The Present State of Things

Class Struggle in the 21st Century

By

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Chapter I: Introduction

The Crisis: Capitalism

My interest in politics began when my third grade class held an experiment. We created a makeshift island, out of sand and plastic models, and set it in a tub surrounded by water. Within the water, we dumped freezing cold ice cubes and then set the model outside in the hot Florida sun. As hours went by, we tracked the water level rise as the ice melted, consuming parts of the island until all the ice had melted and the entire island sank. This experiment aimed to demonstrate the greenhouse effect to my class, and the danger posed by anthropogenic climate change to our planet. As a Florida resident, the urgency of this situation was clear - if we did not do something about climate change, my home would sink under the ocean. The experiment demonstrated much more to me than the greenhouse effect however - it demonstrated the uncertainty of my own future and the future of the planet.

Since this event, I have sought answers to how I can guarantee a positive future. Over time, I have also come to realize the scope of the problem - climate change is the result of centuries of historical processes, stretching all the way back to the industrial revolution and continuing to the modern oil-driven economy. Climate change is not a problem which exists in isolation, rather it is a problem which exists in relationship to other material processes, historical conditions, and state or corporate actors. The solution is not in technology or science (the science is well documented, and the technology already exists) but rather in politics and economics.

Similarly, global issues such as poverty (or "inequality") and imperialism are not independent crises, needing only the correct policy to be resolved. Rather, they are *also* systematic, and intimately connected to one another. The effects of climate change further divide metropole from periphery, while imperialism enforces global systems of inequality. In this

chapter, I will demonstrate the interrelationship between these three crises: climate change, imperialism, and inequality. I argue that these are not flukes in the system which can be corrected by independent policy shifts, but rather inevitable features of a capitalist political economy which need to be answered on a global scale. I further argue that an internationalist and political labor movement is one answer to the problem.

Climate Change

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is a UN body responsible for assessing the impact of climate change. In 2018, in the context of the Paris agreement, the IPCC released a report on Global Warming of 1.5°C Above Pre-Industrial Levels. Keep in mind that this report is analyzing 1.5°C as a *target*, to avoid the more apocalyptic results of 2°C or more. The contents of this report are not only foreboding for the future of our planet, but reflect a reality that the process of climate destruction has already begun, as human activities have already caused 1.0°C of global warming, with shifts in extreme weather patterns since 1950 (IPCC Report 2018). And while this intense warming has occurred over a short period of time, the impacts of it will continue for "centuries to millennia" and shift global climate systems. In terms of sea level rise, 1.5°C of warming will likely lead to between .26 and .77 meters, or between 10 and 30 inches, of sea level rise by 2100. In hundreds of thousands of years, even if warming remains at 1.5°C, Antarctic instability and loss of the Greenland ice sheet will likely lead to sea level rise in terms of meters.

Who will be impacted by climate change? Certainly if I live to see a .77 meter sea level rise, my own home on the Florida coast will no longer be liveable. However, climate change will not only impact coasts, and warming of 1.5°C will have extreme impacts on health, livelihood,

and food security for people across the globe (IPCC Report 2018). This impact will disproportionately hit disadvantaged communities, especially indigenous people who rely on local ecosystems, people who rely on agriculture, and those who rely on marine resources. These are not the people largely responsible for climate change. According a 2015 Climate Analytics report from Brazil, the United States makes up around 20.2 percent of global contributions, or about .205°C of global temperature rise (Climate Analytics Report 2015). The European Union comes in second, with 17.3 percent of global contributions leading to .176°C of temperature rise. The EU and US both represent the core of global imperialist systems, and combined represent around 37.5 percent of climate emissions. In contrast, China, often represented as a "boogeyman" of climate change in US media, has contributed only 12.1% to global emissions, which makes up less than one third the contribution of the US and EU, while possessing a significantly larger population than the US and EU combined.

The discourse surrounding China and its population growth is reminiscent of the theories of population growth espoused by Thomas Malthus. His position essentially argued that because populations expand geometrically, that is, the rate of increase is multiplicative, but means of subsistence increase arithmetically, or at a standard rate, eventually population would outpace the ability of the subsistence base to support it (Sherwood 1985: 840). This is the result of sexual misconduct from the population itself, in the circumstances of industrial England the working class. If workers are supported with increased subsistence, they would only increasingly reproduce, further straining resources. The natural conclusion is advocacy for depopulation, which might take on more benign forms in anti-sex campaigns or policies such as China's former one-child policy, but may also be outright genocidal. 19th Century England realized this through opposition to Irish immigrants, who were seen as responsible for poor conditions of the English

working class and increases in unemployment (Sherwood 1985: 855). Such a position is eerily similar to contemporary discourses regarding US immigration. Contemporary discourse represents immigrants as "diseased" people, even though the prevalence of immigrants bringing diseases into the US is relatively low (Markel and Stern 758: 2002). Such representations are employed by policymakers as a tool for their exclusion, identifying them with contamination and danger.

An alternative view, however, of how the structure of Capitalism strains resources disproportionately can be found in Marx's theories of labor. While Marx did not predict climate change as such, he acknowledged a process within the Capitalist political economy tied to the destruction of our environment. This process is bounded within the labor process in general (that is, beyond the Capitalist mode of production). According to Marx, labor is a process "in which both man and nature participate, and in which man of his own accord starts, regulates, and controls the material re-actions between himself and nature" (Marx 1988: 455).

This process of interrelation between human and nature can be called the "metabolism of nature", the term I will use to describe it. The labor process, then, involves a setting of opposition between human and nature, as nature is transformed into use-values which meet human needs. Production is thus dependent on the conversion of nature through labor into useful objects. In a Capitalist mode of production, these useful objects take on a particular form, that of commodities which either continue along the labor process through further refinement, or are bought and sold on the market (Marx 1988: 456). Capitalism, then, involves a process of transforming nature into commodity, a process only concerned with maximizing profit and embedding exchange value within the commodity. As a pursuit, Capitalism emphasizes limitless resource consumption and limitless growth, with the implicit result of transforming every last bit

of nature into a commodity. This is clearly at odds with the need to fight climate change.

According to environmental sustainability scientist Jonathan T Park, the goals of economic growth and environmental sustainability are "irreconcilably at odds" (Park 2015: 7). Economic growth depends on the expansion of populations, technologies, and by extension the consumption of resources. If we maintain the assumption that this growth ought to be limitless, then we are doomed. What is the capitalist solution? If fossil fuels are such a problem, then a competitor will crop up on the market and provide an alternative, and if such an alternative is preferred, supply will increase and demand for fossil fuels will decrease. Indeed, in transportation alternatives have popped up, including the spread of electric vehicles such as the Tesla Model 3. With a price tag of at least $34,850, this option is hardly available to the vast majority of working class people in the United States, let alone the rest of the world. In addition, switching to electric vehicles does not necessarily resolve the problem of climate change, as emissions from electricity account for 28% of greenhouse emissions, even with only 32% of electricity generated by coal. The wealthy may be able to buy in to some idea of sustainability to ease their conscience, while the rest of us continue to depend on the fossil fuels which got them rich in the first place. In the words of Margaret Thatcher, "there is no alternative" (Flanders 2013).

Wealth Inequality

Most analysts view class along the lines of what I refer to as *statistical class*, which is class defined by presence in certain income brackets (performed with phrases such as "the top 1%" or "below the poverty line"). In this framework, class difference consists of variations in incomes.

Although alienated from underlying economic structures and real humans, income

inequality provides a valuable framework to understand income shifts and trends in class compositions. The 2018 World Inequality Report, produced by a group of economists out of the Paris School of Economics, provides a valuable resource in understanding this shifts in income distributions.

One of the key findings of the Wealth Inequality Report is that the "top 1% captured twice as much global income growth as the bottom 50% since 1980" (Wealth Inequality Report 2018: 9). The diagram below represents the "elephant curve" of income, which outlines relative growths of income by percentile income groups.

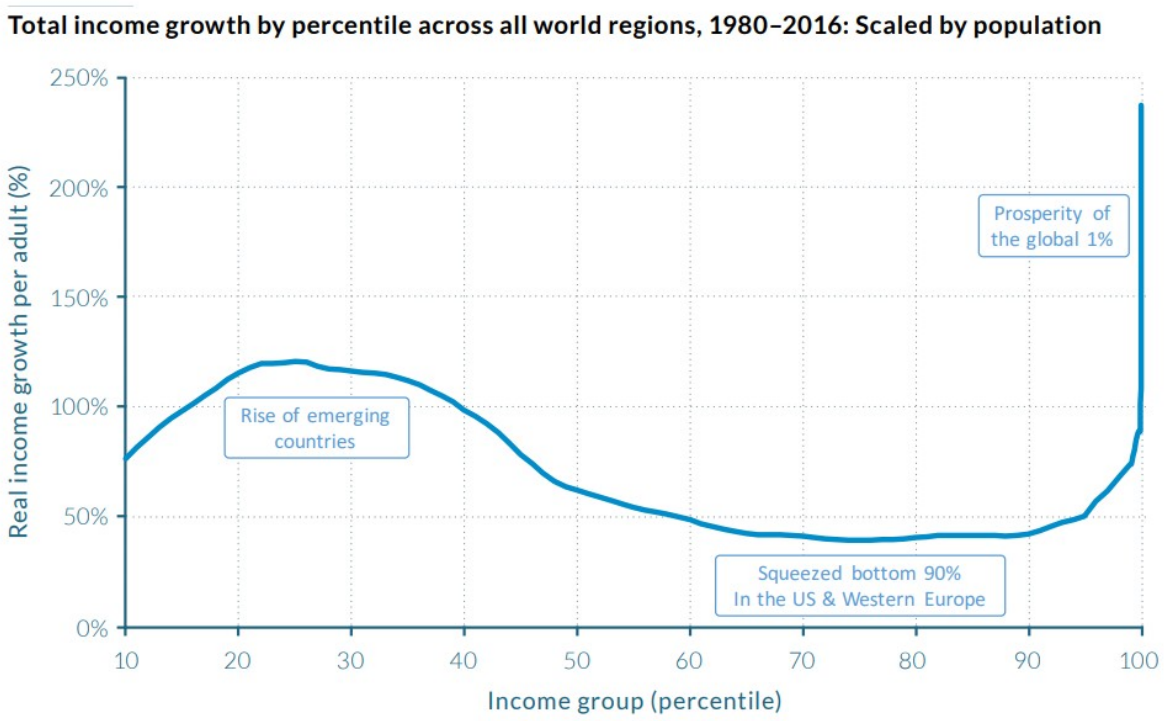

Image Source: World Inequality Report 2018

The elephant curve consists of three sections, the "emerging countries" which have experienced more income growth than the middle portion including the US and Western Europe, and then the global 1% which have seen disproportionate growth (Wealth Inequality Report

2018: 9). Importantly, the Y-axis represents income *growth*, meaning that although the bottom 50% have seen more growth than the middle 40%, they have lower incomes. Charts which modify the X-axis to include greater granularity reflect even starker income growth among the top percentiles of the 1%.

The paradigm of understanding income growth in the US at least since the 1950s has been based on the assumption that growth in the top percentiles will "trickle down" leading to growth in the bottom percentiles (Greenwood 2010: 404). From the 1950s to 1970s, this had some validity due to relatively flat income distributions. Economic growth caused general increases in incomes across the board. Since the 1980s, however, decreased stability in income distribution has largely eliminated this effect (Greenwood 2010: 404). Charts which isolate incomes to the US, Canada, and Western Europe reveal the poverty of such claims.

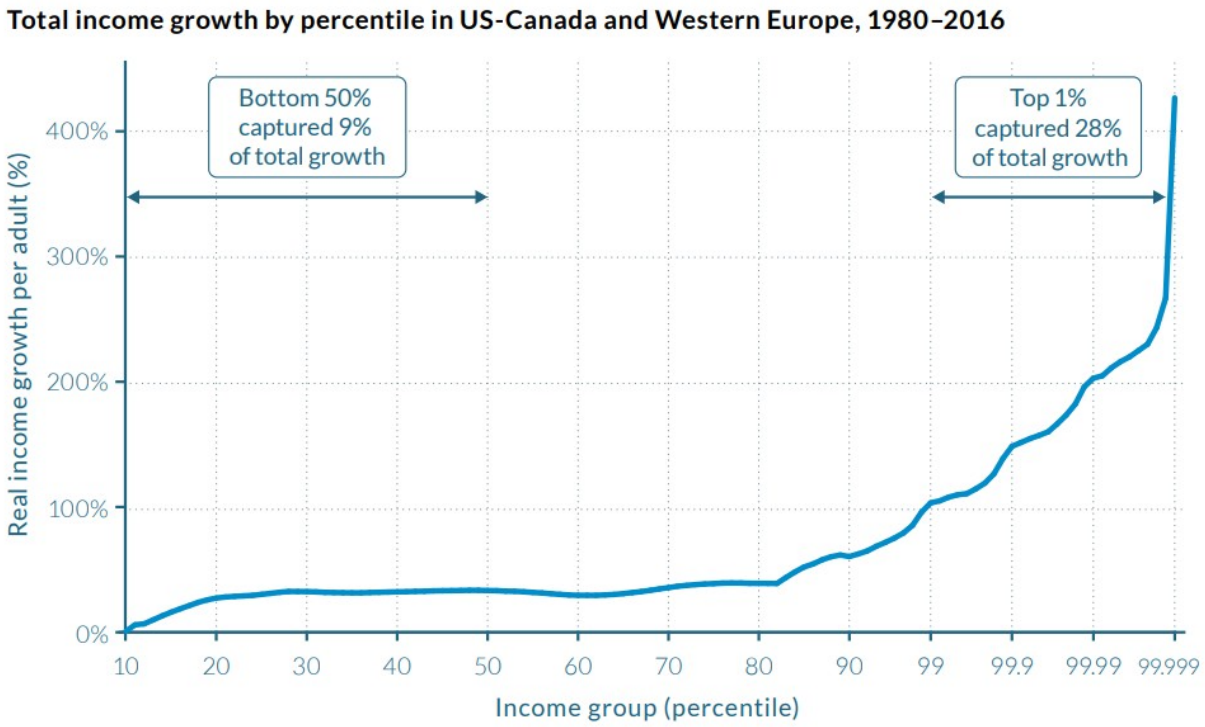

Image Source: World Inequality Report 2018

Clearly, growth among the lowest percentiles within the "developed" world has no correlation with growth among the top percentiles (World Inequality Report 2018: 12). Similar patterns exist in states such as China and India. The differences are most pronounced in the US, with shares of national income for lower percentiles reduced compared to those of higher incomes. Since around 1995, the top 1% has surpassed the bottom 50% in national income share. There are, however, state by state differences. In Western Europe, the bottom 50% have maintained a higher share of national income since 1980 than the top 1%. Between the US and EU, similar levels of development and technology suggests that differences derive from policy. Such differences include level of progressive taxation, minimum wage, and education. Similarly, China has seen more even shares of national income between brackets than India. Such differences can be attributed to greater investment in education, health, and infrastructure in China. One trend running counter to the unrestrained growth in the top percentiles is the growth

of lower percentiles in developing countries. However, this trend may not be permanent, as can be seen in cases such as China or India where rapid growth over the past few decades has leveled out into a situation of high inequality. Without massive policy shifts across the globe, according to the report, global inequality will only continue to rise. In addition, the discourse of income inequality ignores the role that imperialism plays in the differential wealth of countries.

Imperialism

Imperialism has been a mainstay of capitalist accumulation since its outset. While the enclosure movement within Europe threatened the livelihood of the peasantry and pushed them into wage labor within cities, European empires expanded outwards in a process of colonization in which they came into contact with non-capitalist economies (Marx 1988: 487). Through this process, the European empires had at least the partial aim of producing new wage laborers within the colonies. As a result, analysis of imperialism requires analysis of capitalist political economy.

The classical theories of imperialism emerged out of the revolutionary theorists of the early 20th century, at a time of Western European domination (Kettel 2013: 245). These authors include Bolshevik authors such as Nikolai Bukharin and V.I Lenin, and members of the German SPD such as Rosa Luxemburg and Rudolf Hilferding. These authors analyzed "classical" European imperialism, which at that time involved intense conflict *between* European powers. Furthermore, they wrote right at the cusp of all out war between the European powers during World War I. Their arguments diverged significantly, however, all acknowledged that the pressures of capitalism drove states to secure control over foreign territories. The demand for such territories was driven by a key trend in capitalism, the Tendency of the Rate of Profit to Fall (TRPF).

The TRPF describes a mechanism within the capitalist political economy which drives the boom and bust cycles of capitalism. While Marx was a major advocate of this economic position, it in fact began with the work of Adam Smith who acknowledges boom and bust cycles (Reuten 1991: 79). The TRPF is based on interplay between labor and increases in technology. Given a growth of constant capital (capital invested in materials, machinery, etc) relative to variable capital (capital invested in wages), there will be a fall in the rate of profit should the surplus value of production remain constant (Marx 1989: 488). While this is a complex mathematical concept, the important component is how capitalists look to counteract the tendency.

Marx describes a range potential capitalist "counteracting influences" to the TRPF such as increased exploitation or depression of wages (Marx 2008: 438). One tendency is foreign trade, which through the exploitation of overseas labor increases the rate of surplus value and cheapens materials tied up in constant capital. As a result, there is increase in the rate of profit realized through the expansion to foreign markets. Marx describes how this plays into the exploitation of labor within colonies:

> As concerns capitals invested in colonies, etc., on the other hand, they may yield higher rates of profit for the simple reason that the rate of profit is higher there due to the backward development, and likewise the exploitation of labour, because of the use of slaves, coolies, etc. (Marx 2008: 438).

Marx's position on imperialism was that it maintained the structure of the capitalist political economy, ensuring capitalists access cheaper labor within colonies to counteract falling rates of profit.

The modern phase of imperialism originates in the 1970s and 1980s with the advent of *neoliberalism*, which can be defined as a new stage of capitalist political economy (Dumenil

2004: 659). This phase is characterized by the *disengagement* of states from economies, a concept which seemingly runs counter to imperialism. Indeed, neoliberal ideology expounds the need for *freedom* - freer market, freer trade, and freer economies. However, like any political economy, there are contradictions embedded within neoliberal capitalism. Neoliberalism has seen the expansion of state power and the power of state-like institutions such as the IMF. The imposition of a neoliberal world system requires the use of force through states to neoliberal economic relations can be expanded across the globe (Dumenil 2004: 660). The center of this imperialist hegemony is the United States, and while conflicts do exist between imperialist powers, their common interests have thus far prevented the level of military conflict seen in World War I. Gerard Dumenil summarizes the current situation as such:

> The present stage of capitalism can be characterized as *neoliberal* as a result of the new course targeted for the restoration of income and wealth of capitalist classes, *imperial* due to the continued (or increased) pressure on the rest of the world, and *under US hegemony* because of the dominating position of the united states among imperialist countries (Dumenil 2004: 661).

In other words, the current phase of imperialism is characterized by support by the US state of US Capital in exerting a global influence on economies. This complex system involves financial relation between states and corporation. The underlying mechanisms include pressures on prices of raw materials, direct investment, corporate investment, financial investment, and processes such as brain drain (Dumenil 2004: 661). This influence is also realized through structural adjustment programs, especially in Africa and Latin America, which are conditional loans given to states by institutions such as the IMF (Tidjani 1998: 279). Conditions include privatization, austerity, and currency devaluation. In reality, these impositions lead to a worsening of labor conditions, employment, and wages (Tidjani 1998: 278). States which

attempt to disentangle themselves from the influence of US Capital are met by sanctions, demands for the export of "democracy", and even military intervention. Attempts to address such pressures at the state level have only lead to economic ruin and isolation from the world economy. This is the reason I advocate an internationalist position, as the continued pressures on individual states requires a response of international working class solidarity, by which movements can target capital along multiple axes and at different points along global productive flows.

The Solution: Internationalist Workers Movement

Historically, the late 19th and early 20th century were the high points of the international workers movements, reaching its apex during and immediately following World War I with the Soviet revolution followed by revolutions in Germany, Italy, and across Eastern Europe (Lih 2011: 148). This period, especially after the Russian Revolution, was an era of optimism. Other than the Russian Revolution, however, all of these revolutions were crushed, leading to the rise of nationalist and fascist movements in Germany and Italy.

These movements largely followed the logic of German social democrat Karl Kautsky, as outlined in the *Erfurt Programme* (Lih 2011: 56). The Social Democracy of Kautsky was different from that of contemporary Social Democracy, generally defined by a strong welfare state. Kautsky's "merger formula" defines social democracy as the "merger of socialism and the workers movement". The workers movement, on the one hand, suggests a mass, anti-capitalist, and militant movement by which workers seek to protect their livelihoods through protest. Socialism, on the other hand, constitutes an ideological message by which to overcome the exploitation of the working class. There exists a conflict between these two sides. The socialist

movement has historically consisted of intellectuals who oppose capitalism based on academic analysis, whereas the workers movement opposes it based on concrete experiences. However, according to Kautsky, socialism and the workers movement depend on one another, as socialism is the only means to end the exploitation of the workers, and workers are the only ones capable of establishing socialism (Lih 2011: 56). Such a position was largely endorsed by the social democrats of the early 20th century.

In this thesis, I outline how an end to exploitation, imperialism, and climate degradation depends on the internationalist worker movements acting against these capitalistic tendencies on a global scale. In Chapter 2, I provide an overview of the historical materialist perspective, outlining the influences of Karl Marx, Eric Wolf, and other authors to understand the relations between humans, modes of production, and the environment. In Chapter 3, I ask the question "What is Class?" And seek to define class along the varied axes and modes it manifests. I draw the distinction between economic class and political class, and analyze the different ways theorists have attempted to understand class consciousness and class composition. In Chapter 4, I analyze the working class specifically, looking to Marx for definitions based on its structural position and historical emergence. I then analyze how the working class is actually composed, based on a study of gender and race. In Chapter 5, I analyze two case studies of movements which have emerged in the 21st century, and how they relate to discourses of class. These include the Occupy movement and the Coalition of Immokalee Workers. I evaluate the success of these movements, and their potential reasons for failure. Finally, I attempt to articulate a program for 21st century labor, using the case studies I've analyzed thus far to suggest solutions by which the working class can address modern conditions. Through this project, I hope to create an understanding of the modern working class, and articulate a path towards a brighter future.

Chapter II: Historical Materialism

My approach to understanding relations of labor is historical materialist. Friedrich Engels describes such an approach in *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* with the term "materialist conception of history":

> "the production of the means to support human life and, next to production, the exchange of things produced, is the basis of all social structure... From this point of view, the final causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought, not in men's brains, not in men's better insights into eternal truth and justice, but in changes in the modes of production and exchange" (Engels 2015: 54)

Such an approach has two elements, a concern for *history* (or change) and a *materialist* methodology. The materialist methodology is concerned with analyzing history and social change over time through study of material forces and their relationships. In this chapter, I explore the history of historical materialism, Marxist dialectics, and its critiques.

The Marxist Dialectic

Marx's historical materialism functions through dialectical analysis, a method Marx derives from his predecessor, G. W. F Hegel. Marx's early work demonstrates this relationship and the development of his materialist break from Hegel, while also emphasizing the human element of historical materialist. An authentically Marxist approach emphasizes the interrelation between productive and non-productive factors of societies not in a cause-effect relationship, but rather a mutually constructive relationship

Engels, in *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, refers to Marx's position as "scientific socialism" (Engels 2015: 75). Karl Popper argues against such a characterization, claiming that

while historical materialism may have initially been scientific, adopted a "soothsaying practice" when falsified, leading to reformulations in theory to fit reality (Popper 1963: 36). By being unfalsifiable, it could not be scientific. The problem, however, is one of translation. Marx's "science" in the original German was *Wissenschaft*, which has a looser definition of "the systematic pursuit of knowledge, learning, and scholarship" (Oxford Dictionary 2019). Marx's *Wissenschaft* is not based on the scientific method, but rather on its own internal logic of systematic thinking. Such an approach hearkens back to Marx' greatest influence, German philosopher Georg W. F. Hegel.

Similarly to Marx, Hegel sought a systematic understanding of history in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* approaches philosophical history with such an approach. According to the introduction by Frederick Beiser, Hegel takes on three positions in this text: the history of philosophy is the progressive realization of a single idea, which is embodied in the one true philosophy, the sequence of past philosophers is not accidental but necessary stages, and the final true philosophy is a comprehensive system which preserves the truth and cancels the errors of all past philosophies (Beiser 1969: i). There is a clear connection between these positions and Marx's work. First, it attempts to inject systematic unity into the history of philosophy, implying that historical development involves necessary movement towards an ideal. For Hegel, this ideal was a complete philosophical system, integrating all areas of knowledge and past philosophies. For Marx, this ideal was Communism, which would see the elimination of social classes. Second, it seeks an a-priori construction of history, breaking history down to first principles.

This a-priori construction of history can be found in the "dialectical" method of Hegel. This, according to Michael Forster, is a method of expounding fundamental categories, in which each category in turn is shown to have implicit self contradiction and develops into the next step

in a hierarchical linkage (Forster 2008: 131). The apex of this linkage culminates in the Absolute Idea, the complete philosophical system described above. The structure of these dialectical steps can be described as such:

- Begin with category A
- A contains a contradictory category B, and category B also contains A. Thus, both are themselves self-contradictory
- The self contradiction is productive for a third category, C, which eliminates the contradictions of A & B, uniting them. This is called the determinate negation
- C involves some modification to A & B which enables the contradiction to be resolved. C then becomes a new A, with its own set of contradiction.

Marx is not strictly "dialectical" in his approach, however he integrates this method into his analysis and critique of political economy. In addition, he maintains the directional component of Hegel's dialectics, arguing that historical movement trends towards communism. In *Estranged Labor*, for example, Marx describes the relationship between labor, commodities, and workers through their interrelation and contradiction. He says "labor produces not only commodities; it produces itself and the worker as commodity and does so in the proportion to which it produces commodities generally" (Marx 1978: 71). Here, we find the value of the approach brought forward while the theoretical baggage of Hegel is left behind. Marx emphasizes the importance of contradiction between mutually creative (and destructive) categories. Here, there exists a contradiction between the worker and commodity, such that the worker contains aspects of the commodity form within them, and the commodity, as a product of the worker's labor, contains an aspect of the worker's life activity within it. One might find a similar approach employed in Kautsky's Merger Formula described in the introduction - the

contradictory categories of an intellectual socialist movement and mass workers movement resolve into the determinate negation of Social Democracy. A dialectical method emphasizes that interrelation and contradiction are valuable for social scientific investigations, as a means to understand change over time.

Social Scientific Abstraction and Interconnection

Eric Wolf in *Europe and the People Without History* demonstrates how the traditional approaches to social sciences segregate social relations into discrete disciplines, eliminating broader context from their study. This critique contains two key aspects: reliance on abstraction and over specialization. Wolf's contributions provide an updated historical materialism, which leaved behind the teleological components of Marx but maintains the emphasis on interrelation.

The common approach, in history, sociology, economics, and even anthropology, presupposes the existence of mutually exclusive, alienated "bits." Wolf, rather, argues that:

> "The world of humankind constitutes a manifold, a totality of interconnected processes, and inquiries that disassemble this totality into bits and then fail to reassemble it falsify reality. Concepts like 'nation', 'society', and 'culture' name bits and threaten to turn names into things." (Wolf 2010: 3)

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These alienated sections of a greater totality often take the form of nations in historical, political, and economic inquiry. "Even anthropology" he argues "divides its subject matter into distinctive cases" (Wolf 2010: 4). Thus, while anthropology has been adept at critiquing the limited, often Eurocentric approaches of other social sciences, it nonetheless creates its own abstract bits, the wholly integrated and bounded culture. He further argues, in this regard: "any account of Kru, Fanti, Asante, Ijaw, Igbo, Kongo, Luba, Lunda, or Ngola that treats each group as a 'tribe' sufficient unto itself thus misreads the African past and the African present" (Wolf

2010: 4).

On the other side of this abstraction imposed by the social scientists is the alienation of the social sciences themselves from one another. In the same way that separation of Kru from Fanti, British, and Iroquois restricts the analysts ability to examine the full historical picture, so too does the separation of Economics from History, Anthropology, and Political science restrict a holistic analysis. This alienation is the product of historical changes in these discipline. For instance, he suggests, the sociologists "[severed] the field of social relations from from political economy" (Wolf 2010: 8). Similarly, the field of economics and its concern - the economy - severed itself from the field of political science. In turn, this field of economics, concerned with the "bit" of social totality that constitutes the economy "is not about the real world" (Wolf 2010: 10). That is to suggest, the alienation of economics from politics, and the alienation of both from sociology, enables the abstract disassembling into bits critiqued by Wolf.

This critique forms its own positive counterpart. This approach implores the social scientist to guide their analysis between levels of abstraction and the concrete. Wolf does not reject the value of abstraction, analysis of alienated "bits", but emphasizes the need to set those "bits" into context. Indeed, there is value to breaking down complex subject matter into bits, both practical and scientific. In practical terms, any investigation requires a definite scope, to contain the complexities of the real world within definite boundaries. Scientifically, abstraction enables the analyst to grasp the micro-interactions between elements existing in a complex field of interactions. The key is to then re-contextualize those bits within the whole. Further, one might study things which are, in their proper contexts, abstracted themself.

Wolf directs us towards Marx as an example of this "interconnected" approach. Marx, Wolf argues, "was one of the last figures to aim at a holistic human science, capable of

integrating the varied specializations" (Wolf 2010: 21). Wolf rejects the premise that Marx was an economic determinist. While Marx emphasizes production in his work, his concept of production is more all-encompassing than economics. The Marxist understanding of production:

> "embraced at once the changing relations of humankind to nature, the social relations into which humans enter in the course of transforming nature, and the consequent transformations of human symbolic capacity" (Wolf 2010: 21).

For Marx, production extends beyond the economic realm, and integrates the seemingly disparate realms of ecology, politics, and society. As such, my analysis emphasizes the Marxist concept of production as a relational process, defined by a complex set of relations between workers and raw materials, workers and capitalists, commodities and consumers, and so on.

In the study of international labor movements, it becomes increasingly important to understand interconnectedness and the complex networks of social relations which form across the globe. It must be understood that societies do not exist in geographically and temporally isolated pockets, but rather exist in constant interrelation. For the present investigation, an interconnected approach is a necessity - without it, the idea of an international labor movement becomes meaningless

Modes of Production

A second conceptual foundation I borrow from Wolf is his analysis of modes of production, derived from Marx. For Marx, the mode of production is the determining factor in social, political, and economic life - "it is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness" (Marx 1988: 389). Here Marx diverges from Hegel by arguing that social being is determined by mode of production. Underlying this mode of production is the relations of production, which are a set of

interrelated social and material factors particular to a given social arrangement. This can include class, ecology, trade, among countless other factors. Intrinsic to these relations of productions are certain antagonisms that form - chiefly, the class antagonisms described in much of Marx's work.

There is a limit in Marx's approach to Modes of Production - he presents them as progressive stages of development, pointing towards a definite conclusion which eliminates underlying antagonisms in the form of communism (Marx 1978: 5). In anthropology, this is called Unilineal Evolution. The "bourgeois" (or capitalist) mode of production is presented as the current and most progressive epoch, dependent on a historical foundation in the relatively regressive ancient and feudal systems. While Marx certainly does not see this mode of production in a favorable light, he maintains that it forms a necessary step in a grand historical narrative (Marx 1978: 5).

In Marx's original schematic, the successive epochs of modes of production include the "Asiatic", ancient, feudal, and capitalist (Marx 1978: 5). Wolf borrows from Marx's analysis of production and his schematic of modes of production, however he includes several innovations and eliminates much of the theoretical baggage. Wolf maintains many of the antagonisms which characterize Marx's concept of "Species-being", which he describes as "axiomatic understandings of the human condition" present even today in anthropological theory (Wolf 2010: 73).

Wolf refers to *Homo sapiens* as both part of nature and a social species, - "the human species is an outgrowth of natural processes; at the same time, the species is naturally social" (Wolf 2010: 73). Here, it is important to not misalign the concept of species-being with human nature. Species-being assumes as a base that the self is always embodied, and that abstracting of

the self (for instance, in universalizing a "human nature") undermines this fact. For Marx, the species-being is a material concept, dependent on productive relations which are defined both by the cultural context in which the being lives and on biological factors such as climate or the natural human need to eat. However, this understates the importance of interrelation between nature and the species-being. The species being is proven "in the working-up of the objective world", or in other words, humanity creating humanity (Marx 1978: 76). Marx describes the human lived environment as "universal" in contrast to that of non-human animals by the fact that through productive activity, humans can live in a wide range of environments. The human environment is itself human created, and that creation is alienated from the natural sources it derives from. The very process of establishing a "human" environment opposed to a "natural" environment is itself a human abstraction which generates alienation.

Wolf reformulates Marx's analysis of modes of production while maintaining the materialist core. Wolf defines a mode of production as "a specific historically occurring set of social relations through which labor is deployed to wrest energy from nature by means of tools, skills, organization, and knowledge" (Wolf 2010: 75). Wolf is careful, though, not to make the same mistake as Marx, and he emphasizes that the value of modes of production as an analytic category lies not in the classification but rather in its "capacity to underlie the strategic relationships involved in the deployment of social labor by organized human pluralities" (Wolf 2010: 76). For his own purposes, he defines three modes of production as the capitalist, tributary, and kin-ordered modes. He emphasizes that these do not form an evolutionary sequence as they do in Marx. Modes of production have analytical value in "revealing the political-economic relationships that underlie, orient, and constrain interaction" (Wolf 2010: 76). For the purpose of this investigation, I focus on the Capitalist mode of production.

The Capitalist Mode

Today, the dominant mode of production is the Capitalist mode. While I will consistently return to redefine the Capitalist mode of production, having a working understanding of its fundamental characteristics is important. According to both Marx and Wolf, one of the fundamental aspects of Capitalism is the sale of labor power (Wolf 2010: 77). Labor power should not be confused with labor - labor is an act itself, while labor power is the capacity to perform labor. The need to sell labor power is caused by the laborer's alienation from the means of production, which are the set of tools, resources, and land used in producing socially valuable goods (Wolf 2010: 77).

Under other modes of production, individuals and groups might have ownership or other forms of access to the means of production, enabling them to provide for their own sustenance as their physical capacity allows. Under capitalism, a minority of the population (capitalists) have ownership of these facilities (in the form of capital), and to obtain sustenance the majority of society must sell their labor power to capitalists. In turn, capitalists control the distribution of resources produced in these facilities (Wolf 2010: 77). The workers, then, must purchase those goods from the capitalist, which take the form of commodities. These commodities, though, are not sold for the amount that the worker was paid to produce them. Workers are not paid what the commodities they produce are sold for, rather, they "produce more than the cost of their wages" (Wolf 2010: 78). The difference between this wage and the actual value produced forms a "surplus value" which goes to the capitalist, and is either reinvested in the form of capital or goes into the hands of the capitalist.

Wage labor and surplus value forms the basis of trends in a Capitalist political economy. Capitalists aim to maximize surplus value as much as possible, and employ two main strategies

to accomplish this (Wolf 2010: 78). First, capitalists can reduce wages, which means a greater proportion of the value goes to the capitalist. For the capitalist, the wage is the means to reproduce the worker and in doing so, reproduce their labor. For the worker, though, the wage is their entire means of life, and the reduction their wage is the reduction of their livelihood and humanity. Second, capitalists can increase productivity while maintaining a constant wage. This means that more commodities are produced, and the total surplus value over a given period is increased. This may be accomplished through improvements in technology or through demanding more of workers. As discussed earlier, this process of maximizing surplus value is tied into the Capitalists attempt to counteract the falling rate of profit, and in part contributing to the expansion of imperialism .

Both new technologies and the demand for workers are valuable to understanding shifting trends of capital distribution across the globe. As capitalists move to different industries, or employ different productive methods, they are responding to the pressures that the capitalist mode of production places upon them. These pressures, in turn, lead to shifting productive relations and shiting landscapes for labor movements to respond to.

The value of the Capitalist modes of production for the present investigation is in studying the level of the abstract. While these modes of production are based on material relations, they are not themselves material. Rather, they are a set of symbolic relations defined in the process of analysis. Through fieldwork, an anthropologist might uncover certain relations of production, however, the mode of production takes this one step further. It alienates productive activities from the particular people undergoing them and formulates abstract productive categories (for instance, the categories of worker and capitalist). While modes of production provide a valuable tool for analysis in the abstract level, it is necessary to constantly return to the

level of concrete, to relations of production, and to the human experience**.**

Alienation

Marx argues that the life experience of workers is defined by a process of alienation. To understand alienation, Marx isolates a relationship between three components: worker, laborer, and commodity. In *Estranged Labor*, he suggests "Labor produces not only commodities; it produces itself and the worker as commodities" (Marx 1978: 71). Labor, then, is an act undertaken by humans, which in a Capitalist context results in commodities. The act of laboring, though, is not an isolated act, it is an act performed by real humans. The act of laboring must be understood as a social act, which produces much more than the commodity - it transforms the entirety of social relations surrounding it. The labor itself, a necessary part of human life, becomes a commodity, and further the source of that labor - the human - becomes a commodity itself.

A key component in defining labor is the metabolic relationship between humans and the natural world. This relationship is a process of alienation, by which humans take objects of the natural world and transform them into objects of the "built-up" human world (Marx 1978: 72). The laborer is dependent on nature in two respects - first, because the laborer requires the raw materials drawn from nature to begin the productive process, and second because the laborer depends on nature to receive physical subsistence. In many respects, alienation is the key component of production in a Capitalist context - alienation of the natural from itself, alienation of the worker from labor, alienation of the product from worker. In this sense, Marx understands capitalist production as "active alienation, the alienation of activity, the activity of alienation" (Marx 1978: 74). This activity of alienation necessitates a relation to an alien other set above the

worker, to which the estranged fruits of their labor must go - the Capitalist and their ever-growing treasure, Capital.

Commodities

Commodities are, in many ways, the center of the workers life - socially, they are often defined as commodities, their day to day life involves the production of commodities, and their continued existence dependent on the purchase of commodities. The anthropologist Igor Kopytoff provides insight into commodities in *The Cultural Biography of Things* as culturally marked objects, borrowing significantly from Marx.

Echoing Wolf's critique of academic specialization, Kopytoff suggests that "for the economist, commodities simply are" (Kopytoff 1986: 64). That is to say, under an economic analysis alienated from historical and cultural analysis, commodities appears as a naturally existing form. Abstractly, commodities have use and exchange value which define them as objects (Kopytoff 1986: 64). Commodities, though, are not a natural part of human life, rather they are culturally marked. In different contexts, some objects can be commodities while others cannot. People, too, can be commodities, in the context of slavery they might be directly treated as objects or as property (Kopytoff 1986: 64). In a Capitalist context, which might still maintain slavery, we've already explored how the worker is also transformed into a commodity.

Kopytoff suggests, as a methodology for understanding commodities, the "biography of things" (Kopytoff 1986: 66). This can take a variety of forms, for instance, understanding the passage of property between different hands. By asking questions about objects, how they move within a society, and the different meanings they take on in their lifetime, one gains information about that society's relationship to those objects. In the context of globalized capitalism, this can

also provide insight into how societies adopt “alien objects”, that is object which they have no prior cultural relation to, and how those alien objects become culturally redefined in their particular context (Kopytoff 1986: 67). The biography of things, then “[looks] at it as a culturally constructed entity, endowed with culturally specific meanings, and classified and reclassified into cultural constituted categories” (Kopytoff 1986: 68). This allows a study of how objects represent and construct cultural identities.

In this chapter, I have defined historical materialism and Marxist dialectics as theoretical tools, and outlined the categories of analysis I will use for the rest of my study, which include modes of production, alienation, and commodities. In the chapter 3, I employ historical materialism to define class. Through a materialist analysis, class can be contextualized as a historical phenomena, rather than a statistical one, which is driven by the structure of the capitalist mode of production, demonstrating the immense complexity behind class.

Chapter III: What is Class?

What is Class?

I am specifically concerned with the concept of class in Capitalism and how class is created, actualized through consciousness, and politicized through expressions of cultural identity. The two primary classes which I am concerned with are the capitalist and working classes, which form the backbone of the Capitalist political economy.

To begin, I ask the reader to take a moment to think about what "working class" means to them. Who belongs to the working class? What do they do? Imagine an average working class person. What kind of work do they do? What do they look like? What gender are they? Where do they live? In US political discourse, a particular image of the working class is often projected into people's minds, one characterized by historical and cultural conditions. This image is often one of male, white, rugged coal miners or factory workers, with hard hats and faces covered in soot. For instance, in Donald Trump's 2016 presidential election, he projected himself as a candidate for a white, rural, and "self reliant" working class left behind by coastal elites (Pazzanese 2018). This white, rural, and primarily male working class is the most common one employed in political discourses, which contrasts the image of an elitist, urban middle class and poor African-Americans projected as dependents who rely on welfare. This discourse, however, is based on racist myths. Trump's successful presidential run was not made possible by low income voters (Carnes & Lupu 2017). While his base primarily had low education levels, with 69% lacking college degrees, education does not necessarily equate with affluence. In fact, only 35% of Trump voters had incomes under $50,000. While Trump did have positive shares of white voters across the board, these voters were wealthier than is often perceived.

We tend to define class, then, based on images we are exposed to and projections we are

taught. These views have some truth to them, class can be thought of as an ideology. We construct social images of class based on geography, cultural, and economic conditions. We identify ourselves with particular classes, and set others into different classes. A systematic understanding of class, however, needs to look deeper. I situate class within two interconnected axes: economic relations and political relations.

In terms of economic relations, class exists as a structural relationship between laborers and means of production, primarily involving issues of ownership over those means of production. For example, the working class in the capitalist mode of production is characterized by alienation from the means of production and the sale of labor power to capitalists (Marx 1988: 484). In terms of political relations, particular sectors of economic classes might be organized as a political entity bounded within time and space. Such a political entity is organized as an identity - a particular campaign might invoke the aid of the "white working class" to accomplish some goal, or "middle class liberals" might involve themselves in volunteer activities for a social cause. The key, however, is that these political categories do not contain the totality of the economic category, but instead involve only a particular sector of it. In this chapter I analyze class through a historical materialist lens, defining class-for-itself and class-in-itself, and then outlining three materialist models of class: the class consciousness model, the class-for-others model, and the class composition model.

Class Production and Conflict

Marx's understanding of class comes from comparative analysis of historical examples, in which there exist patterned relationships between groups of their respective societies (Marx 1978: 473). The first words of *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* describe this pattern:

> The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and politician, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed (Marx 1978: 473-474).

Marx here produces a grand narrative of history defined by conflict. The context of the *Manifesto*'s publication here is important - the text is both programmatic statement and theoretical summary (Tucker 1978: 469). Second, Marx's definition of history is also important, specifically referring to *written* history (Marx 1978: 473). The generalization of a grand struggle between oppressor and oppressed might be valuable for galvanizing a political movement, however, more theoretical rigor is needed to fully define class. Nonetheless, the element of conflict remains central to understanding class.

Reading deeper into the above section of the *Manifesto* reveals the nuance behind these oppositions. This is not a singular opposition which characterize an entire society, but rather a variety of symbolic relationships which form over particular productive activities. He later describes the class compositions of Medieval and Roman societies:

> In the earlier epochs of history, we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of societies into various orders, a manifold gradation of social rank. In ancient Rome we had patricians, knights, plebeians, slaves; in the Middle Ages, feudal lords, vassals, guild-masters, journeymen, apprentices, serfs; in almost all of these classes, again, subordinate gradations (Marx 1978: 474).

These classes, then, involve an overarching hierarchy of status, defined by particular relations of production between levels. Guild-masters and journeymen exist in a productive relation through their roles in the guild systems, and the same with feudal lords, vassals, and serfs. Each of these levels might possess certain shared interests (for example, the feudal lords and vassals interest in receiving continued tribute from their serfs), but also certain conflicts (vassals desiring greater control over their landholdings than the lords above them).

This understanding of class emerges from a dialectical analysis, wherein each class forms its negative counterpart through its development (Marx 1978: 475). These two classes necessitate the existence of one another, however their disparate interests come into conflict, and this conflict leads to periods of class struggle in which those class antagonisms come to a head, leading to either a "revolutionary re-constitution of society at large" or "the common ruin of the contending classes" (Marx 1978: 474). Returning to Forster's formulation of the Hegel's methodology, we might apply this methodology to class as follows:

- Class A exists with a particular relationship to productive facilities
- Class A's relationship to production necessitates Class B to hold a complementary relationship to production, establishing mutual dependence in the overall productive system
- Class A and B, through their disparate roles in the productive process, also possess disparate interests, leading to conflicts which intensify periods of class struggle
- These periods of class struggle lead either to the revolutionary reconstitution, in which the conflict resolves and a new set of class antagonisms emerge, or their "common ruin," involving the elimination of that class relationship.

The final step does not necessarily involve the elimination of antagonisms in general, but rather, the elimination of the particular set of antagonisms leading to that period of struggle. This could involve the formation of new classes, particular class sectors growing in dominance, or a variety of other outcomes.

Another nuance to this formulation of class is the fact that particular classes take on revolutionary roles in particular contexts, while other classes seek to maintain their current position. Referring to the development of the bourgeoisie, Marx claims:

> The bourgeoisie , whenever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his "natural superiors," and left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous "cash payment" (Marx 1978: 475).

There is a challenge to this analysis which I will discuss in the following chapter, however it remains valuable in understanding how classes take on revolutionary roles. The bourgeoisie, in the context of feudal relations becomes a revolutionary force while feudal lords seek to maintain the status quo. In resolving their conflicts, the bourgeoisie establish a new set of economic relations fitting their class interests, in this case replacing the inherited status of feudal society with liberal capitalism. The power of that class becomes manifest in its political advance, codified for example in the constitutional republic (Marx 1978: 475). We see here that class and state power are related but not equivalent. Class power may become crystallized in the state's form, even though members of that class do not necessarily possess positions within that state.

Class Consciousness

A complete definition of class is, unfortunately, absent from Marx's work. This absence has since formed a void in Marxist scholarship, one which Hungarian Marxist Georg Lukács addresses in his groundbreaking text *History and Class Consciousness*. Lukács identifies the problem as such:

> the omission [of a definition of class] was to have serious consequences both for the theory and practice of the proletariat… The later movement was forced to base itself on interpretations, on the collation of occasional utterances by Marx and Engels and on the independent extrapolation and application of their method (Lukács 1968: 46).

The missing link - at least the one Lukács addresses here - is the question of class consciousness. Lukács asks, as I do, on the one hand what class consciousness *is* (theory), and on

the other what it is *useful for* (praxis). In this section I address both sides of this problem in furthering my definition class itself.

Breaking down the problem, we may begin by separating it into its linguistic components. While our definition of class is incomplete, we have so far understood it to represent oppositional categories which relate to social forms of production, come into conflict with one another, and through this conflict undergo changes over time. Consciousness, on the other hand, possesses a deep genealogy in Marx's work, extending to Hegel and Marx's Hegelian Predecessors, the Young Hegelians (Marx 1960: 5). The Young Hegelians were a group of German philosophers who borrowed from Hegel's methods, utilizing it as a means to reject religion and other "false consciousnesses". In *The German Ideology*, Marx summarizes their ideas as such:

> The Young Hegelians consider conceptions, thoughts, ideas, in fact all the products of consciousness, to which they attribute an independent existence, as the real chains of men… According to their fantasy, the relationships of men, all their doings, their chains and their limitations are products of their consciousness, the Young Hegelians logically put to men the moral postulate of exchanging their present consciousness for human, critical or egoistic consciousness, and thus removing their limitations (Marx 1960: 5-6).

Here, consciousness is the assorted thoughts, ideas, and, especially for the Young Hegelians, religious concepts which restrict humanity from realizing its full potential. Consciousness exists only as "phrases" drilled into the human mind. The Young Hegelians, in combating these false consciousnesses, "are only opposing other phrases, and… are in no way combatting the real world when they are merely combatting the phrases of the world" (Marx 1960: 6). Here Marx counterposes two categories, the real world and the phrases of the world, or in other words, material conditions and consciousness.

This opposition appears quasi-dialectical in form. However, this relationship is missing

key components. Indeed, it possesses the quality of contradiction where, on the one hand material conditions exist in a concrete fashion unacknowledged by its actors, and on the other hand consciousness appears in the minds of humans as real categories. And there is a self-reinforcing component to the opposition, in that one reinforces the existence of the other. The opposition however misses the most useful component, that it describes a system of change over time. Material conditions and class consciousness are abstract, analytic categories. It is a symbolic form which one can then apply the content of specific material conditions and consciousnesses.

For Marx, consciousness is an essential characteristics which distinguishes humans from other animals. Humans, he argues "distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence… By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life" (Marx 1960: 7). This demonstrates how Marx' material/consciousness divide is not a cause and effect relationship, but rather that material conditions exist in a mutually reinforcing dialogue with consciousness. Humans consciously involve themselves in the production of means of subsistence, while those means of subsistence in turn shape the conscious lives of humans.

Returning to Lukács, we can bring together the elements of class and consciousness. Lukács argues that "class consciousness consists in the fact of the appropriate and rational reactions 'imputed' to a particular typical position in the process of production" (Lukács 1968: 51). To employ the analogy of the stage, members of particular classes exist as social actors on a productive stage, and in acting out their parts as members of those classes make believe the social relations from which the whole mode of production derives. Lukács goes on to argue that this consciousness is "neither the sum nor the average of what is thought or felt by single

individuals" (Lukács 1968: 51). In this context, class consciousness is an emergent historical phenomena, and the basis for "historically significant actions for the class as a whole" (Lukács 1968: 51). These historically significant actions, by and large, consist of class conflict - the drama of the productive stage unfolding. Their dialogue, drawn from the dominant class ideologies, whether imposed by a capitalist state, or articulated within labor movements.

Class Consciousness and Class as Politics

I have thus far only considered one definition of class (economic) and one definition of consciousness (cognition). These are not the only means, however, to define class and consciousness. In contrast to economic class, I have already acknowledged the existence of *political* class. And in contrast to the latent, emergent class *consciousness*, there is also consciousness as in awareness.

Founding editor of *Viewpoint Magazine*, Salar Mohandesi, discusses this contradiction in Marx's work, where on the one hand he refers to the proletariat as an economic class defined by wage labor, but also as a political class defined by class struggle against the bourgeoisie (Mohandesi 2013: 74). Based on this contradiction, he draws a similar differentiation to myself between class as "economic category" and class as "political subject", acknowledging three constituent elements of class in general: relation, process, and struggle. This contradiction has severe political implications - Mohandesi draws the example of police officer quelling a working class demonstration (Mohandesi 2013: 75). Though he may engage in wage labor, should he be considered a member of the proletariat?

The Eighteenth Brumaire provides clues as to how we might understand class as political relation. Here Marx addresses a historical event, the ascension of Louis Napoleon in 1851, while

expanding on his own view of class struggle (McLellan 1988: 300). Discussing the conditions of French peasants, he provides some insight into the relationship between class and politics more generally:

> The small-holding peasants form a vast mass, the members of which live in similar conditions but without entering into manifold relations with one another. Their mode of production isolates them from one another instead of bringing them into mutual intercourse… In this way, the great mass of the French nation is formed by simple addition to homologous magnitudes… In so far as there is merely a local interconnection among these small-holding peasants, and the identity of their interests begets no community, no national bond, and no political organization among them, they do not form a class… They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented (Marx 1978: 318).

This excerpt acknowledges two key components to political class. First, there must exist some mutual bond between members of the class by which they acknowledge their mutual conditions. Second, there must be representation of the class, by the class. Marx further acknowledges the role that material conditions play in forging political class. The isolated circumstances of peasant production undermines large scale solidarity between peasant producers.

Jon Elster, in his analysis of class consciousness, finds a Hegelian influence in Marx's differentiation of class, which he categorizes into class-in-itself and class-for-itself (Elster 1985: 347). This can lead to a fluid definition which describes the relationship between political and economic class. Claudio Katz summarizes the distinction: class-in-itself is the "structural definition of class as an objective relation to the means of production" while class-for-itself is the "political or cultural expression of class identity" (Katz 1992: 50). The Hegelian influence comes from the idea of movement between potentiality to actuality (Mohandesi 2013: 79). The class-in-

itself possesses a certain potentiality to become a class-for-itself, similar to how an acorn possesses the potential to become an oak tree. Further, the actuality exists as an innate tendency within the potentiality, such that the class-in-itself strives towards becoming a class-for-itself.

The Chartist movements of Great Britain might be viewed in such a light, as historical consciousness emerging from potentiality in the English working class. The Chartists were active in the later 1830s until the 1850s in Great Britain, and formed a mass working class movement demanding liberal rights for British workers through *The People's Charter* (Jones 1983: 90). This charter included demands for electoral rights, payment of members of parliament, equality of constituencies, and annual elections. In the traditional Marxist analysis, this event exemplifies the actualization of class consciousness, as workers newly forged by the discipline of industry band together for political action. For classical Marxists, this would necessarily culminate in the realization of their exploitation at the hands of the bourgeoisie and an overthrow of the entire Capitalist system (Jones 1983: 90). Of course, this did not happen, even though *The People's Charter* obtained millions of signatures.

Gareth Stedman Jones, rejecting the classical Marxist analysis, proposes an analysis based on the "specific political and ideological form within which this mass discontent was expressed" (Jones 1983: 94). Instead of abstract historical force, Chartism must be understood through linguistic form, which involves "shared conviction articulating a political solution to distress and a political diagnosis of its causes" (Jones 1983: 96). Class consciousness might suffice to explain the distress of the working class in England, and the need for their banding together, but it does not explain why that distress took the specific form of Chartism. Stedman Jones argues that "it was not simply experience, but rather a particular linguistic ordering of experience which could lead the masses to believe that their exclusion from political power is the

cause of our social anomalies" (Jones 1983: 101). Here, the Chartist movement is not seen as a movement of class consciousness, but rather a movement against disenfranchisement, which sought to ameliorate the poor conditions of the working class by entry into the sphere of liberal politics. Rather than articulating an alternative working class position, it sought only to employ decades old enlightenment discourse on natural rights to improve conditions.

The problem of class politics appears more complex than it might seem. Class consciousness alone does not provide the answer to why classes become involved in politics, nor does it answer how they become involved in particular forms of politics. To resolve this problem, Elster adds a third category which bridges the gap between class-in-itself and class-for-itself: class-for-others (Elster 1985: 347). Class-for-others is a class acting in a political stage for the benefit of others. The specific case of class-against-capital from *The Poverty of Philosophy* highlights this:

> Economic conditions had first transformed the mass of the people of the country into workers. The combination of capital has created for this mass a common situation, common interests. The mass is thus already a class as against capital, but not yet for itself. In the struggle, of which yet we have noted only a few phases, this mass becomes united and constitutes itself as a class for itself. The interests it defends become class interests. But the struggle of class against class is a political struggle (Marx 1988: 214).

Edward Andrew addresses this excerpt in his analysis of Marxist classifiers, arguing that "Marx never referred to classes in themselves or distinguished a class in itself from a class for itself" (Andrew 1983: 577). Marx only refers to class for itself and class as against capital, that is, class in class struggle. On this basis, Andrew presents a rejection of economic determinism, in which a process of unfolding material conditions drives the class-in-itself to becoming a class-for-itself (Andrew 1983: 583). Instead, classes form in the process of class struggle, as categories standing in opposition which "come-to" as a class-for itself at different points. Rather than

scripted movements contingent on abstract material conditions, class is a relational, dynamic processes involving identification and organization.

Returning to the Chartist example, we can see how this movement involved some components of Andrew's approach. The development of Industrialism in Great Britain did not *necessarily* lead to the formation of a class conscious, socialist movement. Instead, it drove workers to organize in opposition to their economic and political conditions through identification with a specific linguistic repertoire, the repertoire of radicalism employed in the charter. The British working class moved from existence as a class-against-capital to a "class-for-chartism", that is, a class organized to achieve specific political ends.

Mohandesi similarly rejects the class-in-itself and class-for-itself dichotomy. He identifies class consciousness as the force of movement from class-in-itself to class-for-itself within this schema (Mohandesi 2013: 80). The linearity of this schema is, however, problematic, as it is for Andrew. Mohandesi identifies four problems with this approach. First, it has difficulty dealing with rapid changes in class behavior, as it generally assumes a long period of class maturation (Mohandesi 2013: 81). Historical conditions, however, might lead to class formation as political subject over short periods, without the establishment of formal organs of class power. It further ignores the potential unfurling of class-for-itself, as an organized political class breaks down. Second, following the criticism of French Communizer Gilles Dauvé, such an understanding of class consciousness is idealist, assuming that class formation is a process unfolding in the minds of members of that class (Mohandesi 2013: 82). The source of this class consciousness originates from an external intellectual identified by the theorist - the Leninist vanguard, for instance, in the case of the Bolsheviks, or the workers council in the case of German left-communists. Third, aligning class consciousness with the common cultural

experience of that class necessarily leads to exclusion of those outside that cultural context (Mohandesi 2013: 83). A particular movement might not identify foreign workers as "working class" though they occupy a similar productive position with common interests. Finally, emphasizing the cultural dimension that class consciousness implies often deemphasizes the importance of the structural dimension of class (Mohandesi 2013: 83). Doing so ignores the very material conditions leading to class exploitation itself, resulting in an understanding of class which is simply political, devoid of economic content.

Class Composition?

In his rejection of class consciousness, Mohandesi identifies class composition as a positive alternative from Marxists active later in the 20th century, including the French *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, Italian *Workerists*, and the *Johnson-Forest Tendency* in the United States (Mohandesi 2013: 84). He summarizes the position as such:

> The model of class composition takes advantage of the dual meeting of the word in order to trace the correlation between the manner in which the class is composed, or how it is materially constituted, and the manner in which the class composes itself, or how it actively combines the different parts of itself to construct a whole (Mohandesi 2013: 85).

Such a position replaces the structural class-in-itself and political class-for-itself with the concepts of technical class composition and political class composition. Rather than identifying a spectrum, through which a class moves from one end to the other in a process of actualization, these two categories exist simultaneously and in relation to one another. Shifts in the technical field influence shifts in the political, and vice versa. The historic and economic conditions of particular class struggles influence the ways workers constitute themselves politically. According to Mohandesi, workers do not become political because they one day wake up aware of their

common interests, but rather because "the technical composition of the capital against which they struggle at that historical moment has itself provided the material conditions through which their struggles for their immediate needs can be strategically consolidated" (Mohandesi 2013: 86). In other words, workers come into conflict with capital when the material relations they come into with capital become conducive to meeting their needs.

The example of German councilism illustrates how the class composition model situates class formation within historical context. Concilism was a communist tendency which emerged in the 1920s in Germany which argued for the "council form" in actualizing class struggle (Mohandesi 2013: 86). The council form involves workers self management through decentralized, autonomous, and democratic worker councils which oversee management of production and politics. This mode of struggle was adopted by workers within particular technical compositions of capital, including specialized tool production, electromechanics, and optics, which were dominant in Germany at the time (Mohandesi 2013: 86). Because they were specialized, and highly knowledgeable of their fields, they had a greater capacity to take on the management role than an unskilled factory worker might. The council form represented a greater means for them to realize their own needs and the needs of production under their specific circumstances.

In this Chapter, I have identified a set of three positions:

- The class consciousness model which counterposes class-in-itself and class for itself as a movement between potentiality and actuality.
- The class-against-class model in which class-for-itself emerges out of a process of class struggle, beginning with the formation of class-against-class.
- The class composition model, in which there exists a simultaneous technical class

composition and political class composition which influence one another.

I hope that by having presented their geneology, I also have represented the valuable components of each of these models. I argue that these are not mutually exclusive models, but rather are explanations of different components in the vast web making up the definition of class. Further, many of their differences derive from a common challenge in Marxist scholarship, distinguishing between descriptive theory and prescriptive praxis. Below, I map out these three positions and then analyze their relationship to one another.

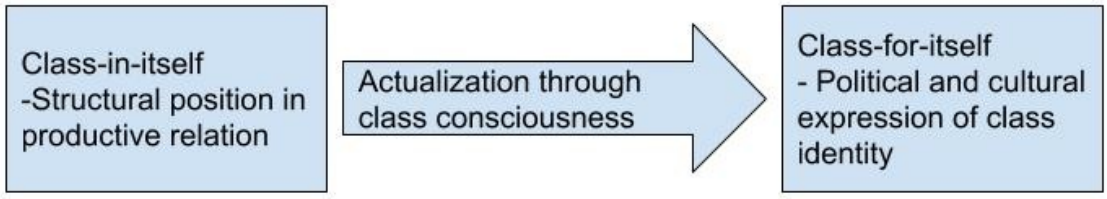

Figure 1: Class consciousness model

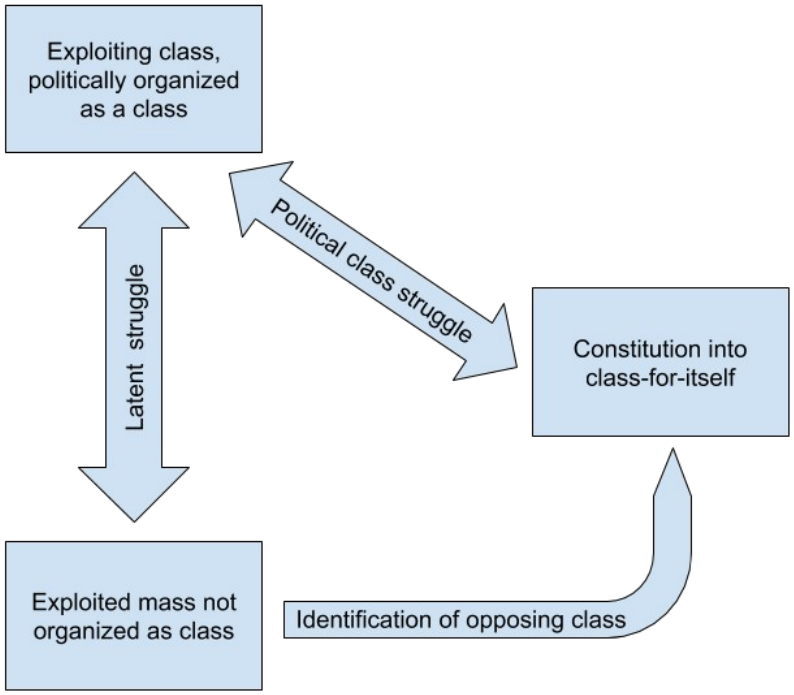

Figure 2: Class-against-class model

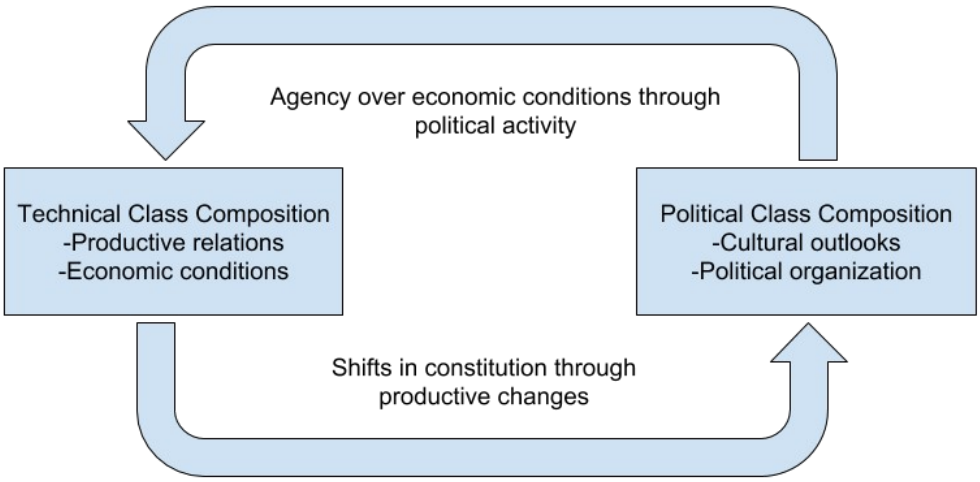

Figure 3: Class composition model

These three models answer the question: where does political class come from? The first model, however, appears prescriptive, arguing that through an intellectual vanguard imprinting class consciousness onto the working class, their latent revolutionary potential may be

"unlocked". In this sense, it articulates a political position, rather than a theoretical observation of how class politicization actually occurs. The second model addresses this, by looking towards historic cases in which classes have actually become politicized, finding that classes generally form politically in opposition to other classes. In doing so, however, it ignores the structural component to class, even going so far as to reject structural class. The third model acknowledges the interplay between material factors and political composition. However, it largely only acknowledges this as correlation, and misses a fully fledged mechanism by which this interplay is expressed.

I return to Eric Wolf's discussion of alienation within the social sciences to understand how economic and political class relate. The problem is dividing politics from economics, as two separate facets of class. By separating these as distinct spheres, we run into the possibility of turning "names into thing" (Wolf 2010: 3). Economic class is itself an abstraction of the subjective experience of members of that class, and similarly, political class is an abstraction of the subjective action of those members. Furthermore, economics is itself political, in that an economic order is enforced by a particular political order, and in turn the political order is conditioned by the economic circumstances. With this in mind, we might think of structural class as "political-economic", to describe it as tied up into a complex set of political and economic dynamics. Indeed, we might be able to define class at the most abstract level, but further levels of analysis are constantly contextualized, as will be explored in the next chapter discussing how the working class is historically contextualized. It does not necessarily follow the strict "class-in-itself" and "for-itself" division, however, that might be valid for describing particular class dynamics at a given time.

This "political-economic" class, manifest in a structural sense, in turn shapes the

subjective experience of members of that class. Whether these individuals see themselves as members of a social class is further determined by context, as we will see in the following chapter with a discussion the relationship between race and class. In this context, I think of class as an abstracted structural role which embeds particular social norms onto members, consciously or unconsciously. The acting out of these social norms is the making of class. In other words, individuals are enculturated into class. They are not specifically enculturated into "the working class," as a singular group, but rather particular working classes which are articulated by particular classes. Future empirical research might be conducted to study how this enculturation process occurs through institutions, and for the purposes of labor organizing, how moments can be placed in people lives which questions the basis of this socialization.

Chapter IV: What is the Working Class?

The Working Class

Having worked out a definition of class in the abstract, it becomes necessary to return to the concrete and define class as it manifests in particular material conditions. Marx discusses historical classes in examining class in general, however the central concern of his work is understanding the proletariat and their relationship to the bourgeoisie. In more common terms, these are the working and capitalist classes in a capitalist mode of production. As established in the previous chapter, the term "working class" is a term with a multitude of meanings, especially in US Political discourse where it is often employed to describe a particular sector of the working class - often the white, industrial working class. Other "class terms" are also employed in political discourses - for instance the middle class or the "99 percent" - which take on various meanings depending on the aim of the speaker. In this chapter, I will analyze what Marx means by "proletariat", and then explore how this class is historically composed through race and gender.

Proletarianization

The Communist Manifesto is a valuable source for understanding Marx's mature definition for the proletariat in both economic and political contexts. Returning to the abstract definition of class, individual classes do not exist in historical isolation, but rather they develop out of historical conditions. The bourgeoisie emerged from "the ruins of feudal society", from which it "established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones" (Marx 1988: 222). The bourgeoisie's development possesses a mutually reinforcing relationship to the development of the proletariat:

> Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinctive feature: it has simplified class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat (Marx 1988: 22).

This summarizes the process by which the strengthening of the bourgeoisie over time has increasingly drawn those under non-capitalist modes of production into wage labor. This process has been termed proletarianization, and is a major component of the primitive accumulation. In *Capital Volume I*, Marx establishes the basic structure of the capitalist mode of production, of the transference of money into capital:

> We have seen how money is changed into capital; how through capital surplus-value is made, and from surplus-value more capital. But the accumulation of capital presupposes surplus-value; surplus-value presupposes capitalistic production; capitalistic production presupposes the pre-existence of considerable masses of capital and of labour power in the hands of producers of commodities (Marx 1988: 483).

The capitalist political economy is, then based on an endless cycle, of transference between surplus-value and capital, and capital into greater surplus values. The problem is that, for such a cycle to begin, some form of initial capital must exist, capital which must emerge out of something other than the above cycle:

> The whole movement, therefore, seems to turn in a vicious circle, out of which we can only get by supposing a primitive accumulation (previous accumulation of Adam Smith) preceding capitalistic accumulation; an accumulation not the result of the capitalist mode of production, but its starting point (Marx 1988: 483).

Marx describes the common narrative of primitive accumulation as the "original sin" of political economy. According to this, the current classes exist as eternal counterparts drawn from the personalities of their members: there are the "diligent, intelligent, and above all, frugal elite" and the "lazy rascals, spending their substance, and more, in riotous living" (Marx 1988: 483).

Similarly, common discourses of class counterpose the hard working business owner (or "job maker") to the lazy and poor welfare recipient. Because of the laziness of the latter half, property and the wealth which comes with it has only gone to the deserving half. Marx counters such a narrative: "in actual history it is notorious that conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder, briefly force, play the great part… The methods of primitive accumulation are anything but idyllic" (Marx 1988: 484).

The central component of this process is "the complete separation of the labourers from all property in the means by which they can realize their labour" (Marx 1988: 484). This separation defines the proletariat as "free labourers", which Marx defines in a double sense: on the one hand, they are not themselves owned as a slave would be, and on the other they are free from ownership of means of production. Primitive accumulation, and with it proletarianization, is the "historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production" (Marx 1988: 484). This process changes how the social means of subsistence of producers can be realized, turning those producers into wage laborers who depend on the sale of their labor-power to survive. In summary, the historical emergence of the proletariat depends on the separation of producers from ownership of means of production, and a transformation of their means of subsistence into wage labor.

The Politicization of the Proletariat

Generally, proletariat refers to class as an economic relation derived out of structural analysis, while working class refers to class employed in political relations. In this section I analyze how the two categories relate to one another, how economic category and political category are tied together.

Marx's varied use of the word "revolution" provides insight into how the political and economic function together. In one passage of the communist manifesto, he claims:

> The bourgeoisie, historically, has played a most revolutionary part… Wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his 'natural superiors', and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous 'cash payment' (Marx 1988: 243).

In the feudal context, then, the bourgeoisie acts in a revolutionary fashion. This, however, occurs in two senses: the political revolution leading to the dominance of the bourgeoisie over the feudal classes, and the "tearing asunder" of the productive relations which characterize that period. The two, however, are not clearly separable, the political dominance of the bourgeoisie implies a certain set of productive relations which enable that dominance. The bourgeoisie, however, also maintains its revolutionary role under capitalist production, in a different sense:

> The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. Conservation of the old modes of production in unaltered form, was, on the contrary, the first condition of existence for all earlier industrial classes (Marx 1988: 244).

Marx here articulates a fundamental characteristic of a capitalist mode of production, that the means of production undergo constant "revolution". In this context, revolution means shifts in productive techniques, technology, and sectors. Further, this constant economic revolution bears with it a constant revolution in the social dimension:

> All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind (Marx

1988: 244).

Through the process of revolutionizing productive relations, so too are social relations constantly in transition. As we will explore later on, however, the revolutionization of productive relations can be limited in how it impacts the entire cultural system, and past hierarchies (such as racial and gender hierarchies) might be preserved and employed for political reasons.

The political-economic development of the bourgeoisie coincided with the development of the proletariat. I have previously defined aspects of what it means to be proletarian, however a succinct Marxist definition consists of two key components:

1) The proletariat relies on the sale of labor-power to survive
2) The proletariat does not own capital

In Marx's words, proletarians "live only so long as they find work, and find work only so long as their labor increases capital" (Marx 1988: 226). In this sense, proletarians are commodities, who depend on their market value to reproduce themselves. Wages consist of an "upkeep cost", to ensure the labor of the worker is reproduced day by day.

This economic role also ties into shifting political relations. Marx describes a series of stages undergone by fledgling proletarians:

> At first the contest is carried on by individual labourers, then by the workpeople of a factory, then by the operatives of one trade, in one locality, against the individual bourgeois who directly exploits them (Marx 1988: 227)

Here, Marx describes a sector of the working class shifting its political orientation. These stages, in a sense, describe how workers move from proletarians filling structural positions, to a collective of politically conscious workers. The end, however, merely consists in frustration against their direct exploiter:

They direct their attacks not against the bourgeois conditions of production, but against

> the instruments of production themselves; they destroy imported wares that compete with their labour, they smash to pieces machinery, they set factories ablaze, they seek to restore the vanished status of the workman in the Middle Ages (Marx 1988: 228).

In this context, class struggle exist absent from a structural orientation. Without acknowledging the role their common structural position plays in their oppression, political workers are trapped moving aimlessly in a "class angst", consisting in rage against their immediate surroundings. As I will explore in the final chapter, this "class angst" might emerge in particular political movements, such as in Occupy where protestors engaged in frustrated rejection of the status quo. In many instances, however, the extent to which the proletariat exists as a political working class is as a political appendage of the bourgeoisie:

> If anywhere they unite to form more compact bodies, this is not yet the consequences of their own active union, but of the union of the bourgeoisie, which class, in order to attain its own political ends, is compelled to set the whole proletariat in motion, and is moreover yet, for a time, able to do so (Marx 1988: 228).

One of the key questions underlying my investigation is how to do politics as a class, and in turn, how class politics answers the slew of problems currently facing the world. This means moving towards class *independence*, that is moving towards a position in which the working class acts as an agent rather than a tool of bourgeois politics. The first step in realizing this aim is to understand the real class composition of the proletariat under 21st century capitalism. I analyze this composition along the dimensions of class and race.

Intersectionality: A Summary

One of the dominant paradigms in left-wing political organizing since the 1980s is intersectionality. Developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality is a response to dominant feminist and anti-racist postitions which treat race and gender "as mutually exclusive categories

of experience and analysis" (Crenshaw 1989: 139). In her classic piece, *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex*, Crenshaw centers Black women experience as simultaneously marginalized for being Black and being women, critiquing the single-axis approach to understanding oppression. In the single-axis view, analysis of marginalization is often limited only to the most privileged members of a particular group (Crenshaw 1989: 140). Intersectionality, as a result, theorizes identity as more robust than singular categories and binaries. Identity becomes fractured and destabilized under this approach, which emphasizes intra-group differences and conflicts which derive from the interactions between multiple identities.

In my analysis of race and gender in the class composition of the proletariat, I hope to highlight how *class politics* can provide a means to *intersectional politics*. By understanding the structural role that class plays in reifying race and gender, we can build a movement which overcomes marginalization on these grounds. Further, by emphasizing the intersectional nature of workplaces, we can foster inter-racial and cross-gender solidarity in combating exploitation.

Race & Racism

In Adolph Reed's article, *Marx, Race, and Neoliberalism*, he summarizes the historical emergence of racial differentiation:

> Race emerged historically along with the institution of slavery in the New World… [Scholars] focus on the simultaneous sharpening of distinctions between slavery and indentured servitude, and the institutional establishment of black and white, or African and English, as distinct mutually exclusive status categories over the course of the seventeenth century in colonial Virginia (Reed 2013: 50).

Race, here, is a product of historical circumstances. Just as the proletariat emerged out of

shifts in productive relations in Europe, so too did "black" and "white" emerge out of colonial productive relations in North America. The 19th and 20th centuries would see the unfurling of racial categories and racial sciences, which ascribed characteristics and capacities to people based on physical characteristics and national origins (Reed 2013: 51). The formation of races, in this context, is intimately tied to the formation of classes. In the 1920s, for instance, Pittsburg companies used "Racial Adaptability Charts" in their hiring procedures to map "thirty six different racial group' capacities for twenty-two distinct jobs, eight different atmospheric conditions, jobs requiring speed or precision, and day or night shift work" (Reed 2013: 51). Such a division is, of course, fictitious, however its impact was material - racialized sorting of labor, even on fictitious grounds, leads to a real racialization of labor.

To understand how race becomes essentialized into a productive relation, I employ Marx' concept of commodity fetishism defined in *Capital Volume I*:

> There it is a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things… This fetishism of commodities has its origin, as the foregoing analysis has already shown, in the peculiar social character of the labour that produces them (Marx 1988: 436).

Similarly, race functions as a fetishism by replacing the social relations between people with relations between "types", subjective characteristics which become objectified by the productive system. Such conditions ascribe privileges to these objectified types, such that possessing white skin provides one with a distinct set of rights withheld from those with black skin.

In this view, race and class are intersecting but not equivalent dimensions of exploitation. Race in capitalism grew out of differing productive relations - white colonizers, indentured servants, and black slaves. Proletarianization, as established earlier, trends towards greater inclusivity of the proletariat and the elimination of other class categories. The abolition of

slavery, then, led inevitably to the incorporation of former slaves in the proletariat within a few decades. The contradictions of past political economies, however, were not entirely eliminated, rather they become incorporated into the new political economy. In the racialized proletariat, "Black" becomes institutionalized through an absence of certain rights while "White" becomes the determinate negation of this - a "guarantee of immunity from such degradation" (Chang 1985: 44). Such a system relies on the division of interests within a class, a separation between white and black working class wherein the the white working class depends on suppression of the black working class alongside the capitalist to engender its own privileged position.

Gender & Primitive Accumulation

Marx touches on gender only briefly and tangentially in his work, primarily through discussion of the family and patriarchal modes of production. Sylvia Federici's work, *Caliban and the Witch*, refines this position, articulating not only a theory of gender but a theory of primitive accumulation which describes the historical conditions leading to the emergence of modern gender and race.

For Federici, the capitalism introduced a new social position for women through transformations in how labor power is reproduced (Federici 2014: 63). In contrast, many Marxists view Capital accumulation as a progressive process leading towards women's liberation as they are drawn further into the proletariat. Of course, membership into the proletariat is not liberation on its own, and the contradictions of capitalism establish new forms of enslavement for women.

Federici position begins with the basic premise of primitive accumulation, the necessary expropriation of workers from means of subsistence. Following feminist scholarship, however, she argues for an equally important process by which primitive accumulation enacts new

ideological regimes upon the body. She describes this as "the transformation of the body into a work machine, and the subjugation of women to the reproduction of the work-force" (Federici 2014: 63). Just as capital accumulates, so do ideological differences in how one relates to the body and how bodies relate accumulate. These differences are crystalized within gender and race.

Women's role in capitalism is structurally embedded in the division between production and reproduction. In capitalism, reproduction and production form conflicting categories - production is production for the market, by which useful commodities can be bought and sold (Federici 2014: 75). Reproduction, on the other hand, is the invisible process by which the worker is reproduced within the households. Capitalism ascribes to women a "natural" role in achieving this process, and restricts them from access to wage labor due to a perceived need for them to be at home engaged in unpaid reproductive labor. The idealized form of this is found in the category of "housewife". Federici employs the term sexual division of labor, through which women become dependent on wage-earning spouses within an idealized heterosexual household (Federici 2014: 75). The husband, in turn, is dependent on a wage providing capitalist, and thus the entire family comes under the command of that capitalist. Federici summarizes the material impact of this development:

> The separation of production from reproduction created a class of proletarian women who were as dispossessed as men but, unlike their male relatives, in a society that was becoming increasingly monetarized, had almost no access to wages, thus being forced into a condition of chronic poverty, economic dependence, and invisibility as workers (Federici 2014: 75).

The last phrase in this excerpt, "invisibility as workers", articulates one important dimension of how the working class is composed. While the proletariat consists of all people

dependent on wage labor for subsistence, the working class of political discourses often excludes those not currently employed. By viewing housework, however, as a (re)productive activity involved in the reproduction of the entire working class, we find a more inclusive definition with which to build class politics. And just as women working in the household are rendered invisible as workers, so too are unemployed workers, disabled workers, immigrant workers, imprisoned workers, and workers in informal sectors such as sex work and criminal activity. Class politics allows us to move beyond divisions set upon us by capital, and struggle in solidarity with one another against the common source of our exploitation.

Viewing race and gender in relation to class allows us to articulate how racial and gender marginalization occurs in practice. Through restricted access to resources, one facet of class, institutions separate working classes and enact internal conflict and competition. This competition is perpetuated and upheld by privileged members of the class, who in turn receive benefits for their subordination to the dominant ideology. Authentic class solidarity requires opposition to racism and sexism. In the words of Black Panther Fred Hampton, "we don't think you fight fire with fire best; we think you fight fire with water best. We're going to fight racism not with racism, but we're going to fight with solidarity" (Fred Hampton 1969).

Chapter V: Case Studies in Class Politics

How Class Politics Happens

In this chapter I banalyze two case studies: the Occupy movement and the Coalition of Immokalee workers, to better understanding class politics in practice. I argue that the income inequality discourse surrounding the Occupy movement is limited in its capacity to realize structural change, and that the grassroots, class based politics of the CIW is more effective in realizing long term change. Then, I draft a program based on the conditions of 21st century labor outlining the steps I believe are necessary the revitalize an international labor movement.

You're NOT the 99%

Within the United States, the Occupy Wall Street looms as a behemoth for future mass movements. One of Occupy's greatest legacy's has been the proliferation of the slogan "We are the 99%", which emerged on an anonymous Tumblr blog weeks before the actual protests began (Tumblr 2011). This blog represented a diverse range of interests, from student debt to health care, which the 99% slogan aimed to encapsulate under a single banner. With the Occupation of Zuccotti park in 2011, this slogan became a rallying cry for protesters fed up with the status quo. Originally targeted towards Wall Street and the financial industry, protests spread across the country to address both local and national issues (Goodman 2011). As a rhetorical device, the 99% identifies a conflict between the mass of US Citizens and a greedy 1% responsible for their hardships.

The Occupy protests did not emerge out of thin air, rather they emerged in response to the economic pressures of 2011, and especially the Great Recession. According political philosophers to Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, the protests were concerned with the subservience of politics to economic and financial interests which came out of this recession

(Hardt and Negri 2011). The protests took many stylistic cues from similar protests in Spain and Egypt in 2011, "encampment" protests which occupied public spaces as a central component of their political action. According to Hardt and Negri, individual encampment movements have take on a common form, but "translate a few common elements to their own situation" (Hardt and Negri 2011). This internal form constitutes a "multitude form" based on participatory democracy and assemblies. Here, the anarchist principles behind Occupy are visible, articulated by David Graeber: "you will never achieve the ends at all unless the means are themselves a model for the world you wish to create" (Graeber 2011). In this respect, formal leadership was largely absent from Occupy camps. In turn, they sought to produce an alternative to hierarchical leadership within the camps themselves.

Two of the founding texts of the protest, the *Principles of Solidarity* and *Declaration of Occupation of New York City*, outline a model for how Occupy camps should function. The principles of solidarity established the scope of the movement:

> It is from these reclaimed grounds that we say to all Americans of the world, Enough! How many crises does it take? We are the 99% and we have moved to reclaim our mortgaged future (NYC General Assembly 2011: 6).

This passage establishes that the protests aimed to represent an immense swath of the population, "*all Americans of the world"*, and "*the 99%"*. Commenters, especially those affiliated with right-wing news outlets such as Fox News and Breitbart, scoffed at such claims. Dan Gainor, for instance, mocked them as a "disorganized and liberal whine fest" who are "not the 99%" with misplaced frustration (Gainor 2011). However, he identified, at the very least, that the movement was a response to legitimate economic anxieties.

The *Principles of Solidarity* established points of unity around which the disparate Occupy camps could find common ground. My analysis of these points divide them between

two principles: organizational and programmatic. These points of unity reflect a structural problem with how the Occupy protests were organized, as disparate camps with little interconnection. Organizational points define how the occupy camps ought to be actually manage, for instance by "engaging in direct and transparent participatory democracy," "empowering one another against all forms of oppression," and "exercising personal and collective responsibility" (NYC General Assembly 2011: 6). Programmatic points are those which define how Occupy aimed to transform the broader society. These include calls for "redefining how labor is valued," "the sanctity of individual privacy, and "making technologies, knowledge, and culture open to all to freely access, create, modify, and distribute" (NYC General Assembly 2011: 6).

The organizational and programmatic sides are, in a sense, reflexive of one another. By enacting their organizational principles, such as "engaging in direct and transparent participatory democracy", they act out a vision of what they would like to realize within the broader society. This parallels historian Robert Darnton's concept of possibilism, employed in his analysis of the French Revolution. Darnton argues that "great events make possible the social reconstruction of reality" (Darnton 1989: 13). The Occupy protesters attempted to use the 2008 financial collapse as such a context, rebuilding an alternative order within the time and space of the camps. The lack of hierarchical leadership within and and between camp modeled the alternative order they wished to experience.

The *Declaration of the Occupation of New York City* was the second document accepted by the general assembly, and is structured to be reminiscent of the *Declaration of Independence*. This draws upon the national myth of the American Revolution which defines an American spirit of rebellion. Like the *Declaration of Independence*, the *Declaration of Occupation* lists the

injustices that "they" have enacted against "us" (NYC General Assembly 2011: 7). One can assume this "they" includes the 1% of elites. However, such claims contain a veneer of ambiguity, which makes the actual conflict ill-defined. The 99% is itself a massive category, allowing everyone from the poorest working class to the upper middle class to participate. And identifying a nebulous 1% as agents of hardship, responsible for the slew of problems outlined by Occupy's demands, obfuscates the structural causes which have lead to those problems in the first place. While the 99% slogan is a useful rhetorical device in rallying a mass of people to fight against injustice, it does not represent an authentic form of class politics. The ambiguity of this slogan allowed individuals such as Mark Ruffalo, a multi-millionaire, to gain entry into this category. In a *Guardian* piece, Mark Ruffalo claimed that "We are the 99%" who have "paid a dear price so the 1% could become the wealthiest people in the world" (Ruffalo 2011). The irony is, of course, that Mark Ruffalo is among the wealthiest people in the world. And while his wealth may not have come from direct exploitation of the working class, it depends on some level of the expropriation of surplus values.

Occupy's success as a class-based protest movement remains difficult to discern. The movement failed to accomplish its goals of complete social transformation. Occupy successfully injected the "99%" as a meaningful political phrase in US vernacular, however, it failed to actually organize the "99%" as a political mass. The structural problems I discussed previously, especially the decentralized nature of the movement, meant it could not muster a nationwide campaign for policy changes. This critique was expressed by left-wing philosopher Slavoj Žižek, who argued that "large-scale decisions have to be made" for the movement to be successful (Žižek 2014). Further, by not articulating demands based on class, and opting instead for ambiguous "mass politics", the demands of Occupy fail to address the systematic problems

which impact the working class

Beyond injecting new discourses of income inequality, Occupy also succeeded in conjuring a new radical imagination for the U.S Left. Occupy called for protestors and the broader public to imagine a better future, and create that future within the time and space of the Occupy camps. Anthropologist David Graeber wrote, in defense of the protests, that "the occupiers are the very sort of people, brimming with ideas, whose energies a healthy society would be marshaling to improve life for everyone Instead, they are using it to envision a way to bring the whole system down" (Graeber 2011). The Occupy protests were an influence on my own growing interest in radical politics, and watching news broadcasts on the protests provided a means for me to envision the possibility of a better world.

While Occupy was not associated with any specific ideology or sects, in practice it resembles the theories of Marxist Autonomism, an anti-authoritarian Marxist sect which came out of the work of Italian Marxists such as Antonio Negri (Burgmann 2013: 173). In particular, it emerged out of the working-class "self"-activity of the 1960s and 1970s in Italy. Here, self-activity implies the working class acting as a class by its own fruition, composing itself spontaneously as a political mass. It emphasizes the "autonomous power of workers: their ability to define their own interests and struggle for these, to go beyond mere reaction to exploitation and take the offensive in ways that shape the class struggle and define the future" (Burgmann 2013: 175)

Political theorist Oliver Harrison describes occupy as invoking the Autonomist concept of the "scream", a form of generalized political frustration against the injustices of capital. According to Harrison, we scream because:

> Capitalism negates our capacity for 'doing' – the 'capacity-to-do'... the reason why we scream is because capitalism negates this capacity and transforms it into its opposite –

> ‘power-over’: involving not the assertion of, but destruction of subjectivity (Harrison 2016: 498).

The scream represents a sort of “class angst”, a defiance of Capitalism and the alienation it brings. The structures organizing our society do not provide an outlet to express this frustration, and instead we create microcosms of human relation which exists outside the alienated structures of Capitalism. These spaces form “cracks” within the authority of Capital, but there cracks merely existed as temporary creative space. By only experiencing brief cracks and moments beyond the Capitalist order, however, is itself a form of alienation. Politics becomes alienated from the broader society as a form of escapism. While the influences of capital may be temporarily negated in the camps, this negation is ephemeral, and ignores the real hierarchies which are produced by Capital. One can only hide from injustice so long.

Harrison also provides information on the composition of Occupy camps. He describes two groups: the “inner layer” of radical anarchists and veterans of anti-globalization movements, and an outer layer of progressives, union members, and the middle class (Harrison 2016: 500). The inner layer was involved in bringing forward the 99% slogan and establishing the groundwork for camp politics and organization. The outer layer are those who would identify with the slogan and see themselves in the politics. While the diversity of presences as the camps can be strength, demonstrating the far-flung resonance of the 99% slogan, but it also demonstrates the ambiguity of its inclusiveness. Who does the 99% represent? The homeless community who spent decades living in the parks taken over by activists? Middle class professionals frustrated by their alienation? Radical students? It represents all of them, and, in the end, none of them. Without politics grounded in class, Occupy was doomed from the beginning.

Looking For an Alternative: The Coalition of Immokalee Workers

The failure of Occupy set me on a political journey, seeking ways to do politics which go beyond ambiguous slogans, chants, and banner drops. I was introduced to a successful alternative in my freshman year of college, while tabling a local event. Here, I met representatives of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), a "worker based human rights organization" founded in 1993 (ciw-online.org). The CIW is engaged in three broad projects: the Fair Food Program, an Anti-Slavery Campaign, and the Campaign for Fair Food. In this section I will briefly summarize the history of the CIW, their campaigns, and how their successes relate to my own vision of a future for class politics.

In 1993, a dedicated group of farmworkers in Immokalee, Florida began weekly meetings in a local church (ciw-online.org). Immokalee is a small, unincorporated farmworker town in South Florida, home primarily to migrant workers from Mexico, Guatemala, and Haiti (Bales 2009: 44). Labor conditions in Immokalee have been and continue to be poor. Workers spend around $50 a week to live on bare mattresses in 12-person trailers, and work long days picking tomatoes in the fields (Bales 2009: 45). Workers earn wages based on the number of buckets of tomatoes they fill, which comes out to around $25 a ton. In the past, workers did not have access to clean water and stopping to drink could result in beatings, however, through the CIW's work some of the most egregious violations have been put to an end.

These workers are not covered by the 1935 National Labor Relations act, meaning employees have a right to fire workers for organizing unions or strikes (Bales 2009: 47). This exclusion came out of pressure from Dixiecrats in the 1930s, who wanted to ensure that black farmworkers and household servants would not be guaranteed these rights - an example of how racialized labor is enforced by the state.

Conditions for these workers are not only dictated by the farms on which they work - they are dictated by forces all along the supply chain (Bales 2009: 48). This fact will become a major factor in how the CIW addresses the structural issues marginalizing farmworkers. The large agribusiness corporations for which Immokalee's residents work rely on the purchase of supplies from even larger corporations such as Monsanto, and on the sale of their produce to massive buyers such as McDonald's and Wal-Mart. On one end, monopolies which constantly raise prices for supplies, and at the other conglomerates which demand lower and lower prices - and at the very end of it all, working people whose own depressed wages forces them to depend on the cheap produce grown on these farms. Here is a totalizing system, functioning only for its own growth by any means - even through the most heinous violations of human rights.

The CIW's first success came between 1998 and 2000 with three work stoppages, a month long hunger strike, and a March from Ft. Myers to Orlando (ciw-online.org). These campaigns resulted in 13-25% wage increases for farmworkers. The CIW's anti-slavery work began in the early 2000s as well, helping lead the formation of the DoJ's Anti-Trafficking Unit and the Trafficking Victims Protection act. The CIW's greatest success comes from system level analysis, beginning in 2001 when they realized the power that entire food supply chains press on the lives of farmworkers (ciw-online.org). This lead to the realization that change needed broader, working class support through boycotts of these industries. The first domino to fall in the Campaign for Fair Food was Taco Bell in 2005, and soon spread across the fast food industry. McDonald's, Burger King, Whole Foods, and Subway would come next, followed by agreements with food service providers such as Aramark and Sodexo. Today, the CIW is focusing on expanding the campaign to supermarkets such as Publix and Kroegers, which have held off from signing on to the campaign.

According to Beverly Bell, the CIW's strategies were largely drawn from experience in grassroots struggles in Latin America (Bell 2007: 39). The CIW's organizing has occurred in some of the most difficult conditions possible - workers are not only marginalized as workers, but as undocumented people, as non-English speakers, and as people of color. These are workers with few institutional labor protections, making traditional union tactics almost impossible to utilize. The CIW cannot attack capitalists at the point of production, as this would only address the growers themselves, not the entire supply chains these growers are tied to. Instead, the CIW looks towards base building strategies which begin within farmworker communities themselves (Bell 2007: 39). The CIW summarizes their approach as "consciousness + commitment = change". Consciousness involves popular education, which Lucas Benitez summarizes:

> Popular education must be at the root of any movement that comes from the base. And it must come from the very people who are affected by the problems. Out popular education is accessible to everyone in our community, regardless of their language or level of formal education. It lets us build a broad base of leadership so that responsibility for the success of the movement doesn't lie in the hands of just one individual whose loss could weaken the struggle (Bell 2007: 40).

Education does not only occur in meeting spaces, but rather emphasizes the struggle of farmworkers across the spaces they inhabit. This includes street art, theater, and a CIW run radio station (Bell 2007: 41). This represents politics by farmworkers, for farmworkers, which identifies the structural source of their exploitation from the base. The CIW also facilitates formal training sessions with leaders from Haiti and Central America, from which they develop their political strategies. Through these educational efforts, they've been able to muster the strength of their communities in the marches, hunger strikes, and boycotts to achieve their goals. The power of this education is not limited to Immokalee either - workers who move further north over the season bring it with them, to raise consciousness with farmworkers across the United

States (Bell 2007: 41).

Through these case studies, I hope to emphasize how the CIW's model of organizing along the lines of class is valuable for the future of left-wing politics. Educating people about the relationship between class positions and the injustices they experience (subjectivities) enables us to inject a critical viewpoint into the daily lives of workers. In turn, however, I believe that the possibilist vision of a movement such as Occupy can ignite the imagination of that grassroots movement to aspire for a better future. Further, I believe that by emulating that vision in the organizational principles of your own organization, you demonstrate how that positive vision is in fact possible. Based on these two examples, I articulate my own vision of how to rebuild a labor movement in the twenty-first century.

Program

In this section, I suggest steps with which we can move forward in the 21st century through class based organizing. These demands are centered on a US context, however, the future of a class movement will eventually require international linkage. These demands fit into two broad categories: organizational and political. Organizational demands are requirements for how I believe a successful workers movement needs to be organized, through political parties and unions. Political demands are those which involve demands made of the Capitalist state to enable the greatest capacity to organize, and the greatest conditions for.

Political

1. A future for working-class organizing cannot be achieved without mass repeal of all right-to-work laws. Right-to-work laws claim to increase the rights, by prohibiting union contracts from requiring membership from employees, but in reality they function to undermine the collective bargaining power of workers (Labor Notes 2018). Right-to-

work laws specifically are tied to a racist history, to erode class solidarity between white and black workers in the South during the Jim Crow era. The appeal of right-to-work will build power for labor and enable collective bargaining through mass union membership.

2. The abysmal wages for workers in the US reduces the capacity for workers to support themselves and consider life beyond the workplace. Minimum wages as low as the federal wage of $7.25 per hour forces workers to spend their lives tired and worn out, working multiple jobs, with constant fear of losing their meager compensation should they attempt to do anything about it. Labor must organize to fight for a $15 minimum wage, as the Fight for $15 movement has been since 2012 (Fight for $15). A $15 minimum wage will reduce the divisions between low-paid fast food or service workers and the higher paid skilled workers. Minimum wage laws are a buffer against the most extreme forms of exploitation, and guarantee workers the ability to live a life of dignity.
3. The capacity for the US Working Class to realize better conditions is constantly hampered by the astronomic costs of medical care in the US. The national Medicare For All movement goes beyond the Affordable Care Act to implement a national, single payer health care system which guarantees care for the working class (Medicare For All). US workers are disproportionately affected by the cost of health care, where a single accident can decimate an individuals livelihood, forcing them to choose between their health and their income.
4. Through the patriarchal family structure, Capitalism maintains a subordinate position for women in the household. Women are frequently made dependent upon a husband's income, which is in turn dependent on the husband's employer, placing the entire family under the dominion of the employer. While strides have been made towards women's

independence through entrance into the workforce, women continue to be subjugated and forced into free domestic labor. Wages for Housework will go a long way in reducing the subjugation of women through the household structure (Jaffe 2018). Wages for Housework emerged out of Marxist-Feminist movements of the 1970s through the International Feminist Collective, arguing that unwaged, reproductive labor of the household was indeed a form of labor worthy of compensation. By providing wages for this labor which contributes to commodity production through the reproduction of workers, we can increase the independence of women in the household. This task has historically been fought through strikes on sexual labor and household work (Jaffe 2018).

5. An expansion of all National Labor Relations Act protections to workers in all sectors, regardless of citizenship status and industry. As I have discussed in regards the CIW, the non-coverage of certain protections within the agricultural sector originates in the racialized nature of farm labor (Bales 2009: 47). Today, that labor continues to be racialized, primarily through Latin American and Haitian workers, who are not afforded the same protections as other workers. This is an intersectional issue, these workers are both marginalized as undocumented immigrants and as agricultural workers. To realize class solidarity, we must have all workers active in the US fight from equal footing. Divisions between industries function to divide working class interests. This includes additional demands, such as abolishing ICE which functions to terrorize undocumented immigrants, and expanding protections for all immigrants regardless of citizenship status.
6. Serious steps must be taken to combat climate change and the inevitable destruction which it will bring. The Green New Deal looks to address the dangers assessed in the IPCC special report, and acknowledges the disproportionate responsibility of the United

States and unchecked Capitalism in driving climate change (sunrisemovement.org). Unfortunately, its demands might not be enough - climate change must be combatted on a global scale. While we should look to slow climate change, we also need to put resources into harm reduction and protecting communities that will be most affected by climate disasters. Fighting climate change is an issue of class because while multinational corporations and imperialsit cores contribute the most to greenhouse emmissions and profit off the destruction of our planet, the working class will have to face the actual consequences of climate change. International solidarity, rather than competition, is needed to fight this global problem and ensure the safety of future generations.

Organizational

1. The US Labor movement must become independent from the Democratic Party. While Democratic politicians have situationally supported greater rights for workers, it fundamentally is a party in support of Capital. An alternative political options must be built up - we need a truly representative US Labor Party. Realizing this possibility requires fundamental shifts in the US electoral system, such as the elimination of first past the post elections and the introduction of some form of ranked choice voting which allows voters to rank candidates based on preference, rather than voting for a single candidate and potentially “wasting” their vote on a third party option (ballotpedia.org).
2. Moving towards industrial unionism provides an alternative to the business unionism which currently dominates US labor. Business Unionism, or trade unionism, divides workers between trades, and functions to create partnerships between labor and capital based on an ideology of cooperation (iww.org). The Industrial Workers of the World presents an alternative, for democratic industrial unionism which organizes all workers

under a big tent, with the aim of organizing the working class as a whole. The IWW organizes workers within industries, such that all workers along the supply chain are involved. The success of this model can be found in the CIW, which looks to build solidarity across the agricultural industry. While the IWW is relatively weak, its model provides a viable alternative for organizing workers in the coming decades.

3. Expanded use of strikes and direct action to achieve goals rather than relying on employer based recognition and employee contracts. While contracts and legal recognition of unions are valuable for providing a minimum level of dignity to workers, direct action and strikes enable workers to express the inherent power they have within the workplace to meet their demands (iww.org). Such a process does not depends on majority support by workers within the workplace, rather it allows individual, union affiliated workers to agitate their fellow workers, and fight for change through action. This model has been tested in the Food and Retail Chain Workers organizing Project through the IWW in Portland, Oregon.
4. Increased use of technology, logistics, and data science in organizing will allow us to fight Capital using the immense computing power available to us. The future of organizing should increased use of computing power to gather, interpret, and distribute data on supply chains and chokepoints in industries, so as to optimally target particular industries and workplaces. In addition, expanded use of communications technology will allow workers in precarious positions to organize with less fear of retaliation from their employers.
5. Unemployed, imprisoned, and houseless workers are often excluded from representation within unions. My analysis of the relationship between class and wage labor indicates

that even those who are not currently employed are still marginalized as working class, through their dependence on the wage fund. Future organizing must include these categories as well, and fight against resentment between unemployed and employed workers which often plagues working class cultures. In addition, we must end the forced slave labor of imprisoned workers who are paid little to no wages in for-profit private prison, as is being done by the Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee (incarcerateworkers.org).

While these demands are not exhaustive, they provide a first step towards building power for US workers. Capital, however, functions on a global scale, and the next step will have to be looking towards building international labor movements, which generate solidarity among workers between states and enables workers to organize along international supply chains. Internationalist organizing combats the resentment generated through international competition between higher waged workers in imperialist cores and the cheap labor of the periphery. Capitalists already act in cooperation on a global scale through international corporations and NGOs, it is time for us to take the class struggle to a global scale as well.

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