

## SUGGESTIONS AND DEBATES

### Labour History and the Interlocking Hierarchies of Class, Ethnicity, and Gender: A Canadian Perspective\*

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“No nation is supposed to be so advanced as the British nation, no race so progressive as the white”, declared *Cotton’s Weekly*, the newspaper of the Social Democratic Party of Canada. “BUT HERE IN TORONTO NO CHINESE, NO HINDOOS, NO JAPS, NO INDIANS, NO BLACKS, NO FOREIGNERS NEED BE IMPORTED. WHITE GIRLS AND MEN OF BRITISH BIRTH BREAK THE STRIKES.”<sup>1</sup> It was 1911. The newspaper was commenting on strike-breaking by “white” workers during a strike at a Toronto garment factory where male and female Jews had walked out. The newspaper compared this with cases out West: “In British Columbia when miners rise up in rebellion against the shameful conditions, Chinese are brought into the mines. In this and other western provinces, Japs, Hindoos, and Indians fill the places of the white toilers because they live on cheaper food and under such intolerable conditions no white people can stand it.”<sup>2</sup>

Focusing on the Toronto strike, the newspaper’s disgust with those who refused to join “strikers who are brave enough to struggle for human treatment”<sup>3</sup> centred on the cutters, who were skilled Anglo-Celtic males, and on the Anglo-Celtic female strike-breakers. “Craft Unionism was shown up as selfish”, declared the paper, not only because these cutters scabbed but also because English-speaking men from other craft unions refused the Jewish strikers’ request to try to persuade the cutters to join the strike.<sup>4</sup> Women

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1. *Cotton’s Weekly* (Cowansville, Quebec), 17 August 1911, p. 4 (emphasis in original).

2. *Ibid.* For an analysis of racist views of the alleged inability of non-“white” workers to live up to the “American standard of living” in this period, see Lawrence Glickman, “Inventing the ‘American Standard of Living’: Gender, Race and Working-Class Identity, 1880–1925”, *Labor History*, 34 (1993), pp. 221–235.

3. *Cotton’s Weekly*, 17 August 1911, p. 4.

4. *Ibid.*, 14 September 1911, p. 1.



Figure 1. Children supporting the strike by the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union against the T. Eaton Company in 1912. Over 1,000 Jewish men and women went out on strike, but their non-Jewish co-workers acted as strike-breakers.

*ILGWU Archives. Kheel Centre, Cornell University*

“who have been taught to sing ‘Britons never never shall be slaves’”, were described as “slaving” at work that Jewish strikers “scorn to touch”.<sup>5</sup>

Ethnic and gender concerns intertwined as the newspaper's indignation against the female strike-breakers was heightened by “the injustice of [the women's] act in taking the places of these family men who cannot live on ten dollars per week, a wage that is considered exceptionally good by a single girl”. “OH TORONTO WORKING WOMEN”, exclaimed the newspaper, “WHY BE SO BLIND, SO SELFISH SO HEARTLESS? SHAME ON THE VAUNTED WARMTH OF WOMANLY HEARTS.”<sup>6</sup>

*Cotton's Weekly* thus hoped to turn the strike-breakers around by appealing to two powerful social myths of the time: (1) the alleged superiority of the “white race” and, more specifically, the British, and (2) the belief that women embodied a set of feminine virtues. The sexist aspect of the appeal was based on the idea that women were supposed to be selfless, caring, and

5. *Ibid.*, 20 July 1911, p. 1.

6. *Ibid.*, 17 August 1911, p. 4 (emphasis in original).



Figure 2. Group of activist Jewish fur workers, 1920s, with one man holding the Yiddish communist newspaper. Yiddish-speaking socialists commonly drew on the imagery of slavery, linking socialist struggles to the Biblical account of Moses freeing the Jews from slavery in Egypt. *Archives of Ontario (F1405-23-21 MSR 1508)*

nurturing; to act otherwise was shameful and unwomanly. The racist aspect of the appeal was based on the notion that it was not “white” to scab, nor was it “white” to slave under inhuman conditions. In fact, however, “racial and religious prejudices” were cutting the other way by motivating Anglo-Celtic workers to refuse to go out on strike with these Jewish immigrants from eastern Europe.<sup>7</sup> Jews were not considered “white” in the early twentieth century.<sup>8</sup> Thus while the newspaper warned Anglo-Celtic workers that strike-breaking and “slaving” were associated with people of Asian and African heritage, the Anglo-Celtic workers were apparently more concerned to avoid associating closely with Jews by joining the strike.

As this example highlights, class, ethnic, and gender issues have intertwined historically in complex ways. If we are to understand more fully the development of working-class resistance to exploitation and domination – and the limitations of this resistance – intra-class conflict needs to be taken seriously. A useful framework for this kind of analysis can be built around the concept of interlocking hierarchies. This approach focuses on the different hierarchies within the working class, especially along the lines of ethnicity and gender but also in relation to levels of skill and of unionization. Since some of these hierarchies obviously move beyond the working class itself, this approach also examines the impact of inter-class ties. This framework emphasizes the idea that working-class responses to capitalist development need to be analysed in relation to these different hierarchies.

This paper develops the concept of interlocking hierarchies by focusing on the Canadian situation. While emphasizing the complex dynamics of worker resistance and adaptation, the paper briefly examines the shortcomings of Canadian working-class historiography. The paper then explores the significance of interlocking hierarchies and sketches the ways in which this analytical framework can be applied, first by emphasizing gender issues and secondly by emphasizing ethnicity in the Canadian context, particularly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. (I use the term “ethnicity” broadly in order to avoid using the term “race” as much as possible, so as not to lend credence to the notion that “race” represents a fixed biological category.) In emphasizing ethnicity, the paper focuses first on issues concerning immigrant workers from Asia and then on issues concerning immigrant workers from southern and eastern Europe. While it is difficult to apply the framework to gender and ethnicity simultaneously because of the compartmentalization of most of the historical work in these areas, I have tried to minimize this compartmentalization where possible.

7. *Ibid.*

8. See, for example, Ruth A. Frager, *Sweatshop Strife: Class, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Jewish Labour Movement of Toronto, 1900–1939* (Toronto, 1992), p. 82.

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INTERLOCKING HIERARCHIES

To develop insightful analyses of interlocking hierarchies, our understanding of worker resistance needs to be complemented by a better understanding of workers' adaptations within capitalist society. It is helpful to think of resistance and adaptation as part of a single, complex, historical process, for they have not simply been two opposite poles of behaviour. For example, consider those workers whose responses to poor working conditions consisted of individualized forms of "voting with one's feet" (such as absenteeism or quitting).<sup>9</sup> While this behaviour constituted a form of resistance to particular employers, it also constituted a form of adaptation, for it facilitated the workers' adaptation to poor jobs or jobs that were marginally less poor.

Consider, too, "economistic" strikes in mass-production plants, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s. Such strikes can, of course, be seen as resistance, since workers typically demanded higher wages. But these same "economistic" strikes were typically also rooted in non-economistic issues such as speed-ups, relations to supervisors, health hazards, etc.<sup>10</sup> In sectors such as auto, unions monetized discontent over working conditions and helped redirect collective worker resentment and alienation into individualized consumerism, facilitated by wage gains. Hence "economistic" strikes have also constituted part of a process of adaptation. Moreover, strikes have sometimes served as a kind of safety valve: workers have let off steam by resisting in this way, and this in itself has sometimes advanced the process of adaptation.<sup>11</sup>

Although the interlocking hierarchies of class, ethnicity, and gender have

9. For example, many early twentieth-century Anglo-Celtic women workers reacted to their poor position in the paid labour force by shifting from job to job and even from sector to sector. On this, see: Canada, Department of Labour, *Labour Gazette*, May 1913, p. 1209; *Toronto Star*, 4 June 1912, cited in Irving Abella and David Millar (eds), *The Canadian Worker in the Twentieth Century* (Toronto, 1978), p. 169; and Veronica Strong-Boag, "The Girl of the New Day: Canadian Working Women in the 1920s", *Labour/Le Travail* (1979), p. 137. Non-British women immigrants were generally less mobile because of language problems and the extra discrimination they faced.

10. As James Rinehart argues, "disputes bearing on non-economic matters sometimes get translated into economic demands", mainly because "the collective bargaining process does not easily lend itself to the resolution of non-economic disputes". See James W. Rinehart, "Contradictions of Work-related Attitudes and Behaviour: an Interpretation", *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 15 (1978), p. 9. In addition, workers' specific grievances concerning their jobs have often been related to the level of the workgroup, at most, thereby making it harder to engage in collective bargaining around these issues than around wage increases. Moreover, workers' fundamental dissatisfactions with their jobs may be only dimly articulated by workers themselves.

11. On the issue of certain forms of militancy functioning as safety valves, see Don Wells, "Auto-workers on the Firing Line", in Craig Heron and Robert Storey (eds), *On the Job: Confronting the Labour Process in Canada* (Kingston, Ontario, 1986), pp. 327–352. Wells argues that "the fight for small-scale victories can serve as a safety valve retarding the buildup of discontent [...]" (pp. 328–329).

shaped the dynamics of resistance and adaptation in fundamental ways, labour historians have, until recently, often ignored ethnic and gender issues. Yet, as David Roediger has pointed out in the American context, “white male workers themselves raised the issues of race and gender in fashioning a class identity”.<sup>12</sup>

Traditionally, Canadian labour history has had a narrow institutional focus, much like the early phases of American and British labour histories.<sup>13</sup> In Canada, critiques of this leadership-oriented approach led to the emergence of the new working-class history in the 1970s as a much broader enterprise.<sup>14</sup> Influenced by E. P. Thompson and Herbert Gutman, the practitioners of the new working-class history (particularly in English-speaking Canada) set out to examine the whole of workers’ lives, striving to uncover the roots of resistance to class exploitation and domination. Focusing on craftsmen, pioneering works emphasized the dynamics of workers’ culture on the shop floor and within workers’ communities (e.g. in fraternal associations and pubs, on baseball diamonds, and at union picnics and parades). The founders of the new working-class history especially emphasized the struggles of skilled, Anglo-Celtic, male workers against deskilling in the late nineteenth century.<sup>15</sup>

While this emphasis on craftsmen stemmed from the important roles they have played in both the labour process and the labour movement, the new working-class history still left much out.<sup>16</sup> In recent years, there have been some attempts to bring issues of ethnicity and gender to the forefront of our understanding of Canadian working-class history. Yet historians who have recently enriched our understanding of gender and class have seldom

12. David Roediger, “Race and the Working-Class Past in the United States: Multiple Identities and the Future of Labor History”, *International Review of Social History*, 38 (1993), Supplement, p. 134.

13. The classic example of an institutional history of trade union activities is: Harold Logan, *Trade Unions in Canada* (Toronto, 1948). For a brief critique of the institutional approach, see the introduction to Gregory S. Kealey and Peter Warrian (eds), *Essays in Canadian Working Class History* (Toronto, 1976).

14. In this paper, I use the term “labour history” in the broad sense rather than restricting the use of this term to refer only to traditional, institutional labour history.

15. On the goals of the new working-class history, see the introduction to Kealey and Warrian. For examples of pioneering works, see: Bryan D. Palmer, *A Culture in Conflict: Skilled Workers and Industrial Capitalism in Hamilton, Ontario, 1860–1914* (Montreal, 1979); and Gregory S. Kealey, *Toronto Workers Respond to Industrial Capitalism, 1867–1892* (Toronto, 1980).

16. Although the new working-class history still left much out, some of the early practitioners of the new working-class history did declare that work was needed on women and on ethnicity. See Gregory S. Kealey, “Labour and Working-Class History in Canada: Prospects in the 1980s”, *Labour/Le Travail*, 7 (1981), pp. 67–94. For a detailed historiographic analysis, see Joanne Burgess, “Exploring the Limited Identities of Canadian Labour: Recent Trends in English Canada and Quebec”, *International Journal of Canadian Studies*, 1–2 (Spring–Fall 1990), pp. 149–173. See, also, Franca Iacovetta, “Manly Militants, Cohesive Communities, and Defiant Domestic: Writing about Immigrants in Canadian Historical Scholarship”, *Labour/Le Travail*, 36 (1995), pp. 217–252.

incorporated issues of ethnicity,<sup>17</sup> while historians who have recently contributed to our understanding of ethnicity and class have seldom incorporated issues of gender.<sup>18</sup>

Ethnic and gender relations within the working class have taken shape, of course, in a capitalist context where workers have been forced to compete sharply with one another for jobs and wages.<sup>19</sup> Employers manipulated these divisions to their own advantage, as in the case of a late nineteenth-century clothing manufacturer who frankly admitted: "I don't treat the men bad, but I even up by taking advantage of the women."<sup>20</sup> In this competitive context, a particularly significant hierarchy developed between the unionized and non-unionized sections of the working class. Unions often emerged to restrict job and wage competition from other workers. Of course, unions aided their members in limiting management's power not only to hire and fire workers arbitrarily but also to resort to cheaper labour. Yet, at the same time, measures such as the closed shop and the union hiring hall reinforced the developing hierarchy between the unionized and non-unionized sections of the working class, often further marginalizing women workers and non-"white" males. In effect, organized labour often reflected and reinforced the division between primary and secondary labour markets, thereby undermining the possibility of the development of a broader class-based politics.<sup>21</sup>

Focusing on Anglo-Celtic male workers' responses to class inequality, we need to ask to what extent their resistance has been predicated historically on their efforts to maintain their relatively privileged positions within the hierarchies of ethnicity and gender. This means that we need to look closely at cases where these kinds of workers actually went out on strike to protest the hiring of immigrant male workers and women workers (whether immigrants or not). It also means that we need to examine other ways in which

17. See, for example, Veronica Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled: Lives of Girls and Women in English Canada, 1919–1939* (Toronto, 1988).

18. See, for example, Donald Avery, "Ethnic Loyalties and the Proletarian Revolution: A Case Study of Communist Political Activity in Winnipeg, 1923–1936", in Jorgen Dahlie and Tissa Fernando (eds), *Ethnicity, Power and Politics in Canada* (Toronto, 1981), pp. 68–93. However, Avery's new book incorporates some of the newer work on immigrant women. See Donald Avery, *Reluctant Host: Canada's Response to Immigrant Workers, 1896–1994* (Toronto, 1995).

19. The state and large employers often manipulated the labour supply so as to intensify the scramble for jobs. On Canadian immigration policy and the labour requirements of key employers who sought to avoid unions, at the turn of the twentieth century, see Avery, *Reluctant Host*, pp. 20–42.

20. *Toronto Daily Mail and Empire*, 9 Oct. 1897. This manufacturer indicated that a particular female employee earned less than half of what her male counterpart earned, even though her work was as good as his.

21. On the distinction between the primary and secondary sectors, see David M. Gordon, Richard Edwards, and Michael Reich, *Segmented Work, Divided Workers: The Historical Transformation of Labor in the United States* (New York, 1982), pp. 165–227. Indeed, the seniority system itself has reinforced divisions based on ethnicity and gender in cases where women and male "ethnics" were latecomers to the shop floor.

more privileged workers have historically pressured their employers to preserve the ethnic segmentation of the labour force and the gender division of labour. We also need to understand to what extent the adaptation of Anglo-Celtic male workers has been built on the existence of these very hierarchies and their relatively privileged positions within such hierarchies.

Consider, more specifically, the much-focused-upon struggles of skilled, Anglo-Celtic, male workers against deskilling in the late nineteenth century. These militants were not simply working-class heroes leading the charge against employers who were out to degrade work and cheapen the cost of labour. They were not only fighting against employers but they were also often fighting to maintain their own relatively privileged position within the working class. To the extent that these skilled workers sometimes succeeded in their protests against deskilling and the “dilution” of labour, they were reinforcing hierarchies within this class. In certain cases, their resistance to employers had been specifically triggered by the ways in which changes to the labour process threatened their relatively privileged positions within these other hierarchies. This entailed not only resistance but also built-in limits to the development of broad-based working-class opposition to capital.

Thus the ways in which these hierarchies interlocked had a contradictory impact, both promoting and limiting resistance. Key components of working-class militancy were rooted in the exclusivism of Anglo-Celtic male workers (especially among those who possessed highly marketable skills). Indeed, commonly held ethnic and gender prejudices could promote strong bonds of *solidarity* for those who were relatively privileged in terms of these other hierarchies within the working class. But this was an intrinsically restricted solidarity.

#### EMPHASIZING GENDER

Women’s historians have begun to analyse the limitations of skilled, male, Anglo-Celtic workers’ militancy in particular historical circumstances, and related developments are emerging in the newer field of gender history as well. The case of the printing trades is instructive. Twenty years ago, Gregory Kealey’s pioneering article portrayed the printers’ struggles against deskilling and other management offensives in late nineteenth-century Toronto. This article, which helped shape the emergence of the new working-class history in Canada, focused on issues of workers’ control and depicted the union’s success in controlling the new linotype machine as an unqualified victory for labour.<sup>22</sup>

Recent work by Christina Burr, however, indicates that developments in

22. Gregory S. Kealey, “The Honest Workingman’ and Workers’ Control: The Experience of Toronto Skilled Workers, 1860–1892”, *Labour/Le Travail*, 1 (1976), pp. 32–68.



the late nineteenth-century printing trades need to be seen in gendered terms. Burr maintains that newspaper publishers drew a parallel between operating a linotype machine and operating a typewriter. The latter was clearly seen as women's work by then, and the newspaper publishers set out to define linotype work as women's work too, thereby anticipating lower labour costs. Like Kealey, Burr finds that the union succeeded in its struggles to exert control over the operation of the linotype machine in that period, particularly in Toronto, for the union used militant tactics to persuade employers that only skilled, unionized workers could operate the linotype machines, at wage rates that were regulated by the union. Burr, however, analyses these developments differently. "Rather than joining with the women machine operators in the struggle with employers", she argues, "male unionists succeeded in protecting their own craft interests."<sup>23</sup> Although Burr does not assess the potential for such a male–female alliance in this particular historical situation, she has uncovered the exclusivist roots of male militancy in this case. The male printers' resistance to their employers stemmed from the way in which the employers' use of female linotype operators threatened the men's relatively privileged position. This was a powerful spur to resistance, but its class basis stopped short at the gender divide.

Shirley Tillotson's study of telegraph workers in early twentieth-century urban Canada raises related issues. Tillotson examines the ways in which skill was defined in masculine terms at the outset, despite some important similarities in the work that men and women performed in this sector. When technological change led to a redefinition of skill in this industry (particularly during World War I), the new definition still linked skill to masculinity. The union enforced the new definition in a major strike in 1917. Tillotson concludes that "masculinity retained its promise of higher wages and superior status". "When the fulfilment of this promise was jeopardized by technological change", she explains, "unionists [...] forced employers both to reaffirm the entitlements of skill and to entrench gender hierarchy in the industry."<sup>24</sup>

Was this 1917 strike, then, a victory for labour? Clearly, we have to cease thinking of "labour" in a narrow, skill-centred, male-oriented fashion, if we are more fully to understand complex issues of resistance and adaptation.

23. Christina Burr, "Defending 'The Art Preservative': Class and Gender Relations in the Printing Trades Unions, 1850–1914", *Labour/Le Travail*, 31 (1993), p. 58. In examining a number of other aspects of the printing trades (such as males' and females' jobs in binderies), Burr further indicates that male unionists reinforced a gender division of labour which privileged themselves. Moreover, a study of early twentieth-century women workers in Montreal has demonstrated that unionized male bookbinders went on strike in 1904 to force management to fire women. On this, see Marie Lavigne and Jennifer Stoddart, "Ouvrières et Travailleuses Montréalaises, 1900–1940", in Marie Lavigne and Yolande Pinard (eds), *Les Femmes dans la Société Québécoise* (Montréal, 1977), p. 140.

24. Shirley Tillotson, "We May All Soon Be 'First-Class Men': Gender and Skill in Canada's Early Twentieth-Century Urban Telegraph Industry", *Labour/Le Travail*, 27 (1991), p. 124.

As Tillotson's work suggests, the concept of the social construction of skill is itself central to the analysis of male workers' efforts to reinforce the gender division of labour. In this strike, male telegraphers' solidarity stemmed from the threat to their relatively privileged position as males on the shop floor – a powerful but limited form of working-class solidarity.

Male printers and male telegraphers were not the only ones who fought to reinforce a gender-based hierarchy on the shop floor so as to retain their own advantages. A recent study of textile workers during the Second World War suggests important parallels. Focusing on this industry in Cornwall, Ontario, Ellen Scheinberg indicates that in the midst of the growing wartime shortage of "manpower", management finally decided to set aside temporarily the customary gender division of labour. But the union opposed such change. "Prompted by the desire to preserve their dominant position in the mills, the union men actually undermined the female members' chances for advancement by fighting for the perpetuation of occupational segregation."<sup>25</sup> In addition, male union leaders framed the union's wage demands in ways that helped maintain large differentials between women's pay and men's pay. Hence, during the war itself, "Cornwall's female textile workers, on the whole, remained relegated to the same low-paying unskilled jobs that they had occupied before the war."<sup>26</sup> Perhaps the maintenance of male privilege helped push the men to adapt to class inequality more broadly. Moreover, although Scheinberg (like Burr and Tillotson) does not examine gender dynamics in relation to ethnicity, management's threat to alter the gender division of labour, in this case, may have facilitated the development of strong inter-ethnic ties among the male textile workers.<sup>27</sup>

As Gillian Creese has argued in her study of sexism in the early twentieth-century Vancouver labour movement, "although many social historians have chosen to ignore the heterogeneity, contradictions, and conflicts within working-class experiences, these should be recognized as essential elements of the 'making' of classes".<sup>28</sup> Indeed, in some cases, male workers were so

25. Ellen Scheinberg, "The Tale of Tessie the Textile Worker: Female Textile Workers in Cornwall During World War II", *Labour/Le Travail*, 33 (1994), p. 172.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 180. Developments related to the Second World War stirred up considerable controversy concerning the employment of women in a number of other sectors in Canada as well. At the Ford plant in Windsor, Ontario, in the midst of the War, many men struck against the hiring of lower-paid women workers. On this, see Pamela Sugiman, *Labour's Dilemma: The Gender Politics of Auto Workers in Canada, 1937–1979* (Toronto, 1994), pp. 43–45; and Donald M. Wells, "Origins of Canada's Wagner Model of Industrial Relations: The United Auto Workers in Canada and the Suppression of 'Rank and File' Unionism, 1936–1953", *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 20 (1995), p. 202.

27. Although Scheinberg indicates that Cornwall's textile mills encompassed a multi-ethnic workforce, she has little to say about the significance of ethnicity. On the ethnic composition of the workforce, see Scheinberg, pp. 159–160, 168.

28. Gillian Creese, "The Politics of Dependence: Women, Work and Unemployment in the Vancouver Labour Movement Before World War II", in Gregory S. Kealey (ed.), *Class, Gender, and Region: Essays in Canadian Historical Sociology* (St. John's, Newfoundland, 1988), p. 122. On

deeply committed to the exclusion of women that they were prepared to make unusual compromises with their employers. James Naylor's study of Ontario labour during the First World War reveals a case where iron moulders struck to protest the hiring of women in the core room. These union men won their demand that the company fire the women and install a core machine instead. As Naylor explains, "the men were willing to allow the company to 'dilute' their labour by means of technological innovation in preference to hiring women".<sup>29</sup>

During the First World War, Toronto's street railway workers also fought to exclude women. These unionized men threatened to strike if women were hired. As Naylor demonstrates, "the union even hinted at a willingness to accept the introduction of pay-as-you-enter cars in preference to hiring women", even though the introduction of these cars would mean the elimination of half the jobs on the street cars. "That such a permanently damaging measure was preferred to the hiring of women", explains Naylor, "reveals the depth of the men's commitment to the existing division of labour."<sup>30</sup>

Of course, this is not to say that male workers always opposed women workers, nor did male workers' militancy always stem from men's concerns to reinforce a gender-based hierarchy. Nonetheless, we now have enough evidence of cases where these elements were crucial; hence we need to keep these issues front and centre in our efforts to understand working-class responses to class inequality. In so doing, we need to examine how these different hierarchies interlocked in different ways in particular historical situations.<sup>31</sup>

To explore these issues, we need to investigate the social construction of masculinity and femininity in specific historical circumstances, while taking ethnic variations into account. As Linda Kealey has emphasized in her recent

male unionists' negative attitudes toward women workers in Vancouver, see also Marie Campbell, "Sexism in British Columbia Trade Unions, 1900–1920", in Barbara Latham and Cathy Kess (eds), *In Her Own Right: Selected Essays on Women's History in BC* (Victoria, BC, 1980), pp. 167–186. For an interesting example of male unionists' negative attitudes in Ontario in the same period, see Ruth Frager, "No Proper Deal: Women Workers and the Canadian Labour Movement, 1870–1940", in Linda Briskin and Lynda Yanz (eds), *Union Sisters: Women in the Labour Movement* (Toronto, 1983), p. 51.

29. James Naylor, *The New Democracy: Challenging the Social Order in Industrial Ontario, 1914–25* (Toronto, 1991), p. 131. There were, of course, other examples of men striking to protest the employers' increased use of women workers to "dilute" the paid labour force in the midst of the First World War. On strikes by male cigar-makers in Montreal, for example, see Geoffrey Ewen, "Quebec: Class and Ethnicity", in Craig Heron (ed.), *The Workers' Revolt in Canada, 1917–1925* (Toronto, 1998), p. 107.

30. Naylor, p. 133. For information on organized labour's attitudes toward "the dilution of labour" through the introduction of women workers during the First World War, see Frager, "No Proper Deal", pp. 51–53.

31. On American historians' efforts to build a gendered labour history, see, for example, Ava Baron, "Gender and Labor History: Learning from the Past, Looking to the Future", in Ava Baron (ed.), *Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor* (Ithaca, NY, 1991), pp. 1–46.

study of Canadian women and the labour movement at the turn of the twentieth century, the attitudes and actions of working-class females and males in this period need to be analysed in the context of deep beliefs that women and men were fundamentally different by nature.<sup>32</sup>

Masculinity and militancy have been deeply and contradictorily linked, as Steven Penfold has explained in his study of Cape Breton coal towns in the 1920s. For the miners, states Penfold, “‘real men’ were defined as those who maintained solidarity with their fellow workmen” and were not afraid to oppose the company. “Real men” were also the family breadwinners, and the miners’ militancy stemmed partly from their concerns that they were not earning enough to support their families adequately. Activist miners appealed to these aspects of masculinity, but, as Penfold also demonstrates, opponents of militancy also appealed to the miners’ sense of masculinity. Hence a particular newspaper “appealed to the miners’ breadwinner identity to try to convince them to stay on the job”, arguing that the strike would deprive thousands of men of the opportunity to support their families.<sup>33</sup> Anti-strike newspapers generally claimed that the strikes were caused by left-wing agitators and that those miners who went along with these agitators were cowardly rather than manly and independent. Although Penfold does not focus on ethnic issues as well, he tellingly quotes a government official who declared that the tactic of “striking on the job” (i.e. engaging in a slowdown) was “unBritish, unCanadian, and cowardly” – indeed unmanly.<sup>34</sup> As this study illustrates, the multiple and, at times, conflicting meanings of masculinity (particularly English-Canadian masculinity in this case) had a direct bearing on class issues.

Sometimes, male workers’ emphasis on masculinity as toughness actually dampened militancy. Mark Rosenfeld’s study of railway workers, from 1920 to 1950, stresses this aspect of the social construction of masculinity with its emphasis on being tough enough to do really hard work and put up with harsh working conditions.<sup>35</sup> As Thomas Dunk has pointed out in a more

32. Linda Kealey, *Enlisting Women for the Cause: Women, Labour, and the Left in Canada, 1890–1920* (Toronto, 1998), pp. 8, 142.

33. Steven Penfold, “‘Have You No Manhood in You?’: Gender and Class in the Cape Breton Coal Towns, 1920–26”, in Joy Parr and Mark Rosenfeld (eds), *Gender and History in Canada* (Toronto, 1996), p. 274.

34. The quotation is from a newspaper account (in 1922), cited in Penfold, p. 276.

35. Mark Rosenfeld, “‘It Was a Hard Life’: Class and Gender in the Work and Family Rhythms of a Railway Town, 1920–1950”, in Chad Gaffield (ed.), *Constructing Modern Canada: Readings in Post-Confederation History* (Toronto, 1994), pp. 342, 357. Wayne Lewchuk’s work on early Ford workers raises related issues in the American context. Lewchuk emphasizes the idea that “working hard – in the company of other men, on a useful product, and being paid well for it – would make Ford workers manly, even though the work itself was repetitive, boring, and devoid of many of the elements of autonomy and control that were characteristic of nineteenth-century skilled labour”. See Wayne A. Lewchuk, “Men and Monotony: Fraternalism as a Managerial Strategy at the Ford Motor Company”, *The Journal of Economic History*, 53 (1993), p. 852. For a discussion of competing notions of masculinity among a group of Ontario furniture workers, particularly in

recent context, focusing on the resource sector in Northern Ontario, “the boredom and alienation of this kind of wage labour is overcome by interpreting it as a test of masculinity. Workers prove their worth as men by their ability to withstand dirt, noise, danger, and boredom. Working conditions are ‘read’ as a challenge to masculinity, rather than as an expression of the exploitation of capitalist relations of production”.<sup>36</sup>

This was a racialized notion of masculinity, for the “white” male workers in this northern sector defined themselves in contrast to the racist stereotype of lazy, degenerate Indians, a stereotype that has deep historical roots in Canada. Here, the highly charged image of aboriginals as welfare bums contrasted with the image of the “real men’s” willingness to persist at tough and boring jobs.<sup>37</sup> This illustrates the ways in which the social construction of both “whiteness” and masculinity, intertwining together, could serve as a mechanism of social control.

Male workers’ emphasis on masculinity as toughness also cut the other way.<sup>38</sup> In situations where male workers felt they were being treated in ways that “real men” would not tolerate, male workers could resort to militancy. For many Anglo-Celtic male workers, their sense of entitlement to fair wages and decent working conditions would have been augmented by their sense of “racial” superiority and their sense that Canada was *their* country. Yet if “real men” fought back because of an affront to their dignity as men – particularly as “white” men – this suggests a powerful and yet limited basis of solidarity since it left aside women workers (whether “white” or not) and non-“white” male workers. The logic of such an orientation was to preclude viewing the situation in broader class terms.

Moreover, the relatively privileged position of male workers, particularly skilled Anglo-Celtic males, was conducive to the maintenance of class inequality. Even if their own working conditions and wages were hardly ideal, they had the consolation of being better off than women workers and non-“white” males. This was not merely a symbolic issue, for male workers had material interests at stake. As we have seen, there were specific situations where employers paid male employees relatively well and would “even up by taking advantage of the women”.<sup>39</sup> More broadly, in the context of the systematic devaluation of the work of women and non-“white” males, “white” men reaped immediate material benefits relative to these less

the 1920s, see Joy Parr, *The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men, and Change in Two Industrial Towns, 1880–1950* (Toronto, 1990), pp. 140–164.

36. Thomas W. Dunk, *It’s a Working Man’s Town: Male Working-Class Culture in Northwestern Ontario* (Kingston, Ontario, 1991), p. 97.

37. Dunk, pp. 114, 130. For evidence of this stereotype in the 1800s, see, for example, Alicja Muszynski, *Cheap Wage Labour: Race and Gender in the Fisheries of British Columbia* (Kingston, Ontario, 1996), p. 96.

38. On this aspect of masculinity, see Rosenfeld, “‘It Was a Hard Life’”, pp. 353, 357.

39. The quotation is from the *Toronto Daily Mail and Empire*, 9 October 1897.

privileged segments of the paid labour force. Yet this was at the cost of greater gains that might have been made in the long term as part of a more unified and militant working-class politics. In addition, cross-class ties of masculinity may have dampened militancy not only because of personal ties in organizations such as fraternal lodges but especially because manhood could serve as a basis for collective identity in ways which could limit the development of male workers' class identity.<sup>40</sup> Since cross-class ties of masculinity were often augmented by ties of "whiteness", class identity could be further muted.

The behaviour of women workers, too, needs to be analysed from a perspective that emphasizes the meanings of gender roles in the context of interlocking hierarchies. Some women's historians have worked to uncover women militants and socialists so as to debunk the image of women workers as passive in the face of their own exploitation. Yet we need to be more careful to distinguish between the extent to which women mobilized on behalf of what they saw as working-class struggles and the extent to which women mobilized against their own oppression as women. We also need to do more to examine the complex relations between these two forms of struggle, while examining the impact of ethnicity on these relations as well.<sup>41</sup>

I have addressed these issues in a study of the history of Toronto's Jewish labour movement. Examination of this particular section of Canadian

40. On the significance of fraternal lodges and cross-class ties of masculinity in the American context at the turn of the twentieth century, see Mary Ann Clawson, *Constructing Brotherhood: Class, Gender, and Fraternalism* (Princeton, NJ, 1989), especially pp. 15, 251–252, 256, 259. For a historical analysis of the ways in which cross-class ties of masculinity could help obscure class differences in the American automobile industry, see Lisa M. Fine, "Our Big Factory Family': Masculinity and Paternalism at the Reo Motor Car Company at Lansing, Michigan", *Labor History*, 34 (1993), pp. 274–291. On male British workers' efforts to claim male privileges that middle-class men enjoyed in the first half of the nineteenth century, see Anna Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches: Gender and the Making of the British Working Class* (Berkeley, CA, 1995).

41. Until fairly recently, however, the very legitimacy of feminist labour history was repeatedly challenged by androcentric labour historians. They argued that feminist labour historians were reading present-day concerns into the past and were therefore asking the wrong questions. This, charged the critics, was ahistorical. These critics maintained that feminist ideas were historically restricted to certain middle-class women's groups and were simply not available to working-class women. Hence the critics questioned the legitimacy of asking whether or not particular groups of working-class women militants or socialists developed analyses of aspects of their own oppression as women.

For the most part, we have moved beyond this roadblock, partly because of the work that women's historians have undertaken to refute the image of feminist ideas as entirely restricted to middle-class women's organizations. Janice Newton's work on the early Canadian Left and Joan Sangster's work on the Canadian Left from 1920 to 1950 have demonstrated the existence of significant feminist currents within certain socialist organizations. If these feminist ideas did not spread far, then surely it is a legitimate question to ask why not. See: Janice Newton, *The Feminist Challenge to the Canadian Left, 1900–1918* (Kingston, Ontario, 1995); Joan Sangster, *Dreams of Equality: Women on the Canadian Left, 1920–1950* (Toronto, 1989); and, most recently, Linda Kealey, *Enlisting Women for the Cause*.

labour also enables us to appreciate the extent to which notions of masculinity and femininity need to be analysed within the context of particular ethnic cultures. The cultural background of immigrant Jews from eastern Europe emphasized women's subordination, especially in the crucial religious sphere, but did so in ways that differed significantly from the Victorian "cult of true womanhood". Traditionally, Jewish women were not seen as passive, weak, and exclusively domestic. Nor did traditional eastern European Jewish culture emphasize a brawny masculinity, for the ideal Jewish man was a religious scholar. Indeed, in a situation where severe anti-Semitism had generally precluded Jews from farming, brawniness was typically and negatively associated with non-Jewish – and often viciously anti-Semitic – males. Although notions of Jewish masculinity and femininity were undergoing change, the historical emphasis on religious scholarship for males meant that Jewish women were traditionally seen as having important roles to play in the marketplace, struggling for a living for their families, in the context of widespread poverty. Moreover, many immigrant Jews toiled in the garment industry, and this was not the sort of work that promoted notions of rugged masculinity. In this context, immigrant Jewish women workers had more scope to develop as labour activists.

In Toronto, socialist Jewish women, as well as Jewish men, played militant roles in the city's garment unions, particularly in the inter-war years. Yet the women's radical critique of class oppression did not lead them to develop a critique of their own oppression as women. Indeed, the very nature of their class analysis, coupled with their strong ethnic identity, tended to preclude a strong feminist analysis. Oriented toward class, female and male Jewish radicals stressed the common interests of men and women workers, so that at the level of their articulated socialist ideology, there was little, if any, recognition that women workers faced special problems. Female Jewish radicals did not develop a critique of the gender division of labour on the shop floor nor were they critical of the significant differentials between women's pay and men's pay in this industry. In fact, they believed that men should have better wages because males were the family breadwinners. Moreover, they tended not to question the fact that the Jewish labour movement was mainly led by males. In effect, these radical women were incorporated into the Jewish labour movement on the basis of their own subordination. Nonetheless, they contributed to "the class struggle" in vital ways.<sup>42</sup>

If we are to understand how gender and class hierarchies interlocked in particular historical circumstances, care must be taken to avoid assuming that developments that have expanded women's traditional roles were *ipso facto* feminist. In this context, the concept of gender-role elasticity is useful. In certain historical situations, female gender roles have stretched beyond

42. Frager, *Sweatshop Strife*, pp. 149–154, 212–214.

traditional confines to enable women to play unusually active parts in struggles to resolve certain social issues. In such cases, female gender roles have sometimes snapped back into place once the particular contingencies have been dealt with.<sup>43</sup> In other cases, female roles may have stretched so far (or perhaps for so long) that the very conception of what constitutes “normal” female roles has itself shifted. Elasticity has its limits: under certain circumstances, female roles may stretch to the point of a far-reaching break with traditional norms. Since the extension of women’s roles has led to a commitment to feminism in certain situations but not in others, historians need to examine the nature of these dynamics carefully, especially in the context of issues of ethnicity. Careful empirical analyses of issues of gender-role elasticity may help clarify complex relations between socialism and feminism and between class and gender more broadly. These issues are particularly important if we are seeking more fully to understand working-class responses to class inequality by analysing these responses in relation to hierarchies within the working class. As the case of the Jewish labour movement illustrates, a more inclusive form of working-class activism might still have incorporated women on the basis of their own subordination.

If we are going to emphasize interlocking hierarchies so as to move beyond more simplistic notions of workers’ resistance to employers, we also need to do more to broaden our focus beyond “the workplace” itself – in ways that are less androcentric than focusing on the roles of pubs and baseball diamonds in promoting male solidarity. This is especially important if we are to advance our understanding of working-class women’s responses to class inequality. Toronto’s immigrant Jewish women, for example, took part in a whole series of consumer boycotts in the first four decades of the twentieth century. The women launched these boycotts to combat sharp increases in the prices of particular kosher food products. Such class activism constituted a gendered response, focusing on “the point of consumption” rather than “the point of production”, and the activists saw this tactic as an important way of standing up for their class interests.<sup>44</sup>

Penfold’s examination of the Cape Breton coal towns also emphasizes the need to look beyond “the workplace”. In addition to examining masculinity in the context of coal miners’ strikes, Penfold examines issues of gender and class relating to women as well. He views strike activity “not as centred

43. The participation of women in certain nationalist causes sometimes fit into this pattern. Women’s traditional roles would stretch in circumstances where a nationalist emergency meant that even women had to be mobilized (in unusual ways). Yet the main goal may have been to shore up nationalist developments that would emphasize women’s traditional roles in the family, especially once the emergency had passed.

44. Frager, *Sweatshop Strife*, pp. 36–37; and Ruth A. Frager, “Politicized Housewives in the Jewish Communist Movement of Toronto, 1923–1933”, in Linda Kealey and Joan Sangster (eds), *Beyond the Vote: Canadian Women and Politics* (Toronto, 1989), pp. 264–266.



primarily in the workplace, but as a process of community mobilization".<sup>45</sup> He highlights the valuable activities of the miners' non-waged female kin who participated in many different forms of strike support, including crowd action against strike-breakers and soldiers. Moreover, Penfold argues that "the domestic labour of women itself constituted a hidden form of strike support".<sup>46</sup> When strikers' families suffered from shortages of food and clothing, women's skill at "making ends meet" became an important aspect of labour militancy.<sup>47</sup> More broadly, we need to examine the extent to which women's domestic labour has taken on public and political dimensions, under specific historical circumstances.

Thus it is that in moving beyond "the workplace", American historian Alice Kessler-Harris calls for a fundamental reconceptualization of our very notion of class. Arguing that labour history has defined class in male terms, she maintains that: "[...] we have to lay siege to the central paradigm of labor history, namely that the male-centered workplace is the locus from which the identity, behavior, social relations and consciousness of working people ultimately emanates".<sup>48</sup> Emphasizing "the ways in which relations of class are constructed out of a gendered sense of self",<sup>49</sup> she usefully reconceptualizes class as "an outgrowth of a broader system of production that includes family, home and community".<sup>50</sup>

#### EMPHASIZING ETHNICITY

Beyond this, working-class responses to capitalist development need to be analysed not only in relation to gender hierarchy but also in relation to hierarchies based on ethnicity and ultimately on the complex relations among these different kinds of hierarchies. Kessler-Harris's emphasis on a much broader, gendered conception of class also paves the way for a deeper understanding of the role of ethnicity in the construction of class relations. Ethnic identity – not simply in the workplace but also in the home and community – has been crucial to issues of class formation, in Canada as in the United States and elsewhere.

As David Roediger has argued in the American context, extensive examination of "the interplay of race, gender, and class" must be central to our understanding of labour history. Otherwise, "we will not only miss much

45. Penfold, p. 271.

46. *Ibid.*

47. *Ibid.*, p. 278.

48. Alice Kessler-Harris, "Treating the Male as 'Other': Redefining the Parameters of Labor History", *Labor History*, 34 (1993), p. 195.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 196.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 199. For a discussion of related themes, see Sonya O. Rose, "Gender and Labor History: The Nineteenth-Century Legacy", *International Review of Social History*, 38 (1993), Supplement, pp. 145–162.

in the histories of those workers who were not white men but will also misapprehend the consciousness of those for whom maleness and paleness shaped class identity".<sup>51</sup> In examining these issues, we need to emphasize the social construction of "race" and recognize ways in which the use of the term has changed over time. While "people of colour" have been most severely racialized, immigrants from areas such as southern and eastern Europe were not deemed "really white" in the early twentieth century.<sup>52</sup> We cannot understand the reactions of "real whites" to class inequality unless we examine closely relations between ethnicity and class in a gendered context.

Clearly US labour history is distinctive because slavery and, later, the emergence of an African-American proletariat has had a decisive impact in dividing and weakening the American working class. Ethnic hostilities and tensions have been crucial to the development of the Canadian working class as well. Long-lasting divisions between English-Canadians and French-Canadians – Canada's "two founding races" – have been rooted in the subordination of the French since "the Conquest". This subordination (dramatically revealed in the historical admonition that French-Canadians should "speak white" instead of using their own language) has been reflected in the disadvantaged position of French-Canadians in the ethnic segmentation of the paid labour force. In this context – and that of the cultural and physical genocide of native peoples – waves of immigrants to Canada, many of neither British nor French heritage, have been inserted into increasingly finely articulated layers of inter-ethnic hierarchy. These immigrants have had their own ethnic prejudices, and there have been dramatic cases of ethnically-based competition among Canadian workers. In addition to fundamental hostility toward indigenous peoples and to the pivotal divide between Canada's French and English "solitudes", working-class responses to class inequality were also strongly forged in the context of hysteria about "the yellow peril" in British Columbia and widespread animosity toward immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, among other forms of "race" prejudice.<sup>53</sup> To illustrate the significance of interlocking hierarchies, this

51. Roediger, "Race and the Working-Class Past in the United States [...]", p. 142.

52. See, for example, Robert A. J. McDonald, *Making Vancouver, 1863–1913* (Vancouver 1996), pp. 202, 208, which indicates that immigrants from southern Europe were not deemed "white" in early twentieth-century Vancouver. See, also, John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860–1925* (New York, 1971), pp. 168–169, 172–173.

53. On the disadvantaged position of French-Canadians in the paid labour force, see, for example, Daniel Drache, "The Formation and Fragmentation of the Canadian Working Class, 1820–1920", *Studies in Political Economy*, 15 (1984), pp. 43–89. For interesting work on the significance of indigenous peoples' waged labour, see John Lutz, "After the Fur Trade: The Aboriginal Labouring Class of British Columbia, 1849–1890", *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, 3 (1992), pp. 69–93; and Steven High, "Native Wage Labour and Independent Production During the 'Era of Irrelevance'", *Labour/Le Travail*, 37 (1996), pp. 243–264. The inaccurate assumption that native people have not been wage workers has made it easier for labour historians to minimize the importance of "race".

section of the paper focuses primarily on issues relating to immigrant workers from Asia and from southern and eastern Europe.<sup>54</sup>

The racist currents of British imperialism have deeply influenced Canadians, particularly Anglo-Celtic Canadians. In addition, the intensity of the American influence on Canada, historically, has meant that American experiences of “race” relations have played a significant role in the development of the Canadian working class. In addition to the impact of American culture more broadly, American economic penetration of Canada has been important, especially where it took the form of American branch plants. Canada’s industrial heartland has been close to key American industrial cities such as Detroit, and Canada’s mining areas have often been contiguous with those of the United States. In a context where many American and Canadian workers crossed and recrossed the border to find jobs, the American labour movement often dominated the Canadian labour movement.<sup>55</sup>

In this historical context, Canadian workers who considered themselves “white” sometimes framed their resistance to their employers in terms of opposition to “white slavery”. Although this term was often used in a different way, to refer to the forcing of “white” females into prostitution, the term’s use in this context is telling. Late nineteenth-century Halifax bakers, for example, felt that it was not legitimate for their employers to “enslave” “white men” through long hours and low pay. Their resistance was thus partly rooted in their indignation that they – specifically as “white men” – were being treated so badly.<sup>56</sup>

Ties of “whiteness” could promote a powerful form of solidarity among workers who were deemed “white”, especially when this ethnic solidarity was coupled with ties of masculinity. Notions of male superiority and white supremacy were deeply intertwined historically, and key components of workers’ militancy were rooted in the exclusivism of “white men”. To an

54. I am focusing on issues relating to these particular groups because the available material concerning these groups best enables me to develop my main themes. In addition, this section of the paper focuses on males partly because the sex ratios were so skewed among immigrants from southern and eastern Europe and especially among immigrants from Asia, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The focus on males is also a product of the shortcomings of the available literature. For an interesting study that contains information on the paid and unpaid labour of Italian immigrant women in Toronto in the aftermath of the Second World War, see Franca Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People: Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto* (Kingston, Ontario, 1992).

55. On the American domination of the Canadian labour movement, see, for example, Robert H. Babcock, *Gompers in Canada: A Study in American Continentalism before the First World War* (Toronto, 1974); and Irving Martin Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour* (Toronto, 1973).

56. Ian McKay, “Capital and Labour in the Halifax Baking and Confectionery Industry During the Last Half of the Nineteenth Century”, *Labour/Le Travail*, 3 (1978), pp. 88–89, 102. “White slavery” was also an issue during a strike of Hamilton’s street railway workers in this period. On this, see Palmer, *A Culture in Conflict*, p. 209.

important extent, “white” males’ resistance to employers was a product of their efforts to reinforce their own relatively privileged position in terms of ethnic and gender hierarchies. At the same time, these forms of resistance also fostered the adaptation of these relatively privileged men, while the exclusivist element of this resistance limited the possibilities of class-based resistance.

Historical work on the relations between Euro-Canadian workers and immigrant Asian workers provides a good opportunity to examine these issues. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Euro-Canadian labour movement in British Columbia was deeply racist. “White” workers did not passively reflect the prejudice against Asians that was so prevalent in this region at this time. They actively contributed to the racialization of immigrant workers from China, Japan, and India (the vast majority of whom were males). Euro-Canadian workers helped define Chinese immigrant workers, for example, as a separate – and inferior – “race”, an ostensibly fixed biological group which allegedly possessed certain negative social characteristics such as servility and effeteness, in contrast to the allegedly superior and manly “white” workers.<sup>57</sup> In part, the image of immigrant Chinese men as emasculated was linked to their small stature and to the fact that a significant number of them worked in restaurants, laundries, and fish canneries at jobs that were seen as similar to “women’s work”.<sup>58</sup> This emphasis on effeteness was also bound up with the notion that “the yellow race” was intrinsically cowardly. As Madge Pon has emphasized, “yellowness was not ‘somewhere’ in Chinese men’s character, it was constructed as the very essence of Chinese manhood”.<sup>59</sup> Hence immigrant Chinese men could not become really manly by working hard at rugged work such as mining. From the point of view of the “white” labour movement, such hard work was seen as evidence of Chinese servility, and immigrant Chinese miners were often seen as submitting to inhuman conditions that “white” men would not tolerate.

“White” manhood itself thus rested on a delicate balance. While it was often considered manly to be tough enough to work hard under difficult

57. On the racialization of Asian immigrants, see, for example, Vic Satzewich, “Racisms: The Reactions to Chinese Migrants in Canada at the Turn of the Century”, *International Sociology*, 4 (1989), pp. 311–327; and Audrey Kobayashi and Peter Jackson, “Japanese Canadians and the Racialization of Labour in the British Columbia Sawmill Industry”, *BC Studies*, 103 (1994), pp. 33–58. See, also, Kay J. Anderson, *Vancouver’s Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875–1980* (Kingston, Ontario, 1991), pp. 9–33.

58. See, for example, Nancy M. Forestell, “Bachelors, Boarding-Houses, and Blind Pigs: Gender Construction in a Multi-Ethnic Mining Camp, 1909–1920”, in Franca Iacovetta *et al.* (eds), *A Nation of Immigrants: Women, Workers, and Communities in Canadian History, 1840s–1960s* (Toronto, 1998), p. 262.

59. Madge Pon, “Like a Chinese Puzzle: The Construction of Chinese Masculinity in Jack Canuck”, in Joy Parr and Mark Rosenfeld (eds), *Gender and History in Canada* (Toronto, 1996), p. 96. On the alleged effeteness of immigrant Chinese men, see also Muszynski, pp. 148–150, 157.

conditions, if one worked too hard and put up with too much, one risked being seen as unmanly and not “white” enough. Then, too, if one did not work hard enough, one again risked being seen as unmanly and insufficiently “white”.

The Euro-Canadian labour movement in BC often reinforced the sharp ethnic hierarchy which situated Asian immigrants at the very bottom. Sometimes “white” labour activists struggled to reinforce this hierarchy through resistance to employers, for there were a number of strikes where “white” workers demanded the firing of Asian immigrants. Striking Euro-Canadian coalminers on Vancouver Island made such demands in 1883 and again in 1912–1913, for example. This type of resistance to employers could become intertwined with violence against “Orientals”. During the 1912–1913 strike, for instance, a group of strikers rioted in “Chinatown”.<sup>60</sup> Euro-Canadian labour activists in BC also turned to political action to reinforce the subordination of Asian immigrants, campaigning not only to end immigration from Asia but also to bring about legislation that would restrict job possibilities for “Orientals” in the province.<sup>61</sup> Although capitalists were not united in their responses to legislative proposals to exclude Asian immigrants from certain jobs, key employers and their political allies opposed such legislation, not because they opposed racism but because they felt that such measures would strengthen the Euro-Canadian labour movement.<sup>62</sup>

The impact of all of this on class dynamics in BC was complex. At one level, the “white” labour movement sometimes succeeded in reducing low-wage competition from Asian immigrants. Employers habitually paid “Oriental” workers less than comparable “white” workers and counted on the docility of Asian immigrants, often using them as strike-breakers. In situations where “white” workers’ workplace struggles had little chance of wrenching direct economic concessions from large corporations, there was a certain logic to trying to reduce the labour supply by fighting against

60. Paul Phillips, “The Underground Economy: The Mining Frontier to 1920”, in Rennie Warburton and David Coburn (eds), *Workers, Capital, and the State in British Columbia* (Vancouver, 1988), p. 43; and Avery, *Reluctant Host*, pp. 57–58. Another riot took place in connection with the Knights of Labor’s efforts to help mobilize “whites” to force “Orientals” out of Vancouver. On this, see Paul Phillips, *No Power Greater: A Century of Labour in British Columbia* (Vancouver, 1967), p. 14.

61. See, for example, Gillian Creese, “Class, Ethnicity, and Conflict: The Case of Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1880–1923”, in *Workers, Capital, and the State in British Columbia*, p. 71; Gillian Creese, “Exclusion or Solidarity? Vancouver Workers Confront the ‘Oriental Problem’”, in Laurel Sefton MacDowell and Ian Radforth (eds), *Canadian Working Class History: Selected Readings* (Toronto, 1992), p. 320; Phillips, *No Power Greater*, p. 30; and Phillips “The Underground Economy [...]”, p. 45.

62. Jeremy Mouat, “The Politics of Coal: A Study of the Wellington Miners’ Strike of 1890–91”, *BC Studies*, 77 (1988), p. 26; and Alan Grove and Ross Lambertson, “Pawns of the Powerful: The Politics of Litigation in the Union Colliery Case”, *BC Studies*, 103 (1994), pp. 12–14.

Asian immigrants who were already especially vulnerable due to their lack of political rights in Canada.<sup>63</sup>

Moreover, racism constituted a form of exclusivist solidarity. In cases where strike demands included the firing of Asian immigrants, “anti-Orientalism” itself contributed to “white” workers’ resistance to their employers. Such racism often served as a focal point for rallying Euro-Canadian workers to the labour movement of British Columbia. The “anti-Orientalism” of the Knights of Labor, for example, greatly facilitated the organization’s growth in this province.<sup>64</sup> In general, the sense of a common enemy no doubt helped unite male workers of varied European heritages and varied skills. In this context, despite their varied backgrounds, they may have shared a sense of common manhood that stopped at “the colour line”.

At the same time, racism enhanced working-class subordination by reinforcing ethnic fragmentation. Euro-Canadian workers themselves could be hurt by these deep divisions – and not just in the long run. In one case, immigrant Chinese cannery workers struck to pressure management to fire Euro-Canadian workers.<sup>65</sup> More often, the racism of dominant groups created a climate where Asian immigrants had little incentive to refuse to act as strike-breakers.

Moreover, while Euro-Canadian racism could lead to militant action against employers to reinforce ethnic hierarchy, Euro-Canadian workers’ sense of superiority to “Orientals” helped to facilitate the adaptation of Euro-Canadians to levels of exploitation that were merely better than those for Asian immigrants. In addition, ties of “whiteness” between employers and employees, often enhanced by ties of masculinity, helped forge cross-class solidarity, thereby contributing to the adaptive subordination of Euro-Canadian workers.

How did Asian immigrant workers position themselves with regard to these interlocking hierarchies, to the extent that they had room to manoeuvre? What was the impact of their own conceptions of masculinity? What role did their own conceptions of ethnic hierarchies play? At issue here is not only their own attitudes toward “whites” but also the attitudes of particular groups of Asian immigrants toward groups from other parts of Asia (e.g. the attitudes of the Chinese immigrants toward Japanese immigrants and vice versa). Did the racism directed at particular groups of Asian immigrants reinforce their ties with their own ethnic straw bosses and thereby undermine the development of class-based militancy among them? Did they see strike-breaking as justified by ethnically-segmented labour markets? Did they see strike-breaking as an important form of resistance to

63. See, for example, Creese, “Class, Ethnicity, and Conflict [...]”, pp. 55–85.

64. On the Knights of Labor, see Creese, “Class, Ethnicity, and Conflict [...]”, p. 69; and Phillips, *No Power Greater*, p. 14.

65. On this strike, see Gillian Creese, “Organizing Against Racism in the Workplace: Chinese Workers in Vancouver Before the Second World War”, *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 19 (1987), p. 39.

ethnic hierarchy within the working class? Did they feel more loyal to “white” employers who gave them jobs than to “white” workers who sought to exclude them from many jobs?

We also need to ask to what extent Asian immigrants resisted the exploitation they faced from employers. Since their dual victimization as workers and as a despised “race” were so deeply interwoven, did their reaction to racism heighten resistance to employers? Although more work is needed on the attitudes of the Asian immigrants themselves, Gillian Creese has highlighted instances of their workplace militancy in Vancouver. While illuminating the many constraints that prevented them from being as militant as Euro-Canadian workers in the region, Creese explains that immigrant Asian strikers sometimes demanded the elimination of racist labour practices. In 1931, for example, 600 striking sawmill workers, including both Asian immigrants and Euro-Canadians, demanded not only a wage increase and union recognition but also “equal pay for equal work” and the “abolition of the contract system for Oriental workers”.<sup>66</sup> In such cases, the workplace militancy of Asian immigrants constituted an attempt to combat their disadvantaged position in the interlocking class-based and ethnically-based hierarchies. This raises questions which, in some ways, parallel questions concerning the reactions of “white” female workers to their own two-fold oppression. But we also need to go beyond an emphasis on two sets of dynamics concerning each group; we need to examine the impact of conceptions of masculinity on Asian immigrant workers and the impact of conceptions of “whiteness” on women workers.

As the 1931 sawmill strike indicates, there were cases where immigrant Asian males and Euro-Canadian males struck together. According to Creese, “three interrelated factors – economic conditions, the growth of radical labour politics, and increased Asian militancy – resulted in greater racial solidarity” at two points, namely at the end of the First World War and in the midst of the Great Depression. With regard to the first period, she argues that the wartime labour shortage contributed to the increased militancy of both Asian immigrants and Euro-Canadians, while the spread of

66. Creese, “Organizing Against Racism in the Workplace [...]”, p. 42. However, the immigrant Asian workers were facing an additional risk, for employers who felt compelled to pay them equal wages might then have decided to replace them with “white” workers. While Creese’s article focuses on immigrant Chinese workers in Vancouver before the Second World War, Jin Tan has examined the position of immigrant Chinese workers in the whole province from 1858 to 1885. Tan emphasizes that there were cases where the Chinese immigrants struck for higher wages and indicates that there were some cases where mine owners replaced striking Chinese immigrants with “white” strike-breakers. On this, see Jin Tan, “Chinese Labour and the Reconstituted Social Order of British Columbia”, *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 19 (1987), pp. 76–77. For other examples of Asian immigrants going out on strike, see: Allen Seager, “Workers, Class, and Industrial Conflict in New Westminster, 1900–1930”, in *Workers, Capital, and the State in British Columbia*, pp. 123, 128, 132; Jeanne Myers, “Class and Community in the Fraser Mills Strike, 1931”, in *Workers, Capital, and the State in British Columbia*, pp. 141–160; and Muszynski, pp. 155, 181.

socialist internationalism produced an ideological climate that facilitated cross-ethnic, class-based solidarity. In the second period, according to Creese, reaction to the widespread hardships of the Depression, combined with the class politics of the communist-led Workers Unity League, led to increased cross-ethnic militancy. Although Creese notes that BC socialists sometimes held deeply racist beliefs and acted on them, she argues that the socialist emphasis on class oppression – indeed on capitalists as the common enemy of all workers regardless of birth place or skin colour – helped undermine racism in certain circumstances.<sup>67</sup> Even if Creese has minimized the extent of “white” working-class racism in these two particular periods, her work provides valuable insights concerning the inter-connections between class-based and ethnically-based hierarchies in early twentieth-century British Columbia.

We need to look at similar issues of interlocking hierarchies in relations between Anglo-Celtic workers and immigrant workers from southern and eastern Europe, in a context where the majority of these immigrants were males. At the turn of the twentieth century, employers in key sectors strove to ensure a more docile workforce by employing a variety of immigrant workers and manipulating ethnic divisions. In this period, many of the male immigrants from southern and eastern Europe were sojourners (temporary residents who strove to earn money as quickly as possible and then return to their homelands), and their temporary orientation to the New World meant that they were often reluctant to engage in workplace militancy. Their lack of citizenship rights in Canada also made them more vulnerable to employers’ reprisals. In this context, it was common for employers to break strikes by bringing in immigrant workers as scabs. Yet significant numbers of immigrants from certain ethnic groups acted militantly and promoted radical socialist views. While historians such as Donald Avery and Craig Heron have been looking at some of these dynamics,<sup>68</sup> we also need to analyse Anglo-Celtic workers’ roles in reinforcing ethnically-based hierarchies. These kinds of questions have been more obvious in analyses of relations between “white” workers and “Oriental” workers on Canada’s west coast, but the available fragmentary evidence suggests how crucial these issues were with regard to Anglo-Canadians’ relations to immigrant workers from southern and eastern Europe as well.

At times, Anglo-Celtic workers went out on strike or threatened to strike against the employment of “foreigners” from southern and eastern Europe.<sup>69</sup>

67. Creese, “Exclusion or Solidarity?”, p. 318.

68. See, for example, Avery, *Reluctant Host*, pp. 29–36, 66–71, 100–103; and Craig Heron, *Working in Steel: The Early Years in Canada, 1883–1935* (Toronto, 1988), pp. 74–87.

69. Other methods of exclusion may have been far more common. After all, Anglo-Canadian workers were not always in a strong enough position to risk striking against the employment of the foreign-born. And why strike, if less drastic methods of exclusion might accomplish the same goal? We need more work to examine how immigrants from southern and eastern Europe were kept out of the better jobs.



A group of Hamilton, Ontario, iron moulders struck in 1909, for example, because, among other issues, they objected to working with Italian immigrants.<sup>70</sup> Similarly, a 1912 strike at the Steel Company of Canada began because two Polish immigrants had been brought into the wire-drawing department.<sup>71</sup> This dynamic was intensified during the First World War because of the animosity toward “enemy aliens”. Anglo-Canadian miners, joined this time by immigrant miners from allied countries, threatened to strike in two western locales unless all “enemy aliens” working in the mines were fired.<sup>72</sup>

In some cases, Anglo-Canadians’ efforts to reinforce their own relatively privileged position within ethnic hierarchies meant that resistance to employers and direct violence against “foreigners” intertwined. At Hamilton’s Westinghouse plant in 1913, for example, two English-speaking core-makers beat up a “foreigner” who was hired to work in the core-making section of the foundry. When management fired the two for assault, the Anglophones’ co-workers walked off the job in sympathy.<sup>73</sup>

Anglo-Celtic workers’ attempts to reinforce the ethnic segmentation of the paid labour force were not always a matter of resistance to employers. In some cases, unions colluded with management to keep “foreigners” out,<sup>74</sup> and there were probably many situations where management went along with Anglo-Celtic workers’ refusal to work with immigrants from southern and eastern Europe.<sup>75</sup>

Moreover, while various historians have drawn attention to situations where immigrant workers from southern or eastern Europe acted as strike-breakers, insufficient attention has been paid to situations where Anglo-Canadians broke immigrant workers’ strikes. One of the most dramatic examples of the latter occurred during the Holmes Foundry sitdown strike of 1937 in Sarnia, Ontario. As Duart Snow explains in his study of this dispute, the strikers were non-English-speaking immigrants from Europe, and the Anglo-Celtic employees refused to join the strike, colluding with

70. Palmer, *A Culture in Conflict*, pp. 205–206. Palmer also states more broadly that, in Hamilton from 1890 to 1914, “skilled workers often refused to work with foreign-speaking labourers, striking to preserve specific jobs as the exclusive terrain of the English-speaking”. On this, see p. 231.

71. Heron, *Working in Steel*, p. 85. Often, part of the antipathy toward Italian and Polish immigrant workers was rooted in anti-Catholic attitudes. Within the Canadian working class, there was a serious division between Protestants and Catholics.

72. Avery, *Reluctant Host*, p. 72.

73. On this incident, see Craig Heron, “The Crisis of the Craftsman: Hamilton’s Metal Workers in the Early Twentieth Century”, in Michael S. Cross and Gregory S. Kealey (eds), *The Consolidation of Capitalism, 1896–1929: Readings in Canadian Social History*, vol. 4 (Toronto, 1983), p. 102.

74. See, for example, Frager, *Sweatshop Strife*, pp. 85–87.

75. See, for example, Carmela Patrias, *Relief Strike: Immigrant Workers and the Great Depression in Crowland, Ontario, 1930–1935* (Toronto, 1990), p. 16. (This study is reprinted in condensed form in Iacovetta, *A Nation of Immigrants*.)

management. The strike-breakers succeeded in abruptly ending the strike by invading the plant and driving out the sitdowners to shouts of “We’ll give their jobs to white men!”<sup>76</sup> Although Snow does not examine gender issues, the strike-breakers apparently emphasized the male breadwinner role, together with the image of the law-abiding citizen, in addition to blatant ethnic prejudice, to legitimate their opposition to the strike. They argued that the strikers were in the wrong because the sitdown was “keeping heads of over 300 families from earning their bread and butter, paying rent or taxes”. “Good Canadian citizens” viewed the sitdown as a fundamental threat to “law and order”, especially because this form of protest allegedly testified to the “foreigners’” lack of respect for private property. At the end of the pitched battle which ejected the sitdowners from the plant, the triumphant strike-breakers raised the Union Jack.<sup>77</sup>

Sometimes the threat of violent strike-breaking was enough to keep “foreigners” from militant action. Orest Martynowych has uncovered evidence of this in his work on immigrant Ukrainian navvies and loggers in early twentieth-century Canada. Martynowych cites a sympathetic observer who declared: “The Ukrainians were held in check by the small Anglo-Saxon element present in every camp, who, being decently treated, were always ready to put down with fists, clubs, and even guns, any outbreak of the ‘Bohunks’.”<sup>78</sup>

There were important cases where “foreigners” went out on strike while their Anglo-Celtic co-workers remained at work, partly or perhaps mainly because the employers commonly treated the “real Canadians” better. Thus, in Sydney, Nova Scotia, for example, several hundred Italian immigrants struck at the Dominion Iron and Steel Company in 1903. In addition to arguing that their wages had been unfairly reduced, the strikers claimed that they were treated poorly in comparison to native-born workers, particularly in terms of the allocation of work. Most of the native-born workers refused to join the strike.<sup>79</sup> A similar pattern emerged during the crucial 1946 strike at the Steel Company of Canada in Hamilton, Ontario. Immigrant workers from southern and eastern Europe tended to be the staunchest strikers while the strike-breakers tended to be of British heritage. This pattern was related to the fact

76. Duart Snow, “The Holmes Foundry Strike of March 1937: ‘We’ll give their jobs to white men!’”, *Ontario History*, 69 (1977), pp. 3–31.

77. Snow, pp. 18, 22, 27. The quotation is from the *Canadian Observer*, 4 March 1937, cited in Snow, p. 18.

78. Eli Culbertson, *The Strange Lives of One Man* (Chicago, 1940), p. 273, cited in Orest Martynowych, *Ukrainians in Canada: The Formative Years, 1891–1924* (Edmonton, 1991), p. 120.

79. Ian McKay, “Strikes in the Maritimes, 1901–1914”, in David Frank and Gregory S. Kealey (eds), *Labour and Working-Class History in Atlantic Canada: A Reader* (St. John’s, Newfoundland, 1995), pp. 209–210.

that the former had often been badly treated by Anglo-Celtic supervisors and usually worked in the worst jobs.<sup>80</sup>

Thus we have a significant number of cases where Anglo-Celtic workers clearly reinforced ethnically-based hierarchies in the paid labour force.<sup>81</sup> Key aspects of both their militancy and class collaboration were rooted in their relatively privileged positions in the workforce. Just as women's historians have been analysing the ways in which male workers reinforced the gender division of labour within the paid labour force (instead of simply blaming employers for slotting women into female job ghettos), so labour historians need to do more to analyse the ways in which Anglo-Celtic workers have reinforced the ethnic segmentation of the paid labour force. Beyond this, we need to examine the ways in which the gender division of labour and the ethnic segmentation of the labour force have interacted. Ultimately, we need to cease thinking of them as separate processes.

#### EMPHASIZING MOMENTS OF BROADER SOLIDARITY

This history of sharply interlocking hierarchies means that it is all the more important to analyse the particular historical circumstances under which diverse groups of workers were able to come together to resist their class subordination. While much work remains to be done in this area, Donald Avery has stressed that, under frontier conditions, "economic exploitation in an isolated and dangerous work-place could produce frustrations which overcame all national and linguistic differences" among immigrants from different parts of Europe and native-born workers, particularly those who were itinerant male workers without immediate family responsibilities.<sup>82</sup> He has highlighted the role of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in leading a strike of 7,000 ethnically diverse, male, railroad construction wor-

80. Bill Freeman, *1005: Political Life in a Union Local* (Toronto, 1982), p. 56; and Wayne Roberts (ed.), *Baptism of a Union: Stelco Strike of 1946* (Hamilton, Ontario, [ca. 1980]), p. 12. For an example from the needle trades, see Frager, *Sweatshop Strife*, pp. 87–90. On tensions between rank-and-file, immigrant militants and Anglo-Celtic union leaders at Ford of Canada, see Wells, "Origins of Canada's Wagner Model", pp. 204–205. Wells indicates that the Anglo-Celtic union leaders had much in common with Ford supervisors, due to ethnic, religious, and Masonic ties.

81. Various forms of work-related public agitation sometimes reinforced ethnically-based hierarchies as well, especially in the aftermath of the First World War. In Winnipeg in early 1919, for example, a mob threatened the Swift meatpacking plant in reaction to the company's refusal to fire "aliens" and replace them with returned soldiers. The angry mob then swept along, beating up "foreigners". On this, see Donald Avery, "The Radical Alien and the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919", in J. M. Bumsted (ed.), *Interpreting Canada's Past*, vol. 11: *After Confederation* (Toronto, 1986), p. 230. For more information on the public agitation to pressure employers to fire "enemy aliens" in the aftermath of the war, see Avery, *Reluctant Host*, p. 76; and Heron, *Working in Steel*, p. 85.

82. Donald Avery, "Dangerous Foreigners": *European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896–1932* (Toronto, 1979), p. 63.

kers in 1912, emphasizing the IWW's promotion of the idea that wage workers were closely linked together by the common experience of class oppression, regardless of ethnic origins.<sup>83</sup> In the American context, the IWW was able to make impressive headway, for a time, not only among itinerant male workers in frontier settings but also among ethnically diverse male and female textile workers in Lawrence, Massachusetts, and Paterson, New Jersey.<sup>84</sup>

In a study of a strike of male relief workers in Crowland, Ontario, during the Great Depression, Carmela Patrias has identified factors which united diverse groups of immigrants from continental Europe, at a time when the sojourner phase of European immigration had ended. In addition to highlighting certain shared experiences and daily contact between members of these groups in the workplace and in the neighbourhood, Patrias argues that "perhaps the strongest integrative force among them was the discrimination they all faced from the host society",<sup>85</sup> including job discrimination. She also emphasizes the importance of socialist ideology, particularly among Ukrainian, Hungarian, and Serbian immigrants. As she points out, Canadian labour historians have paid little attention to issues of inter-ethnic collaboration even though this area is so important to understanding the complex relations between class and ethnicity.<sup>86</sup>

In addition, new work on the labour upsurge at the end of the First World War highlights the unique circumstances that led to unprecedented solidarity and militancy in many parts of Canada. Most of the leaders of this upsurge were "white", English-speaking males who focused mainly on workers like themselves and often remained uneasy about women workers and non-British, male, immigrant workers. Yet although gender and ethnic divisions remained problematic, women and male immigrants were drawn into the movement on an unprecedented scale. This heightened class solidarity and militancy stemmed from wartime discontents centring on rampant inflation, government mismanagement and corruption, business profiteering, and military conscription. Political leaders made nationalist appeals, calling on people to make great sacrifices in the fight for "democracy", while the government pursued anti-labour policies. Consequently, as Craig Heron argues, "more than ever before, divisions between workers seemed to be

83. *Ibid.*, pp. 53–55.

84. Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World* (New York, 1969), pp. 227–285.

85. Patrias, *Relief Strike*, p. 15.

86. *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9, 15–20, 45–46. Allen Seager has also done interesting work examining inter-ethnic collaboration. See Allen Seager, "Class, Ethnicity, and Politics in the Alberta Coalfields, 1905–1945", in Dirk Hoerder (ed.), *Struggle a Hard Battle: Essays on Working-Class Immigrants* (DeKalb IL, 1986), pp. 304–324.

giving way to a remarkable spirit of working-class unity and class consciousness".<sup>87</sup>

### CONCLUSION

For a more complete understanding of the complex dynamics of resistance and adaptation to class subordination, labour historians need to analyse the different ways in which class, ethnic, and gender hierarchies have interlocked in specific historical circumstances. This is not simply a question of emphasizing divisions within the working class and attempts to overcome these divisions. It is inadequate to conclude merely that class-based resistance has been limited in scope and intensity because the working class has been divided along a number of lines.

As a corrective to more limited analyses of working-class resistance, the concept of interlocking hierarchies makes us sensitive to the contradictory nature of resistance itself. Rather than being mutually opposing forces, resistance and adaptation have, in particular circumstances, interpenetrated as part of a larger, more complex process. Particularly among more privileged sections of the working class, certain currents of ethnic and gender pride and prejudice have been significant cultural bulwarks against the intensification of exploitation and class domination. Yet, at the same time, these same ethnic and gender identities have placed historical limits on the development of broader class-based politics. Key elements of the very same solidarity that has manifested itself in militancy against employers have also been a basis of enduring intra-class fragmentation and inequality. Moreover, these exclusivist gender and ethnic identities have reinforced the segmentation of privilege and power that define ethnic and gender hierarchies. Defence of these relative privileges has sometimes become an important basis of ties of inter-class collaboration. Thus resistance and solidarity

87. The quotation is from Craig Heron, "National Contours: Solidarity and Fragmentation", in Heron, *The Workers' Revolt in Canada*, p. 272. See also Craig Heron and Myer Siemiatycki, "The Great War, the State, and Working-Class Canada", in Heron, *The Workers' Revolt in Canada*, pp. 11–27. Other articles in this anthology also advance this argument. On the erosion of divisions in the Maritimes, for example, see Ian McKay and Suzanne Morton, "The Maritimes: Expanding the Circle of Resistance", pp. 45, 56–63. On issues of ethnicity during the Winnipeg General Strike, see Avery, "The Radical Alien and the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919", pp. 222–239. Avery argues that although the Central Strike Committee was made up only of Anglo-Canadians, ethnic organizations such as the Ukrainian Labour Temple Association formed links to the Central Strike Committee and helped draw together workers from diverse backgrounds. On the participation of women in the Winnipeg General Strike, see Linda Kealey, "'No Special Protection – No Sympathy': Women's Activism in the Canadian Labour Revolt of 1919", in Deian R. Hopkin and Gregory S. Kealey (eds), *Class, Community and the Labour Movement: Wales and Canada, 1850–1930* (n.p., 1989), pp. 134–159; and Mary Horodyski, "Women and the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919", *Manitoba History*, 2 (1986), pp. 28–37.

become more problematic than is usually recognized in labour history. Such resistance has sometimes *reinforced* intra-class hierarchies – and inter-class inequality. A history of the shackling of worker resistance within such interlocking hierarchies, punctuated by moments when these hierarchies have been partially unlocked, can show us how workers make history in the historical circumstances they have inherited.

Beyond this, the concept of interlocking hierarchies can provide a more powerful understanding of adaptation and resistance not only to class inequality but also to other fundamental aspects of domination and subordination, especially concerning ethnicity and gender. More traditional analyses that focus in isolation on class relations, ethnic relations, or gender relations, have tended to generate only partial and distorted understandings of the nature of political stability and social control. While this paper has examined the nature of interlocking hierarchies to further our understanding of working-class responses to class inequality, we also need studies that will examine the nature of interlocking hierarchies to advance our understanding of popular responses to gender inequality and similar studies to advance our understanding of responses to ethnic inequality.

In applying this framework to these other axes of power, we need to ask whether resistance to one form of hierarchy has reinforced another form of hierarchy under particular historical circumstances. Have middle-class, Anglo-Celtic women, for example, historically reinforced ethnic and class hierarchies in their efforts to resist their own subordination as women? Historically, we know that many of these relatively privileged women fought for women's suffrage explicitly because this reform would, in their view, shore up the power of the "white" middle class in Canadian society. Indeed these women's resistance to this aspect of their own political subordination stemmed partly from their indignation that male, usually darker-skinned "foreigners" of the "lower classes" could vote while they themselves, as women, could not.<sup>88</sup> The importance of these dynamics in the case of women's suffrage should lead us to develop our analyses further along these lines, not only when centring on gender but also when centring on ethnicity. We might ask, for instance, to what extent male, middle-class leaders of ethnically subordinated groups resisted ethnic prejudice in ways that reinforced aspects of class and gender subordination. We already have some historical studies that ask whether mobilization against one form of hierarchy has led to mobilization against another form of hierarchy, for socialist-feminist historians have been particularly interested in asking whether a

88. On the attitudes of many female suffragists, see, for example, Carol Lee Bacchi, *Liberation Deferred?: The Ideas of the English-Canadian Suffragists, 1877–1918* (Toronto, 1983), pp. 3–12, 50–55. On the racist attitudes of first-wave feminists, see especially Mariana Valverde, "When the Mother of the Race Is Free": Race, Reproduction, and Sexuality in First-Wave Feminism", in Franca Iacovetta and Mariana Valverde (eds), *Gender Conflicts: New Essays in Women's History* (Toronto, 1992), pp. 3–26.

commitment to socialism has led to a commitment to feminism in particular historical contexts.<sup>89</sup> We need to complement this by focusing further on other dynamics of interlocking hierarchies, as well.

Ultimately, the fields of working-class history, women's history, and the history of "ethnics" need to merge so that we can better understand the complex forms of adaptation and resistance of the multi-faceted many to the very few who have been so privileged and powerful in so many ways and for so very long. In contemporary terms, this means writing the history of "the new force" – of those marginalized by their class, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, age, citizenship status, geographic location, and other bases of social, economic, cultural, and political subordination – now being mobilized under the new "politics of difference". The future of politics in "advanced" Western societies hinges increasingly on whether these interlocking hierarchies will dissolve into a multitude of political fragments or provide the basis for a new, more powerful, inclusive politics.

89. See, for example, Sangster, *Dreams of Equality*, and Linda Kealey, *Enlisting Women for the Cause*.