test).

Model 3 adds the control variables from Table 2 with the exception of nonconformity, and the results again support Hypotheses 2 and 3.[9] Model 4 adds a control variable for nonconformity. In this model, the coefficient for the interaction of high status and chores continues to be negative, but its magnitude is diminished, and it falls outside of statistical significance (p = .115). The diminished magnitude suggests that nonconformity could account for some of the interaction term's effect. In some contexts, doing chores could be

nonconformist behavior for high-status residents—the theory proposes that it is incongruent with a high-status rank—and this behavior could facilitate the ideological nonconformity measured by the variable. This could account for the diminished magnitude of the interaction term's coefficient. Along with the smaller number of observations, it could also account for the loss of statistical significance.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

These analyses show that we-feeling is distributed unevenly across the status hierarchies of 54 heterogeneous communal groups. My empirical tests indicate that high-status members of these communities are likely to have a muted sense of belonging compared to their middle-status counterparts—a finding that diverges from scholarship that positively associates status with affective attachment to the status-conferring group. This relationship between a member's status position and his or her we-feeling is robust to possible spurious variables. Moreover, the strength of this relationship does not diminish in a marked way when other possible determinants of we-feeling are included in the model.

Further analyses offer evidence that we-feeling's concentration in the middle of the status hierarchy is brought about by a high-status penalty. High status can shape a community member's normative expectations about what responsibilities suit his or her rank. When one's responsibilities do not match those expectations, the obligations of community membership can take on a negative valence, which in turn can dim one's feelings toward the group. Empirical tests support the argument that household chores induce this effect for high-status individuals in this sample. This reasoning is further supported by the null finding for leadership responsibilities, an obligation that high-status community members are more likely to regard as congruent with their rank.

Contributions and Implications

This study brings together research on small groups, status processes, and belonging. Previous scholarship has considered how status fosters affective attachments to a group, although it has done so in the course of pursuing broader aims (e.g., Collins 2004; Willer 2009). This chapter focuses on that relationship in particular and offers evidence to support the hypothesis that high status–incongruent responsibilities moderate the positive influence of status on we-feeling.

In addition to supporting the hypothesis that certain demands can induce a high-status penalty on we-feeling, the findings presented here have other intriguing implications. The analyses presented in Table 3 suggest that chores create not only a high-status penalty but also a low-status penalty. Contributions to the group have long been theorized to foster group-level attachments (e.g., Durkheim [1925] 1961), and recent research provides evidence that individual sacrifice when coupled with status conferral can encourage group identification (Willer 2009). This chapter's finding speaks to what can happen in the absence of such recognition. It suggests that among individuals who receive the least respect or esteem, contributions to the group may not only fail to enhance group attachment but actually harm it.

More generally, these findings suggest that affective attachment to a group can be enabled or restricted by a person's social rank. The affect theory of social exchange (Lawler 2001), for example, proposes that group-level affective attachments form when an exchange task that generates positive emotions is attributed to the group—something that happens when the task involves a high degree of jointness. This chapter adds that not only do the emotions generated by a task matter, they matter in ways that are conditioned by a person's status position.

Limitations and Future Directions

The communes sampled by the UCP and their residents vary in many respects. At the same time, these groups are not universally representative of community life. The American communitarian movement flourished in a historical moment that might be unusual in the deliberate way that people sought out living arrangements that would add meaning to their lives. The population sampled by the Urban Communes Project may have been unusually motivated to develop group-level affective attachments (Zablocki 1980)—an inclination that could mute the impact of processes that suppress we-feeling while exaggerating the impact of others that boost it. Under that scenario, the high-status penalty found in this sample would present a conservative estimate of what to expect in other populations.

Certain scope conditions may be important in producing this relationship between status and we-feeling. Residential communities, even those that require less commitment, are likely to be more encompassing for their members than most other kinds of groups. A question that remains open for future research is whether this finding holds for groups that, like communes, entail commitment and generate solidarity but might not be considered "communities" or "primary groups." Groups of this sort include sports teams, work crews, worship groups, civic organizations, and social clubs. Moreover, it remains an open question whether belonging would be distributed similarly in groups that build affective attachments without a formal structure or formal responsibilities, such as friend groups. In this context, high-status individuals may be less likely to face demands that they consider status incongruent.

Finally, this chapter presents evidence that high- and low-status penalties account for the unequal distribution of we-feeling within these communities. This raises the possibility that the "spread" of a group's status hierarchy could be a factor in activating or accentuating these

processes. Groups that are more egalitarian might plausibly circumvent such penalties and achieve a more equitable distribution of belonging. Alternately, a highly stratified group might cultivate security among high-status members that makes low-status responsibilities less threatening and thus less generative of negative feelings. The question of how the breadth of a group's stratification shapes its distribution of belonging is another line of inquiry open for future research.

APPENDIX A

Table A1. Polychoric Correlation Coefficients for Variables Comprising the We-Feeling Index.

	Offered $10,000	True family	Needs of others	10 years from now	No one cares
Offered $10,000	1				
True family	0.5782	1			
Members look out	0.5928	0.8561	1		
10 years from now	0.5787	0.8604	0.8457	1	
No one cares	0.5906	0.8559	0.9092	0.8780	1

Table A2. Descriptive Statistics for All Variables.

Variable	Observations	Mean	Standard Dev.	Min	Max
We-Feeling	443	0	.9357	-2.835	1.818
Status	583	0	.3211	-.9359	.9763
Gender (female=1)	591	.421	.4942	0	1
Class background	457	49.818	18.078	0	86
Age	530	25.566	5.572	13	61
Education	457	1.586	.7476	0	3
Length of residence	449	.766	1.084	0	5
Founding member	459	.741	.967	0	1
Actively involved	457	.304	.461	0	1
Working ties	464	.754	.298	0	1
Loving ties	464	.831	.265	0	1
Exploitative ties	464	.155	.251	0	1
Nonconformity	350	.106	.308	0	1
Chores	592	.103	.098	0	1
Leadership actions	592	.103	.129	0	1

APPENDIX B

Interpreting Martin's social rank variable

Martin (2002) refers to his rank variable as "status," clarifying that "Status is simply some individual's 'rank' in an unspecified system; far from being an alternative form of stratification to 'power,' this status rank is precisely that which is translated into power when individuals interact" (Martin 2002:880). Martin makes explicit that his use of the terms *status* and *power* are not meant to distinguish alternative forms of hierarchical stratification systems. Instead, he uses them to distinguish a structural phenomenon—namely, position in a hierarchy—from interactional phenomena such as deference and compliance.

Is it possible to specify the "unspecified system" that this variable captures? One issue of terminology requires clarification. Other researchers have decomposed social rank into two (or more) dimensions referred to as status and power (Blader and Chen 2014; Cheng et al. 2013; Fiske 2010a; Magee and Galinsky 2008). In these instances, the terms status and power *do* distinguish alternative forms of hierarchical stratification. It is in this latter sense that I use the terms when I consider whether the variable captures status, power, or some combination thereof.

I offer a partial answer to the question of specification by analyzing Urban Communes Project (UCP) data in light of Fragale, Overbeck, and Neale's (2011) findings on character traits associated with status-holders and power-holders. Fragale et al.'s experiment tested how power-holders and status-holders are judged with respect to dominance and warmth. UCP data also include judgments of dominance and warmth: UCP field researchers asked each commune resident to volunteer names of housemates who fit certain descriptions, among them several that indicate dominance (decisive, dependent, dominant, influential, passive, strong) and several others that indicate warmth (charismatic, loving, supportive, interested in children). This parallel

offers an opportunity to use Fragale et al.'s findings as a guide for interpreting whether this measure captures hierarchical stratification by status or power.

Fragale et al.'s (2011) experiment asked participants to rate the dominance and warmth of 12 occupational identities representing four intraindividual combinations of status and power: high status/high power, high status/low power, low status/high power, and low status/low power. They found that occupations with high power and/or high status were seen as dominant. They also found that occupations that had high power were judged cold—unless that identity also had high status; high status offset the chilling effect of high power. Only the power-holders who lacked status were judged to be cold; all other combinations were seen as warm. This supports their theory that "individuals who possess high power, and thus have the ability to constrain free choice, will be judged cold" (Fragale et al. 2011:769).

Based on these findings, the UCP rank variable would be best described as isolating power only if high-ranking communards are judged to be colder than low-ranking ones. If high-ranking members are judged warmer than low-ranking ones, or if they are judged neither warmer nor colder, this would indicate that the variable is better described as capturing either status or some blend of status and power. (Judgments of dominance can confirm that the hierarchy can be described as a status and/or power hierarchy but do not on their own indicate that one description is more apt than the other.)

Following the approach of other researchers (Martin, Van Gunten, and Zablocki 2012; Yeung and Martin 2003), I calculated for each description (loving, dominant, etc.) the total attributions made in each commune. I then calculated for each resident the percentage of his or her commune's total attributions that the individual received. I tested for correlations between these attribution statistics and Martin's rank variable. Table B1 reports the results.

Table B1. Pearson's Correlation Coefficients Relating Hierarchical Position with Attributions of Dominance and Warmth.

Dominance indicators		Warmth indicators	
	Pearson's r		Pearson's r
Decisive	.455***	Charismatic	.306***
Influential	.442***	Supportive	.195***
Dominant	.410***	Interested in children	.012
Strong	.375***	Loving	-.058
Dependent	-.238***		
Passive	-.293***		

***p<.001

As one would expect, rank correlates positively and significantly with measures of dominance, thus confirming that the hierarchy captures the dimensions of status and/or power. Rank does not correlate negatively with indicators of warmth, which is to say it does not correlate positively with coldness. Correlation coefficients are positive and significant for charismatic and supportive. For both loving and interested in children, the coefficients are nonsignificant and moreover very close to zero.

These results suggest that the variable does not capture the dimension of power in isolation from other dimensions of social rank. Instead, it is best understood as capturing status and possibly power as well.

NOTES

1. Applying a factor analysis using varimax rotation, Vaisey (2007) confirmed that all the measures load on a single factor. My own analysis also shows high correlation among them. Cronbach's alpha for the five variables is .9034. Appendix A, Table A1 presents polychoric correlation coefficients for each of the categorical variables that comprise the we-feeling index.

2. In the quadratic models I run later, I modify Martin's variable from a scale of $-1 < x < 1$ to a scale of $1 < x < 3$ by adding 2 to the value of each resident's score. This adjustment preserves the variable's substantive meaning while avoiding a situation in which $x_1 < x_2$ but $(x_1)^2 \geq (x_2)^2$ because $-x_1 \geq x_2$, as well as possible correlation of x and x^2 when $0 < x < 1$.

3. The variables that this produces reflect whether a resident's housemates *perceive* him or her to be doing chores or carrying out leadership actions. In that respect, it's an imperfect measure: A person might be leading or doing chores without his or her housemates' awareness. I use these variables as the best measurement available.

4. I omit race only because the survey did not ask residents for their racial identity. My variable for class background is based on the resident's father's primary occupation, which Urban Communes Project administrators coded according to ISCO categories. They assigned each one a value according to Treiman's Standard International Prestige Score, which runs from 0 to 86. My variable uses this score. I code education as an ordinal variable that sorts communards into one of four categories based on the amount of education they have: less than a high school diploma, high school diploma, college degree, or graduate degree.

5. Length of residence is measured in years. Founding member is a dummy variable that codes a yes answer as 1. Active involvement is a dummy variable for which 1 indicates that the resident chose "one of the more active members of this commune" as best describing himself or

herself over other choices such as “just an average member” or “somewhat less involved than most right now.”

6. Residents evaluated their relationships independent of the other parties. Answers are not necessarily reciprocated. When respondents did not complete questionnaires about every housemate, their exploitative (and other) ties are calculated as a fraction of their valid responses.

7. I follow a similar logic for the other six ideologies in the sample. Using Zablocki (1980) as a guide, I identify a defining characteristic of each ideological type and locate an attitude or belief that diverges from it. For example, in alternative family communes, which practiced shared child care (Zablocki 1980), nonconformists were identified as those who disagreed that either “raising children is important work” or “it’s healthier to grow up in a communal household than in the household of a nuclear family.” In psychological growth communes, which “are composed of people who believe that people are basically good but that society brings out the worst in them” (Zablocki 1980:240), nonconformists disagreed with a statement that presented this idea.

8. Observations are reduced because of the low response rate to questions about belief in God and the significance of religion. The missing data do not appear to be related to commune ideology.

9. One could sort the sample into high-, middle-, and low-status categories based on a broader definition of those categories. I find that the results of Model 2 hold for all definitions of high and low status between 1 and .5 standard deviations above or below the mean, respectively. The results of Model 3 hold for all definitions between 1 and .65 standard deviations from the mean.

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Chapter 2. Anatomy of a "Beatdown": When Talk Threatens Face

CHAPTER SUMMARY

A person's social worth is subject to evaluation in any interaction, with stakes rising the more onlookers there are. Interaction rituals work to protect a person's face, but at times face-work takes a competitive, zero-sum turn when one participant attempts to "score points" at the expense of others. This chapter uses a public embarrassment spectacle to isolate the role of conversational mechanics in face-work. In a televised interview between comedian David Letterman and actor Joaquin Phoenix, Letterman and Phoenix unknowingly collaborate to embarrass Phoenix. Letterman and Phoenix navigate conversational obligations and conventions in ways that threaten Phoenix's face. These "conversation-mechanical points" facilitate content-based points that further damage Phoenix, who afterward described the encounter as a "beatdown." This analysis highlights the place of conversational mechanics in face-work and shows how the structure of talk works in concert with the content of talk in producing a ritual outcome.

Public figures can be subject to humbling scrutiny. Recent events have demonstrated how abruptly a person in the public eye can move from esteemed to exiled. In sociological terms, these falls signal a change in a person's moral status. The shift may be most dramatic when it happens to a politician or a celebrity, but in theory anyone can experience such a fate: Each person maintains a reputation and a degree of social honor, regardless of how publicly she leads her life. Like any social phenomenon, this social esteem is enacted and reproduced in interactions between people.

Sometimes we can observe this happen in real time. On February 11, 2009, the actor Joaquin Phoenix appeared as a guest on The Late Show with David Letterman. In the months prior to this appearance, Phoenix had announced his retirement, at age 34, from his successful Hollywood acting career. He would instead, he said, pursue a career as a rapper. On the Letterman show, Phoenix's physical appearance likely came as a surprise. Far from the attractive, composed presence that he had displayed in previous public appearances, Phoenix emerged from backstage with unkempt hair and a bushy beard. He wore sunglasses and a black suit, a departure from his ordinary public attire. In contrast to his usual well-mannered self, he chewed gum. Although he had been an able conversation partner in the past, here he was nervous, unresponsive, and socially awkward.

Phoenix had little to say during the interview. He offered none of the humorous anecdotes that movie stars typically bring to late-night talk shows. He said almost nothing about the film that he was ostensibly there to promote. Letterman took full advantage of the situation, turning his guest's interactional shortcomings into punch line after punch line. Afterward Phoenix would describe the encounter as a "beatdown."

A year later Phoenix confessed that it had all been a hoax. His "retirement," his career change, his altered appearance, the uncharacteristic public behavior epitomized by his interview on The Late Show—all of it was a staged performance for a faux-documentary movie about his life. But regardless of whether the person appearing on the Letterman show was the "real" Joaquin Phoenix, the interview stands as a comedic achievement and a record of Phoenix's short-lived public defilement. Knowing that Phoenix actively complied in his profanation only makes it more intriguing for an analyst of social interactions, turning the interview into a breaching experiment (Garfinkel 1964) for which both Letterman and the audience members are the subjects. What tactics did Phoenix employ to help bring about his disgrace? Insofar as he worked to create a situation that any other person would avoid, his performance underlines the notion that interactions have an internal logic that can be manipulated to bring about a desired end.

How did Phoenix's exchange with Letterman achieve its embarrassing outcome? This chapter examines that question through the Goffmanian lens of face-work (Goffman 1967a). It begins by reviewing the concept of face as well as previous efforts to operationalize face-work using talk. I identify similarities between Goffman's Durkheimian microsociology and conversation analysis' development of the ethnomethodological tradition, each of which has a fundamental concern with locating social order in interactions. I note two ways that conversation analysis can empirically specify face-work rituals. The chapter then addresses the phenomenon of "point-scoring," a game-like interaction in which face-work takes a competitive, zero-sum turn. I present the Letterman-Phoenix interview as a competition of this sort, albeit one that Phoenix rigs for Letterman to win. After describing the interview, my source data, and my conversation-analytic approach to interpreting it, I make my empirical argument: While some of the points Letterman scores on Phoenix are content-based "digs," these remarks work in concert

with what I call "conversation-mechanical points"—points that rely on the internal logic of talk itself. The latter establish Phoenix as an interactional maladroit and diminish his ceremonial (i.e., moral) standing, which in turn marks him as a fair target for those digs. Finally, I discuss the encounter as a variation on "interactional vandalism" (Duneier and Molotch 1999) made possible by the institutional setting, and I reflect on the status of talk within moral sociology.

FACE-WORK IN CONVERSATION

A Condition of Interaction

Goffman introduced the concepts of "face" and "face-work" in his essay "On Face-Work." Any face-to-face interaction, he explained, induces a person into taking what he called a "line." A line expresses that person's view of the situation and her view of the people involved. Are we familiar to each other? What type of relationship do we have? Are you my subordinate? Am I yours? What are we up to? Just as a geometric line extends indefinitely in a single direction, an interactional line, once taken, tends to continue unchanged for the duration of an interaction.

By taking a line, or by being induced into a line, Goffman noted, a person also claims for herself some "positive social value" (Goffman 1967a:5). He called this value "face." Face is simultaneously projected (by a person to others) and attributed (by others to her). Although face is associated with a particular person, it is "not lodged in or on his body, but rather… diffusely located in the flow of events in the encounter" (Goffman 1967a:7). This makes face, in a typically Goffmanian analytical move, a property of interactions rather than individuals.

Face and its upkeep, as Goffman saw it, are essential to the very procession of social interaction—a feature of interactions that allows them to happen in the first place. "[M]aintenance of face is a condition of interaction," he wrote, "not its objective" (Goffman

1967a:12). Participants in an interaction tend to act both defensively to maintain their own face and protectively to maintain others', an effort he called "face-work." Face-work is "the actions taken by a person to make whatever he is doing consistent with face" (Goffman 1967a:12). In pursuit of this, people and groups develop an entire "repertoire of face-saving practices" (Goffman 1967a:13). Poise, for example, would be considered a form of face-work, as would be the rituals by which people address and correct a faux pas.

Goffman saw important implications in this phenomenon. Face is treated with ritual-like care, he observed—and here he echoed Durkheim's analysis of tribal religious rites (Durkheim [1912] 1995). Just as those rituals upheld the sacredness of totems (and by extension the group), the rituals of social interaction, he argued, uphold the sacredness of the self. "One's face… is a sacred thing," he remarked (Goffman 1967a:19), as are the rules of conduct that protect it (Goffman 1967b:48). Even in the context of everyday secular interactions, persons themselves operate as "sacred objects… subject to slights and profanation" (Goffman 1967a:31).

Finding Face in the Conversation Analytic Tradition

Scholars following Goffman have sought or found face-work in a variety of empirical settings (e.g., Berk 1977; Lee 2009; Bargiela-Chiappini and Haugh 2009; Schnurr and Chan 2011; Scarborough 2012). Goffman's own essay highlighted spoken interaction as an occasion when face concerns are especially salient (Goffman 1967a:33–40). Conversation, he wrote, is a useful focal point for studying face because "there is no occasion of talk so trivial as not to require each participant to show serious concern with the way in which he handles himself and the others present" (Goffman 1967a:33). A subset of scholars has pursued this insight by focusing on linguistic strategies for managing face (e.g., Brown and Levinson 1987; Holtgraves 1992; Lerner 1996; Tannen 2009).

Conversation analysis (CA) offers a body of findings and an analytic approach that can explicate face-work rituals. As a descendent of ethnomethodology, CA inherited ethnomethodology's "central obsession" (Garfinkel 1996:6) with the problem of social order. CA proceeds from the premise that social order is being created and upheld moment-by-moment: Each adjacency pair or turn sequence attempts to establish and maintain an intersubjective reality. Goffman's microsociology, while not taking up these precise concerns, can also be said to have a central obsession with order—in his case, with moral order. Ceremonial rules and interaction rituals function to "affirm the moral order and the society" (Goffman 1967b:90). The sanctity of the self provides the focal point of this moral order, and the secular rituals that enact that order are the very stuff of face-work.

In this respect Goffmanian microsociology and CA share an animating concern: Each one has an eye on order, with Goffman conjuring Durkheim to cast the social order as a moral order. This chapter proceeds from the insight that the conversational mechanics identified by CA can establish the moral order identified by Goffman. Lerner noted this convergence when he described his intentions as "to locate analytically the 'ritual requirements' of Goffman in the so-called 'system requirements' of conversation analysis" (Lerner 1996:306). Goffman even forecasted it himself, referring to "a functional relationship between the structure of the self and the structure of spoken interaction" (Goffman 1967a:34).

Previous scholars have argued that the "preference structure" of talk reflects face concerns. Empirical studies reveal that talk is ordered by systematic practices that researchers refer to as "preferences"[1] (e.g., Davidson 1984; Pomerantz 1984; Sacks 1987; Schegloff 1980; Schegloff et al. 1977). "[C]onversations… have a 'preferred' structure: not all possible next actions are equivalent" (Holtgraves 1992:148). Brown and Levinson (1987), for one, have

argued that this preference structure upholds speakers' faces. "If one asks what determines what kinds of responses are preferred vs. dispreferred… a large part of the answer must surely lie in face considerations" (Brown and Levinson 1987:38). Lerner (1996), meanwhile, has shown how "anticipatory completion" manages face concerns by converting dispreferred constructions and sequences into preferred ones.

The flip side of order is its breakdown, and here CA coincides with Goffman again by taking a similar posture toward interactional threats. Goffman's approach, by conceptualizing face-work as a condition of interaction, bespeaks the ever-present threat of losing face. "Threats to face are ubiquitous," explains Holtgraves (1992:143). Any and every interaction puts one's face at stake, and the ritualized face-work that addresses such threats provides structure to social interaction. Conversation analysts, meanwhile, describe a similar phenomenon that besets talk: the possibility of conversational "trouble" and the need for "repair" (Schegloff et al. 1977). Trouble can take various forms: misstatement, misunderstanding, silence, or violation of the one-speaker rule, to name a few. Just as threats to face are ubiquitous, trouble is ever-present in conversation. "[A]nything in the talk may be treated as in need of repair. Everything is, in that sense, a possible repairable or a possible trouble-source" (Schegloff 2007:100).

Trouble, then, shares a family resemblance with threats to face. I argue that trouble can represent a linguistic realization of face threats, while repair can represent a linguistic realization of face-work. CA thus offers two ways of empirically specifying face-work rituals: through preference structures that uphold face and through repair actions that solve face-threatening trouble. This chapter demonstrates this with a case of "point scoring"—an interaction in which these processes are used strategically to subvert their usual function of protecting face.

SCORING POINTS: WHEN FACE-WORK TURNS COMPETITIVE

Although face-work rituals often enact deference (Goffman 1967b), Goffman pointed out that face-work sometimes takes on an aggressive, competitive tenor when one participant attempts to "score points" for himself at the expense of others—a situation that arises when an interactant deliberately forces another into a situation in which he must save face. Colloquially, these are "digs" or "snubs." The dynamic can resemble a game in which there are winners and losers. "[T]he winner not only succeeds in introducing information favorable to himself and unfavorable to the others, but also demonstrates that as interactant he can handle himself better than his adversaries" (Goffman 1967a:25).

Exchanges of this sort can build alliance or ease conflict, especially among men (Radcliffe-Brown 1952). They can also establish hierarchies and discipline participants (Desmond 2007:111; Lee 2009:319–21). Lee, for example, documents occasions when freestyle rappers abstain from cooperative face-work in order to "humble" a rapper who "falls off," an interaction that disciplines through public embarrassment.

As an object of study, aggressive interchange highlights the normative practices of interaction by focusing on the subversion of those practices (e.g., Lee 2009:319–21). The possibility of subversion is built into very nature of face-work. "One's face can be threatened because one expects that one's face will not be threatened. In other words, the assumed cooperativeness of face-work allows for the aggressive use of face-work" (Holtgraves 1992:151). Or as Goffman put it, "every religious ceremony creates the possibility of a black mass" (Goffman 1967b:86).

This chapter applies that insight using the methods and findings of conversation analysis. The very conversational practices that do face-work can defile face when put to selective or

strategic use. Dispreferred actions can subvert talk's structural concern for face, and moreover repair can be initiated or withheld in a strategic way. As this chapter demonstrates, an adept, motivated speaker can use these properties of talk as a resource, manipulating them for competitive advantage in a game of aggressive face-work.

Scoring Points in the Letterman-Phoenix Interview

Goffman describes aggressive interchange as a game with the goal of "scoring as many points as possible against one's adversaries and making as many gains as possible for oneself. An audience to the struggle is almost a necessity" (Goffman 1967a:24). Phoenix's 2009 appearance on The Late Show operates as just such a game, audience included, with Letterman scoring point after point on his bewildered-seeming guest.

Phoenix walks out on stage, and almost immediately something is off. He wears sunglasses and a black suit. He keeps his left hand in his pocket. His hair is unkept, his beard is ungroomed, and he chews gum. His self-presentation departs not only from what one would expect from a guest on the show but from what one would expect from Phoenix himself based on his established persona as a pleasing and congenial Hollywood star. Letterman notes this almost as soon as Phoenix sits next to Letterman's desk, deadpanning that "I will just say right off the top here, you look different than I remember you"—a comment that elicits hearty laughter from the crowd. Thus begins the undermining of Phoenix's face.

Although Letterman's ritualistic embarrassing of Phoenix begins almost immediately, it evolves over the course of the interview. The first two minutes prove critical to establishing the tone and direction of the encounter. Despite his early remark about Phoenix's appearance, Letterman goes out of his way to compliment Phoenix's past performances and his overall talent as an actor—an effort that accentuates Phoenix's failure to offer Letterman something in return,

interactionally speaking. Letterman offers questions that ought to give Phoenix an easy way of entering the conversation. Phoenix, for his part, says little and reacts less. Letterman obliquely calls attention to the trouble that the conversation is running into, which includes misunderstandings, Phoenix's unflagging passivity, and one very long silence. Phoenix remains detached, hiding behind his sunglasses and beard, and the audience laughs.

As the interview proceeds, Letterman begins to take direct aim at Phoenix. With Phoenix having failed to show basic interactional aptitude, Letterman scores repeated points with barbed punch lines made at Phoenix's expense. When Phoenix offers to be a musical guest on the show, Letterman replies sarcastically that "We'll certainly keep you in our Rolodex." Letterman begins winding down the interview with the remark, "Joaquin, I'm sorry you couldn't be here tonight."

In a return visit to Letterman's show 18 months later, Phoenix said he had been looking for a "beatdown" and had thus worked to enable Letterman's point-scoring effort. Phoenix's revelation that his behavior on the show was staged allowed him to save face in the grand scheme of things. But seen in isolation, the interaction is a study in how to lose face. I argue that Letterman and Phoenix achieved this outcome in part by manipulating conversational rules.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter's transcription of the Letterman-Phoenix interview derives from a publicly available video excerpt of the February 11, 2009 episode of CBS's The Late Show with David Letterman.[2] The video begins with Letterman announcing Phoenix as a guest, which serves as the prompt for Phoenix to enter the stage. It continues for approximately nine minutes until Letterman ends the conversation and sends the show to a commercial break. The interview is punctuated by a commercial break about five minutes in.

I chose excerpts of the conversation for analysis based on when Letterman could be said to have "scored a point" on Phoenix. At least two conditions must be met: Letterman must speak or gesture to or about Phoenix, and the audience must produce some audible reaction, whether that be laughter, cheering, applause, or some other response. This chapter analyzes excerpts that I take to be unambiguous instances of point-scoring.

I transcribed the excerpts according to conventions of conversation analysis.[3] The notation follows that of Jefferson (2004) and is described in Appendix A. Appendix B describes the challenges of transcribing the audience's laughter and applause as well as my solution. I have foregone phonetic spellings in an attempt to make the transcription more readable. Letterman and Phoenix each speak Standard American English.

ANATOMY OF A BEATDOWN

From almost the moment Phoenix sits down in the chair next to Letterman's desk, Letterman begins his attempts at scoring points at Phoenix's expense. He is very effective. Close attention to the interview transcript reveals that Letterman and Phoenix co-create this spectacle by manipulating conversational rules. While Letterman scores some points based on the content of what he says, other points are scored through the management and conduct of the conversation itself. Phoenix repeatedly creates conversational trouble, which Letterman then solves. Moreover, Letterman sometimes sets Phoenix up to fail, and Phoenix sets Letterman up to succeed. Through this interplay, Letterman and Phoenix demonstrate Phoenix to be a substandard conversation partner. By contrast, Letterman shows himself to be an adept one. Faced with a highly disaffiliative guest, yet placed within an institutional setting that does not allow for spontaneous conversation closings, Letterman assumes responsibility for solving conversational troubles.

Content-Based Points

This chapter highlights how conversational mechanics contribute to producing Phoenix's public embarrassment. This is not to suggest that Phoenix's "beatdown" results only or even primarily from the way he and Letterman manipulate the structure and mechanics of conversation. Indeed, conversation-mechanical practices work in concert with "digs" (Goffman 1967a:25) that score points based on the semantic content of the turn. Some of Letterman's point-scoring turns mobilize rhetorical techniques such as irony and sarcasm. Others can be understood on their referential basis: They call attention to something Phoenix should be embarrassed about. Phoenix loses face, but the structure of the conversation itself does not necessarily face trouble. I analyze these turns as a qualitatively distinct form of point scoring.[4]

An example of content-based point-scoring happens about two minutes into the interview. Letterman makes an extended, complimentary remark about Phoenix, which as a whole can be seen as face-giving. Between the compliments, however, Letterman takes a dig at Phoenix's conduct in the interview, saying "I think you're taking a little time off tonight" (Excerpt 1, lines 9-10). The audience "interrupts" Letterman by laughing. Phoenix meanwhile receives the dig without any comment or gesture that might mitigate the damage to his face. He does not, for example, use the audience's intervention as a chance to "opportunistically interrupt" (Gibson 2005) Letterman, whose previous turn remains syntactically incomplete. Letterman then completes his interrupted turn by finishing his sentence.

Excerpt 1. 2:20. Example of a content-based point.

1	Letterman	ahm (1.2) now I heard that you were ah: that
2		you were leaving (.) uh acting (.6) and I said
3		to myself that's too bad (.3) because ah you're
4		**great** (.2) uh and you know not just me the two
5		time academy award nominations (.) w- walk the
6		line you were tremendous in walk the line
7	audience	(applause for 9.0)

8	Letterman	[so] here here's my hope that after some time
9		off uh: and I think you're taking a little time
10		off tonight (.5)
11	audience	([laughter.....])
12	Letterman	[uh: (3.0) I (2.0) I'm hopeful] that you will
13		reconsider and and c- come back to acting
14		because you're just you know th- th- nobody
15		really better than you are (1.0)
16	audience	(applause)

Letterman's point hinges on its referential content, viz. Phoenix's conduct during the conversation thus far. As I show in the next section, Letterman's content-based points work in concert with another point-scoring strategy, one that succeeds by manipulating structural vulnerabilities of the conversation itself. These "conversation-mechanical points" subtly undermine Phoenix's face, leaving him in a ceremonially defiled state that prepares the interaction for Letterman's further efforts. Letterman can then make digs without placing himself in a ritually unsatisfactory state.

Conversation-Mechanical Points

The previous excerpt demonstrated one way that Letterman scores points, viz. through punchlines that offer unfavorable commentary on Phoenix's behavior. But Letterman scores points in other ways besides his barbed quips. Some points against Phoenix are more closely tied to *the production of talk*. The methods and findings of conversation analysis illuminate the micro-level processes by which Letterman and Phoenix co-create this outcome. In this section I highlight *four conversation-mechanical practices* that Phoenix uses that abet Letterman's point-scoring: 1) disaffiliative practices, 2) turn abdication, 3) balking at repair, and 4) manipulation of institutionally specific constraints and obligations.

Disaffiliative practices. After Phoenix sits down in the chair next to Letterman, the conversational trouble begins early and happens often. The first set of turns quickly establishes Phoenix as a disaffiliative partner. In lines 25-26 (Excerpt 2), Letterman scores a point by

suggesting obliquely that Phoenix should be ashamed of his beard ("I can't be the *first* one to make you feel weird about it"). It is a notable score for Letterman, as indicated by the volume of the audience's laughter, the quickness of its onset, and the fact that the laughter overlaps significantly with Letterman's turn. And like the example above, it falls into the category of content-based points.

But to stop the analysis there would be to leave unanswered an important question. How do they arrive at this juncture—one in which Letterman can take a swipe at Phoenix and not suffer greatly for it himself? Not only that, but how does Letterman establish that immunity so quickly? By the time he takes this point-scoring turn, he and Phoenix have been speaking for approximately 30 seconds. A close look at the preceding sequence of turns reveals that Letterman is able to score so effectively so quickly because Phoenix quickly establishes himself as a disaffiliative partner.

Excerpt 2. 0:20. Interview opening.

1	audience	[applause.....]
2	Letterman	[good to see you (1.5) thank you very much for
3		being on the uh program again you know its
4		been] **three years** since the last time you were
5		on the show and I will just say right off the
6		top here (.4) you look different than I
7		remem[ber you↓] (2.0)
8	audience	([laughter] laughter [laughter.....])
9	Letterman	[You've got uh] uh a
10		nice uh beard going and uh
11	Phoenix	oh yeah [thank you]
12	Letterman	[yeah] (.2) how is that (.) the
13		beard (1.0)
14	Phoenix	ih- in what way
15	Letterman	well is it [**com**fortable is it] (.)
16	audience	([low laughter.....])
17	Letterman	**itch**y is it uh: are you **pleased** with it (1.5)
18	Phoenix	I'm okay with it but now you're making me feel
19		weird abou- [bout it] (.8)
20	audience	([laughter] laughter
21		[laughter.....])

22	Letterman	[I'm sorry↓ I'm making you feel] weird↑ about
23		it
24	Phoenix	is there something wrong↑
25	Letterman	I can't be the **first**↑ one↓ to make you
26		[feel weird about it] (1.2)
27	audience	([laughter.....] laughter
28		[laughter.....])
29	Phoenix	[mmm (.) no (.)] I guess not

As is customary in this institutional domain, the host takes the conversation-opening turn (line 2). A downward inflection in Letterman's voice signals the end of his turn (line 7). At the same time, the audience asserts itself in the next turn with laughter. Here a structural feature of this institutional setting becomes salient. Since the audience cannot select the speaker of the next turn, either Letterman or Phoenix must initiate the turn himself. Phoenix takes a pass, and after 2.0 seconds the issue is resolved by Letterman's turn at line 9. While it is not unusual for the host to be the more assertive party, Phoenix establishes in this opening sequence the passive conversational role that he will play throughout the interview. It's a role that does not assist in solving conversational trouble, and this becomes important to the point-scoring effort that ensues.

Phoenix's response in line 11—his first turn in the conversation—is consistent with the passive line he has taken. With "Oh yeah," he signals a shift in his attention and acknowledges receipt of new information, as phrases that begin with "oh" often do (Heritage 1984). Along with the "thank you" that follows, his turn is primarily backward-looking. It functions to solicit more talk from Letterman.

The next sequence shows signs of conversational trouble, and it begins Phoenix's movement from passive to disaffiliative. In lines 12-13 Letterman asks a question. Phoenix initiates a repair by asking Letterman for clarification. His pre-turn silence of one second, along with his halting start ("ih- in what way," line 14), indicates that his repair is a dispreferred

response (Pomerantz 1984) and a disaffiliative one. Moreover, he neglects a turn-initial phrase such as "I'm sorry" that would mitigate the disaffiliative effect (Letterman uses "I'm sorry" in just this way in line 22).

Letterman responds in line 15 with "well," typically an indicator that what he is about to say is not what Phoenix would want or expect (Pomerantz 1984:72; Schiffrin 1987:102–27). However, this is in tension with the overall function of the turn, which is to complete the repair that Phoenix initiated in the previous turn. This suggests that Letterman's use of "well" to begin his turn acknowledges not a dispreferred remark to come, but that he is completing a dispreferred sequence—that sequence being the disaffiliative one begun in the previous turn.

Once Letterman completes the repair, Phoenix expresses more disaffiliation in the long (1.5 second) pause that precedes his turn. When he does speak (line 18), he mumbles. Letterman initiates a repair (line 22) by asking for clarification. In yet another disaffiliative turn (line 24), Phoenix declines to solve the trouble. Ignoring Letterman's inquiry, he asks a question of his own: "Is there something wrong?" While this question alludes to some trouble, it does not address a "trouble" in conversation analytic terms; rather it extends the trouble that Letterman had addressed in lines 22-23.

Here Letterman steps in with his zinger ("I can't be the *first* one to make you feel weird about it," lines 25-26). Posing a threat to Phoenix's face, his comment is not exactly affiliative. I contend that Phoenix's disaffiliative practices in lines 14, 17-18, and 24 abet Letterman's point-scoring dig. Having failed to produce affiliative turns—something that would normally be expected in an opening sequence of turns—Phoenix establishes himself as a difficult conversation partner. This has the effect of diminishing him as a sympathetic figure, thereby casting him as a sound target of Letterman's rather aggressive, face-threatening remarks. It

also helps Letterman get away with the dig without suffering a loss of face for delivering those remarks.

Turn abdication and balking at repair. Conversation-analytic principles illuminate how Letterman tallies a subsequent point, revealing that the point results from the failure of turn-taking rules (Sacks et al. 1974) and repair initiation-solution sequences. Several turns after the previous exchange, Letterman attempts to engage Phoenix about Phoenix's role in a movie. Letterman feigns as though he can't remember the co-star's name and needs Phoenix to help him save face (Excerpt 3, lines 3-4). It's an "offering" in Goffmanian terms (Goffman 1967a:20)—an affiliative gesture that seeks to do two things. First, it offers Phoenix a chance to repair his damaged face. If Phoenix saves Letterman from his ritually unsatisfactory state of not knowing the name, he will undo some of the damage he previously incurred. Second, it creates a chance for Letterman to make amends for the offense of taking a shot at Phoenix. By posing a threat to his own face and seeking Phoenix's help, he can resolve whatever ritual disequilibrium he may be experiencing for having harmed Phoenix.

Excerpt 3. 1:06. Turn abdication and balking at repair.

1	Letterman	I saw this movie the other night (.)
2		tre**men**dous (.5) what a tremendous film↓ you
3		and ah (.) who else is in it uh what's her
4		name (.) beautiful lovely (2.0)
5	Phoenix	[mmm] (2.5)
6	audience	([laughter])
7	Letterman	Gwyneth Paltrow
8	Phoenix	oh yeah Gwy[neth Paltrow]
9	Letterman	[o:h]
10	Phoenix	[Vanessa Shaw] (1.5)
11	audience	([laughter])

In conversation analytic terms, Letterman does this by producing conversational trouble: he does not complete his turn as projected ("you and…") when he fails to produce the name of Phoenix's co-star (lines 2-3). He then initiates a repair ("What's her name?") and abandons his

turn (line 4). Repair-initiations ordinarily yield self-correction (Schegloff et al. 1977), but with Letterman ending his turn, Phoenix is granted the unusual opportunity to complete Letterman's self-initiated repair and solve the trouble.

Phoenix, however, balks at solving the trouble or even taking a turn at all. He waits two full seconds—a very long time between turns—before even acknowledging that he has been selected to speak. When eventually he does, it's with an almost inaudible "mmm" (line 5). As a turn initial "word," it offers no signal as to whether he means to hold the floor or whether he is selecting Letterman to speak again. Rather than solve the trouble, he adds to it by creating ambiguity about who can speak without interrupting.

Phoenix's abdication leaves Letterman to solve the conversational trouble. After another 2.5 seconds, Letterman takes a turn and produces the name of Phoenix's co-star (line 7). This solves the conversation trouble, but it has another consequence for the face-work that the conversation enacts: In solving the trouble, Letterman undermines his effort to restore Phoenix's damaged face. With this turn, Letterman in effect rescinds the offer he made in lines 3-4. This not only preserves Phoenix's damaged face, it adds to it by confirming Phoenix to be an inept conversational partner. By disregarding conversation cues and expectations, Phoenix almost ensures this outcome. The audience laughs, providing confirmation of Phoenix's ritually disgraced state. It's a point for Letterman, but it's just as much an own-goal against Phoenix.

Manipulating institutionally specific constraints and obligations. A few turns later Letterman again scores a point that hinges on conversational mechanics rather than content. Within the institutional context of a live-audience television interview, participants cannot close conversations spontaneously (Schegloff and Sacks 1973)—at least not easily, since the duration of the conversation is managed by the show's producers. This constraint—that conversation

partners do not initiate a closing sequence at will—provides the backdrop for one of Letterman's most well received points, judging by the audience's response.

Following Phoenix's disaffiliative practices, Letterman responds with a comment that emphasizes its affiliative content. He heaps lavish praise on Phoenix's performance in a recent movie, adding emphasis to the words "gratified" and "terrific" (Excerpt 4, lines 2-3). Guests on talk shows typically elaborate on their experiences when offered the floor, as Letterman does by ending his turn. Phoenix's terse response ("Thank you," line 5) functions as a disaffiliative turn insofar as he disregards the institutional expectations of a talk show guest. Sandwiched between Letterman's gushing praise (lines 1-4) and his affirmative remark ("yeah," line 6), its disaffiliation appears even more pronounced.

Excerpt 4. 1:22. Manipulating institutional obligations and constraints.

1	Letterman	very nice movie an:d ah: you don't see movies
2		like this much anymore and I was so **grat**ified
3		to see it and you were ter**rif**ic in the film I
4		really enjoyed your work
5	Phoenix	thank you
6	Letterman	yeah (26.0)
7	audience	(laughter.....applause)
8	Letterman	ahm (1.0) what ah: (.5) what can you tell↑ us↓
9		about your days with the unibomber↓
10	audience	(laughter for 12.0)

With his turn in line 5, Phoenix seems to have selected Letterman to speak again. Letterman, however, responds with only an affiliative backchanelling remark ("yeah," line 6). He declines Phoenix's invitation to speak, thereby forcing Phoenix to fulfill his institutionally assigned conversational obligation or else be judged an interactional maladroit.

Phoenix does not speak. The audience laughs and then applauds. Letterman earns a point for having highlighted Phoenix's abdication, yet Letterman achieves this outcome not by the

content of his point-scoring turn—in fact, he says nothing—but rather by taking advantage of Phoenix's conversational dereliction.[5]

This conversation-mechanical point then enables a content-based point. Letterman follows the extended silence with a dig in lines 8-9 ("What can you tell us about your days with the unibomber?") that elicits another round of extended laughter. In other circumstances, Letterman's sharp punchline might work against the speaker, placing him in a ritually dishonorable state for damaging his interlocutor's face. At this point in the interview, however, the pair have softened the interaction to accommodate such behavior. Phoenix's conduct, by drawing repeatedly on disaffiliative conversational practices, has compromised his own moral standing. Letterman's dig at Phoenix, who is compromised, can then be met with favor rather than sanction. The pair's use and misuse of conversational mechanics has ritual implications that allow Letterman's dig to succeed.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Beatdown as Interactional Vandalism

The excerpts analyzed above transpire in the opening minutes of the nine-minute video. As the interview proceeds, Phoenix continues his passive and disaffiliative behavior, and Letterman scores more and more content-based points—a result made acceptable, as I argued above, by the speakers' conversation-mechanical priming. A year later, after revealing that his public conduct had been a hoax, Phoenix described the interview as a "beatdown." The beatdown became possible because Phoenix established himself early on as ceremonially debased and unworthy of deference—a state he arrived at in part, as this chapter shows, through his and Letterman's use of conversational resources.

Letterman's point-scoring effort succeeds not just on account of his witty, barbed comments, but on account of his and Phoenix's conversational practices: their treatment of conversational obligations, their production of and engagement with conversational trouble, and the interplay of their affiliative and disaffiliative behavior. Phoenix is an active and complicit party in this undertaking. Knowing, as we do now, that Phoenix was pulling a stunt, his behavior can be understood as a variation on Duneier and Molotch's (1999) concept of "interactional vandalism."

This chapter extends that concept into a new institutional domain where the process of interactional vandalism operates somewhat differently. In Duneier and Molotch's case, the vandal ignored the disaffiliative signals of his conversation partner, who had few obligations to continue the conversation. This study examines a scenario that presents the obverse situation: the vandal (Phoenix) ignores the affiliative signals of his conversation partner, who does retain an obligation to continue the conversation.

In this case, the term "vandalism" does not fully capture the spirit of the undertaking; the effect is comical rather than antagonistic, and the vandal does more damage to himself than anyone or anything else. Moreover, Phoenix's effort succeeds only because his strategy is concealed. As Garfinkel (1964) observed, a pillar of everyday social life is that social actors assume that those around them are who they present themselves to be. Both the audience and Letterman himself take Phoenix to be who he presents himself to be: the "true" Joaquin Phoenix rather than a character masquerading as such. Yet despite these differences, the process operates on the same logic of betraying "tacit conventions of sociability" (Duneier and Molotch 1999:1276). This study suggests that an institutional setting's unique backdrop—the

tacit conventions that are particular to that domain—shapes the tactics by which the vandalism can succeed.

Conclusion

Phoenix's appearance on The Late Show had several short-term effects. In the moment, it placed Phoenix in an embarrassing situation and transmitted the evidence to millions. The live audience laughed at his expense, and no doubt many viewers did as well. The interview also generated much contemporaneous chatter, as entertainment-industry reporters speculated about what kind of personal crisis Phoenix might be going through.[6] Along with other unusual public appearances, the Letterman interview contributed to the accumulating (although ultimately short-lived) defilement of Phoenix as a public figure.

This chapter uses the tools and findings of conversation analysis to reveal the micro-level processes by which this came about. It makes empirical and theoretical contributions. On an empirical level, it demonstrates that conversation-mechanical practices contributed to Phoenix's loss of face, and it identifies particular practices that the speakers employ. Close attention to the interview transcript shows that Phoenix and Letterman co-create the embarrassment spectacle by taking advantage of conversational vulnerabilities. They do this by using four conversation-mechanical practices: 1) disaffiliative actions, 2) turn abdication, 3) balking at repair, and 4) manipulation of institutionally specific constraints and obligations.

This chapter also contributes to the microsociological theorizing of social order and interaction rituals. It highlights the place of conversational mechanics in Goffmanian face-work and shows how the structure of talk operates in concert with the content of talk in producing a ritual outcome. Working in the ethnomethodological tradition, conversation analysts have pinpointed how conversational practices structure talk, thereby upholding social order. These

practices figure into face concerns as well: While often doing the face-work that is a condition for interaction, they also provide a resource for "aggressive interchange" (Goffman 1967a:25) that can damage face. In doing so they construct not only a social order but a moral order.

Durkheim famously wrote that "Every society is a moral society" (Durkheim [1893] 1997:173). Taking into account Goffman's elaboration of Durkheim's microsociology, one could add that every interaction is a moral interaction. This chapter demonstrates that studies of talk, even those that do not ordinarily make a Durkheimian argument, have something to gain by being placed into conversation with that tradition. Talk cannot help but have a moral valence.

APPENDIX A: Transcribing Conventions

My transcription uses conversation analytic notation, which captures features such as overlapping talk, pauses, and tonal variation. These details, which other transcription methods would not capture, have implications for how a speaker's turn proceeds and for how it shapes subsequent turns. I have followed conventions used by Jefferson (2004) with some modifications introduced by Gibson (2011), whose transcriptions open up the analytic possibilities of conversation analysis while also rendering the transcription in a readable format.

Overlapping speech

```
Phoenix  : I [mean]
Letterman:   [so y-] you have
```

When two speakers talk at once, the overlapping speech is placed in brackets. The transcription stacks them vertically to show where the overlap occurs.

Pauses

```
Phoenix  : no (.7)
Letterman: huh (.5) why


thing to (.) to explain
```

A pause, either within a turn or between turns, is represented by a number in parentheses that measures the duration of the pause to the tenth of a second. A pause too short to measure is represented by a period in parentheses.

Self-interruption

```
and c- come back
```

A word begun but not completed is depicted with a hyphen.

Intonation

```
why is↑ that↓
```

A pitch shift is notated with an upward arrow (rising pitch) or downward arrow (falling pitch).

Stress

```
you were ter**rif**ic
```

A word or syllable spoken with emphasis is notated with boldface.

Sound stretching

```
not really:
an:d
```

When a speaker stretches a sound, whether at the end of a word or in the middle, that sound is followed immediately by a colon.

APPENDIX B: Transcribing the audience's laughter and applause

I notate the audience's laughter or applause as (laughter) or (applause). The parentheses are meant to distinguish the sound of laughter or applause from the spoken words "laughter" and "applause."

Transcribing the audience presents a challenge. It can be difficult to pinpoint exactly when the laughter begins, since not all voices in the audience enter at once. The same can be true of applause. I have no perfect solution to this challenge. I have tried to discern when the laughter reaches a level at which it is more than a smattering of isolated voices – when it seems to have "taken hold" among the audience. That is the moment when the laughter "begins" in the transcription.

A related issue involves how to transcribe silences between Letterman and Phoenix. If the audience laughs between their turns, does this end the "silence," and should it be notated that way in the transcription? It is hard to give a consistent answer to this. Sometimes the audience's laughter very clearly functions as a "turn." In these cases, the primary dyad withholds its speech until the audience yields the floor. Other times the audience's laughter does not hold the floor, with the primary dyad paying little heed to the audience's interjection. I have notated silences based on which of these two scenarios seems to be in effect. For example, in the following sequence I consider the audience to take a turn. Respecting conversation rules, Phoenix does not speak until the audience completes its turn. The notation at the end of Letterman's turn indicates .3 seconds of silence before the audience enters:

1	Phoenix	I [mean]
2	Letterman	[so y-] you have given it some thought (.3)
3	audience	(laughter for 2.0)
4	Phoenix	yeah it's not really: an easy thing to (.) to
5		explain

Other instances are harder to deal with in the transcript. Sometimes the audience's laughter is not respected as a turn by the primary dyad. In this case I do not notate the duration of its laughter. In the following sequence, the audience laughs but never holds the floor. The .8 seconds of silence in line 2 refers to the time between when Phoenix finishes and when Letterman begins:

1	Phoenix	I'm okay with it but now you're making me feel
2		weird abou- [bout it] (.8)
3	audience	([laughter] laughter
4		[laughter.....])
5	Letterman	[I'm sorry↓ I'm making you feel] weird↑ about
6		it

In general, if the transcript does not state the duration of the audience's laughter, then the silence notated in the preceding turn refers to silence between the main speakers' turns.

NOTES

[1] Whether these preferences are properties of talk or of the speakers' mental states is a separate question. Conversation analysts see them as a property of talk, i.e. of the interaction, rather than a preference that individual speakers carry around with them.

[2] Available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RRb_3hCa72Y. Accessed Oct 27, 2017.

[3] To ensure an accurate transcription, I extracted an audio file from the online video. I listened to the file using the audio editing software program Audacity, which includes features that allowed me to transcribe accurately the pauses and overlaps in the conversation.

[4] The distinction I make here is one between form and content, namely between the structure of conversation and the content of particular turns. I do not mean to imply that the content of Letterman's remarks can be understood in isolation from formal properties of his speech, such as its pacing, pauses, and intonation. These too are relevant to the success of what I describe as content-based points.

[5] After the audience laughs, indicating a point has been scored, Letterman uses gesture to call even more attention to Phoenix's failure. He looks around from side to side as if searching for his interlocutor. He arranges his face into an expression of bewilderment. This "extra point" does rely on the content his communication, albeit a non-verbal gestural "utterance." But this only accentuates the original point, which hinges on conversational obligations, not the content of an utterance.

[6] Gawker.com, while entertaining the possibility that Phoenix's appearance might have been "performance art," called it a "trainwreck." Celebrity physician Dr. Drew Pinsky said that "the behavior I observed during the Letterman interview gave me great concern." A writer at *Vanity Fair* correctly saw through the act, likening Phoenix to pranksters such as Andy Kaufman and

Sacha Baron Cohen, but a columnist for *Psychology Today* earnestly declared, “He’s hurting. He’s in distress…. I decry the public takedown of a talented and troubled man.”

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Chapter 3. Why Were Oilfield Workers Unhappy? The Masculine Dimension of Migrant Discontent

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Beginning in the mid-2000s and accelerating in 2011, the oil-producing region in northwestern North Dakota received tens of thousands of migrants, mostly men, from across the United States. Work paid well, but ethnographic research found a social world in which "most everybody hates it here." This chapter focuses on the complex role of masculinity in shaping migrants' experiences. Oilfield work gave migrants an opportunity to embody and enact a masculine ethic, one that was cultivated by the hypermasculine environment of the oilfield. Workers aligned their self-understandings and senses of moral worth with the local definition of masculinity, and many found it satisfying to think of themselves as doing a "man's job." At the same time, the realities of oilfield life—long hours, little control over one's time, crude and makeshift living arrangements—subtly undercut many men's sense of independence and entitlement, thereby frustrating the masculine self-understanding they prized. This aspect of the work situation that they encountered in North Dakota—the centrality of an aspiration that they simultaneously struggled to realize—contributed to their sense of frustration and their overall discontent.

It was 8:20 a.m. on a cool summer weekday morning, and over two hundred people had assembled inside a small-town community center in western North Dakota. The venue was known as the Farm Festival Building, but on this particular morning it was serving the purposes of the oil and gas industry. Outside, the surrounding farmland was dotted with pumpjacks, gathering containers, and other infrastructure of oil production. The highway had recently been widened from two lanes to four. New residential developments were going up. A nearby "mancamp" warehoused non-resident workers.

The two hundred men and several women who filed into the community center that morning worked for companies that had been contracted by an international oil and gas corporation. These were the laborers who would do the actual work of drilling oil wells, repairing downhole breakages, and handling toxic chemicals. They had come for a mandatory safety training. The oil company had a reputation to protect, and that meant taking measures to prevent injuries and deaths on their work sites.

It was a typical crowd for an industry event in that part of the country. The attendees arrived in white crew trucks decaled with logos of oilfield services companies. They wore steel-toe boots, hoodies, t-shirts, baseball caps with sunglasses perched on the bill, and work pants with cans of dip tucked into the back pocket. Over three-quarters of them were white. As many as fifteen were black, perhaps twice that number Latino, and two others drove a truck with corporate iconography that suggested they were American Indian.

At 8:30 a burly, mustached oil company representative took the stage, a power-point presentation on a screen behind him. Unaided by a microphone, his voice modulated between a holler and a bellow. He introduced himself to an audience seated in folding chairs and shouted the locations of fire-escapes, muster points, and first-aid devices. He started with a story of a

property owner who had complained about trash blowing into his yard from one of the oil company's wells. He stressed that the company, and by extension the contractors seated before him, had a responsibility to respect "the community."

"Raise your hand if you're originally from Stanley, Tioga, out in this area," he boomed. Only one person among two hundred raised a hand. "That tells me an awful lot right there."

He turned to the topic of "priorities" as they related to workplace safety, and as he wrapped up his first point and prepared to start a new one, a man in the audience—white, perhaps 40, California native—interjected.

"Excuse me, sir," he began as the crowd turned in his direction. "I'll tell you something about a priority—and you already know this. Most of the people in this room don't like it here. They hate it here. But because of their priorities, they're away from their wives and their kids and their husbands, and they're here to make a living. And I gotta tell you, I've been here for a little over six years, and most everybody I meet, they don't like it here. But they're here because of their priorities, which is their wife and kids."

It was a direct and spontaneous expression of something that oil boom migrants communicated time and again. Starting around 2009, western North Dakota received tens of thousands of men such as the ones in the Farm Festival Building that morning. Over time the figure matched and then doubled the number of residents who predated the boom. Many came for the money, and many received sizable paychecks for their labor—sometimes two or three times what they had a chance of making back home. And yet many were also unsatisfied with their new situation.

This dissatisfaction was widespread and widely recognized—something the audience member alluded to when he prefaced his comment with "you already know this." It was

acknowledged among coworkers, among roommates, even among people unknown to one another: A guy in an airplane leaving North Dakota remarks to his seatmate that he lives for his days off, the one week per month when he can leave and go home. A man boarding a flight at the end of his hitch turns to a stranger and says, "I'm glad to be getting out of here," his wearied face communicating as much as his words. A former righand now working as a cross-country trucker texts, "Can't wait to get off the road but i am so glad i am out of that shithole. never again." A young lease operator for an oil company wears a vacant look at a church-sponsored dinner. Does he ever think about leaving? "Every day," he says.[1]

These statements were not equivalent to coworkers griping idly over a boss, for example, or Los Angelenos complaining about the traffic. Oilfield migrants, like workers everywhere, did indeed voice quotidian complaints as a way of building rapport and solidarity. But in addition to this, many indicated that they were experiencing loneliness, isolation, and frustration that exceeded what they considered to be everyday hardships.

Why did so many migrants have negative experiences, even as they made more money than they would have back home? This chapter answers that question by examining the social conditions that migrants encountered in North Dakota. I argue that the widespread discontent was not just the product of a self-selecting aggregation of chronically depressed, downtrodden, or disenchanted individuals who brought their woes with them to their new residence. Upon arrival, many faced a broadly similar set of situations and social conditions, and this influenced the attitudes and sentiments they formed. Those conditions were in turn shaped by the nature of the work and the expectations of the oil industry.

This chapter focuses on the complex role of masculinity in shaping migrants' experiences. Oilfield work gave men an opportunity to embody and enact a masculine ethic, one

that was cultivated by the hypermasculine environment of the oilfield. Many actively desired this and found it satisfying to think of themselves as doing a "man's job." At the same time, the realities of oilfield life—long hours, little control over one's time, crude and makeshift living arrangements—subtly undercut many men's sense of independence and entitlement, thereby frustrating the masculine self-understanding they prized.

This chapter draws on the experiences of a work crew and four additional individuals, giving attention to their actions and to remarks they made both in situ and upon later reflection. It draws on ethnographic data I collected while living and working in the boomtown of Williston, North Dakota. After an exploratory trip in 2013, I moved to Williston in the fall of 2014 and spent eleven of the next fifteen months living in two boarding houses there. During this time I also worked as a derrickhand on an oil rig and staffed the front desk of an extended-stay hotel that provided room and board to oilfield workers. In 2016 and 2018 I made follow-up trips. The material presented here was collected primarily through participant observation research, a method that earned me access by virtue of the extended commitment I made to the people and communities documented here. This allowed me to observe people over time, across situations, and at close proximity. I supplemented this foundational data with formal and informal interviews of people I met during the course of my participant observation research.

The chapter begins by providing background on the Bakken oilfield and its labor market before briefly discussing the relevant literature. It then reports its findings in two sections. The first section depicts frustration and discontent among oilfield workers by documenting the experience of an individual and a work crew. The second section presents an in situ account of the masculine ethic that prevailed in the oilfield and argues that this ethic, when met with the

constraints of the oil industry's labor demands, amplified workers' frustration. I conclude the chapter by discussing some of the argument's broader implications.

THE BOOMTOWN SETTING

North Dakota's oil deposits are located in the Bakken formation, a thin layer of shale that lies 10,000 feet below the surface of the earth. Above it stretch 200,000 square miles of North American prairie. Most of this land is incorporated into the state of North Dakota, although parts extend into Montana, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. The formation takes its name from Henry Bakken, a son of Norwegian homesteaders and a North Dakota farmer who owned land near the town of Tioga. It was there in 1951 that an oil company drilled one of the first successful oil wells in North Dakota.

Oil companies have been active in North Dakota ever since, although their presence has waxed and waned. The high oil prices of the 1970's and early 1980's spurred a flurry of drilling, but by the end of the decade that boom had gone bust along with oil prices. Oil reserves in the Bakken were either inaccessible or too expensive to recover. This spelled bad news for the town of Williston, which had sold municipal bonds to finance infrastructure projects. When the oil economy slowed down, they were stuck with a heavy debt burden.

Oil production continued in modest amounts, but agriculture drove the local economy, much as it had since the first European settlement. Economically speaking, towns in the area were not much better off than other small towns on the Great Plains. Population was declining. Young people moved away for jobs or adventure.

Everything changed in the first decade of the 2000's. Oil companies mastered the twin technologies of directional drilling and hydraulic fracturing, a process commonly known as "fracking." These innovations allowed oil producers to capture reserves that previously had been

inaccessible, including billions of barrels under the North Dakota prairie. It set off a frenzy of drilling, which in turn created a large demand for workers. North Dakota became a station for high-paying blue-collar jobs.

This demand for workers happened to coincide with the economic recession of 2008. When word got out, people began moving to North Dakota from all over the country.[2] In the midst of the recession, North Dakota's jobless rates were the lowest in the country, beating many states' pre-recession numbers.[3] Labor was scarce enough that companies involved in drilling and production would hire "anyone with a pulse," the local saying went.

The population of Williston grew threefold, from 12,000 before the boom to around 35,000 at its peak.[4] It also shot up in the nearby towns of Watford City, Dickinson, Tioga, and others, straining local infrastructure and introducing social problems such as crime, drug trafficking, sex trafficking, homelessness, and traffic jams. The housing shortage led Williston to become one of the most expensive rental markets in the country.[5] People took up residence in cars, campgrounds, RVs, and a local church. Businesses such as Walmart and McDonald's advertised wages of $17 an hour or more in order to recruit employees.

For residents of small towns in the United States, the experience of living there is often defined by community rather than economic prosperity. "Choosing to remain in a small town or deciding to move to one is tantamount to saying that some other goal in life is valued more highly than becoming a huge success," writes Wuthnow (2013:139). In this respect, the towns scattered across northwestern North Dakota were anomalies. Many people moved there precisely because they wanted to become a success. They envisioned a life for themselves or their families that exceeded what their hometowns offered. At that moment in their lives, success tended to

preoccupy them. In a reversal of the earlier dynamic, the Bakken had become a destination for young people seeking opportunity and adventure.

These were the broad circumstances that brought migrants to the Bakken and greeted them upon arrival. The research presented in this chapter began in 2014 around the time that Williston reached its peak population and North Dakota's daily oil production first exceeded a million barrels per day.[6] Local infrastructure was beginning to catch up to the needs of the swollen population, but residential construction, road expansion, and other projects were ongoing. Local conditions continued to evolve as my research continued through 2015, during which time the population declined along with oil prices and oil production. The labor market tightened as hiring slowed down, while some of the aggravating factors such as the housing shortage began to abate.

LOCAL PRODUCTION OF DISCONTENT

Migrants arriving during this time entered a work setting in which masculinity and social class were highly salient. This chapter argues that local definitions of masculinity interacted with the labor demands of the oil industry to shape the subjective experience of oilfield migrants in North Dakota. Several bodies of research inform this chapter's research question.

Previous scholarship suggests that local context plays a role in how social class and masculinity influence the quality of people's subjective experiences. Social class has been shown to be a weak predictor of subjective wellbeing (SWB) (Kahneman and Deaton 2010), with socioeconomic status being associated with only small differences in SWB (Diener et al. 2010). To the extent that social class does influence SWB, it appears to do so primarily by raising one's status in a localized setting (Anderson et al. 2012; Yu and Blader 2020), which is to say that

subjective wellbeing is shaped by the meaning-making that goes on in local, face-to-face social contexts.

Masculinity has a complex relationship to wellbeing. Research suggests that masculine norms cause harm in some circumstances and create benefits in others (Kaya et al. 2019). Masculine norms are themselves subject to local definitions and situational variability. Gender has been theorized as an interactional accomplishment that responds to the demands of particular situations (Garfinkel 1967; West and Zimmerman 1987). Theoretical work on hegemonic masculinity proposes local dynamics as one of three analytical levels constituting the "geography of masculinities" (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005).

The local and situational dynamics that shape masculinity are sensitive to social class. Studies of working-class men and boys have highlighted class-based masculine practices and in particular have analyzed the social function of exaggerated masculine behavior (e.g., MacLeod 1987; Walker 2006; Willis 1977). Researchers have theorized hypermasculine displays among working-class men as "protest masculinity," a type of masculine expression that strategically emphasizes a high-status identity marker, namely manhood, as a form of protest against a subordinate class position (Connell 1995).

This body of research highlights the relevance of local context in shaping the experience of oilfield migrants. Migrants encountered locally defined masculine ideals and expectations. These local definitions interacted with workers' class position and relative status to influence the quality of their experiences.

ANALYTIC STRATEGY

This chapter asks why so many oilfield migrants had negative experiences, even as they made more money than they would have back home. One approach to answering this question

would consider the individual dispositions, inclinations, or pathologies that people brought with them. Migrants were indeed a self-selecting group that likely differed from the population at large and may have resembled each other in some predictable ways. Many had been exposed to some "push" factor, such as economic hardship, that impelled them to leave home. In leaving, they distinguished themselves from those who remained. For example, they may have been less satisfied, less socially rooted, more physically fit, more skilled, or more ambitious than others in their cohort. The former mayor of Williston, the oil boom's hub, recognized this in comments he made at a public forum, offering this assessment: "People who come here have passed the first test. They came. The freeloaders are still back in Michigan or Georgia living off the government."

At the same time, the people who migrated during the boom represented a wide cross-section of the population. The vast majority of them were men, but within that group they varied in a number of notable ways. They came from all parts of the United States. They were more racially diverse than the local population that predated the oil boom, which was overwhelmingly white. They came with many different sets of work skills, employment histories, life experiences, and expectations.

Traits that distinguished "leavers" as a group from "stayers" may have primed them to have negative experiences, but the processes that activated those experiences were local and shared. What migrants had in common was an exposure to the same broad social conditions upon arrival. To explain why workers were frustrated in their new circumstances, this chapter focuses on these social conditions. In the empirical sections that follow, I begin by depicting the frustration and discontent that oilfield migrants experienced. I then present additional ethnographic data that shows the how local definitions of masculinity entered into their

experiences of work. Finally, I argue that this definition of masculinity amplified their discontent, not on its own but because the oil industry's labor demands impeded workers' masculine self-definitions, the subjective basis of their identities and self-evaluations.

MIGRANT DISCONTENT

In the Farm Festival Building that morning, the audience member who spoke up remarked that "most everybody I meet, they don't like it here." I observed this myself among many people in a variety of settings. This section offers a window into the discontent that migrants experienced. It first introduces Robert, an oilfield worker from the U.S. mountain west who worked as a truck driver and later on a crew that prepared well pads for drilling. It then introduces four members of a work crew, all of them migrants from other parts of the country, who were employed as righands by Northern Plains Well Services, a company that ran several workover rigs servicing oil wells. This section identifies the chapter's object of explanation, namely the frustration that many oilfield workers felt after migrating to North Dakota. It also serves as background for the chapter's next section, which examines the salience of masculinity among the same individuals.

"I hate my life, but I want money"

Robert came to North Dakota in 2012 after working a series of oilfield jobs in the western United States. A company from his hometown was doing business in the then-booming Bakken, and Robert took his commercial driver's license and relocated to Alexander, ND, to haul production water, a waste product of oil wells. He and I met in 2014 when we moved into neighboring rooms in a boardinghouse in Williston, the local hub of the oil boom. By that point Robert had held multiple jobs and lived in multiple towns in the Bakken. His new job based in

Williston was on a crew that drilled ratholes, a shallow hole on a well pad that goes in before the drilling rig sets up.

It was a challenging job, physically and mentally. There were no prescribed breaks, and when his crew was on location they rarely had idle time. Robert had no fixed schedule beyond three weeks on, one week off. During those three weeks he was on call at all hours of the day. Sometimes his crew worked 24 hours in a single stretch, occasionally twice that. At times he would end up covered in mud. A couple months later, when I was speaking with the office manager at the North Dakota Job Service, she would describe the job as a tough one. “That’s dirty work,” she said. “Hard work too.”

My first morning in the new apartment, Robert and I crossed paths in the kitchen and made coffee together. He was 32 years old but could have passed for younger. He had shaggy auburn hair and a shy smile. He had been in North Dakota for two and a half years. I asked him what he thought of the apartment. “It’s a place to live,” he remarked.

He described the work and living arrangements of his previous jobs. His initial job in Alexander led to a stint hauling casing and drill pipe for a company based out of Ross, ND. In both jobs the work was essentially the same: Load product onto truck. Haul product to location. Unload product. Repeat. He made enough money to pay his bills and still have some left for spending—by his account, he “cleared four or five thousand a month”—but he found the work mind-numbing. It took a toll on his body too; he said he felt like an old man with his lower back pain. One winter he got frostbite on his ear. “It’s like someone is holding a lighter against your skin,” he said. The part that felt like an affront to his dignity, however, was putting up with the living conditions in the mancamp. Like so many workers during the boom, his accommodations

consisted of a trailer among trailers in a gravel lot. Sometimes during the winter he would come back after a shift to find that his toilet had frozen over.

He also alluded to struggles that weren't physical. "Everybody here's had some bad days," he observed matter-of-factly. He said it in a way that emphasized its universality. *Everybody*'s had some bad days.[7]

"What keeps you here?" I wondered.

"Money. I can make twice as much here as I can anyplace else."

As was the case with many other workers, his paychecks didn't translate into savings. "Things come up," he explained. Rent could be exploitatively high. Food often had to be purchased on the go. Vehicles required maintenance. The realities of oilfield life—the long hours, the physical and emotional demands, the windfall paychecks, the all-male hypermasculine culture—were conditions that encouraged binge spending (Wilk 2006, 2011). A month later he would admit that the previous Friday, the day he got his paycheck, he had spent $1000 at the "titty bar." He thought it had been Friday anyway—the days blurred together and he couldn't be sure. Nor was he sure what exactly he spent the $1000 on—he had been too drunk to remember. "A dance costs a hundred dollars. So that happened."[8]

"I've never been to anything fun around here," he told me one evening as we headed to a bar. "Except for outdoor shit like rodeos." He expressed no desire to be in North Dakota beyond the paycheck it provided—a sentiment echoed many times over by numerous people. Whenever he had time off from work he would leave town, provided he had the money to do so.[9]

"I hate my life," Robert would tell me, "but I want money." In the oilfield, he said, the company owned you. They controlled your time and constrained your freedom. One night we would be watching the World Series on the TV in his bedroom. He surveyed the contents of the

room: work clothes, minifridge, toaster, coffee maker, TV set, videogame console, PC laptop—the artifacts of a mobile, migratory life. He noted that everything he owned was either in that room or in his truck. “God I want a house,” he sighed.

Sitting in his truck one afternoon on a day off, Robert pointed out to me the wealth around us. He gestured up the street. “That house is half a million dollars.” We could see into the backyard with its grown-up toys. “The camper is a hundred grand. Boat is fifty grand. Truck is forty.”

He wanted those things for himself, and he was frequently revising a plan for how to attain the trappings of a middle-class life. Those plans dissolved at the beginning of 2015 when the price of oil collapsed and the boom ended abruptly. By February Robert had been laid off from his job. After three years he bid farewell to North Dakota and didn’t return.

In retrospect, he considered that last season to have been his best. He had found a room to rent in Williston, which was not an easy thing to accomplish, and having a place in Williston allowed him to hold down the highest paying job he had during his years in the oilfield. Drilling ratholes had been extremely dangerous work, and looking back he said wouldn’t do it again on account of that, but at the time he had started to see a future for himself. He had “gotten [his] ducks in a row”: a room, a local bank account, an official change of address that included a North Dakota driver’s license and license plate. After a few paychecks, he was able to work his three-week hitch and then drive to Colorado for a week of snowboarding. It was a rhythm he had hoped to keep up through the winter. “It’s easy for me to say this now, but I really felt like I was on my way to finding a home—right before it crashed.”

That was his perspective after eighteen months away. Initially his assessment had been sharper. “the hell with that oilfield,” he texted a month after leaving. Five months later, having

spent his money on the ski slopes, he was working as a cross-country trucker making trips between the Midwest and the Port of Oakland. “Cant wait to get off the road,” he texted, “but i am so glad i am out of that shithole. never again.”

When I spoke to him eighteen months out he was hauling a load of beef destined for East Asia. He had pulled into a truck stop to talk. He said he thought of his time in North Dakota as a failure—not a personal failure but a gamble that never paid off. “There’s plenty of other things I’d rather be doing in life than freezing my ass off in North Dakota and doing a dangerous job. It’s like you’re taking your seat at the poker table, and some guys that are my age that I know have a truck and a house that are paid for. At my age. So I’ve seen it done, and that’s what I was trying to do. So yeah, I don’t consider it a successful venture for me.”

The Final Countdown

Most days nobody greeted each other at the beginning of the day, no “Good morning” or “How’s it going?” We would pile into the crew truck with our bags and lunch containers and arrange ourselves in silence. Nobody said goodbye at the end of the day either, as though the time between one workday and the next were a scene change in an ongoing play.[10]

We sat in the pickup at 5:30 a.m., engine running, waiting for each crew member to stagger from trailer to truck to begin the ride to our work site. The heater blew warm air in the predawn morning. Around us the countryside, newly industrialized, was coming awake. It might have been peaceful, even meditative, had the radio not been blaring the Z 96.1 Dakota Country morning show.

Pato settled into the corner of the back seat, a camouflage baseball cap pulled low over his face.

“What’d you do yesterday?” he asked. We had had the day off unexpectedly. The company man had called Wilkes, the rig operator, before we left the yard and said to stay home. High winds were making it too risky to run the rig.

“Read a little,” I said. “Chilled. What’d you do?”

“Jerked off. Slept. I was going to jerk off again this morning but I woke up too late.”

We waited on Johnny Jr. to come to the truck. For a person separated from his family, the Bakken offered little to occupy oneself with other than work. When he wasn’t staying in one of the shared employee trailers at the back of the industrial yard, Pato lived 90 minutes away with his girlfriend, their two-month-old, and his girlfriend’s parents. He had three kids in the lower Midwest as well, ages 18, 16, and 8. He himself was 38. He had been putting in long hours in the oilfields for years, often in remote locations away from his family.

“You never saw that movie?” Andrew asked him one day while we were chatting. “How could you have never seen that movie?”

“I was working,” Pato deadpanned.

The truck warmed up. A little after 5:30 Wilkes directed me to go bang on the door of Johnny’s trailer. I got out and banged until he answered, bleary-eyed and shirtless.

“Fuck. Shit.”

“What’s up,” I said.

“Fuck.”

He disappeared to put on work clothes. Johnny Jr. was the youngest member of the crew, a lean, tattooed twenty-year-old working his first job out of high school. His father Johnny Sr. was a rig manager. On my first day of work I had arrived at the yard and found him half-asleep in the back seat of the idling pickup waiting for the rest of the crew.

"I'm the new guy," I said. "Johnny told me to be here at 5:15." I got in the truck and introduced myself. "I'm Cary."

"Johnny."

"You're Johnny too?" I asked.

"I'm Johnny Jr."

He closed his eyes but I made conversation anyway. "Do you live here?" I asked, gesturing to the row of employee trailers.

"I live in the trailer on the end. Paradise."

"I bet it's real nice in the winter."

"Fuck. I wanna kill myself in the winter."

In lighter moments Johnny Jr. provided comic relief for the crew, both as the butt of jokes and as the purveyor of goofball humor. If you asked him how he was doing, his ready response came in a comically exaggerated drawl. "*Marinatin'*," he'd offer. He liked to tease the opening line of an obscure country song by oilfield troubadour Wes St. Jon. "Have you ever heard the story," he'd start, and after pausing for effect he'd resume in his exaggerated drawl, "*about the hard-workin' oil righands?*"

A few minutes later Johnny Jr. climbed into the back seat of the crew truck with Pato and me. Wilkes sat in the front passenger seat. Andrew put the engine into gear and started the truck toward the gate of the dusty industrial yard, tires crunching across the gravel-studded patch of dirt and weeds. We passed the gate onto the unpaved road, leaving behind us the yard with its row of employee trailers and its tool shed and further still the shipping containers and the tractor trailer cab and Rig 3, idle since February when the price of oil went south. We drove down the frontage road lined with industrial shops and turned onto Highway 2.

Andrew had sandy blond hair and an easy smile. When he wasn't in a foul mood, he exuded a boyish exuberance that vied for attention and had little trouble getting it. He talked incessantly, a ticker tape of riffs and retorts that could go on all day long. In recent days his attention had turned squarely toward his time off at the end of the month. He claimed that he was going to take all his stuff with him. He wouldn't be coming back. "Sixteen days," he kept announcing, a tally of the time separating him from his departure. Then he'd sing the refrain of Europe's 1986 hit song "The Final Countdown" along with its famous synthesizer theme.

He had his eye on other jobs, as did the rest of the crew. Pato claimed he was getting out of the oilfield. He was looking into a job in the meat department of a grocery store in Montana, as well as a job at a natural gas processing plant. Wilkes was putting in applications for oilfield and gasfield jobs all over the country: Colorado, California, Texas, Pennsylvania. Last week Andrew had filled out an application, seemingly on a whim, to work nights at Walmart. At $18.50 an hour it would be only about two-thirds of an experienced righand's wage, but the schedule would be steady and predictable. The oilfield could be feast or famine, and in 2015 it had been mostly famine.

Today he was saying he'd do farmwork with his sister in California. You could make $100 or more a day picking onions or grapes, all of it in cash, he said. He might do that for spending money while collecting unemployment. "'Let's go pick some fruit,'" he joked, "said no white man ever—until this morning!"

With the truck's steering wheel in one hand, he got on the phone with his stepbrother in Texas, who told Andrew he could get him a job roughnecking down there for $20 an hour plus housing in an apartment—an upgrade from the trailer he lived in here. As a bonus, there were lots of good-looking women in Midland, he claimed. He got on the phone with a friend in

California about a job laying rebar near Sacramento. That one would be $32 an hour with 40 hours a week guaranteed.

"It's the *fi-nal count-down*! Doo-da-loo-doo, doo-da-loo-doo-doo…"

We passed the towns of Ray and Tioga on our way to a well near Stanley. Already at this early hour the road was active with trucks: flatbeds carrying pipe, side-dumps hauling sand, pickups with company decals on their doors.

"North Dakota is the greatest state the U.S. invented," Andrew announced. His voice was punchy with sarcasm. "I thank Lewis and Clark every day I'm here."

Wilkes, the rig operator, looked straight ahead at the road. "I think I'm being punished for something I did when I was younger. How the hell did I end up in the Bakken?"

"I think I'm going to crash on the way to work," Andrew proposed. "Do you think they'd get mad if I crashed the truck?"

"Nah."

"I'll crash it just a little so we'll still get paid, but not bad so that we get fucked up."

The conversation drifted to what it's like going home. Andrew, Wilkes, and Johnny Jr. had come to North Dakota from the same town out west. Last night Andrew had gone on Facebook to announce that he'd be back soon, and he said the news got as many "likes" as he'd ever gotten. Women were telling him he should get in touch.

"Everyone who's been up here has a badass fucking vehicle," he said, anticipating the warm welcome he'd receive. Around the country, working-class communities like Andrew's had loaned manpower to the oil boom, and the returns were visible in the form of new trucks, boats, and motorcycles. Andrew himself had a jacked-up GMC Sierra Denali pickup.[11]

"Can't live in a vehicle though," Wilkes noted.

"That's why I'm like fuck dude I should have bought a house." Andrew laughed. "I've probably made a little less than two hundred grand over the last couple years and I haven't saved a dime. But I had a fucking good time."

It hadn't dampened his enthusiasm for leaving, however.[12] In addition to the lack of women to date, there was the merciless North Dakota winter, a test of fortitude that was worn as a badge of honor by those who had worked through it.

"Everyone's excited to see you when you get back," Andrew said.

Johnny Jr. chimed in from the backseat. "It's like coming home from jail!"

They all laughed. Johnny Jr., Andrew, and Wilkes had each done time, Johnny Jr. in juvie. Wilkes riffed on the similarities. "New clothes. New shoes. Cheeseburgers."

"You know what I'm going to be happy about?" Andrew asked. "Being close to a fucking mall. Not having to drive four hours to get something." Aside from the local Walmart, the closest destinations for shopping were between two and four hours away in Minot, Bismarck, or across the Canadian border in Regina.[13]

Our drive to the work site had taken an hour and a half. Andrew turned off the highway onto the gravel road that led to the oil well we were working on. We followed the road, straight as a ruler, across two miles of rolling prairie before turning onto another gravel road and going another two miles, dust billowing behind us. Finally we veered onto a private driveway posted with "No Trespassing" signs. We wound through hills dotted with cattle. The sky was pale with the suggestion of daylight. In the distance we spotted our rig, its derrick curtained with upright stands of pipe and hanging sheets of sucker rods. Andrew gazed at the horizon with mock reverence. "There she stands, tall and proud."

MASCULINE SELF-UNDERSTANDINGS

The previous section presented examples of the observation that "most everybody I meet, they don't like it here." Oilfield migrants often stated their ambitions in material terms, as Robert did when he named money as his primary incentive for staying in North Dakota or as Andrew did when he noted the status he derived from his "badass fucking vehicle." These ambitions sometimes went unrealized, leaving men frustrated and angling to leave. At the same time, men also used their oilfield jobs to pursue nonmaterial aspirations that they tended to express less directly.[14] These aspirations revolved around a masculine self-understanding that valorized strength, independence, self-sufficiency, adventurism, and providership.

Just as discontent was central to many oilfield migrants' experience, so was masculinity. In the oilfield, anything a man said or did could serve as a referendum on his masculinity. It shaped how Robert thought about his work and how he evaluated himself. The righands at Northern Plains likewise enacted and enforced a masculine ethic on the rig.

The masculine ideals embraced by oilfield workers were not unique to the oilfield. Many men who migrated to North Dakota probably aspired to some version of them elsewhere. But while these concerns may not have been novel, the oilfield incubated a hypermasculine ethic that bolstered or accentuated them. Interactions among all-male crews of oilfield workers pushed men to invest themselves in masculine ideals that associated masculinity with autonomy and fortitude.

I argue that masculinity and discontent were related. This section presents in situ accounts of how the local definition of masculinity found its way into workplace interactions and workers' self-understandings. Masculinity infused moral worth into workers' understandings of themselves and the work they did. Following this descriptive presentation, the chapter then

argues that the oilfield's social organization created demands that frustrated workers' attempts to fully inhabit the masculine self-understanding that they aspired toward, thereby amplifying their discontent. At the same time that workers invested themselves in masculine ideals, the structure and demands of the oil industry obstructed their ability to fully realize them. This aspect of the work situation that oilfield migrants encountered in North Dakota—the elevation of an aspiration whose realization was simultaneously undermined—left some workers feeling frustrated.

In the sections below I describe how masculine aspirations shaped the way Robert thought about his work. I then present a scene that shows how a masculine ethic was enacted and enforced among the righands at Northern Plains Well Services. Finally, I describe how the oilfield's social organization frustrated workers' attempts to fully inhabit the masculine self-understanding that they valued and aspired toward.

"I want to be a man"

A month and a half after transitioning from a job as a truck driver to a job on a rathole crew, Robert had finished his second three-week hitch and was on his week off. He still didn't have the money to leave town, which is what he wanted to do, so instead he hung around killing time.

Idle time in Williston often led men to bars and strip clubs. One night in the middle of the week I joined Robert for drinks at a dive bar located on an out-of-the-way back road. It was a slow night and the space was half-empty. We sat at a table to drink our first beer and our conversation turned to dogs. Robert wanted a pit bull, he said, but he'd have to get a female since he couldn't bear to have a male dog neutered. He couldn't deal with the thought castrating it. Having a female dog spade would be less upsetting. I asked why.

“I don’t know,” he said. “I just can’t imagine cutting its nuts off. I wouldn’t want to have my nuts cut off.”

I said that the main difference is that a female dog’s parts are on the inside. When they’re gone you can’t see that they’re gone, but they’re just as gone.

He smiled and looked stumped. “I don’t know. It’s just not the same.”

He talked about his desire for a stable, middle-class life, a topic he would return to on many occasions. He wanted a house, a truck, a plane, and a car, and to have it paid for. Having it paid for was important so that he wouldn’t have to worry about monthly bills. Debt was a shackle. He wanted autonomy.

The first round of drinks went fast. I was halfway through my second beer when Robert went to the bar for a third Coors. He scoffed when I told him not to get me one. “You want that in a nipple or a sippy cup?” he shouted.

The previous night he had gotten wasted. He had gone to a bar, then sat in his truck drinking IPAs, then taken a cab to Whispers, the strip club, where he got kicked out for being too intoxicated. He came home, threw up in the toilet, and passed out on the bathroom floor.

He was awakened in the early morning by our roommate Jonah, who was getting ready for work. Our fourth roommate’s dog needed to go to the bathroom, but his owner wasn’t around. Jonah asked Robert if he knew where the dog leash was. Instead Robert took the dog out himself without a leash. As he related the story to me in the bar, he spoke contemptuously of Jonah for thinking he needed a leash for the dog. “He needs to be a fucking man,” Robert said. Just take the dog outside without one. Problem solved.

We left the bar and got in Robert's truck. As we followed the road back into town he pointed out the Schlumberger[15] shop nearby. I asked him if he'd ever work for one of the big companies.

"Fuck no. I don't need that fucking corporate bureaucratic bullshit. I want to be a man." His job is hard work, he said. He gets more hours and more pay. "It's a man's job," he reiterated.

We pulled into the parking lot across the street from the apartment complex, and Robert backed his truck into the parking spot, as he always did. Before we could get out, he had started to reconsider. "I've got an itch in my skirt," he said. He wanted to go back out. I asked him what he had in mind.

"You wanna go to the titty bar? Come on!"

I told him no.

"Come on, Cary. You're my wingman!"

I told him I had to work at 7 in the morning, which seemed to satisfy him. He dropped his insistence, although he added that he had to get up early too. "I'm getting up at 5, what about you?" he asked.

On an earlier occasion Robert had remarked that "I hate my life, but I want money." He liked the paychecks he got from his job, but money was not the only thing he liked. The type of work he did gave him the satisfaction of feeling like a man. The effort, the endurance, the material reward—it served the non-material purpose of fashioning a masculine self-understanding that he felt good about.

The contours of that manhood had several identifiable features. One was the autonomy that came from being indebted to no one. Robert wanted to buy things outright, not owe money to a bank, a state of affairs that would have constrained his choices by tying him to monthly loan

repayments. He would later tell me that autonomy was one of the things he liked about having money. So-called "corporate bureaucratic bullshit" did not sit comfortably with his self-understanding insofar as it threatened his autonomy through red-tape rules. Another feature was self-reliance, such as solving one's own problems.[16] When Jonah couldn't figure out how to walk the dog without a leash, he failed not just as the dog's custodian but as a man. Robert saw himself as more masculine for taking care of the situation, even if it meant that he ended up doing a chore while Jonah escaped it. Fortitude was another feature. A boy stopped drinking after two beers and needed "a nipple or a sippy cup." A man had the fortitude to keep imbibing and still wake up at 5 am.

Local production of masculine virtue

All-male work crews incubated this masculine ethic. For migrants who found jobs in certain oilfield roles, work crews became the locus of their local social world: the people they spent the most time with and came to know the best, as well as the people they competed with and measured themselves against.[17] It was in this social context, and in the situations that arose therein, that workers enacted and enforced a self-understanding guided by notions of masculine virtue.

At 5:40 AM Andrew got in the driver's seat of the crew truck and we started our commute to a remote oil well east of Williston. I had taken my place in the middle of the back seat.[18] Pato had gotten in on my left and disappeared into his camouflage hoodie to find more sleep. As the truck started moving Wilkes looked over his shoulder at me from the passenger seat. "Johnny's not coming," he said, a way of letting me know that I didn't need to leave the seat open to my right. "His *feet hurt*."

I resituated myself by the window, pushing aside the wrappers and plastic bottles that littered the floor of the cab. Johnny Jr. had blisters on his feet and had been in visible pain the day before. If there had been any doubt that he deserved ridicule for skipping work, Wilkes's scornful tone had just removed it.

"The only reason he can get away with that shit is because his dad's the boss," Andrew complained, the first of many derisive comments. Johnny Jr. would be mocked without mercy for the rest of the day, the preferred epithet being "pussy."

Jeremy, our toolpusher[19], was waiting for us when we got to location that day. He had already heard about Johnny Jr.'s absence. He walked to the crew truck and immediately piled on the derision.

"Where's that pussy Johnny at?" he demanded. "His feet hurt?"

A righand's job places numerous strains on the body. The muscles ache, the skin bruises and breaks, fatigue accumulates. Fingers can easily get gnarled. A righand manages these strains daily, and how exactly he manages them is regulated by informal sanctions. When the demands of work test one's limits, a righand is expected to demonstrate fortitude—to toil away, endure physical pain, and not complain about it.[20] This was understood as a masculine virtue, and sanctions that upheld this understanding often relied on feminizing epithets. On the day that Johnny skipped work, this played out before me as both a caution and an instruction.[21]

That day I followed Andrew into the derrick[22] to learn how to catch tubing pipe that had been hoisted out of the well—a role ordinarily assigned to Johnny. Andrew was in pain himself. His bad hip was nagging at him, and this seemed only to steel his resolve. By the end of the day he was limping. Yet he did exactly what Johnny hadn't done: He sucked up the pain and kept working. We got back to the yard around 6:30 pm and Andrew hobbled toward his trailer. As if

to punctuate the lesson for the day, he singled out Johnny for one final pummeling. “Tell Johnny on Monday that while he was sitting around with hurt feet, you learned how to catch pipe. Actually, don't tell him that because then he'll think he won't have to do it.”

A righand had to learn to perform the correct response to the physical demands of the job. At a minimum, this required careful self-management. Among his co-workers, he had to “engineering a convincing impression” (Goffman 1959:251) that he was realizing the moral standards expected of him, namely to demonstrate stamina and fortitude by enduring physical pain, emotional hardship, etc. On the rig, however, violations were not met with tactful inattention—Goffman’s (1959:230) term for the gracious, magnanimous way of protecting the dramaturgical façade. A righand who failed to show fortitude could not expect others to look away. My crewmates were quick to sanction each other, often in feminizing terms, and in doing so they acted as more than just “merchants of morality” (Goffman 1959:251), or amoral actors in a moral world. They themselves were actively creating and sustaining that world.[23]

To master this, men attended to more than outward-facing, surface-level appearances needed to engineer a convincing impression. They inhabited their masculine persona through “deep acting” (Hochschild 1983) that brought their feelings into alignment with outward expectations. This required techniques that were not just expressive but also corporeal. I saw this the following week as I watched Johnny struggle to manage the demands of the job.

We were picking up joints of pipe off the ground and lifting them onto the floor of the rig, and as we were doing it Johnny slammed his hand between two pipes. He yelled. Wilkes left the operator’s platform to confer with him and see how serious the injury was, asking him multiple times if he was okay. Johnny nodded, looking away. He wore a serious and determined look on his face. For the rest of the workday he worked through the pain, but he remained

withdrawn and at one point appeared to be holding back tears. On the ride home he slumped into the corner of the back seat and pulled his coat over his head.

Johnny knew to act unscathed. He made an attempt to engineer this impression, even if it was an unconvincing one. He had failed and he knew it; his retreat into his coat during the ride home conveyed the shame he incurred in the moment. It would be a stretch to say that he failed because of bad acting. Rather, it was because of "incorrect" feelings, ones that violated the ethic of remaining steadfast and undeterred in the face of dangerous, painful, and taxing physical demands.

The next day Johnny appeared to be struggling once again. He held his eyes tight in a wince, and his bottom lip protruded in an expression somewhere between a pout and a determined scowl. Wilkes pulled him aside in an unusual gesture of sympathy and tried to coax him out of his funk.[24] Rather than sanction him with feminizing epithets, he attempted to motivate him by appealing to notions of masculine valor. "You're the man of your family," I overheard Wilkes telling him. Johnny attempted to walk it off. He disappeared into the doghouse[25] while the rest of us finished getting things set up for work. By pacing, sitting, and ultimately removing himself from the rest of the crew, he used tactics of bodily adjustment to align his feelings with the outward expression he needed to project.

It was in situations such as this that oilfield migrants learned to enact and embody a masculine ethic of physical fortitude and emotional resolve. This ethic was more than just self-presentation, although it was that too; it was internalized and embodied—a brand of deep acting that facilitated their masculine self-understanding. For migrants such as Andrew, Wilkes, and Robert, this self-understanding, enacted both internally and externally, emotionally and physically, became an important and distinguishing mark of pride. Their sizeable paychecks

further enhanced this masculine identity, and their ability to enact this identity in turn made them feel deserving of that pay.

Elusive Ideals

The previous sections showed oilfield migrants articulating and enacting a masculine self-understanding. Many took satisfaction in this notion of themselves to the point that it became a benefit unto itself. But at the same time that oilfield workers cultivated and realized this self-understanding, other factors frustrated it. Some masculine ideals were attainable, especially feats of strength, endurance, and fortitude. Indeed, the oil industry's long hours, the physical nature of the work, and North Dakota's extreme climate necessitated it.

Other masculine ideals proved more elusive. In particular, workers in the oil industry found that their work limited their sense of freedom and independence. It was not just that they were beholden to a clock that governed their work hours. A regimented work schedule, while repetitious, also provides a chance to clock out. For those working in the field, the oil industry was a "greedy institution" (Coser 1974) that consumed their lives. Many oilfield workers were effectively on call at all hours of the day. Others worked fixed and predictable shifts, but those shifts stretched to fourteen hours a day, long enough that they effectively had no time to do anything but work and sleep, sometimes for weeks on end.[26]

With so much of their lives committed to their jobs, oilfield workers often made good money thanks to overtime pay. Some found this empowering and liberating in one respect. They could buy vehicles they wanted and ignore prices on a restaurant menu, in the event that they made it to a restaurant. But they found it stifling in another respect. With so little control over their time, workers could not enact the independence that was part of their masculine identity. Nor could they enjoy the lives they felt they had earned through their hard work, proven strength,

and contribution to society, given that living arrangements on offer comprised boarding houses, RVs, and mancamp dormitories. Their masculine self-understanding offered a sense of entitlement that the realities of oilfield life did not fulfill.

Complaints that revolved around lifestyle opportunities register with additional significance when one considers them in light of the masculine self-understanding that accompanies them. Looking back on his time in North Dakota, Robert valued the toughness and self-reliance he developed, which he thought of as manly. “It’s hard work, and you should know that going in so you don’t bitch that you’re tired. There’s isn’t like a government guy coming around and making sure that everyone’s getting their fifteen-minute potty break, you know. I was kind of proud of myself for that I guess. I felt like I was, you know, like a man and didn’t need someone else to take care of me.”

In the moment, as he lived it, he also hated it. His declaration that “I hate my life” was followed by his explanation of how “In this life, the company owns you.” He could take care of himself, but that capacity was a practical response to the conditions of dependence that structured his life and the recurring indignities that he put up with. The injury smarted because it undermined his emerging self-understanding as a man who was self-reliant and efficacious.

Oilfield workers provided numerous accounts of their attempts to project autonomy, ruggedness, and self-reliance. They claimed, for example, independence from institutions such as law enforcement and medicine. A rig operator named Nathaniel described avoiding medical attention to preserve his masculine reputation. “I’ve worked weeks with my back just killing me. But you just keep on working because you ain’t gonna go to the doctor. That ain’t very manly. I mean, as bad as that sounds. You ain’t going to the doctor to get your back looked at cause it just ain’t what you do.” A righand named Hugh described how his co-workers respected self-reliant

men who solved their own problems. For them, this extended to interpersonal conflicts that might arise. One would be looked down on for involving the police, he explained, not because the police were irresponsible or untrustworthy but because seeking their assistance would indicate dependence. “If there’s a conflict where there’s more of them and you involve the police, and you win via the police, that seems to make strategic sense to me,” he said. “But that would be cowardly.”

Yet dependence was a central fact of life for oilfield migrants, one that confronted them constantly. In the medium-term they were subject to the oil industry’s fickle expansions and contractions. The precarity of oilfield work was always in the back of people’s minds. But even on a daily or weekly basis, the men doing the oil industry’s labor exercised little governance over their own lives. Employers demanded all of their time. With few available housing options, they depended on company-provided employee housing in crowded or makeshift arrangements. Workers often relied on the company for transportation to and from remote work sites in crew trucks or buses.

These numerous reminders of one’s dependent position created tension with oilfield workers’ aspirations for the kind of men they wanted to be and the kind of men that others expected them to be. Opportunities to exit this arrangement hardly existed during a hitch. Rather, they were concentrated and sequestered into “days off,” the week or two weeks away from work. Johnny Jr.’s joke resonated: going home, whether for a visit or for good, was indeed like coming home from jail in the sense that guys could exercise their independence—not from a total institution (Goffman 1961) but certainly from a greedy one—and assume a role as a provider rather than a dependent. But given the demands that the industry typically placed on its workforce, the majority of one’s days and weeks afforded few of these opportunities.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Raewyn Connell (1995) has conceptualized working class masculinity as a "protest masculinity," one that strategically emphasizes a high-status identity marker, namely manhood, as a form of protest against a subordinate class position. The intersection of these two identities, one dominant and the other subordinate, can elicit the assertive masculine attitudes and behaviors that oilfield workers displayed. One can read these displays as a way of saving face given the dependent and subordinate positions that most oilfield workers occupied in the industry and, more locally, at their work sites. Paradoxically, in the local context of the oilfield, this particular response actually tightened their bind. It positioned their self-understanding and their self-worth in a confrontation with the realities of the lifestyle they could live. Their masculine identities became both an asset and a liability—something that could engender pride but also compound frustration.

As a work site and a social world, the oilfield differed in some ways from other sites of rural blue-collar work. Similar to the firefighters in Desmond's *On the Fireline* (2007), oilfield workers sometimes lived with their co-workers in isolated areas. They forged relationships of fictive kin (Stack 1974) and referred to each other as brothers. Their self-understanding and way of interacting were notably masculine, although not necessarily "country masculine." But the Bakken was not a "sanctuary" as the forest was for the fire crew. At Elk River, "Crewmembers trade economic stability for a sense of place, of home" (Desmond 2007:88) In the Bakken, migrants struck the opposite bargain: they traded home for economic stability. For many if not most, home remained a distant place.

They also differed in the benefits they derived from the work. "Firefighters are in it not primarily for the money or the rush or the status but for the freedom, a freedom produced when

the country-masculine habitus discovers a world where it recognizes itself and can thrive" (Desmond 2007:88). Oilfield workers, by contrast, reported that they *were* in it for the money, and I observed that they were often in it for status as well. Freedom was not always the outcome. It would not be wrong to say that the oilfield, as a work site and as a social milieu, was compatible with some men's deeply held sense of self and default posture toward the social world; call it a habitus. Many migrants found work that they intuitively recognized as the type of production-side labor that aligned with their aptitudes, interests, and self-understandings, in contrast to the service sector jobs on offer elsewhere. What those men were less likely to find was freedom—or if they did find freedom, it was an abridged version of it. The oilfield provided freedom from material want, but it rarely provided freedom of spirit. For that type of experience, migrants often turned to hedonistic release, such as binge drinking or raucous nights at the strip club. Their subjective experience was likely to be one of freedom curtailed by constraints and belonging salted with alienation.

This chapter has identified an empirical phenomenon and offered a partial explanation. Over the course of almost a decade, thousands of workers migrated to North Dakota for lucrative oilfield jobs. Some were very satisfied with the money they made, which was often far more than they had an opportunity to earn back home. Many of those same people, however, also found themselves discontented in their new surroundings. Time and again, my ethnographic research found workers expressing this directly and indirectly.

In addition to documenting that finding, this chapter also addresses the question of why. It attributes the finding in part to how the demands of the oil industry interacted with local definitions of masculinity. It does so by highlighting the experiences of a crew of righands at Northern Plains Well Services and a migrant whose three-year foray into the Bakken ended as

the oil boom went bust. Workers aligned their self-understandings and senses of moral worth with the local definition of masculinity, an evaluatory framework that was highly salient in the oilfield. Masculine-inflected notions of worth guided workers' attempts to manage impressions (Goffman 1959) and emotions (Hochschild 1979). At the same time, the structure and demands of the oil industry obstructed their ability to actualize the self-understanding that they cultivated. This aspect of the work situation that they encountered in North Dakota—the centrality of an aspiration that they simultaneously struggled to realize—contributed to their sense of frustration and their overall discontent.

This argument does not purport to explain variation among individuals. It does not account for why particular individuals who migrated to North Dakota adjusted more easily or found themselves more satisfied with their lives than others did. Rather, it identifies one mechanism that contributed to a phenomenon that I observed widely among oilfield migrants. This chapter treats that phenomenon as a group-level outcome. It traces this outcome to other supra-individual factors: to social conditions that were widely shared by oilfield workers and to cultural meanings at the level of public culture (Lizardo 2017).

To be sure, other conditions also contributed to migrants' discontent. When asking why "everyone hates it here," a researcher can and should listen to what the research subjects themselves had to say, such as: Guys missed their friends and families. They had limited dating opportunities. Amenities were scarce compared to other parts of the country ("You know what I'm going to be happy about? Being close to a fucking mall"). Housing accommodations left much to be desired ("It's a place to live"). The North Dakota winter was hard for anyone, but especially for those who worked outside ("I wanna kill myself in the winter").

This chapter's argument extends beyond those explanations named by the research subjects themselves. My ethnographic inquiry identified masculinity as an important source of meaning for migrants in their new lives as oilfield workers in North Dakota. It also found that the oil industry filled its labor needs in a way that thwarted workers' ability to actualize the masculine self-understanding from which they derived meaning. No single individual explicitly stated that the frustration of "the company owns you" aggravated their masculine self-understanding. For that matter, when oilfield workers revealed masculinity to be central to their self-worth, they often did so indirectly. My research subjects at times proved to be insightful lay theorists, but a researcher cannot expect individuals speaking about their own experience to proffer explanations for group-level outcomes, even if they belong to that group.

The argument advanced here maintains a narrow focus on one factor among many that gave rise to the phenomenon of migrant discontent. Yet it also speaks more broadly to the importance of local context in shaping wellbeing. This research found structural factors interacting with cultural factors to shape the experience of oilfield workers who moved to North Dakota. The oil industry met its labor demands in ways that constrained workers' lifestyles. Those structural constraints took on meaning within a cultural context in which masculinity was especially salient for the workforce. This chapter suggests that attending to local cultural meanings can reveal the process by which structural constraints impact a population.

NOTES

[1] Each of the examples in this paragraph is drawn from my field notes.

[2] The director of the Williston branch of the North Dakota Job Services provided data on the average number of daily visitors to their drop-in center for each month between 2010 and 2014. In 2011, the monthly average jumped from 63 visitors per day in October to 225 per day in November. She called it "the Brian Williams effect." The NBC news anchor had come to North Dakota and reported on the boom. Shortly after, people arrived in droves.

[3] Jobless rates from the Bureau of Labor Statistics are available at https://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/srgune_02252011.pdf.

[4] The local population was hard to estimate because many newcomers did not make Williston their official residence. "No one knows I'm here," remarked Robert, a migrant introduced below who after two years did not have a local driver's license, license plate, or voter registration. One attempt to estimate the population relied on sewage flow (Scheyder 2015).

[5] A less-than-scientific analysis found that Williston had the most expensive rental market in the country in 2014 (see https://www.apartmentguide.com/blog/williston-nd/). That particular distinction may not hold up, but the "study" nevertheless points toward Williston's place on the expensive end of the rental market distribution.

[6] Statistics from the U.S. Energy Information Administration are available at https://www.eia.gov/dnav/pet/hist/LeafHandler.ashx?n=PET&s=MCRFPND2&f=M.

[7] A clinical psychologist in Williston reported that the migrants she saw often suffered from depression and anxiety. Interview with Dr. Jessica Mugge, November 10, 2014.

[8] For an account of Williston's notorious strip clubs from a dancer's point of view, see Shepard (2013). For a server's point of view, see Gottsdiener (2014).

[9] "The worst days are when I'm not working," a young single migrant with two jobs told me.

[10] During busy times, it's not unusual for a righand to clock 100 hours in a week. A righand and his crew sometimes spend more hours together than not. If they also live together in employee housing, then the experience becomes even more immersive.

[11] Denali is GMC's luxury line, sometimes a status marker.

[12] Andrew's dissatisfaction could exist simultaneously with having "a fucking good time," understood as the positive emotions derived from hedonistic consumption. Social psychologists and economists distinguish between life satisfaction, which tends to be more enduring, and emotions, which are more transient. Each have different predictors and a different relationship to income (Diener et al. 2010; Kahneman and Deaton 2010).

[13] As Andrew noted to me once, he couldn't go to Canada as a convicted felon. My anecdotal evidence is consistent with the belief held by many locals and migrants that, compared to the general population, a disproportionate number of oilfield migrants had criminal records.

[14] This analysis implicitly invokes a distinction between what people say and what people do, and by extension differences in the understandings made possible by interviews and participant observation (Becker 1958; Becker and Geer 1957; Jerolmack and Khan 2014). In my account, people say they are pursuing money. They may not say they are trying to realize a masculine self-understanding (although some do say this in so many words; see the section on Robert below). Nevertheless, their actions suggest that a masculine self-understanding is a desired outcome of their work pursuits, if not a motivation in itself.

[15] Schlumberger is one of the world's largest oilfield services companies.

[16] This also came up in interviews. One righand said that the guys on his crew valued a person who could solve problems for himself, calling this a quality of central importance.

[17] It is only a slight exaggeration to say that work crews constituted a "primary group" (Cooley 1909) for migrants such as Andrew and his co-workers. Cooley identified primary groups as "those characterized by intimate face-to-face association and cooperation. They are primary in several senses, but chiefly in that they are fundamental in forming the social nature and ideals of the individual. The result of intimate association, psychologically, is a certain fusion of individualities in a common whole, so that one's very self, for many purposes at least, is the common life and purpose of the group" (Cooley 1909: 23). He offered families as a prototypical primary group. Workers who spent months and years with the same crew, working countless hours side-by-side to meet the demands of the oil boom, sometimes came to think of their co-workers as fictive kin (Stack 1974).

[18] In response to a question about "unwritten rules of the oilfield," one interview subject offered, "New guy always gets the middle seat."

[19] The toolpusher, or pusher, supervises one or multiple rigs. In terms of authority, he lies above the rig operator and below the rig manager. His responsibilities include seeing that the crew has the tools and supplies it needs to complete its job.

[20] In the words of a righand who worked for another company, "If you don't have broken bones—and even if you do, depending on where they're at—and you call out of work for it, you're definitely going to get ragged on. There's no doubt about it. I worked with two broken ribs."

[21] Righands on other crews described similar situations in which they or their coworkers faced this treatment. In addition to feminizing epithets, some reported infantilizing insults such as crying-baby noises.

[22] An oil rig erects a tower above the oil well called a "derrick." A pulley device at the crown of the derrick is used to lower and hoist the string of pipe that extends from the surface to the bottom of the well. One member of the crew works on a platform in the derrick when the crew is "tripping" pipe into or out of the hole. This became my job.

[23] On social actors as performers, Goffman wrote that "individuals are concerned not with the moral issue of realizing these standards, but with the amoral issue of engineering a convincing impression that these standards are being realized." As critics such as Hochschild (1979:557) have noted, Goffman's subjects can seem to lack a rich interior life.

[24] Johnny Jr. was Wilkes's brother-in-law, and Wilkes sometimes treated him the way an older brother might treat a younger brother.

[25] A small shed on the back of a flatbed trailer used for storage and for escaping the elements.

[26] Writing about the challenges that the oilfield places on romantic relationships, Stewart (2013) recounts that when he applied for his job on a frack crew, the interviewer asked him if he was married. He said he was not, to which the interviewer replied, "Good, this job is hard on married people."

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