# THE MAKING AND REPRODUCTION OF MALE WORKING-CLASS IDENTITY IN A MINING TOWN

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# Abstract

This dissertation is a study of working-class identity and subjectivity among a sample of male nickel miners in Sudbury, Ontario. Recent foreign takeovers of mining firms and a protracted strike at Vale-Inco in 2009-2010 motivate this dissertation's new look at class relations and subjectivity in one of Canada's most historically significant regions of working-class organization. This study understands these recent events as part of a set of decades long economic processes that have transformed workers' lives in and outside work. It explores how the form that trade unionism took in the post-WWII period has shaped class relations and class identity among male nickel miners in Sudbury. The dissertation asks: how have class subjectivity and socioeconomic change interacted over this history?

After first analyzing the political economy of mining in the Sudbury Basin, the dissertation traces the formation of historically situated class subjectivities. In it, I examine how the postwar compromise between capital and labour influenced unionization and class identity among male workers at the mines. I then inquire into how industrial restructuring and job loss, the rise of new managerial strategies and neoliberal governance, and the growth of precarious, contract labour have transformed both the material contexts of workers' lives and their practices of reproducing their identities as members of a working class.

To form the central arguments of the dissertation, I draw on 26 oral history interviews with current and retired workers, and organize their narratives into three

thematic areas of class identity: first, issues of work and the labour process; second, themes of place, space, and belonging in the formation of class identities; and third, how historical memory and generational conflict influence class. Within and across these thematic areas I show how material conditions and workers' own practices of identity formation interact, adjust, and at times, contradict. I argue that the postwar class compromise between labour and capital contributed to a resilient form of working-class subjectivity among workers that is reproduced by local processes of social remembering and class reproduction. Yet, industrial restructuring, the growth of precarious employment, and the internationalization of ownership and management at the mines challenge the efficacy of this historical subjectivity. By studying unionized workers who are confronting profound industrial change, this dissertation raises questions about how the making of male working-class identity limited broader processes of class formation, as well as how we understand class and class formation in the global economy at a time when labour movements face growing structural challenges.

*For my grandfathers, who laboured long and hard,*

*one in a cement plant, the other on a farm*

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

> I guess being working-class in Sudbury is sort of a way of life, like, maybe I don't think about it that way, but I've been listening to these stories about the mines and that all my life, you know? Guys, like family, friends and that, we do the same stuff, work doing the same stuff, and a lot of us heard the same stories growing up, so we relate. That's it really. But, honestly, sometimes I feel like [pause] it's hard to explain [pause] but what I learned and think about being union and working in the mine is different from what it's actually like, if that makes sense.
>
> James, 34 years old

I had asked James, a union miner with three years on the job, what he thought it meant to be "working-class" in Sudbury, Ontario. His response nicely encapsulates the central themes running through the interview data that informs this dissertation. James and other workers featured in this study build working-class subjectivities through social memories that both construct and confront the experiences of daily life. Class is formed, made

meaningful, and embedded in the places and narratives of work, community, family, and social relationships. For James and others, class is learned as it is experienced, socially, culturally, and narratively. It takes shape inter-generationally and is, inevitably, an "historical question" (Thompson [1963] 1982:10). That is to say, as Thompson suggested,

> If we stop history at a given point, then there are no classes but simply a multitude of individuals with a multitude of experiences. But if we watch these men [sic] over an adequate period of social change, we observe patterns in their relationships, their ideas, and their institutions. Class is defined by men as they live their own history, and, in the end, this is its only definition (p.10).

Workers like James negotiate class "in their own history," a process that I argue involves difficult questions about the relationship between social representations and changing historical circumstances, transmitted and shared images of the past and thoughts about the present and future.

This study traces the making of class identity among male nickel miners in Sudbury across generations, changing class relations and labour processes, and ownership regimes at the mines. It does this by focusing on the relationships between class relations and institutions on the one hand, and workers' social and cultural processes of reproduction on the other hand. I seek to understand how working-class subjectivity, consciousness, and action were shaped during the postwar compromise between labour and capital, and in turn, how these particular forms that working-class identity limited the broader project of class formation (Burawoy [1979] 1982; Camfield 2011; McInnis 2002; Palmer 1983, 2003, 2017; Wells 1995a, 1995b). The study then asks how workers experience and

integrate subsequent changes in the mining industry in Sudbury, such as technological innovation and job loss, foreign acquisition and corporate concentration, and the growth of precarious labour into their identities. In connecting material relations of capital accumulation and social practices of identity formation, the dissertation traces the making of working-class identity and subjectivity as social and historical phenomena and inquires about their reproduction and re-composition. Because the dissertation is based on a small sample of 26 male nickel miners, its scope is necessarily limited. However, this also allows me to explore how processes of reproducing working-class identity impeded class formation more broadly, across workplaces and sectors, and beyond Sudbury. Moreover, the project's focus on gender and the division of labour looks more at how male miners employ a masculine definition of working-class identity, and less at the making of gender roles between women and men or gender relations in the workplace.

This is a sociological study of working-class subjectivity that engages the "historical question" and historical methods. It addresses what Somers (1996a:54) refers to as "historical epistemology," i.e. the variability of our knowledge about things over time. As she puts it: "Such epistemology assumes that all our knowledge, our presumptions, and our reasoning practices, are indelibly (even if obscurely) marked with the signature of time. They are 'history laden'" (p.54). This research assesses the 'history laden-ness' of our knowledge about how workers construct their individual and collective identities by using a methodology attuned to the relationship between past, present, and future in narrative constructions. Through oral history interviews, I analyze the social, cultural, and narrative production of working-class subjectivity and situate it in the context of local and

global economic reorganization. Examining workers' accounts in this way sheds light on the complex ways in which difficult structural changes and local processes of class formation interact and change over time. As well, it shows how and why attention to the dynamics of class subjectivity is integral to projects of building and reproducing workers' organizational power.

Nickel mining has long been a staple industry and employer in the Sudbury Basin. Sudbury's identity was largely formed around this natural resource extraction (Wallace and Thompson 1993) and, as this study will demonstrate, so were the class identities of the region's workers. Additionally, Sudbury provides an illuminating case for research on class and class formation because of its important place in Canadian labour history (Lang 1995; Swift 1977), and for reasons having to do with its particular integration into the institutional and legal framework of labour and class relations in Canada. That the Communist-led International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers (Mine-Mill) organized and then maintained control of union locals into the early 1960s meant that mining companies had an excuse when they resisted full participation in the more generalized system of union security and legally-protected collective bargaining known in Canada as the Rand Formula. Consequently, what became known as 'Fordism' (Roberts and Bullen 1988) – where workers experienced material gains amid rising productivity and ceded control of the labour process to management – arrived late and was relatively short-lived in Sudbury. More recently, industrial restructuring and precipitous job loss have been slowly eroding the gains that workers made under the Fordist compromise, as well as the forms of class consciousness that it generated.

This presents us with three distinct regimes of labour relations, all of which are characterized by particular regulatory frameworks, types of workplace organization, and forms of worker subjectivity. In the first case, preceding World War II and the system of industrial pluralism inaugurated by Privy Council (PC) 1003 and the Rand Formula, workers demonstrated a greater range of radical political and economic organization, but lacked robust state-sanctioned rights to collectively bargain with their employers (Fudge and Tucker 2004; Palmer 2003, 2017). With the introduction of industrial pluralism, workers gained a form of "industrial citizenship" (Fudge 2005; Strangleman 2015) in which collective bargaining and other rights were guaranteed in exchange for management's firm control of the workplace and strict limits on the exercise of strike action and class struggle (Camfield 2011; McInnis 2002; Wells 1995a, 1995b). This arrangement further coincided with the normalization of the "standard employment relationship" (Vosko and Clark 2009), providing a measure of job and income security to many white, male workers, while also producing and solidifying an unequal gender division of labour. Since the turn to neoliberal governance and regimes of flexible accumulation (Harvey 2005; Moody 1997), the state[1] has curtailed trade union rights (Panitch and Swartz [2003] 2009) and workers have either been on the defensive or forced to adjust to circumstances unfavourable to unions and solidarity (McBride 2017; Ross and Savage 2018). Although

[1] It should be clear that the Canadian state has played a central role in organizing, reproducing, and transforming class relations and the various forms of the political administration of industrial relations over the period discussed in this dissertation. A fuller theoretical discussion of the state is outside the parameters of the study, but Miliband's (1974) characterization of the state as the set of political institutions that encompass governments and their agencies and play a role in the superintending of capitalist social relations in *The State in Capitalist Society* closely approximates the theoretical underpinnings of this study.

these three periods are of course not so easily demarcated in history, as a heuristic device their demarcation is helpful in understanding how particular social, class, and gender relations shaped workers' subjectivities over time in this study. As well, the way that this timeline unfolded in Sudbury presents an auspicious opportunity to study the formation and re-formation of a regional section of the Canadian working class.

In many respects the economic changes that Sudbury has undergone over the past several decades are not unlike those of other industrial regions that have experienced shifting patterns of development, deindustrialization, and moves away from stable, unionized employment toward precarious and 'postindustrial' forms of work (Leadbeater 2008; Peters 2010, 2012). Indeed, the transformations of core capitalist economies away from industrial production, and the attendant dismantling of entire regions built around single or core industries, has inspired an expansive sociological and political economy literature (Bluestone and Harrison 1982; Cowie and Heathcott 2003; Dublin 1998; Dunk 2002a; High 2003, 2013; Livingstone, Smith and Smith 2011; Milkman 1997). Scholars and activists alike have devoted considerable effort to understanding the causes and implications of deindustrialization and changing patterns of capital accumulation, as well as the implications for the legal framework of labour relations. The broad and deep processes of change involved in deindustrialization and globalization result from a confluence of factors that have direct bearing on the case of mining and miners in Sudbury, and thus form the backdrop against which changes in class and class subjectivity are taking place. In this research, I draw attention to how structural change and workers' subjectivities interact, and often, clash contrarily.

Although this study recognizes the necessity of explaining the transformations of resource extraction and labour in Sudbury as the conditions in which workers' narratives are produced and shared, this is ultimately not its central aim. Rather, I ask a different set of questions, motivated not so much by the *decline* of Sudbury's miners amidst job loss and industrial restructuring, but by the *persistence* of institutional and legal constraints on worker militancy and the particular ways that these impediments intersect with working-class identity. Given recent strike action in 2009-2010, these are important questions to entertain, particularly for a group of workers who are quantitatively and qualitatively now much weaker as a class force (Peters 2010). Moreover, I draw attention to the tensions that are produced through the persistence of this patterning of working-class subjectivity and action. Studies of deindustrialization or industries and workers in decline, though producing much of value and capturing well the social dislocations associated with these processes, are generally characterized by a focus on loss, defeat, and "adjustment" (Dunk 2002a; Strangleman and Rhodes 2014). This is understandable. The job loss and class re-composition brought on by neoliberalism, corporate globalization, and its related processes have been nothing short of devastating for once major centres of capital accumulation and union strength in the industrial North. However, just as scholars of class formation from disparate theoretical persuasions point out that there is no necessary correspondence between class structure and any *particular* expression of class formation or consciousness (Chibber 2017; Eidlin 2014; Przeworski 1993; Somers 1992; Thompson 1978; Wright 1997), so too we must be careful and precise when tracing how economic restructuring has impacted class identity, consciousness, and culture. This dissertation is

then motivated by three broad, overarching questions: what forms did workers' subjectivities take during the 'postwar compromise'? How did these forms of subjectivity shape and limit class formation, workers' organizations, and class conflict? And how have changes at the mines in Sudbury affected the relationship between material conditions and miners' experiences of work, culture, and community in deindustrializing Sudbury?

**Studying Workers through Processes of Change**

Drawing on traditions and literatures that study working classes sociologically, historically, and culturally, this research begins from the position that classes are made through a complex interaction of economic, social, and cultural processes (Burawoy [1979] 1982; Dunk 2003; Mann 1973; Thompson [1963] 1982; Willis 1981). In the tradition of these literatures, this study considers how workers make sense of, respond to, and reposition themselves relative to processes of economic, workplace, and community change. And importantly, it inquires into how processes of identity formation and collective representation serve to reproduce segments of the working-class over time and in relation to material change.

In studying workers' individual and collective making of themselves, there is an inherent tension between analyzing the expressions of class actors and situating them within the material context from which they emerge (Palmer 2017; Sangster 1994; Thompson 1978). This is so, as Palmer (1988) suggests, because of the "two-sidedness" (p.36) that often characterizes working-class cultures. The alienation and subordination characteristic of working-class experience breed forms of opposition that, while

contributing to the establishment of particularly working-class cultures, also do the work of reproducing dominant class relations (Willis 1981). This study deals in detail with this issue through close readings of workers' narrative accounts of economic and community change, as well as their stories of the development of the labour process and the class dynamics at work at the mines in Sudbury. Moreover, it considers the impacts of gender relations and family organization on the formation and reproduction of working-class subjectivity among men in a highly male-dominate industry. My aim in this research is to comprehend the transformations in working-class culture, organization, and community as not only outcomes of deep material change, but also of the latter's interaction with workers' processes of reproducing themselves as collective actors. Therefore, I trace the making of particular forms of class consciousness, their confrontation with processes of capital reorganization and community change, and the ways in which subjectivities persist, alter, or accommodate.

Such an analysis inevitably traverses the rough and uncertain terrain of the concept of consciousness. As Marx ([1859] 1977) somewhat polemically put it in the "Preface" to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*,

> In studying [historical] transformations it is always necessary to distinguish between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophic – in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. Just as one does not judge an individual by what he thinks about himself, so one cannot judge such a period of transformation by its consciousness, but, on the contrary, this consciousness must be explained from the contradictions of material life, from the conflict existing between the social forces of production and the relations of production (n.p.).

Thus, Marx suggests, our task is to understand the production of "ideological" forms in their material context, as the working out of the contradictory experiences of class relations. The issue, however, is not only to deal with the instances in which workers "become conscious of this conflict and fight it out," but also to offer a theoretical explanation for the forms of consciousness and cultural practices arising out of class relations, particularly in the moments when they are not expressed in class-conscious terms (Thompson 1978; Wood 2016). Or, alternatively, to understand and explain the forms that *classed* consciousness takes.

In this sense, this study is more broadly oriented than a focus on 'consciousness' would typically suggest. It explores workers' memories, beliefs, attitudes, self-understandings, and culture, treating these as complex and contradictory phenomena. Whereas 'consciousness' can tend to limit our focus to either the development of *class* consciousness, or to explaining its absence, my focus is concerned with workers' self-understandings, culture, and social relations, presupposing no correct class consciousness. My focus here is closer to what Passerini (1979) means by "subjectivity." As she puts it:

> By [subjectivity] I wish to connote that area of symbolic activity which includes cognitive, cultural and psychological aspects. The terms used to define this area more narrowly are generally confused and vague because of the overlapping meanings and subtle differences of emphasis which have been attached to their conceptualisations, such as mentality, ideology, culture, world-view […] and consciousness. In comparison with these, subjectivity has the advantage of being a term sufficiently elastic to include both the aspects of spontaneous subjective being […] contained and represented by attitude, behaviour and language, as well as other forms of awareness […] such as the

> sense of identity, consciousness of oneself, and more considered forms of intellectual activity (p.85).

For Passerini, subjectivity "has its own history, and a multi-faceted relationship with institutional power" (p.86). It does not result from material conditions in any straightforward sense, though its relationship to lived experience and social relations is central. Furthermore, subjectivity cannot be deduced as a simple reflection of workers' actions, but must instead be understood within the complex web of material conditions, beliefs, and actions. For example, as Dunk (2003) shows in his study of male working-class culture in Northwestern Ontario, class subordination can breed forms of anti-elitist thought with sexist and racist corollaries. Workers' beliefs and cultural practices can be expressions of class resistance that retain pillars of some of the worst forms of oppression. Class, as a social relation predicated on submission and exploitation, thus lends itself to myriad ideological expressions of opposition and accommodation.[2] This research accepts Wright's (1997) argument that, though particular class structures might produce a tendency toward corresponding forms of consciousness, there is no *necessary* consciousness derived from any class structure. It is, rather, the historical tendencies and constraints that make the mechanisms that mediate forms of subjectivity or consciousness of significant interest, both sociologically and biographically (Sangster 1994).

[2] Chapter 2 engages more substantively with these forms of "boundary-drawing strategies" (Silver 2003:24) through a discussion of class interest, labour market competition, and identity formation (see also Seccombe and Livingstone 2000:71-2).

Studying the production of class is thus to treat it as an always-unfinished process that interacts with economic and material changes, but that is not reducible to them (Gruneau 1988:20). That is to say, workers' subjectivity must be treated as both structurally embedded in class relations, as well as resulting from workers' own social and cultural practices. Working-class culture is here understood as a source for understanding the dynamics of class relations, within and across classes. Though it necessitates analyses that are sensitive to its logic of production, it contains no inherent trajectory. In fact, the lack of any *necessary* correspondence between class structure and class consciousness demands attention to the latter's historical and social generation. By approaching working-class culture and subjectivity in this way, I avoid the "epistemology of absence" that Somers (1996b:180) argues afflicts much scholarship on class formation. As she suggests, the point of studying class formation is not to explain workers' deviation from supposed theoretical necessities, but rather to explain "the *presence* of various dispositions and practices" (p.180). That is, it is not to explain the lack of revolutionary class consciousness, but to understand working classes as they are and where they are (or were).

Toward this end, I ask: What forms of consciousness emerged among workers in relation to the employment relations, labour processes, and community dynamics of mine work in Sudbury during the postwar period? How did the institutionalization of unions, the formalization of practices of class struggle, and the forms of class consciousness generated as a result interact in the production of male, working-class identity? How did this produce particular ways of reproducing working-class subjectivity? And in what ways did the

particular forms of male, working-class identity in Sudbury limit class formation more broadly? In tracing these patterns over a period of significant economic, workplace, and community restructuring, I also ask: What have been the impacts of recent changes on workers' lives in and outside work, the class relations at the point of production, and on miners' understanding of work, family, and community as Sudbury transitions to a "mining town" in which progressively fewer workers are stably employed at the mines?

In order to study class and class identity in Sudbury over a period of economic restructuring, and to treat class as an "historical question" as Thompson suggests, I inquire about the processes through which workers reproduce themselves as working-class, individually and socially. In particular, I draw attention to social memory and narrativity in the making of class subjectivity and reproduction, and ask how these interact with the recent economic changes confronting workers. Because this is not a study utilizing (primarily) archival, written records, but is, rather, research based on the voices and active participation of workers, I am attentive to the nuances that these sources generate. In the tradition of oral history, I understand the tenuousness, variability, and context of memory not to be liabilities, but the very objects of investigation and analyses (Sangster 1994; Passerini 1979; Portelli 1991). I am interested in the making of working-class subjectivity as a social process and so am attuned to the ways in which workers integrate experiences and construct individual and collective selves through remembering. As Michael Frisch (1990) poses these questions:

> What happens to experience on the way to becoming memory? What happens to experience on the way to becoming history? As an era of intense collective

> experience recedes into the past, what is the relationship of memory to historical generalization? These questions, so basic to thinking about how culture and individuality interact over time, are the sort of questions that oral history is peculiarly, perhaps uniquely, able to penetrate (p.10)

My methodological strategy further follows the work of Alessandro Portelli (1991, 1997, 2011, 2017), and focuses on the social production of local history through collective forms of generating memory and meaning, a strategy especially useful when studying "nonhegemonic classes" (1991:49). As Portelli explains:

> Oral sources from nonhegemonic classes are linked to the tradition of the folk narrative. In this tradition distinctions between narrative genres are perceived differently than in the written tradition of the educated classes. This is true of the generic distinctions between 'factual' and 'artistic' narratives, between 'events' and feelings or imagination. While the perception of an account as 'true' is relevant as much to legend as to personal experience and historical memory, there are no formal oral genres specifically destined to transmit historical information; historical, poetical, and legendary narratives often become inextricably mixed up. The result is narratives in which the boundary between what takes place outside the narrator and what happens inside, between what concerns the individual and what concerns the group, may become more elusive than in established written genres, so that personal 'truth' may coincide with shared 'imagination' (p.49).

Portelli's approach is a form of "constructionism, anchored in realism" (Bischoping and Gazso 2016:27), which treats workers' narratives not as objective facts but as objects of study. My research thus engages workers' narratives as a window into understanding the production of working-class identity, and traces the making of a particular segment of the working class through a focus on the interplay between socioeconomic history and subjectivity.

Based on the analysis of 26 oral history interviews with male workers in Sudbury, this research provides a detailed examination of the making and reproduction of working-class identity across a period of economic restructuring. Specifically, this research asks:

1) How were class and class consciousness formed during the postwar period, and in what ways did they shape, or reshape, working-class culture in Sudbury?
2) In what ways have economic and workplace restructuring transformed workers' lives at and outside of work, and what have been the consequences for class identity and subjectivity?
3) Through what processes do workers reproduce particular forms of consciousness?
4) What is the relationship between these processes of working-class reproduction and the cultural practices of workers?
5) How do the processes through which workers reproduce their identities impact class struggle and workers' collective power, particularly over the course of profound material change?

I address these questions as matters of historical subjectivity, treating workers' accounts not as objective sources about the past but as situated reconstructions that hold clues about the meaning and significance of class and work in Sudbury.

Drawing from the tradition of narrative analysis, I am concerned with how workers organize the telling of their stories. As elaborated further in Chapter 2, this strategy

involves treating speech as text, and understanding the relationship between the text's internal coherence and the discursive environment of its creation (Linde 1993; McAdams 2006). As I am using it here, narrative analysis is not wholly focused on the life of the story inside the text, but seeks to understand its internal organization and the meaning generated therein, as well as what this tells us about the socio-historical context to which it refers. As Riessman (1993) summarizes:

> The purpose of [narrative analysis] is to see how respondents in interviews impose order on the flow of experience to make sense of events and action in their lives. The methodological approach examines the informant's story and analyzes how it is put together, the linguistic and cultural resources it draws on, and how it persuades a listener of authenticity. Analysis in narrative studies opens up the forms of telling about experience, not simply the content to which language refers. We ask, why was the story told *that* way? (p.2).

The narrative dimension of this methodological strategy was key to mapping the social discourses on which workers draw as they form and re-form class identities. As I discuss further in Chapter 2, this involved analyzing the data in stages. First, I read individual interview transcripts for plot structures. Second, I thematically coded across interviews. Finally, coded data was organized according to the dominant historical themes to which they referred, and then analyzed to arrive at how workers' accounts draw on, relate to, and negotiate their social world.

As sociologists and historians have long suggested, the historicity of class involves attending to the multiple axes through which it is made (Bannerji 2005; Camfield 2004/5; Dunk 1994, 2003; Thompson 1978, [1963] 1982). In this research, I have sought to look at

working-class identity through the lens of narrativity and social memory. Narrative analysis, as a methodological strategy, has allowed me to consider the multiple processes through which working-class men in Sudbury interpret their experiences and reproduce subjectivity.

***Class Formation and Class Identity***

In this dissertation, I trace the making and reproduction of male, working-class identity. It is my argument that the formation and historical reproduction of collective identity is an integral part of class formation. However, through in-depth interviews with a group of male nickel miners, this research also points to the ways that working-class identity generates particularities that limit class formation across workplaces, sectors, and spaces. It is therefore important to have a clear theoretical understanding of class formation in order to consider how the working-class identities analyzed in this study come to limit class formation.

In Chapter 2, I pursue a more theoretically extensive discussion of class and class formation, making a case for increased attention to the processes of the latter in the definition and constitution of the former. Here, for purposes of clarification, I briefly trace some of the uses of the concept of class formation.

Marxist political economy, or perhaps more accurately, historical materialism, treats class formation as both a structural and historical process.[3] Classes are formed and re-

[3] Recognizing the broad theoretical orientations of historical materialism, it might be more accurate to say, different schools of thought treat class formation in these fashions. For

formed, made and unmade, through the dynamic development of forms of accumulation, exploitation, and struggle. The degree to which the set of theoretical concepts provided by historical materialism applies across historical periods, particularly as pertains to pre-capitalist social formations, has been a point of contention (Ashton and Philpin 1987; Cohen [1978] 2000; Wood 2016). Ellen Meiksins Wood (2016:118-21), for example, argues for seeing the specificity of capitalist social relations, their unique reorganization of rationality, work and accumulation, and therefore the necessarily *historical* nature of historical materialism. Along these lines, class formation appears as an object of study understandable through changing patterns of capital accumulation and concentration, social and geographical relations, and attendant forms of social and political power. Studies in this vein are able to register historical and economic developments and chart the resulting reorganization of regimes of accumulation (Moody 2017; Moody and Post 2015). Yet, even when attention is turned to patterns of labour unrest and their role in shaping the dynamics of class formation on a global and historical scale (Silver 2003), the class places inhabited by social actors do not necessarily explain what the latter will do when in them; nor do they help us adequately understand how the making of classes in particular places might limit class formation across space and time. Understanding the material forces at work in setting the conditions for the constitution of classes is important, but it also risks losing the richness of more detailed, historical, and localized studies of class.

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contrasting views see Blackledge (2006), Cohen ([1978] 2000), Harman (1998), and Palmer (2017:308-79).

Alternatively, Wright's (1997) sociological approach to class formation seeks to conceptually separate class structure from class formation, while operating at a higher level of abstraction. As he (1997) articulates it:

> Class formation […] refers to the formation of organized collectivities within [a] class structure on the basis of the interests shaped by that class structure. Class formation is a variable. A given type of class structure may be characterized by a range of possible types of class formation, varying in the extent and form of collective organization of classes. Class-based collectivities may be organized, disorganized or reorganized within a given class structure without there being any fundamental transformations of the class structure itself (p.10).

This move to separate concepts is useful insofar as we are able to devote analytic focus to the processes of class formation themselves. However, it falls short of the needs of my research for two reasons. First, although treating class formation as a variable seemingly rids the concept of any teleological or determinist connotations, it nevertheless understands class structures as primarily constraining class formation. In this rendering, class structure is of interest only insofar as it reduces the 'variability' of class formation. As Callinicos (1987:9) argues, the difficulty with this way of understanding the issue is that we end up theorizing social structures as limiting factors only. Alternatively, our approach to class formation should conceptualize how "structural capacities" (p.235) enable action by virtue of social actors' positions in the relations of production. As Callinicos summarizes: "Structures do not simply constrain action. They do not simply act as inert limits, restricting the alternatives open to agents. They are also enabling and are thus present in the actions actually pursued by individuals or groups" (p.86).

Second, it follows that Wright's formulation treats class formation as secondary, i.e. variable and dependent on the class structure. As I have indicated above with reference to the contributions of E.P. Thompson (1978, [1963] 1982, 1993), this characterization is historically somewhat dubious, and as an orientation to the data gathered in this research, not helpful. Rather, in this dissertation I treat classes as the result of struggle, and the institutional and cultural spaces that shape that struggle, as arising out of action and social identification (see also Fantasia 1988 and Lembcke 1988). This is partly what Thompson meant when he characterized the British working class as "present at its own making" (Thompson [1963] 1982:8). It is a dialectical process of material influence and social action.

Przeworski (1993) offers a similar challenge to the reading of the causal ordering of class and class formation. He argues that classes are an effect of struggle, not necessarily of any objective criteria or prior relations of production. Although he also characterizes the latter as setting limits on the realizability of particular projects of class formation and political aspiration, he treats these as among a number of factors shaping social action. The mechanisms for determining what is realizable therefore vary insofar as any historical conjuncture contains much inherent potential (p.66-7). Classes thus result from a confluence of economic, political, ideological, and cultural struggles. In this, the economic or social relations of production constitute "a structure of choices given at a particular moment of history" (p.73). Classes are organized and disorganized as the outcomes of continual and interrupted struggles in which individuals with a variety of other social

attributes participate. As Przeworksi aptly summarizes: "The ideological struggle is a struggle *about* class before it is a struggle *among* classes" (p.70).[4]

This suggests a focus on the cultural conditions and processes of class formation. Consequently, in this dissertation, I borrow from scholarship on the reproduction of working classes (Charlesworth 2000; Dunk 1994, 2002a, 2003; Seccombe and Livingstone 2000; Willis 1981), seeing class formation as a social and cultural process, embedded in historical time and space, and actively participated in by workers themselves. Through this study of male, nickel miners, I seek to trace how class formation is simultaneously buttressed and limited by the social practices and institutional supports of working-class identity.

Willis' (1981) *Learning to Labour* is a classic example of work in this tradition. Responding to debates at the time about the "reproduction" of working classes, i.e. about whether and how institutions and apparatuses form new generations of working-class people, impede social mobility, or sometimes prevent substantive resistance, Willis offers a convincing, richly ethnographic account of "how working-class kids get working-class jobs." Willis challenges the notion that educational institutions ensure new generations of able and compliant workers by limiting the social mobility of working-class kids. He argues that this neglects the cultural forms whereby working classes actively take part in their own reproduction. Their submission is not a matter of forced compliance. Instead, Willis shows how the "counter-school culture" of "the lads" (p.52) itself reproduces their

[4] Although Wright (1997) concludes the quote above by similarly suggesting that "class formation is defined by social relations *within* classes" (p.10), his presentation of how class formation is related to a notion of class structure is far too constrained.

working-class lives in the transition from school to work. Rather than the school actively participating in the slotting of working-class kids into un- and semi-skilled labour, a liberal or progressive pedagogical approach runs up against a non-conformist and resistant counter-cultural group. Their opposition to authority and refusal to submit, together with their identification of mental labour with domination, helps to reproduce an aversion to education. “The lads” maintain an opposition to embedded forms of authority by opposing a school curriculum that increasingly encourages the acquisition of credentials for social mobility. What Willis refers to as their “penetration” (p.126), i.e. the implicit critique in their cultural forms and disobedient attitudes, represents these kids’ recognition of the material limitations of social mobility in the world of work. Theirs is a realization that, although school curricula might teach that education is a path to mobility for all, in fact, mobility under capitalism remains limited and uneven whereby the majority will still need to work in un- and semi-skilled jobs. Although the “Reproduction Debates” (Gintis and Bowles [1976] 2011) and Willis’ critical intervention largely took up the role of education in reproducing class relations, his findings and approach are useful here. In this study, I am concerned with the active participation of workers in their own making and re-making, and seek to draw particular attention to workers’ practices of remembering and narrating collective identities as the relations between labour and capital change in Sudbury.

***Class, Culture, and Narrative***

How then can we understand class as also a cultural process? Tracing the making of class in any particular place, I argue, necessitates a focus on workers' daily lives and interactions in the workplace and beyond. How workers understand and intervene in the social relations that constitute their material conditions is fundamentally a cultural question. I understand culture to be partially autonomous from economic relations, and to be a site where class reproduction takes places. Thus, any attempt to study the making of collective and inter-generational identifications, and to thus explain the bases of social action, must attend to how workers build senses of self and subjectivity.

However, class formation theorists often built their explanations of identification and social action on an abstract, and sometimes teleological, notion of class interest (Katznelson and Zolberg 1986; Somers 1992:594). In doing so, they assume what ought to be explained. By treating Marx's discussion of class formation in *Capital*'s chapter on "The Working Day" (Marx [1867] 1990:340) as a foundational text, those who have studied processes of class formation implicitly import from his English case assumptions about universal patterns of capitalist development and their relationship to class consciousness. This was partly because Marx had described movements for the reduction of the working day and factory regulation in France and the United States as "limp[ing] slowly behind England" (p.413), giving the impression, if not forthrightly arguing, that class formation proceeds developmentally, with working-class movements responding as capitalist development reaches necessary stages (p.411-6). Other scholars (Anderson [2010] 2016; Desai 2004; Shanin 1983) have argued for less Eurocentric readings of Marx. Yet, Marxism

has nevertheless tended to treat intervening institutional and cultural influences as deviations from a theoretical norm, rather than as constitutive parts of class formation (Chibber 2017; Somers 1992). Cultural or regional particularities are presented as giving way to the forward march of capitalist social relations and class consciousness. However, as Katznelson (1986) argues, our research should be directed toward understanding the impacts of historical specificity and variation on class formation. Our focus should be less on explaining various deviations from an ostensibly correct theory, and more on understanding the political, social, cultural, and other influences on the making of classes and social formations.

"Macroanalytic" and "comparative" (Zolberg 1986:454) approaches to class formation have sought to correct for the above issues, building strong historical and theoretical accounts in the process. However, the tendency for "variation" to be conceptualized at national or other macro-social levels leaves open questions of historical specificity open that can be better examined through local, qualitative approaches. Narrative approaches (Somers 1992: Stedman Jones 1983) to class formation and identity attempt – to varying degrees of success – to address this shortcoming. Their theoretical interventions also challenge the deterministic tendency to attribute interests to social or historical actors. This problematizes the practice of describing social action deviating from 'true class interests' as empirical 'failures,' and instead aims to present class as at once materially embedded and as a narrative and cultural practice. For instance, returning to the case of English class formation, Somers (1992) and Stedman Jones (1983) use narrative approaches to emphasize how workers relied on conceptions of political rights

and equal access to the law in a community of equals as a "language of class" (Stedman Jones 1983). The implication here is that workers draw upon multiple sources of meaning and webs of relations in their narrative production of class, even though these other social relations are also materially embedded. In the process, the narrative approach treats class subjectivity as inherently bound up with other social relations. In this dissertation, I have borrowed from this narrative approach, while remaining attentive to its tendency to overemphasize the socially constitutive role of language (Foster 1985; Jones 2004; McNally 1995; Palmer 1990).

This study takes an approach that sees narrativity as socially-embedded, and key to the constitution and articulation of social identities. If class is a meaningful identification in the lives of workers, it is because its significance is wrapped up with broader narratives about workers' place in the world. It is not, as Somers puts it, that narrative forms are easily "imposed" on social life, but rather that "social life and human lives are themselves 'storied'" (Somers 1992:606). A narrative approach to class identity thus treats social being as constituted by the telling of stories about social life. But this is not its sole advantage. It also provides us with additional methodological tools for ascertaining class in practice. Rather than treating classes as relational categories and imputing conceptions of interests to social actors deposited into them, narrative analysis opens the broad relational matrix of social life to analysis. In other words, narratives can provide clues about the forces that both constitute social life and generate the sets of discursive meaning subjects draw upon. In this sense, as I elaborate in the following chapter,

narrative identities and the multiple social relations which sustain them are as relevant to the constitution of social actors as material interests and categorical antagonisms.

In this dissertation, I organize my analyses around what I refer to as thematic areas of class identity. These thematic areas are derived from close readings of the interview data, and help organize the ways that workers form class subjectivities. As I explain further below, Chapters 4, 5, and 6 are structured around these three areas of class identity. They deal, respectively, with: the experiences of work and the labour process; space and place in the production of class subjectivities; and, social memories, gender, and generational tensions. In these chapters I am focused on the workplace, the community, the family, and the union as loose 'sites' where male, working-class identity is made and reproduced. I am concerned to show how class identity takes shape through available narratives and adjusts, or does not, in response to socioeconomic change in Sudbury. As well, my focus on a single occupational group at one workplace is meant to highlight the dynamics and contradictions in the making of working-class identity. My focus will show how the very processes that contribute to the resilience of working-class identity impede class formation.

**Literature on Deindustrialization and Industrial Workers**

This dissertation makes an original contribution to research on workers and labour movements in regions experiencing what has come to be called "deindustrialization." Although there is considerable scholarship on various facets of deindustrialization across sociology, history, political economy, and geography, much of this work centres on places

impacted and workers "displaced" (High 2010:159) by plant shutdowns or closings resulting from outsourcing, and other forms of capital flight and job loss. Often research takes place following a major shutdown, or as one approaches, and focuses on industrial workers' lives as more 'postindustrial' types of work begin to characterize affected local economies. Much less is known about processes of making and reproducing working classes in areas where deindustrialization has not meant full shutdowns, so much as major restructurings, foreign acquisition, and workforce reductions, as is the case in Sudbury. Moreover, by focusing on the narrative production of working-class subjectivities during these processes, this study aims to broaden our understanding of the sociological, cultural, and spatial dimensions of workplace and community restructuring. In particular, I am concerned with how to understand the historical legacy of the postwar compromise amid decades of economic restructuring. Through a focus on workers' memories and narratives, I show the relationships between material conditions and institutional forms, and workers' subjectivity and agency.

Since deindustrialization was first identified as a growing socioeconomic issue in the early 1980s, literature on its causes and consequences has grown substantially (High 2013; Strangleman and Rhodes 2014). Originally emerging in response to the significant social dislocations caused by shuttered factories and displaced blue-collar workforces, this scholarship has grown and deepened to include wide ranging concerns, such as deindustrialization's cultural and psychological impacts, its historical origins and economic impetus, and labour's efforts to resist and reform affected factories or industries. Most recently, oral history approaches have brought new methodological tools and concerns to

bear on the topic (Bluestone and Harrison 1982; Camp 1995; Clemens 2011; Cowie and Heathcott 2003; Dublin 1998; Dudley 1994; High 2003, 2010; High and Lewis 2007; Milkman 1997; Moody 1997, 2007; Strangleman 2007, 2013). This research has been highly interdisciplinary, in terms of the range of approaches undertaken and the questions asked.

Literature on deindustrialization has grown through a strong relationship between scholarship and activism. As High (2013) notes, scholars' early interventions addressed workers' and community's attempts to resist deindustrialization and its attendant political and economic forces. Efforts were made across regions in North America and Western Europe to catalogue both the opposition to and losses from industrial displacement (Jenson and Mahon 1993; Laxer 1973; Livingstone, Smith and Smith 2011; Lynd 1982; Nissen 1995; Raines, Berson and Grace 1982). Although this work achieved much of significance, others recognized that to conceive of the phenomenon as new, particularly in the emergent "Rust Belt" Midwestern states, was to obscure deeper historical patterns of capitalist development and spatial dynamics (Cowie 1999; Hayter and Harvey 1993; Koistinen 2016; Massey 1984; Silver 2003). Cowie (1999), for example, by tracing RCA's seven-decade history of plant relocations in the United States, showed how spatial reorganization served as a way for employers to redraw the battle lines of class iteratively. Although political economy, historical, and contemporaneous interventions identified many factors propelling deindustrialization and capitalist reorganization, more attention was needed – and remains needed – on their cultural impacts.

Scholarship in which workers are the object of research has broadened the study of deindustrialization, taking up questions of race, gender, culture, and loss (Altena and van der Linden 2003; Bluestone and Harrison 1982; Cowie and Heathcott 2003; Dublin 1998; Dunk 2002a; Finkel 2013; Frisch and Rogovin 1993; High 2010, 2015; High and Lewis 2007; McKee 2008; Strangleman 2004). Bluestone and Harrison's (1982) classic work *The Deindustrialization of America: Plant Closings, Community Abandonment, and the Dismantling of Basic Industry* marked the first major shift to studying deindustrialization more holistically, attending to its social, communal, and personal impacts, or what the authors referred to as its "social trauma" (p.65). Subsequent literature sought to place workers as active subjects at the centre of political, social, and economic processes. Yet, in many cases, it too lacks engagement with processes of class formation and reproduction.

More recently, work offering deeper criticisms of both deindustrialization and the original studies tracing its patterns has emerged (Joshi 2002; Strangleman 2013, 2017). The latter has taken a number of forms, such as critiquing what one scholar refers to as "smokestack nostalgia" (Cowie and Heathhott 2003; Strangleman 2013) for equating the longing for good jobs and economic security with romanticized portraits of industrial work (Hart and K'Meyer 2003; Mah 2012). Others have taken aim at the gender and racial inequalities of postwar industrialism (Sugrue 1996; Joshi 2002), as well as its environmental devastation (Hurley 1995). From a more cultural approach, some scholars have also criticized 'industrial heritage' and other forms of social remembrance for frequently expunging class and class struggle in representations of industrial work (Chan 2009; Finkel 2013; Rhodes 2013; Stanton 2006; Taksa 2003). Despite their innovative

contributions, many of these studies have tended to lose focus on workers and class relations, specifically as they have moved to analyzing cultural representations and discourses.

More explicit in its eschewing of class analyses, what is broadly referred to as "end of work" (Foster 2013; Strangleman 2007) scholarship has also offered theoretical readings of the move away from industrial employment and postwar class relations (Bauman 1998; Beck 2000; Casey 1995; Gorz 1980, 1999; Rifkin 1996; Sennet 1998). Reading deindustrialization as one aspect of a more general socioeconomic shift, literature in this tradition has posited that work and labour now have far less centrality in the formation of identity. This has led to a series of studies that offer conflicting conclusions depending on the empirical context (Doherty 2009; Foster 2012; Perry 2003; Watson 2009). What they often have in common, however, is a focus on "work" rather than class in the constitution of identity, offering limited reflections on the historical making and shifting dynamics of class.

In this dissertation, I have thus turned to literatures on deindustrialization and working-class cultures using oral history and memory studies (High 2003, 2010, 2013; Passerini 1979, 2009; Portelli 1991, 1997, 2011, 2017; Strangleman 1999, 2001; Strangleman, Rhodes, and Linkon 2013). In order to expand the methodological tools for studying the formation and reproduction of working-class subjectivity in Sudbury, I have also broadened my approach to include attention to memory and narrative analysis (Halbswachs 1992; Passerini 1979, 1992, 2009; Riessman 1993). This study seeks to build on the methodological innovations of sociologists and historians employing oral history

and narrative analysis strategies in the study of deindustrialization by looking at how workers' subjectivities consolidated in particular periods of social relations, and how they are reproduced and negotiated over periods of socioeconomic change. Here my objective is to show the multiple axes across which workers narratively construct class subjectivities and reproduce identity over time.

***The Case of Sudbury***

As indicated at the outset, mining in Sudbury offers an illustrative and distinctive case in which to pursue this study. Although it is characterized by many of the features that scholars of deindustrialization have identified, such as blue-collar job loss, increased global economic integration, declines in union influence, the rise of precarious and feminized service work, and cultural shifts pertaining to its local identity as a 'mining town,' Sudbury also has particular characteristics that make it useful as a location for research on working-class identity.

Perhaps most importantly, Sudbury has a rich labour history that is both institutionally still represented by unions at the mines, and embedded in the lives and preserved by the memories of workers. Moreover, local author/workers have produced their own history books on mining and miners in the region that are quite popular locally (Brasch 1997, 2007, 2010; Gilchrist 1999; Seguin 2008). Despite considerable declines in unionized core employment in the mines – in fact, in spite of it – a particular way of embodying and narrating working-class identity persists. How, or through what processes this takes place, is a major concern of this research.

Second, because resource extraction is geographically-bound, outsourcing or 'off-shoring,' as we typically understand it in manufacturing, is not possible, or is constrained by the degree to which minerals of comparable quality can be sourced elsewhere.[5] Instead, the mining companies have pursued other "fixes," to borrow Silver's (2003) term, in their efforts to reduce labour costs and undermine union power and influence. These factors will be covered more extensively in Chapter 3. In short, technological improvements and work reorganization have been the primary means of translating process innovations into workforce reductions. In 1978, the International Nickel Company (Inco) employed over 18,000 workers at its mines and processing facilities in Sudbury. As I write, new Brazilian owner Vale Ltd. (CVRD) retains approximately 3,000 core employees (Mulligan 2010a, 2010b; Saarinen 2013). Relatedly, Inco, and later Vale, have been able to slowly increase their reliance on a growing mining supply and service sector of over three hundred firms in the region (Robinson 2005). This has allowed the companies to move a number of formerly in-house tasks and jobs to leaner firms with more precariously employed and cheaper labour. The issue of 'contracting-out' has been a matter of considerable contention between the union and companies, and has intermittently increased with each collective agreement since the 1970s (Roth, Steedman, and Condratto 2015). As I will demonstrate in this research, it has also generated sizable tensions between unionized workers and their precariously employed, contracted counterparts. Class divisions, often manifesting themselves in "generational discourses" (Foster 2013:70), appear between a core of older workers and a pool of younger contingent

[5] See Chapter 3 for historical context on Inco's attempts in this direction, and the divergent strategies they pursued to reduce labour costs (Clement 1981; Swift 1977; USWA 1987, 1988).

workers. Yet, efforts to organize those excluded from the benefits and protections of the unionized core are absent, overshadowed by rearguard battles to hold onto former union victories now under attack.

Last, the early years of the twenty-first century have witnessed major mining ownership changes in Sudbury. The largely Canadian-owned mining firms International Nickel Company of Canada (Inco) and Falconbridge were sold internationally to Brazilian conglomerate CVRD (known as Vale Ltd. in Sudbury) and Swiss equity firm Xstrata in 2006, respectively. This globalization of ownership represents the culmination of a project of economic restructuring in the mining industry, coupled with neoliberal policies undertaken by both the Ontario and Canadian governments to more fully open Canada's natural resources to global competition and foreign investment (Leadbeater 2008, 2014; Peters 2010; Stanford 2008). Vale's business strategy since entering Sudbury has included an aggressive approach to labour relations (Aguzzoli and Geary 2014). The company has pursued an extensive reorganization of work and overhauled operating costs by forcing open collective agreements. Demands that unionized workers make concessions on pensions, benefits, new hires, and contracting-out precipitated a bitter yearlong strike in 2009-10, which culminated with the ratification of an unpopular collective agreement and raised serious questions about union strategy, as well as the new global terrain of struggle on which workers found themselves (Brasch 2010; King 2017; Peters 2010). Vale workers ranging in age from 26 to 74 years, and with markedly different work and union experiences, form the bulk of the interviewees in this study.

Before moving to a discussion of my theoretical framework, sampling, and methodological strategies, the following section briefly discusses the aims and arguments of the subsequent chapters and sets out the organization of the dissertation.

## Structure and Organization of the Dissertation

The workers whose voices are at the heart of this dissertation engage in a narrative construction of class subjectivity. Their practices of making and reproducing class identity involve processes of social remembering and narrativity. In this dissertation, I trace these processes across three thematic areas of class identity. First, I examine narratives about the workplace, management, and technology. Occupational identity has historically been a pillar of miners' class consciousness (Williamson 1982). This pattern holds true here as well. However, technological and process innovations have undermined skill and reshaped the nature of work, while new managerial strategies have altered workers' relations to the company and one another. Thus, the social and institutional relations of the workplace shape how workers discuss their work lives. Yet, they also retain occupational and class identities rooted in historical conceptions of what it means to be a miner in Sudbury. The second area of class identity concerns space, place, and culture in workers' narratives. Here, workers draw on notions of place-based identities, and articulate shifting boundaries of class and community against a backdrop of new foreign ownership and work reorganization. The final area involves narratives about union history, family, and generational conflict. In this case, workers engage in practices of social remembering that draw on locally available discourses (Somers 1992). However, when we examine how they

do so, we can see the ways in which economic structures generate problematic notions of gender and generation.

These three overarching thematic areas show how class identity takes place in Sudbury amid and in response to socioeconomic change. This dissertation traces how class subjectivities emerge and how they are narratively constructed, both by drawing on available discourses and through processes of social remembering. As well, it seeks to show how narrative constructions of class are reproduced or adapted by workers in response to transformations in the material context out of which they emerged. As the research questions above outline, I situate this production and reproduction of class against the backdrop of the forms that capital-labour relations took during the postwar compromise, and am concerned with how neoliberal restructuring has impacted them. Ultimately, I conclude that the postwar class compromise and the form of trade unionism that it encouraged shaped working-class identity in Sudbury, but also limited class formation beyond the mines. In addition, I find that: class narratives provide ways for workers to make sense of work, community, and change; class narratives are remarkably resilient in the face of substantial material change; and, the inability to effectively counter the power and ability of new international owners to reshape the terms of work in Sudbury is partly explained by the endurance of a class subjectivity far less able to motivate collective action.

In Chapter 2, "Class Formation, Oral History, and Narrative Analysis," I detail the theoretical orientation and methodological strategies used in this dissertation. This chapter is first concerned with advancing a critique and reformulation of the concept of

class interests. Tracing some of the uses of this concept across Marxist sociological theory (Callinicos 1987; Marx 1990; Przeworski 1993; Wright 1997), I argue that 'class interest' is often an unduly limiting formulation, and unable to explain a sizeable portion of working-class social action. I contend that 'interest' misses many of the justifications and motivations that social actors offer to explain collective action and identity. Instead, I offer a reading of class formation that, while attentive to the specificities of working-class action (Lembcke 1988; Offe and Wiesenthal 1980), also sees history, culture, and experience as integral to identification and therefore central to processes of making and reproducing classes.

After explaining my theoretical orientation, I outline my research questions and methodological approach. This methodological discussion has both theoretical and practical components. I divide this portion of the work into: first, a discussion of the theory and practice of oral history utilized in the data collection of this study; and second, an explanation of my engagement with narrative analysis during data analysis and interpretation.

Chapter 3, "Mining and Miners in Sudbury," provides the socioeconomic and political background for the dissertation. In this chapter, I first discuss the history and political economy of mining in Sudbury, providing the reader with the context necessary to understand the origins of the industry and current issues facing workers. Bringing the discussion into the present, I argue that a series of spatial, technological, and financial 'fixes' (Harvey 2005; Silver 2003) have reshaped mining locally and globally, tracing their direct impacts on the conditions of work in Sudbury. In particular, I discuss Vale's

purchase of Inco and show how foreign acquisition represents the culmination of these changes, as well as new challenges for workers. Borrowing Tabb's (2012) notion of a "social structure of accumulation," I make the case for viewing these 'fixes' as contributing to deep material shifts that reorganize not only ownership and work, but also workers' lives outside of work.

Chapter 4, "Work, Management, and Subjectivity: The Making of an Occupational Identity" deals with how the labour process, labour relations, and managerial strategies shape workers' narratives. It engages with scholarship in the tradition of labour process theory (Braverman [1974] 1998; Burawoy [1979] 1982, 1985; Heron and Storey 1986; Knights and Willmott 1990; Lembcke 1988), situating arguments about the structure of workplace politics and class struggle alongside the conceptions of class and work that emerge in my findings. In particular, this chapter traces the emergence of an occupational identity among miners and links it to the framework of the postwar class compromise. I then discuss how mechanization and technological change in the workplace have challenged this identity. As well, this chapter deals with changing managerial strategies and their interaction with class consciousness. I argue that the spatial fixity of mining has meant that employers have relied on process innovations as central tools to control labour and reduce labour costs, and that these changes to the labour process were paired with new 'post-Fordist' managerial initiatives emphasizing cooperation and obscuring class conflict. Yet, because of the institutional development of both labour law and "job control unionism" (Russell 1999:12), union responses have been limited and rearguard, hemmed in by the limitations of postwar labour relations. I conclude by looking at how

workers talk about technology and workplace health and safety. Although both the uses of technology in the workplace, and employer discourses around health and safety, have fairly clear class connotations, workers have an ambivalent and at times contradictory relationship to them.

Workers' narratives about work and technology generate a contradictory set of ideas about working-class experience. In the context of job loss, the identity of 'the miner' serves as a point of pride amid growing service and supply work locally. Yet, the technical organization of work at the same time undermines this image. Interviewees' articulate a working-class identity shaped in the context of the Fordist workplace and reproduced through social remembering and shared ideas about miners' importance to local history. Labour process and managerial changes, on the other hand, progressively undermine the labour relations system that shaped this image, and take advance of its most individualizing features in the process of undoing it. We thus find workers who emphasize the increased safety that workplace technologies afford, and who engage with cooperative approaches to health and safety, even as these obscure demands for greater productivity.

Chapter 5, "Place, Culture, and Class Formation: The Contradictions of Place and Identity," looks at a second area of working-class identity, focusing on what I refer to as 'resources' for the development of social identity. In this chapter, I draw on theoretical work concerning space, place, and nationality in understanding how workers narratively construct place-based identities (Anderson [1983] 2006; Harvey 2006a, 2006b; Kelly 2011; Lefebvre [1970] 2003, [1974] 1992; Massey 1984, 1994, 2005; Merrifield 1993). I argue

that workers' class subjectivity is embedded in space and place. Region, nation, and culture are axes along which workers in this study narratively position themselves in opposition to a shifting set of class enemies. Using Vale's takeover of Inco as an exemplar, I show how workers redraw the boundaries of class, nation, and community in response to their new Brazilian employer. As well, this chapter explores the narrative and conceptual difficulties workers have with building solidarity beyond the local, regional, and national levels, and thus how the particularities of class identity limit broader class formation (Harvey 1995).

Chapter 6 is the last of the chapters covering the thematic areas of class identity. "Generation, Memory, and Class Identity: Making Union History and Generating Conflict" draws most heavily on narrative analysis to show how workers use social memory in the making of class identities. By first focusing on workers' telling of union history, I demonstrate the ways in which narrative practices and collective forms of storytelling operate in bringing workers together around shared meanings. I then highlight the complex ways that the collective and the personal work to aid masculine notions of class in workers' narratives. (Yarrow 1991).[6] Last, by using the 2009-10 strike as an example, I show how narratives about the strike divide along generational lines, and contend that this results from historically-specific forms of class subjectivity. How workers narratively integrate the strike depends on the conditions of labour in their formative work years. This provokes tensions between workers of different ages, as "generational discourses" (Foster 2013:7) tend to stand in for divergent class experiences (McDaniel 2004). It also

[6] See Palmer (2017:356-61) for an excellent discussion of the shifting boundaries of production and social reproduction in the process of North American working-class formation.

demonstrates the lasting impacts, as well as the contradictory strains, of the postwar compromise's class relations. This suggests deeper difficulties with calls for "high participation organizing" (McAlevey 2016:16) and increased member mobilization and union involvement. In this case, lack of member mobilization, though an impediment to union renewal, must also be explained as resulting from a segmented labour force, which is narrated along generational lines in workers' discourses. In this chapter, I note the contradiction that the union's capacity to mobilize broad participation is undermined by the new employer's ability to extract concessions that divide workers. Yet, as union capitulation to these demands for cost reductions contributes to a segmented labour force, the younger and worse off conceive of resistance as increasingly ineffectual (Corman, Duffy and Pupo-Barkans 2018).

The contradictory persistence of historically particular forms of class identity among miners in Sudbury is explored in the conclusion. The concluding chapter summarizes the empirical findings of this research and elaborates on the logic of persistence in the areas of class identity identified in Chapters 4 through 6. I conclude that ownership change, work reorganization and job loss, and employer attacks on union strength add up to a set of significant disruptions for working-class life in Sudbury. As workers' narratives suggest, however, diagnoses of these issues do not necessarily translate into innovations in class organization and social action. Through interpretations of workers' narratives about workplace and community change, new employers, the issue of contract labour, and union leadership, I identify contradictory processes of class reproduction and diagnoses of substantive material change. These findings suggest that the persistence of a particular

class identity takes place alongside the unmaking of the postwar class compromise – a process most visible in the alienation and disassociation of young workers. The conclusion then reflects on areas for further research by briefly considering how union renewal (Camfield 2011; Lévesque, Murray, and Le Queux 2005; McAlevey 2016; Ross 2008) might take place amidst these contradictions.

In this dissertation, I problematize the relationship between material change and class identity. By focusing on the narrativization of social life, I argue that workers' class subjectivities are shaped by material conditions but are not reducible to them. I conclude that despite considerable socioeconomic change in Sudbury, an historical class subjectivity rooted in the particular conditions of the postwar class compromise in Sudbury is sustained by a set of persistent social and narrative practices, despite economic restructuring and growing precariousness undermining its socioeconomic foundation.

# Chapter 2

## Class Formation, Oral History, and Narrative Analysis

> It is not a small, or theoretically trivial, point to distinguish between the constitution of classes by modes of production and the process of class formation. Nor is it unimportant to suggest that, however completely we may succeed in deductively situating people on a chart of class locations, the problematic question of class formation will remain and may yield answers that are both theoretically and politically more significant. The crucial point is that the main burden of a Marxist theory of class must be less on identifying class "locations" than on explaining class formation.
>
> Ellen Meiksins Wood (2016:80-1)

This dissertation fits within and builds upon the study of class formation by focusing on the making and reproduction of working-class identity. Its theoretical framework is therefore informed and inspired by scholars studying working-class formation as a social, cultural, and narrative process (Dunk 1994, 2003; Eidlin 2014, 2018; Fantasia 1988;

Katznelson 1986; Lembcke 1988; Somers 1992, 1996a; Thompson [1963] 1982; Willis 1981). Although class formation is commonly treated as an historical question – particularly when addressing the origin and composition of specific working classes and their organizations – my research is designed to study class formation and identity as also a process of reproduction.[1] This involves examining classes historically, as well as socially and culturally, seeking to explain not only the past's influence on the shape of contemporary working classes, but also the processes and practices whereby working classes reproduce themselves.

This is a reading of class formation, as Wright (1997) describes it, concerned with relations *"within* classes" (p.10). Importantly, my research moves beyond the class-in-itself/class-for-itself distinction that often motivates historical materialist treatments of class formation.[2] I am not solely concerned with how and under what conditions nickel miners in Sudbury became 'class-conscious.' Rather, I accept Somers' (1992, 1996b) critique of teleological theories of class, and instead seek to understand miners' subjectivities and consciousness as they emerged, and as they are reproduced in relation to material conditions. I understand the latter process as contingent on the social relations between and within classes. I engage with these questions through oral history interviews and a narrative approach to data analysis and interpretation. This data

[1] Though I do discuss issues of gender and class below, my use of the term 'reproduction' should not be equated with feminist political economy's notion of social reproduction. Rather, I have in mind reproduction in a similar sense as Willis (1981), i.e. the historical and cultural reproduction of working classes as distinct classes, inter-generationally and inter-subjectively.

[2] The longevity of the "class in-itself/class for-itself" distinction as a way of describing the move from a "common situation" to class consciousness is striking, given that it appears in Marx only once in *The Poverty of Philosophy* (Marx [1857] 1955:150).

collection strategy allowed interviewees the space to develop their stories about work in the mines and their union. Narrative analysis then provided me with the analytical tools to interpret the plot structures of the interview data, and to draw out the themes and discourses on which workers relied in narratively representing themselves (Mishler 1986; Riessman 1993; Somers 1992).

In this chapter, I first detail my theoretical approach and conceptual apparatus. I begin with a discussion of the relationship between class and material interests in which I argue for devoting less attention to rational "interests" (Cohen [1978] 2000), in favour of greater focus on "structural capacities" (Callinicos 1987:235). This sets the theoretical ground on which I elaborate my research design, pointing in particular to history, culture, and experience as key points of entry to an understanding of class formation and working-class identity. This theoretical section concludes by making the case for a broader historical materialist framework encompassing the constitutive roles of culture, narrativity, and consciousness. I then present my research questions, and explain the methodological approach adopted in the dissertation. This section is organized around discussions of oral history methods, social memory, and narrative analysis, and builds upon the preceding theoretical framework. The chapter concludes with a brief description of the practical undertaking and organization of the data collection and analysis.

## Theoretical Framework

### *Class and 'Interests'*

A theoretical framework for studying class formation and working-class identity cannot but begin with Marx and historical materialism (Cohen [1978] 2000; Blackledge 2006; Palmer 2017). Marx's method begins by seeing class relations as the defining feature of modes of production, and by treating these productive relations as, to some degree, determining consciousness, culture, and historical change (Fine and Saad-Fihlo 2016). But as Ste. Croix (1981:46) notes in perhaps one of the most unique and provocative uses of historical materialism, Marx never elaborated a *general theory* of class.[3] What we inherit from Marx are, rather, theoretical and historical texts in which he theorizes such things as value, exploitation, and other concepts that play a role in producing classes, but do not necessarily add up to a formal definition of class. Ste. Croix thus offers the following definition:

> A *class* (a particular class) is a group of persons in a community identified by their position in the whole system of social production, defined above all according to their relationship (primarily in terms of the degree of ownership or control) to the conditions of production (that is to say, the means and labour of production) and to other classes […] The individuals constituting a given class may or may not be wholly or partly conscious of their own identity and common interests as a class, and they may or may not feel antagonism towards members of other classes as such (p.44).

[3] Others have attempted to develop such "general theory" in interesting, though historically limited, directions. Perhaps the most extensive and theoretically robust is John Roemer's (1982, 1986) work.

Ste. Croix's definition, although thorough and systematic, lends itself to a conception of class that is overly structural. As Camfield (2004/5) notes, when class definitions emphasize the social roles generated out of production relations, they tend to present an "empty slots" version of class in which historical specificity and meaning are lost, along with the importance of culture and consciousness.

Such an approach has its defenders, however. Cohen ([1978] 2000), for example, writes: "A person's class is established by nothing but his [sic] objective place in the network of ownership relations, however difficult it may be to identify such places neatly. His consciousness, culture, and politics do not enter the *definition* of his class position" (p.73, emphasis in original).[4] Were this true, we would expect little variation in class formation between working classes in places with similar levels of productive development. Palmer (1990), who also emphasizes the importance of material relations, concludes: "By no means always easily locatable, class defies simplistic, straightforward identification precisely because productive life develops unevenly and never quite homogenizes the human material at its core to a congealed, undifferentiated mass" (p.138). Recognizing the inherent messiness of class formation, I use an approach to class identity that sees the historical particularities of culture, location, and experience as necessarily part of the formation of classes or particular segments of classes.

Relatedly, my theoretical framework is critical of definitions of class that rely too heavily on notions of class interest. Such definitions see "interests" as arising out of

[4] It is interesting to note that Cohen begins his statement speaking of "class" and ends with "class *position*," essentially equating the two. E.P. Thompson, on the other hand, uses class position to denote social relations prior to the collective struggle that produces class.

objective conditions, needing only to be uncovered by historical actors. Whether explicitly or implicitly, "class interest" implies to some degree a 'rational' choice. Embedded within it is an implication that people universally have a desire to increase their material wellbeing. A slightly more complicated version of this same supposition is to, as Wright (1997) suggests, include an attendant desire to minimize "toil." As he puts it: "There is [...] no assumption that people universally have an objective interest in *increasing* their consumption, but they do have an interest in reducing the toil necessary to obtain whatever level of consumption they desire" (p.36, emphasis in original). In the latter formulation, an "objective interest" is still "rational" in that it maximizes a utility (consumption/leisure) and minimizes a disutility, namely "toil," which Wright acknowledges inherently defies definition. Capitalism is thus a problem for workers because it frustrates their ability to maximize their gains: they must compete with one another for jobs, and they are structurally weaker than owners of capital. Thus, class is both *relational* and *exploitative* insofar as some increase their capacity to realize material interests at the expense of others. Wright and others' critique of rational choice thus has more to do with the need for social action to realize material gains for workers because capitalism prevents them from doing so individually than it does with a broader critique of the concept of objective interests itself. Though not as methodologically individualistic as other attempts to use rational choice theory to understand class (Elster 1994; Przeworski 1993), Wright's intervention still retains a commitment to a version of class interests that posits rational calculation as fundamental to class formation. In consequence, class

formation appears as the outcome of realizing the necessity of collective struggle to satisfy individual wants.

Further, we may ask whether relational considerations always conform to economistic deliberation. That social actors deviate from such utilitarian calculation in many social encounters, including those supposedly in the realm of formal "economics," has been widely demonstrated (Granovetter 1985; Portes 2010; Zelizer 2013).[5] The key point, as Marx and Engels ([1845] 2004) argued, is not that rationality is a universal characteristic upon which to ground a theory of individual or social action, but rather that capitalist social relations tend to subordinate all social relations to economistic calculation (Wood 2016). As they wrote in *The German Ideology*: "For [the bourgeois] only *one* relation is valid on its own account – the relation of exploitation; all other relations have validity for him only insofar as he can include them under this one relation" (Marx and Engels [1845] 2004:110). Thus, the action implied in this utilitarian theory is historically and socially particular in action. It is a form of rationality specific to capitalist social relations. Though it is never entirely hegemonic, its influence on the conduct of subordinate social actors is often immense. But to treat all motivations for action, especially those forms of collective action undertaken by the exploited, as arising out of efforts to maximize utility or minimize toil cannot capture the range of complex social relations and considerations which influence action (Callinicos 1987). Indeed, if bourgeois forms of rational calculation are often experienced as a hegemonic force imposing their

[5] Economic sociology, although quite useful for studying the embeddedness of capitalist economic organization (Evans 1995; Jessop 2002; Krippner 2001), has had less to say about the development and reproduction of classes, largely due to its Polanyian theoretical heritage.

influence on social life, collective resistance is at least as likely to be arrayed in opposition to this form of economization as to be motivated by it. The opposition to neoliberalism's hegemonic political project of economizing nearly all areas of social life offers abundant examples of this dynamic (Harvey 2005, 2012:159-64).

The best route to clarifying class interests, I believe, is offered by Callinicos (1987), who, borrowing from Giddens (1979), suggests that were we to separate interests from wants, we could retain a notion of interests that is objective but does not presuppose the rational preferences of social actors. Callinicos (1987) argues that we ought to focus on how structural capacities shape social action, irrespective of the goals to which action is directed. As he contends:

> If we are to say that social action involves conscious choices, that these choices issue from agents' beliefs and desires and that their desires cannot be read off from the social structure or deduced from an ethical theory – and I think we must say all these things – then there seems no alternative than to consider the ways in which agents with fairly diverse wants may still benefit from certain common courses of action (p.130).[6]

That is, wants may be manifold but their realization depends on the structural capacities of social actors, which in turn arise from actors' locations in production relations. Put similarly, as Williams ([1977] 2009) argued, "determination" is "not just the setting of limits" but "also the exertion of pressures" (p.85). This "pressure" or "capacity" not only

[6] Wright's (2000) distinction between "associational power" and "structural power" is similar in this respect; the former describing the power workers wield once "formed" into a class, and the latter the power that accrues to them by virtue of their location in production relations. The key question concerns whether workers are a class when not in "association."

constrains, but also enables, and thus opens the terrain of struggle to no universal set of objectives. We can say that workers have an *interest* in cooperating by virtue of their common situation, even if they do so for varied, non-rational goals. By making this distinction between position and objectives, we do not assume a proper course for social action, and can instead, as Thompson ([1963] 1982) poses the issue, explain class in its historical and relational context. Though Thompson claims that "class happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs" (p.8-9), his emphases on experience and history suggest an interpretation of "interest," here, that is closer to what Callinicos means by "capacity." It is the commonality of the experience of a class situation, not any predetermined material interest or rational course of action, that influences the forms that class takes. Offe and Wiesenthal's (1980) theory of workers' collective action proposes a similar approach. The "logic" of workers' collective action stems from their structural position. Unlike the capitalist, workers must associate to pursue whatever objectives they determine to be important. The operative question from this perspective is then: what are the "wants" or desires that shape workers into a class in any given situation and thus motivate collective identification and action?

***History, Culture, and Experience***

The previous subsection has shown the merit of a broader theory of class interests. This opens the space for considering the myriad influences on the making of working-class

identity. Below I highlight specific concerns of the theory of class identity used in this dissertation, as well as its impact on class formation.

In the previous chapter I began by alluding to E.P Thompson's ([1963] 1982) characterization of class as an "historical question," quoting his oft-cited remark that "Class is defined by men [sic] as they live their own history, and, in the end, this is its only definition" (p.10). Thompson's is not simply an historian's defense of his discipline's relevance, but a measured theoretical case for the importance of *process* in class formation. As he later put it, "[class] is derived from the observation of the social process over time" (Thompson 1978:147). That is, only by treating it as an historical phenomenon, by measuring and analyzing it over time, can we arrive at a theoretical elaboration of class, as well as its processes and structures (see also Fine and Saad-Fihlo 2016). Key to the historical investigation of class is the question of time. Strictly "sociological" or "heuristic" (Thompson 1978:147) elaborations of class that seek to topologically organize relations of exploitation expunge time and process from their analyses.

Thompson's emphasis on time and process leads him to argue that theoretical attention should be refocused on class struggle, which is inherently an historical process, and away from a static conception of class. He concludes:

> To put it bluntly: classes do not exist as separate entities, look around, find an enemy class, and then start to struggle. On the contrary, people find themselves in a society structured in determined ways (crucially, but not exclusively, in productive relations), they experience exploitation (or the need to maintain power over those they exploit), they identify points of antagonistic interest, they commence to struggle around these issues and in the process of struggling they discover themselves as classes, they come to

> know this discovery as class-consciousness. Class and class-consciousness are always the last, not the first, stage in the real historical process (p.149).

In this dissertation, I accept this reordering of class and class consciousness. I ask how the integration of labour into processes of capital accumulation in the mines, and subsequent changes, such as industrial restructuring and technological innovation, changing patterns of employment in the community, and intra-class and generational dynamics have influenced class subjectivity and class struggle.

In this research, I treat nickel miners in Sudbury as one "historical formation" (Camfield 2004/5) of a segment of the Canadian working class. That is, I understand it to be empirically impossible to define working classes solely by the relations of production into which they enter. For this reason, I investigate how workers are socially constituted by a confluence of modes of differentiation in time and place. Refocusing the analysis in this way allows me to appreciate the impact of occupation, culture, gender, place, and other social categories on the making of workers during specific "historical formations." Similarly, Bannerji's (2005) theorizing about the inseparability of class, race, and gender call for a treatment of "social ontology" as a structured whole of constitutive relations. It is precisely class' inseparability from other modes of oppression and differentiation that calls for historical investigations. Abstract orderings of class relations neglect the ways in which class is made in relation to gender, race, nation and other social categories in history.

In some instances, Marx and Engels might have sent us down a limited theoretical path on this point. By emphasizing the homogenizing impact of capitalism, they seem to

argue that other allegiances, prejudices, and differences would give way to class as the central axis of social conflict (Marx and Engels [1848] 2008). In more recent theoretical debates, Ellen Wood (2016) develops this point further, arguing:

> The extraction of surplus value from wage labourers takes place in a relationship between formally free and equal individuals and does not presuppose differences in juridical or political status. In fact, there is a positive tendency in capitalism to *undermine* such differences, and even to dilute identities like gender or race, as capital strives to absorb people into the labour market and to reduce them to interchangeable units of labour abstracted from any specific identity (p.266, emphasis in original).

However, as Seymour (2017) has recently suggested, there is enough historical evidence to seriously doubt this theoretical claim of 'class homogenization.' Moreover, capitalism's lack of necessary "juridical or political" status differentials[7] does not mean that other social inequalities do not remain central to the organization of labour markets and class exploitation. Roediger (2006, 2007, 2010) and Roediger and Esch's (2014) work on the relationships between slavery, racism and the development of the 'white' working class in the United States, offer illuminating examples of theoretically robust historical scholarship challenging this point.[8] On gender, Nancy Fraser (2014), in attempting to update and clarify the claims of social reproduction theory, has also argued that capitalism has always depended on an exterior "hidden abode" to maintain the accumulation process.

[7] It should also be noted that scholarship on migration and undocumented workers suggests that neoliberal capitalism may indeed be quite dependent on "status" inequalities, of which citizenship is one of the most significant, to fulfill labour market needs.

[8] Davis, in *Women, Race, and Class* (1983), takes a similar approach, though she focuses on the women's movement, and race and class in the US.

Unwaged, and largely female, household labour reproduces labour power and thus provides the necessary bases upon which capital accumulation takes place (Bezanson and Luxton 2006; Bhattacharya 2017). Exploitation, commodification, and exchange, according to this argument, depend on non-market sources of labour and resources to fuel the accumulation process. These literatures demonstrate that to avoid treating class as a "thought object" (Bannerji 2005:152), we need to understand its production in history, as constituted in social formations with inseparable modes of differentiation, expropriation, and exploitation. In this study, I have sought to read workers' narratives about class identity for the ways in which nation and gender in particular have shaped class subjectivity in Sudbury, and how this has changed over time.

In addition, it is my argument that studying class requires paying attention to the internal formation and re-formation of classes. In other words, members of working classes, individually and – more importantly – collectively, share in the making of their class with respect to their self-understandings. Therefore, it is not just a matter of the historical formation of working classes at particular points and encompassing specific intersections of oppression and differentiation, as impactful as these are. It is also a matter of how these historical particularities mesh with workers' subjectivities as they have been both inherited and actively reproduced over time. When we consider the latter, it begins to become possible to appreciate the contradictions and conflicts that arise as social change alters the material conditions out of which working classes were formed. The individual and collective forms of identity that working classes are at all times in the process of reproducing and clarifying come under strain and must be negotiated

anew. As Passerini (1979, [1987] 2009) shows, studying subjectivity in this way allows us to see the ways that consciousness, belief, and action interact, and at times contradict. In an important sense, it is not only "the relations people have to the conditions of production and other classes" (Camfield 2004/5:424), but also the relations these classes have to themselves as historically located and always *developing* actors.

Relations within classes are then not only an historical matter, but also a cultural question. I treat the culture and social practices of workers as central considerations in how, and in what ways, class is produced and reproduced. In the broadest sense, I mean by culture the "way of life…of a people, a period, a group, or humanity in general" (Williams 1983:90). I am treating culture as partially autonomous from material relations, but more complex than accomplishing the work of reproducing working classes as in, for example, an Althusserian version (Althusser 2001). That is, I do not see culture as simply an additional sphere in which social relations of production are reproduced by the powerful imposing on the exploited. By contrast, I utilize Willis' (1981) argument concerning the relationship between culture and class relations. For Willis, working-class culture develops out of its relationship to the material needs of capitalism, but it is not reducible to them. He writes: "In its desire for workers of a certain type the reach of the production process must pass through the semi-autonomous cultural level which is determined by production only partially and in its own specific terms" (p.171). As he concludes, the forms that "determination" takes cannot be read directly from the relations of production. Rather, the interaction between production relations and culture help explain how classes come to be reproduced over time. As both Willis (1981) and

Dunk (2003) show, working-class culture often develops attitudes, practices, and beliefs that both critique and simultaneously reproduce class subordination. In this dissertation, I treat this "cultural level" (Willis 1981:171) as key to understanding working-class subjectivity over time. Toward this end, I am concerned with how workers' cultural practices and institutions have shaped class subjectivity.

Building, maintaining, and reproducing social identities and cultural bonds are, as Chibber (2017) argues, key aspects in the making and reproducing of working-class identity. He writes:

> For a culture of solidarity to become a part of workers' strategic orientation requires conscious direction and agency. In its weakest form, this means a set of *routines* inside and outside work, designed to encourage the building of relationships and, through these, the sense of trust and mutual obligation that might sustain class organizing (p.50-1).

These 'weak' forms constitute only part of a complex cultural web of working-class reproduction. Workers learn, develop, and articulate class subjectivities as fundamentally cultural processes. A cultural orientation to class has thus allowed me to consider the specific processes through which the reproduction of class subjectivity takes place among nickel miners in Sudbury.

Last, the theoretical orientation to class identity used in this research is also concerned with the role of experience in working-class life. As Palmer (1990:76-8) argues, the relationship between experience, its articulation in language, and a materialist

framework is fraught with complications.[9] He contends that the proximity of social or historical actors, often without the benefit of broader context or the availability of critical ways of understanding and interpreting the world, can render the experiential itself mystifying. However, as Wood (2016) points out, experience can also be the key mechanism through which we begin to understand how class relations in the abstract become the concrete bases for class formation. Drawing on Thompson's previous claims about how classes come to recognize themselves as such, Wood sees experience as key to the making of classes. She explains:

> Class formation is particularly difficult to explain without resorting to concepts like Thompson's 'experience'. While people may participate directly in production and appropriation – the combinations, divisions and conflicts generated by these processes – class does not present itself to them so immediately. Since people are never actually 'assembled' in classes, the determining pressure exerted by a mode of production in the formation of classes cannot easily be expressed without reference to something like a common experience – a lived experience of production relations, the divisions between producers and appropriators, and more particularly, of the conflicts and struggles inherent in relations of exploitation. It is in the medium of this lived experience that social consciousness is shaped and with it the '*disposition* to *behave* as a class'. Once the medium of 'experience' is introduced into the equation between production relations and class, so too are the historical and cultural particularities of this medium (p.96, emphasis in original).

The approach of this research is attentive to the role of experience in the making of class subjectivity. However, this is so while also bearing in mind that a critical perspective is necessary to interpret and critique the immediacy of working-class experience and its

[9] See also Scott (1991), and Palmer (1990) for a summary of the debates on 'experience' in social history.

expression in language. As Scott (1991) argues, treating experience as though it is an unmediated reflection of the world is theoretically problematic. Instead, she claims, in a certain sense we must reorder the relationship between experience and explanation. She writes: "It is not individuals who have experience, but subjects who are constituted through experience. Experience in this definition then becomes not the origin of our explanation, not the authoritative (because seen and/or felt) evidence that grounds what is known, but rather that which we seek to explain, that about which knowledge is produced" (p.779-80). As Passerini's (1979, [1987] 2009) work also shows, part of explaining experience involves understanding the production of subjectivities.

Furthermore, workers' narratives of experience must be situated in the socio-political context of their generation. For example, what Seccombe and Livingstone (2000:71-2) characterize as "abstract individualism" and a "market rationale" – i.e. consciousness predicated on the notion of individuals competing for scarce resources and entering the market without pre-existing inequalities – tend to afflict working-class people when they face challenges from other workers. The results are real competitive pressures and related material insecurities, which can exacerbate inequalities between groups of workers. These are at times manifest in racist or sexist attitudes. Yet, without excusing their repugnancy, these responses need to be understood as in part deriving from the relative insecurity and imposed scarcity that often structure working-class life. As Silver (2003) puts it, "precisely because the ongoing unmaking and remaking of working classes creates dislocations and competitive pressures on workers, there is also an endemic tendency for workers to draw nonclass borders and boundaries as a basis for claims for

protection from the maelstrom" (p.22). "Boundary-drawing strategies" (p.26) thus require materialist theory to disentangle experience and understandings of it from the forces that structure and shape them.

The above subsection has identified several important areas of class formation and identity that have informed my theoretical framework. Below I expand on the version of historical materialism used in the design of my research.

***Expanding Historical Materialism***

As I have argued, historical materialism, as a theory of the role of class and class struggle in social change, must necessarily explain how particular workers come to identify themselves as members of a class. Thus, inevitably, "explaining class formation" (Wood 2016:81) has meant exploring how forms of class consciousness take shape. However, as Eidlin (2014) argues, the relationship between material forces and consciousness or identity has been a troubled one to disentangle. Moreover, the question has not only been academic. Lenin's critique of "economism" was at base an argument about the lack of revolutionary consciousness emerging out of workers' immediate experiences and their organization in trade unions. His solution was a political party of professional revolutionaries who brought class consciousness to workers and politicized it (Lenin [1902] 1973). Perlman ([1928] 1970), one of the pioneers of American labour history, accepts the terms of Lenin's critique only to defend and celebrate the natural tendency for workers' concerns to be confined to their immediate workplace circumstances. Mann (1973), as well, suggests that we approach the theory that class consciousness arises out

of workers' material experience with "circumspection" (p.13). In an attempt to clarify the relationship between social relations and consciousness, he claims that class consciousness should be seen as having four elements:

> Firstly, we can separate class *identity* – the definition of oneself as working-class, as playing a distinctive role in common with other workers in the productive process. Secondly comes class *opposition* – the perception that the capitalist and his agents constitute an enduring opponent to oneself. Thirdly is class *totality* – the acceptance of the two previous elements as the defining characteristics of (*a*) one's total social situation and (*b*) the whole society in which one lives. Finally comes the conception of an *alternative* society, a goal toward which one moves through the struggle with the opponent. True revolutionary consciousness is the combination of all four, and an obviously rare occurrence (p.13).

Mann's classification, similar in many respects to Katznelson's (1986:14-22), helps to clarify how class formation operates as a process. Yet, as both he and Katznelson demonstrate, there is no linear progression through these levels or elements of class consciousness. Indeed, Mann (1973) contends that for many workers consciousness is "split" (p.68) between their work-life and life outside of work, militating against the development of more generally radical attitudes. In this dissertation, I am most concerned with class identity as it takes place in Mann's first and second forms above. As I will demonstrate, these involve a significant degree of historical particularity.

Mann (1973) is also rightly critical of what he refers to as "*possible* consciousness" (p.45), i.e. the truly objective interests of workers unencumbered by the contradictions and illusions of actually existing capitalism. In this research, I take a similar position and work from the premise that to understand class consciousness, or its absence, in this way

is to assume what needs to be explained. Heeding Somers' (1992, 1996b) suggestion that we begin with workers' narratives, I explain male, working-class identity in Sudbury by situating it within the discourses and material relations that motivate it.

The theoretical framework used in this dissertation thus retains a concern with the relationship between material circumstance, or 'class situation,' and consciousness, understood to imply no *necessary* type of class consciousness. It does so, as elaborated above, by dispensing with a direct relationship between social relations of production and necessary forms of class consciousness. However, as Seccombe and Livingstone (2000) point out, the "being-determines-consciousness" position, always somewhat of an oversimplification of materialism's theory of consciousness, still nonetheless provides a usual point of entry for understanding the relationship between productive relations and consciousness. Its value can be improved, they suggest, by several "amendments" which qualify and clarify its applications (p.24). Borrowing from Seccombe and Livingstone, below I elaborate four "extensions" that are key to my understanding of the reproduction of working-class consciousness and subjectivity in this study: 1) "interior" bonds, 2) institutional linkages, 3) culturally-embedded and 'non-rational' forms of interest, and 4) processes of social remembering.[10]

"Interior" bonds emphasize the formation of collective identities and interests as processes of activity within a social group. These bonds may be, and often are, related to external social phenomena (such as production relations). However, I wish to highlight the

[10] Seccombe and Livingstone offer six "amendments" to improve the "classical materialist thesis." However, for the purposes of this study, I have collapsed them into four for emphasis and concision (p.24-6).

degree to which workers' transformation of their structural capacity into conscious action involves building social cohesion. When we speak of common interests or constraints, we must avoid thinking about these in narrow terms, i.e. as though material interests are the only factors of influence. As Przeworski (1993) argues, the choices conditioned by material interests are simply those available at any particular historical conjuncture, and may vary in their rationality. It is far too simplified to posit any one interest, let alone a rational course of action, based on a reading of a set of material conditions, or worse – as argued above – an entirely abstracted notion of interest. In order for workers to engage in social action, they must build bonds of solidarity and common identity to transform structural capacity into collective action.

The above point deals most often with local or 'face-to-face' forms of sociality. In the case of the workers in this dissertation, place (Lefebvre [1974] 1992; Merrifield 1993) is fundamental to the building of working-class subjectivity, particularly as group identifications are reproduced inter-generationally. As other labour geographers show (Herod 2001) the spatial organization of class relations is an important determinate of class capacity and agency. However, ideas about place (Massey 2005) are also important to how workers in Sudbury's mines understand their class identities. As we will see, when capitalist accumulation is reorganized, such place-based identities come under strain. When considering class relations across regions, states, or even the globe, local and interpersonal forms of class formation (aside from what linkages exist between key leaders or social actors) are of insufficient explanatory power. Rather, at larger scales, institutional bonds become key to the formation of active class interests. This is not to

suggest that institutions, such as union locals and support groups, do not also play an important role in local contexts, but rather to point to their necessity across larger spaces. Large-scale institutional arrangements allow people to "envision ways of working together with others they have never met, and probably never will meet, to improve their situation" (Seccombe and Livingstone 2000:25). Moreover, because institutions bring those with markedly different lived experiences together to address common objectives, they too play a role in forming identities. When workers must coordinate action at spatially disparate levels, the strength of the institutional ties on which they can draw is hugely important. As this dissertation will show, however, this is no easy task, as the distances of space and culture grow, and as the numbers of those involved swells.

As elaborated above, historical materialists often presuppose that capitalists and workers are rational economic actors. This is the case at both the level of historical change, when the development of the productive forces proceeds by way of rational choices with respect to efficiency and utility maximization (Cohen [1978] 2000), and at the level of class interests, where workers act according to the objective interests of their class to maximize the gains they receive out of the surplus that their collective labour produces (Wright 1997). As I have noted, a more 'historical' reading of historical materialism problematizes this analytical elaboration of the theory. It is with this in mind that I wish to highlight the cultural and ethical moments in the making of working-class subjectivity. The notions of both 'material interest,' and 'objective constraints,' are culturally specific. As Seccombe and Livingstone's (2000) analysis of interview data with Hamilton Steelworkers shows, constraints on action that are seemingly beyond a person's

control can also be subjective in nature, as certain culturally-embedded practices and beliefs act in much the same way as objective or material impediments. Alternatively, motivations for action also emanate from interests that are not objective/material in the Marxist sense, i.e. that are not necessarily concerned with maximizing utility/minimizing toil. Class oppression not only exacts a toll in the sense of economic exploitation, i.e. in the extraction of surplus value, but also through generating shame, indignity, or other moral affronts that motivate resistance. Moreover, preservation of group identity – an ostensibly irrational choice when such preservation carries with it risks of material loss – can also generate significant resistance and collective action. It is a mistake to see this as unimportant to the formation and reproduction of working classes, or beyond the pale of class struggle. As I argue, the making of working-class identity takes place as a social and narrative process for workers in this study.

Finally, we need to consider historical materialism with an eye toward long-term forms of social identification. In both its abstract and historical presentations, working-class formation often appears as something happening within fairly short time frames, or as a process taking multiple shapes in various locales as conditions dictate. Particularly as institutional bonds develop and are maintained over extended periods of time, and therefore play a formative role in the *reproduction* of class subjectivities, we need to take theoretical stock of how classes are made and re-made in particular local and institutional spaces. Or, in the context of deindustrialization and job loss, we must account for how local and institutional bonds act on class subjectivity as economic conditions worsen. The theoretical framework I use in this dissertation sees processes of social remembering and

narration as integral to collective identity and solidarity. Focusing on social memory also brings the roles of time and history into our study of the making and re-making of class.

This subsection has outlined the broad theoretical framework adopted in this dissertation: an "amended" (Seccombe and Livingstone 2000:24) historical materialism. This framework shaped the design of my research and the sets of questions with which I entered the field.

**Research Questions**

This dissertation is concerned with the making and reproduction of class identity among nickel miners in Sudbury, Ontario. Its approach is derived from an understanding of class subjectivity that is historical as well as social. As mentioned above, the theoretical orientation of this research looks for how material relations influence consciousness and identification, as well as how class identity is also generated from workers' self-activity, social relations, and processes of reproduction. Importantly, it presupposes no form of consciousness or inherent interest in the 'class situation,' and instead asks how social relations between and within classes shape class subjectivity, its reproduction or revision. The research design was organized to identify the ways interviewees narrate working-class identity, with attention to the discourses on which they draw, and the social formations out of which class subjectivities are generated. In particular, I have sought to understand the influences of broad social, political, and economic forces on class identity, as well as how workers' own social relations influenced the re-making of class when confronted with profound changes, such as the erosion of the postwar class compromise,

deindustrialization, workplace restructuring, and employer attacks on unions. The following questions guided the research design and, eventually, the sets of interview questions with which I entered the field:

1) How were class and class consciousness formed during the postwar period, and in what ways did they shape, or reshape, working-class culture in Sudbury?
2) In what ways have economic and workplace restructuring transformed workers' lives at and outside of work, and what have been the consequences for class identity and subjectivity?
3) Through what processes do workers reproduce particular forms of consciousness?
4) What is the relationship between these processes of working-class reproduction and the cultural practices of workers?
5) How do the processes through which workers reproduce their identities impact class struggle and workers' collective power, particularly over the course of profound material change?

These questions were formulated based on the theoretical framework outlined above. They are thus meant as a set of guiding lines of inquiry about the sociological, historical, and cultural formation of male workers in Sudbury's mines. Moreover, the transitions taking place in the local mining economy offered a distinctive research opportunity to probe workers' historical reflections on class identity and to study the reproduction of

class during processes of workplace and broader economic change.[11] In the following section, I detail how this theoretical orientation and set of research questions were mobilized into a methodological strategy, first by elaborating the methods appropriate to my theoretical framework, and second by detailing the practical application of these methods.

## Methodological Strategies

The methodological strategies employed in this research are meant to address the particularities of the object under consideration, namely class identity among male nickel miners in Sudbury, Ontario – as I have described it above. A key consideration when designing this research was how to capture the processes of class reproduction. Specifically, how, after theoretically identifying the roles of history, culture, and experience in the making of class identity, to study it as a sociological issue over time. The following subsections address these questions first through considerations of time, memory, and narrative representation in oral history, and then through a discussion of the practical application of my approach in the research field and after data collection.

### *Oral History, Social Memory, and Narrative Analysis*

The theoretical framework utilized in this research sees workers' cultural practices and processes of remembering as integral to class identity and reproduction. Oral history

[11] See Chapter 3 for an account of these changes.

interviews were thus identified as an apt format through which to address the central questions raised above. As Thompson (1988) shows, various forms of social inquiry have a long tradition of collecting the oral evidence of those "hidden from history." Oral history's reemergence in academic practice during and after the period of the New Left in North America and Western Europe marked a shift in theoretical orientation as well as subject matter, as researchers moved to bottom-up approaches, and brought sociological theory to bear on new areas of contemporary and historical life (Frisch 1990). As Sangster (2015) suggests, though we lack definitive "origins" (p.119) for oral history, its interdisciplinary character has long been evident. Sociological inquiry, particularly as it pertains to working-class history, can thus utilize oral history methodology fruitfully (Bischoping and Gazso 2016; Sangster 2015).

In this dissertation, I employ a theoretical approach to class that is historical in nature, and thus attentive to questions of time and process in the making of working-class identity. Oral history methodology recognizes the inherent complexity of time, as interviewees are not simply expected to produce unencumbered recollections of the past, but understood to insert their present selves into that past in the process of remembering and narrating it. Thus, when using oral history methodology we inevitably engage with issues of memory and its social construction (Halbwachs [1952] 1992; Kansteiner 2002; Olick and Robbins 1998). As Portelli (1997) claims, historical time and "narrative time" differ in their modes of organization. In the former's case we are most often confronted with the linear, sequential presentation of time. In the latter, time is more fluid, moving back and forth as narrators group events, moments, and memories according to the

similarity or congruence that they imagine exists between them. Similarly, Passerini ([1987] 2009) points to the role of memory in the organization of narratives, when she warns against seeing "chronological order [as] inherently natural or automatic" (p.27). When subjects offer reflections or tell stories about the past they borrow from available discourses and narrative forms, imposing order and generating meaning. Narrative reconstruction is part of linking the past and the future to the present in any coherent story (Bischoping and Gazso 2016:8).

It follows that oral history is attuned to the interaction of the objective and subjective in interview narratives. In particular, the oral history interviewer aims to draw out the connection between biography and history. As Portelli (1997) explains:

> [A]t the core of oral history, in epistemological and practical terms, lies one deep thematic focus, which distinguishes it from other approaches and disciplines also based on interviewing, such as anthropology, sociology, and folklore: the combination of the prevalence of the narrative form on the one hand, and the search for a connection between biography and history, between individual experience and the transformations of society, on the other (p.6).

This connection is not always so straightforward to capture or describe. It is not simply a matter of recording interviewees' stories of historical action. "Stories […] communicate what history means to human beings" (Portelli 1997:42), but stories also have consequences for the movement of history, for the material process of historical change that Trouillot (1995) calls the "sociohistorical process" (p.2). It is not only a matter of understanding the objective constraints that shape particular ways of acting in,

remembering, and narrating the past, but also of gauging the influence of experiences and stories on the movement of history. In this sense, oral history methodology must: take care to understand the social contexts of the meanings that subjects attach to their lived experiences (Scott 1991); situate their narratives with reference to the sociopolitical space in which they are spoken; and work toward understanding how subjects' interpretive frameworks may affect social action.

Key to oral history methodology is an understanding of speech as forms of text, formulated and expressed in particular social contexts. As Portelli (1997) explains:

> Texts (by which here I mean also the verbal component or oral narratives and interviews) are both highly individual expressions and manifestations of social discourse, made up of socially defined and shared discursive structures (motifs, formulas, genres). Through these structures, then, we can see how each individual text negotiates the interplay of the personal and the social, of individual expression and social praxis. This negotiation varies with each text and each performance, but is always carried out on the basis of recognizable, socially defined grammars (p.82).

As Frisch (1990) points out, when we interview and produce a data set, we are dealing with the "surface of the narrative," but also the "broader social context through the prism of individual experience" (p.60). How we understand the relationship between the narrative's "surface" and the social identity, consciousness, and relations which embed it is the task of social analysis, interpretation, and, ultimately, argument.

If workers draw on socially available discourses, from where do they come? How are they produced and reproduced? What role do they play in the process of

making and reproducing class identity? And what accounts for their salience, resonance, durability, or change?

In this research, I am concerned with the how processes and practices of collective remembering (Assmann 2008; Halbwachs [1952] 1992; Welzer 2008) shape class identity and subjectivity. In analyzing workers' oral histories, I am not only trying to situate their lived experiences within socio-historical contexts, but also attempting to identify how workers produce class subjectivities in the spaces of work, community, and family.

***Fieldwork***

This is a dissertation produced from fieldwork involving white, male workers in Sudbury, Ontario – a place where I do not live and am not originally from. As Mishler (1986) argues: "The one-shot interview conducted by an interviewer without local knowledge of a respondent's life situation […] does not provide the necessary contextual basis for adequate interpretation" (p.24). Thus, entering the research field in this case was a gradual immersion. Connections with friends and acquaintances were utilized to set up an initial visit with potential interviewees to discuss the feasibility of this project. These worker-interviewees were at first apprehensive, but eventually enthusiastic. Five years after a bitter, yearlong strike (2009-10) against a new multinational employer over wages, pensions, bonuses, and the growth of precarious contract labour, these initial contacts expressed a general frustration with their employer and union, and were skeptical about the value of engaging in this research. Moreover, two currently employed contacts

expressed some fear concerning repercussions from their employer or union (the other is retired), my role vis-à-vis the mining companies or union, and the ultimate dissemination of the research. Written research proposals and informed consent forms were given to workers. I informed workers of the nature and parameters of the research, my lack of any affiliation with the union or company, and their rights as research participants. However, these initial three contacts' agreement to participate in the project ultimately resulted from their collective discussion, a conclusion they expressed to me later. These initial contacts also helped facilitate the snowball sampling through which further participants were recruited.

Interviewees in this study were selected using a snowball sampling method, beginning with the above three contacts. These individuals were not only instrumental in the next stages of participant recruitment, but also in legitimizing the project to the next set of interviewees. This snowball sampling process, as well as the trust and research legitimacy based on the word of previously interviewed workers, was essential to generating the full sample of interviewees.

In most instances, new contacts obtained from those already interviewed were limited to two (with the exception of two of my initial contacts). Moreover, not all suggested or contacted potential participants were interviewed. Particularly as the nature of the research questions began to refocus, selection criteria were applied more carefully. That is, as particular variables such as age, personal and family work history, or strike experience emerged inductively as important during interviews, new participants were selected to provide sample variation. In this way variables could be "dichotomized" or

"trichotomized" as necessary, without the need to fill every possible variation (Foster 2013). For example, none of the participants was between 55-64 years of age *and* had both contract work and strike experience. However, as will become clear in the empirical chapters that follow, this sampling method did prove fortuitous in providing variation along theoretically and empirically relevant variables.

In total, 26 workers were interviewed during this research. Participants ranged in age from 26 to 74 years, with an average age of 48.2, and only one worker (age 45) falling between 38 and 49 years of age.[12] My sampling method and the hiring history at Inco/Vale likely combined to produce this distribution of ages. This is first because male working-class friendship networks tend to be "informal," with loose parameters of inclusion. Networks of friends, though quite expansive, tend also to be fairly age-determined, for reasons largely having to do with the life course and leisure activities (Dunk 2003:7). Thus, contacts tended to suggest additional participants close to their own ages. In addition, particular waves of hiring and attrition-based job loss (Clement 1981) at Inco/Vale make the age range 38 to 49 statistically less represented in the workforce as a whole. My sampling did not intend to reflect this and does not do so in any statistically exact way. Thus, in this study I did not intend to produce a representative sample of workers in Sudbury, but to explore the making of working-class identity among a subset of miners. All interviewees were male, reflective of an industry that only quite recently began hiring women in underground jobs in any sizable way (Keck and Powell 2000). The study's sampling method of gaining new contacts through previous interviewees likely

[12] See Appendix A for a complete list of the interviews conducted, including information on the interviewees' age, contract work history, family work and union history, and strike experience.

contributed to the lack of female interviewees. That no female miners were interviewed is a limitation in terms of the representativeness of the data sample, though quite instructive in terms of the analysis of working-class subjectivity developed in later chapters. Interviewees were also all 'white,' though some retain ethnic or cultural affiliations that they expressed as meaningful to their identities, particularly French-Canadian and Scandinavian heritages. This is reflective of Sudbury more broadly. In contrast to Ontario as a whole where visible minorities account for 29.3 percent of the total population, in Sudbury visible minorities represent only 6 percent of the population (Statistics Canada 2016). Finally, I intended this research to focus on rank-and-file workers, not elected union officials. Though I am attentive throughout the dissertation to the relationship between union structures and institutional forms on the one hand, and working-class subjectivity on the other, my concern with the latter is chiefly focused on 'workers' broadly conceived. Of the 26 interviewees, only five had ever held a union position in their Steelworkers' local. Four had held health and safety committee positions, and one previously held an executive position in his union local.

Interviews lasted between 45 and 120 minutes, with most taking approximately 90 minutes to complete. As Herzog (2005) suggests, interview location is not only a matter of convenience, but should also be considered for its "social context" and the relations it implies between interviewer and interviewee. Workers in this research were asked to choose the research location. In most cases, interviews took place in workers' homes or those of family members, with the exception of three conducted in local restaurants. Interviewees who expressed the most interest in the project were eager to have

interviews take place in their homes, often to show me union paraphernalia, books, or other items. All three interviews conducted in public settings were with workers under 30 years of age, who initially indicated they wanted to hear more about my research and meet in person before agreeing to an interview.

Though I take heed of Dunk's (2003) warning about the interview form's "particularly bourgeois way of communicating information" (p.16), and thus its potential shortcomings in research involving working-class research participants, open-ended, oral history interviews proved effective in this research. This is likely so because I conducted interviews not to obtain strictly 'factual' information, but like Terkel ([1972] 1997) and others (Passerini 1979; Portelli 1991; Sangster 1994), to gather the reflections, experiences, and stories of research participants. In the interviews, workers recounted their work histories, and if applicable, those of other family members who have worked in the mines. They were also asked about the history of mining in Sudbury, as well as about contemporary issues at work and in mining more generally. I used an interview guide that I modified partway through fieldwork. However, many times workers' own direction of the narratives often took our conversations far afield from my original set of questions.[13]

Research participants were given the option of remaining anonymous or having their names appear in the text along with their words. As Janovicek (2015) argues, we often understand making research subjects' identities invisible to be a means of protecting them. However, oral history, as a research practice largely concerned with considering marginalized voices, has sought to revise ethics protocols to reflect traditions

[13] See Appendix B for sample interview schedules.

of public history and accountability, not requiring, but allowing interviewees to have their names appear in 'history' as well as their voices. Interestingly, all participants in this research chose to remain anonymous. I believe that this was partly a reflection of workers' general animosity toward their employer, and to some extent, anger with their union at the time of this research. Even though I have no affiliation with either, it is likely that workers opted for anonymity for reasons of safety. However, this choice also resulted from the momentum of snowballing. When informed consent forms were given and read aloud to workers, and the options regarding anonymity discussed, nearly all asked what option previous interviewees had selected. After hearing that previous respondents had chosen to remain anonymous, the interviewee would choose the same. Thus, in all interview excerpts that appear in the text, I have used pseudonyms to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of interviewees.

***"Epistemic Reflexivity"***[14]

Before discussing data analysis, a few words are in order about my own positionality and what Bourdieu terms "epistemic reflexivity" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:36). This is neither strictly "insider" nor "outsider" research. I am not native to Sudbury, and as Dunk (1994) suggests, regional tensions between "metropolis" and "hinterland," or Southern and Northern Ontario – particularly among working-class men – can be significant. However, I built rapport with research participants through discussions of our common blue-collar, working-class family histories. In this sense, I was a community outsider

[14] See Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992:36-46).

(particularly as a resident of Toronto), but a class insider because of the occupations of my parents (home construction and renovation, and, formerly, factory work). Many initial interactions with potential interviewees began with questions about where I grew up and what kind of work my family did. I also acknowledge that my whiteness and maleness might have influenced the general acceptance that I experienced from my white, male respondents during this research. Although there were large differences in age between some of the interviewees and myself, from my perspective, this did not seem to impede the interviews or present other difficulties when conducting this research. In some cases, our differences had most to do with cultural practices (hunting and fishing being popular hobbies among respondents).

However, as Wacquant (1992) argues in his presentation of Bourdieu's thought, reflexivity must go beyond considerations of individual position and background. Bourdieu's "epistemic reflexivity" is more concerned with "intellectual bias," which for the sociologist "entices us to construe the world as a *spectacle*, as a set of significations to be interpreted rather than as concrete problems to be solved practically" (p.39). As Charlesworth (2000) summarizes:

> [F]or Bourdieu, reflexivity involves a turning back upon the position of the knowing subject, a looking back at one's own knowing practices. Hence its target is not merely the individual analyst but the unconscious embedded in her social position, as well as the tools and operation of analysis […] the task is to analyze the conditions of one's own view, to recognize the angle of one's vision (p.31, 66).

Yet, as Wacquant makes clear, Bourdieu's point is not to bemoan this "bias," but to recognize it and register its "unthought categories of thought" (Bourdieu quoted in Wacquant 1992:40). In this sense, reflexivity's target is social scientific practice in general, if only to make explicit its particular modes of analysis and thought. Thus, although the social backgrounds of participants and myself might be similar, this is not necessarily the case for the categories of thought and interpretation with which we understand the interview dialogue produced in this research. For example, this was particularly evident with older workers' discussions of generational differences between themselves and their younger coworkers. While I understood the lack of younger workers' participation in union activity to result from the a long process of imposed concessions, particularly in the 2010 contract and the decline of postwar unionism's efficacy, many older workers explain this through narratives about younger people not wanting to put in the extra work that union involvement entails.[15] As Mauthner and Doucet (2003) argue, we should be reflective not only about our social position, but also about our practices of interpreting and analyzing our data.

Moreover, oral history and qualitative interviewing bring their own further set of reflexive considerations. In contrast to the written text, "which we can only interpret" (Portelli 1991:54), oral sources depend on the relationship and interactions of the interviewer and interviewee in the moment of exchange. The interview is necessarily a "dialogic formation" (Portelli 1997:6) that "enhances the authority and self-awareness of the narrator" (p.4). In the chapters that follow I have tried to make it clear where my

[15] See Chapter 6.

interpretations diverge from interviewees, how I arrived at these, as well as where particular interview exchanges produced interesting findings.

***Transcription, Interpretation, and Analysis***

Oral historians and narrative analysts in the social sciences resist treating data collection, transcription, and analysis as demarcated parts of research. Rather, as many scholars contend, interpretation of the narratives of oral history interviews begins in the interview exchange itself (Friedlander 1998:314; Frisch 1990; Mishler 1986; Portelli (1997). For Portelli (1997) in particular, there is no narration that is not itself an interpretation. Out of the myriad memories, and of the possible combinations of words to express ideas, interviewees make interpretative presentations. Portelli understands the narrator's interpretative action to be a "construction and expression of one's subjectivity" (p.80). To fail to recognize this as part of the data itself, he claims, is to "falsify" (p.80) it. Moreover, by virtue of its dialogic form, the oral history interview proceeds by way of a certain collaborative interpretation, as the interviewer makes decisions on the spot about the meanings of the speaker's narrative and responds, probes, or questions accordingly.

Beyond the interpretation that takes place during the interview, there is the complexity of transcribing, of producing a rendering of the "orality of oral sources." The "source," as it were, is in fact the interview itself, not its written transcript, which "implies a certain amount of invention" (Portelli 1998:64). A large portion of social meaning is tied up with the performance of speech, calling for the careful attention of the transcriber, and an admission that some of this meaning will be lost in transcription. However, narrative

analysis embraces the inventiveness of transcription, and treats it as part of data analysis. Because discerning meaning in narratives necessitates close listening and reading, getting from the former to the latter is an important part of uncovering meaning and significance in the text. As Riessman (1993) argues:

> [Transcription] is not a technical operation but the stuff of analysis itself, the 'unpacking' of structure that is essential to interpretation. By transcribing at this level, interpretative categories emerge, ambiguities in language are heard on the tape, and the oral record – the way the story is told – provides clues about meaning. Insights from these various sources shape the difficult decision about how to represent oral discourse as written text (p.58).

Thus, narrative analysis provided useful interpretative strategies for this research. Close listening and reading allowed organization within individual interviews to emerge, as well as themes across interviews (Mishler 1986; Riessman 1993:60). In this research, I have used textual organization and re-organization as part of the analysis of workers' stories. I understand these interventions between workers' stories and my processes of analyzing and interpreting them dialectically. Careful listening to the interview data facilitated textual presentations that reflected respondents' emphases, pauses, and other speech patterns.

This raises a tension that I have sought to balance between plots in single interviews and themes across interviews. Though it is a nearly inescapable feature of interpretation and analysis, thematic coding can sit somewhat uneasily with a focus on story form and plot structure. For one, grouping coded data across interviews necessarily breaks excerpts off from the patterns of dialogue in which they were embedded (Mishler 1986:53).

Extracted speech can lose part of its meaning, necessitating careful consideration when applying thematic codes and comparing text across interviews. Second, coded excerpts can also remove sections of speech from a larger narrative structure, risking misrepresentation or limiting an understanding of its embedded significance. Recognizing these challenges, I have nonetheless attempted to balance narrative analysis *within* texts with the necessity to use thematic coding to discover findings *across* interviews. The thematic areas of class formation that I outlined in the previous chapter, and which form the basis of the arguments in Chapters 4 through 6, would not have been possible without the extraction and comparison that coding entails.

Thus, during data interpretation I treated single interview narrative analysis and thematic coding across the interview data as in conversation with one another. But in developing the arguments that follow, I situated this text within its social context by reading it against the political economy of mining in Sudbury and the history of labour in the region and nationally. It is through this complex interplay of narrative and social relations that I understand the processes of making and reproducing working-class identity among the male workers in this study.

# Chapter 3

## Mining and Miners in Sudbury

*The glasses they will tinkle when our eyes begin to twinkle,*
*And we'll think no more of Inco on a Sudbury Saturday Night.*

Stompin' Tom Connors, "Sudbury Saturday Night"

On May 31, 1979, the unionized miners of United Steelworkers (USW) Local 6500 in Sudbury, Ontario ended their strike against the International Nickel Company (Inco). While the 11,600 workers fought this 261-day strike, the company was able, during a period of depressed nickel prices, to sell from its historically large stockpile and bide its time. Yet, USW 6500 managed to achieve two key objectives: the "thirty and out" pension and a cooperative wage study (CWS),[1] which resulted in company-wide wage increases

[1] 'Thirty and out' refers to a guaranteed, defined-benefit pension plan after thirty years of employment, irrespective of the age of first employment or retirement. A cooperative wage study

(Brasch 2007; Mulligan 2010a). Just over three decades later, the union was again ending a long strike, this one surpassing 1978-1979's as the longest in company history. However, in 2010 the result, and the conditions that helped produce it, were much different. The approximately 3,300 workers remaining after decades of job loss faced a new multinational employer, were without the levels of support and mobilization of previous strikes, and were ultimately resigned to ratifying a contract many felt contained significant concessions (Mulligan 2010b; Peters 2010). In the time between these two events, the material conditions of work in Sudbury underwent significant changes. The impacts on the working class and its organizations have been no less profound, transforming workers' lives and institutions.

This chapter outlines the social, economic, and political context within which I situate workers' narratives in this study. Explaining the stark difference in outcomes between the 1978-79 and 2009-10 strikes requires more than taking stock of the institutional missteps of organized labour, or of pinning the blame on an industry in decline. Rather, in this chapter I argue that to understand the current conditions of nickel mining and organized labour in Sudbury requires a deeper reach into history. This is necessary to trace how the composition of the industry locally and the form that labour-capital relations took in the post-WWII period set the stage for the more recent set of material changes encountered in this study. In this chapter, I pursue this objective thematically, as well as chronologically. First, I look briefly at the origins of mining in

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is a joint union-company process of comparing the skills and duties of various jobs both to systematize job classifications and to ensure fair pay scales. As Russell (1999) points out, the "job control unionism" that such studies encourage can have negative consequences for unions. This is taken up below and further in Chapter 4.

Sudbury, focusing mainly on the period in which stable corporate and labour relations were established. Here I trace the form that the 'postwar compromise' between labour and capital (McInnis 2002; Palmer 2003:483-8; Panitch and Swartz [2003] 2009; Wells 1995a, 1995b) took at Inco in Sudbury, which underlies the discussions of class identity and subjectivity that follows in later chapters. Relatedly, drawing from the social structure of accumulation approach (Kotz 1994; Tabb 2012), I show how the capital-labour compromise fit within the overall set of socio-political policies dominant at the time.

Second, I turn to the factors that have contributed to the unraveling of this arrangement from the late 1970s and early 1980s to today, and examine how a broader neoliberal policy shift impacted nickel mining in Sudbury. Using Silver's (2003) notions of capital 'fixes,' I look at the set of strategies mining companies utilized to restructure work and accumulation, and then register their effects on workers. In particular, this chapter's discussions of the 'technological fix' and workforce reduction contextualize some of what follows in Chapter 4, and demonstrate the primary means through which geographically-fixed capital sought to contain the power and cost of labour. Lacking the spatial fixes of production relocation available to industrial corporations (Harvey 2006a:434-6), Inco and other mining firms pursued extensive use of labour-saving technologies (Clement 1981; USWA 1987).

Finally, I discuss the most recent ownership change, showing how Vale's acquisition of Inco in 2006 fits within and marks a culmination of the neoliberal reorganization of natural resource extraction in Northern Ontario. Neoliberalism's regime of flexible accumulation (Harvey 2005:75-6) has meant that labour relations, as well as investment

decisions, increasingly operate according to short-term market considerations. According to Tabb (2012), as productive (and extractive) capital operates according to strict financial considerations, this imposes a logic of 'short-termism' that militates against stable forms of investment and labour relations. Moreover, financialized restructuring helps explain the pace of capital concentration in mining globally over the past decade (Peters 2010), a trend typified by multinational Brazilian conglomerate CVRD (Vale Ltd.). Most importantly, the shift to a neoliberal social structure of accumulation (Tabb 2012) has also slowly reshaped the material context of workers' subjectivities, as I discuss in the empirical chapters that follow.

## The Political Economy of Mining in Sudbury

Prior to the discovery of nickel in the Sudbury Basin in the 1880s,[2] the town of Sudbury had been little more than a railway station. The town's origins and identity are thus inextricably tied to the nickel mining industry (Wallace and Thomson 1993). As retired miner Charles succinctly put it to me, "This [mining] is all I've ever done. It's all there was here for me." However, as in other resource-extracting regions, capital concentration and geographically distant investment shaped the socio-political dynamics in the Sudbury region for subsequent decades.

Foreign direct investment from the United States was key to nickel mining's establishment in Sudbury (Swift 1977; Wallace 1993). After the 'prospectors' rush' of

[2] The discovery of ores in Sudbury is steeped in folkloric mystery. Reports of Indigenous people mining copper had circulated since as early as the 1630s, but the actual 'first' discovery of nickel in the region is the subject of multiple and competing stories (Wallace 1993:18-9).

unregulated and small-scale production following nickel and copper's initial discovery, large capital investments set the industry in motion. Though the productive uses of nickel were still in their infancy, American capital began to rush in during the early twentieth century. The broader dynamic of dependence on US capital that scholars of Canadian political economy have identified also shaped local industrial development in Sudbury (Clement 1992). American tariffs further prevented investment in refining and processing facilities. With tariff restrictions on the import of refined nickel into the American market in force, the higher value-added labour of processing, refining, and manufacturing took place south of the border, with Sudbury's newly formed working class confined to the arduous work of extracting the raw material. As Wallace (1993) concludes, "from the beginning Sudbury was at the mercy of external finance, industry, and government" (p.29).

Moreover, capital concentration – a key feature of mining's contemporary political economy – had also been an historic part of the nickel mining industry. In 1902 the Morgan Trust swallowed the firms Canadian Copper Company and Orford Copper of New Jersey, and incorporated as the International Nickel Company (Inco) in New Jersey. However, as Swift (1977) argues, over the years Inco "Canadianized," moving "the benevolent monopoly's" (p.28) headquarters to Toronto and becoming identified in the popular imagination with Canada, and Sudbury in particular (p.20-8). However, as Gilbert (1993) contends, Inco made this move strategically. As the company continued to grow, Canadianization allowed it to evade anti-trust laws in the United States. In 1928, the company merged with Mond Nickel Company in Canada and was "technically

reorganized" (Gilbert 1993:122) as a Canadian corporation with subsidiaries in the United States and Great Britain, where it had additional processing facilities. In some respects, this shifting of the external influences on Sudbury only solidified the antagonism between "metropolis and hinterland," as Dunk (2003:46-62) similarly argues happened with forestry in Northwestern Ontario. Toronto, which I will show to be regarded by workers as the place from which power and control emanates in Ontario, came to stand in for the spatial embodiment of class rule. Variations on this theme appear in the data presented in this dissertation, though as I will demonstrate in Chapter 5, the more recent global reorganization of nickel mining has problematized simple class and spatial dichotomizations.

The industrial uses of nickel and copper also explain Sudbury's economic dependence on US capital. Shipbuilding and armament manufacturing were the principal applications of Sudbury's ores, making the US Army and Navy the ultimate destination of much of Sudbury's economic output. This business model also incentivized concentration and monopolization. After the process for separating nickel from copper in the mined ore was established, US Steel, the then-principal buyer of the resources required to fulfill its own military contracts, saw the business logic and potential monopoly advantages of acquiring the sources of its raw materials and integrating them into its growing business empire. In addition, the company's strategic financial position effectively barred competitors from entering the business due to the large initial capital investments required (Swift 1977). These ties to the military, though they provided certain state guarantees and encouraged large-scale development due to the advantages of economies

of scale, also exacerbated the boom-and-bust cycles typical of resource extraction generally. For example, the First World War saw the first major expansions of output and employment in Sudbury's mines. But, with the war's end and economic downtown, mass lay-offs soon followed and lasted well into the early 1920s (Gilbert 1993). This was the first indication of the problems generated by the region's overreliance on a single, strategic industry and employer, as the local economy's susceptibility to resource profitability cycles was amply demonstrated. However, these cycles – which were often related to military conflicts – continued up to the Vietnam War's end. It was not until deeper crises set in for the nickel mining industry in the late 1970s that Inco went searching for ways to increase its consumer market for nickel (USWA 1987). As we will see, these economic cycles, and the harm that their low points inflicted on Sudbury's working class, did little to curb workers' growing militancy and their demands for unionization, wage increases, and health and safety improvements in the mines.

***The Class Compromise at Inco***

The formation of Sudbury's working class was a slow process. The mining industry attracted workers of a variety of national and ethnic backgrounds, French-Canadian, Irish, Italian, and Finnish. Many of these workers were new immigrants who spoke little English, which generated fragmentation and antagonism between workers that mine bosses used to their advantage (Clement 1981). Combined with the cultural and ethnic differences of workers was a widespread belief among them that labour in the mines – and living in a 'camp' – was temporary, a means to earn money to buy property elsewhere in Canada or

in their home countries. The transitory nature of mine labour in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries matched the stop-and-start nature of the industry, as early capital attempted to find its footing (Wallace 1993). As Bob Miner (1979) puts it in his oral history of this period:

> Most miners who grew up in this camp and raised families felt the same way as I did. I'd have sooner broken my boys' legs than see them work in the mines. And the people in this community, especially the foreign element, all seemed even more determined than we were that their children would get an education and get the hell out of the mines (p.4).[3]

The gender division of labour during this period was also marked. Male workers often lived without spouses or children in the early camps, and low wages made sending money difficult. However, as in the coal mining regions of Appalachia, mine owners encouraged family settlement under the assumption that the presence of wives and children would discourage male workers from both strike activity and alcohol (Yarrow 1991). As a spatially-bound working class eventually began to grow in Sudbury, and the promise of escape gave way, workers undertook struggles to improve work, pay, and safety in the mines. Yet, as Keck and Powell (2000) argue, the labour market for miners in Sudbury was gendered from its inception, an issue that efforts to improve work and pay seemed only to exacerbate through the cementing of the 'breadwinner' model of high male wages and female dependence.

[3] Notice Miner's reference to "the foreign element," highlighting the ethnic diversity of the Sudbury working class discussed above, and the challenges that lack of attachment to Sudbury posed in this early period of union organizing.

As was the case in mining regions in the United States and Western Canada, radical syndicalist unions were the first to attempt to unionize Sudbury's miners (Swift 1977:34-7). The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) had some successes but were beaten back by employers emboldened by anti-labour local governments and a legal climate unfavourable to unions and workers (Fudge and Tucker 2004; Tucker 1995). Prior to the system of industrial pluralism that resulted from Privy Council Order 1003 and the Rand Formula in Canada (Wells 1995b), production largely took place under what Burawoy (1985) characterizes as "market despotism," wherein "despotic regulation of the labour process is constituted by the economic whip of the market" (p.122). At Inco, physical repression or long periods without work or income were enough to starve out striking workers, and without state-regulated union rights or collective bargaining, workers had limited abilities to turn strikes into lasting victories (Clement 1981; Thomson 1993; Palmer 1983). The International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers (commonly referred to as Mine-Mill) was the first union to gain a foothold in Sudbury. Mine-Mill was the outgrowth of the Western Federation of Miners, and had built a reputation as a militant union throughout North America (Abella 1973; Lembcke 1988; Steedman, Suschnigg, and Buse 1995). With the establishment of Mine-Mill Local 598, the union undertook a major organizing drive, and built a solid base of union membership for the first time in Sudbury, and throughout Northern Ontario (Abella 1973). As former miner Homer Seguin (2008) describes it, this period was ripe for union activity:

> The 1930s were a desperate time, Depression years in Canada, and my dad was unemployed. However, Sudbury was beginning to boom a little bit in the

> run-up to the Second World War. Nickel was considered the most militarily strategic of minerals because it is used to harden steel into all kinds of armaments. As word got out that there was work in the nickel mines of Sudbury, men would come from all over, and they would line up at the plant gate every morning hoping to get hired on at the mines. In fact, that's how my dad got his job: by waiting in lines. The company man would say, "Okay, we need you and you and you" (p.4).

From the 1940s, Mine-Mill broadened its ambitions by running local candidates for office, developing cultural and community programs, and attempting to build support in mining regions throughout Northern Ontario. Moreover, the union made efforts to organize miners' wives in supporting roles. Although in many respects these initiatives drew on and solidified the patriarchal gender division of labour between waged men and unwaged women, women's activities were integral to the formation and functioning of the union, particularly its social and cultural efforts (Luxton 1990:110-2). After years of membership fluctuations, Mine-Mill 598 amassed 18,000 members between Inco and Falconbridge (the other large mining employer in Sudbury) by the mid-1940s, and became the central local of the union in Canada (Lang 1995). However, the connections between Mine-Mill and the Communist Parties in both the United States and Canada meant that, as the union gained ground, employers and politicians utilized the growing hostility of the Cold War to publicly attack Mine-Mill, eventually preventing international union leaders from crossing the Canada-US border. Cold War hostility emanated from inside the labour movement as well (Abella 1973; Palmer 1995). After the US Congress passed the Taft-Hartley Act into law in 1947, restricting workers' ability to strike and requiring unions to sign "non-Communist affidavits," union leaders ratcheted up the purging of Communists

from the labour movement throughout North America (Heron 1996:82-3; Lichtenstein 1982:238-41). The Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL), after a series of conflicts with Mine-Mill leaders, expelled all Mine-Mill locals from the Canadian federation. The CCL did so citing Mine-Mill's alleged failure to apologize for disparaging comments printed in the latter's official publication *The Union*, attacking CCL leaders for not supporting organizing drives in Northern Ontario mining towns. However, as the internal correspondence of the CCL shows, Mine-Mill had been expelled to purge Communists from the CCL, and to pave the way for the Steelworkers' raids on Mine-Mill's Northern Ontario locals (Abella 1973:100-2; Clement 1981:304-5; Swift 1977:49-50).[4]

As a result, during the first major strike in 1958, the union was in a strong position locally, yet completely bereft of support from national and provincial labour federations (Seguin 2008:28-9). In addition, local politicians attempted to undermine the union by dividing organized women in the Women's Auxiliary from the striking men. Playing on male anxieties about socially-engaged wives, the mayor of Sudbury called a meeting with the Women's Auxiliary to discuss the strike. To the surprise of those in attendance, the local media subsequently quoted the mayor as saying the Women's Auxiliary had voted in favour of ending the strike – a claim that the Women's Auxiliary vociferously denied. The myth that 'the women' undermined the 1958 strike persists and still influences the oral history of the relationship between men and women in the union (Luxton 1990).

[4] This was part of a broader and lengthier process of ridding the labour movement of Communists, which not unpredictably resulted in significant de-radicalization. Abella (1973) writes: "Whatever the explanation given publicly [by the CCL], Mine-Mill, UE [United Electrical Workers], and other left-wing unions would be expelled for no other reason than that they supported Communist policies" (p.101-2).

The difficult loss of this strike emboldened the United Steelworkers of America's efforts to 'raid' the weakened Mine-Mill Local over the next three years (Clement 1981:305-14).[5] As the *Sudbury Star* reported in 1961, during the height of the battle between Mine-Mill and the USW for Sudbury's miners, it was the 1958 strike that "renewed interest in returning to the central labour movement," as Local 598 was starved for funds and unable to mount an effective resistance at Inco (Rice 1961:n.p.). By November 1962, the political attacks of the Cold War, isolation from the broader labour movement, and relentless counteroffensives from the company combined to allow the USW to win an Ontario Labour Relations Board-supervised certification election held in February and March (Swift 1977:58-9). After months of hearings and confrontation over allegations that the USW had tampered with and forged votes, Local 6500 of the United Steelworkers became the legal bargaining agent of miners at Inco by a margin of 15 votes.

The United Steelworkers Local 6500 certification portended Inco's full integration into the Canadian system of state-regulated labour relations, which included union security through the 'closed shop,' automatic dues check-off, and managerial control of the organization of the workplace. As MacDowell (1983) shows in her study of the 1941-42 battle of uranium miners at Kirkland Lake, the growth of industrial unions in Canada proceeded with reference to the legislative issues that had already been resolved in the United States. Workers in the mass-production and resource extraction sectors, who made up the growing membership of the Canadian Congress of Labour, sought government intervention and a system of formalized collective bargaining rights and

[5] See King and Braid (1998) for a history of Mine-Mill on the west coast of Canada during this period.

union security similar to the Wagner Act south of the border. However, Canadian employers and US owners with operations in Canada resisted, using the changes to American labour law as an example of what they hoped to prevent in Canada. But whereas industrial pluralism and free collective bargaining had been reluctantly accepted by capital and the state in Canada by the mid-to-late 1940s (Roberts and Bullen 1984:112-23), the regularity and predictability of this arrangement arrived rather late to Sudbury. Mine-Mill's radicalism and relative isolation from the broader labour movement gave Inco a certain justification for its trenchant anti-union position. Although, PC 1003 guaranteed Mine-Mill the right to organize miners, it relied on its own system of dues collection and worker organizing, inside and outside of the workplace. Local 6500, although it could point to hard-fought Steelworkers' battles and precedent-setting contracts throughout North America, represented moderation and ostensible respectability. USW's certification symbolized the move from the pre-compromise system to the postwar regime of politically administered and regulated industrial relations. With Mine-Mill 598 defeated, Inco was compelled to concede what other industrial employers had already accepted – that collective bargaining, automatic dues check-off, legally-stipulated processes for striking and managing workplace conflict, and a general system of regularized labour-management relations was the new norm (Panitch and Swartz [2003] 2009:10-19; Wells 1995b).

Of course, many of the activists and rank-and-file members working at Inco attempted to continue the workplace struggles in which they were engaged. The Steelworker's leaders, compelled by the legal constraints of the new system of industrial

relations, thus underwent a period of disciplining a workforce known for militancy and direct action. This was prominently on display in 1966, when workers called a wildcat strike in defiance of the Local 6500 leadership. Seguin (2008) describes the strike:

> Cars were left in the parking lot at Garson and set on fire; a lot of illegal things went on that I didn't agree with but I understood. The picket line was manned by a few guys with guns. Some of our guys broke in at the Copper Cliff Smelter. I remember this well. They took the bulldozers and pushed big boulders and blocked the highway to Inco's offices. They blocked it for days and they cut the telephone lines, some of which served the Copper Cliff hospital. They even had the overpass at Copper Cliff dynamited, all set to blow (p.46).

Though workers returned to work with relatively minor damage to company and city property, their unresolved anger was eventually channeled into legal strike action three years later. USW was thus in the process of making the trade-off that other unions – particularly the United Auto Workers – had made: quelling radicalism and militancy in exchange for union security (Yates 1993). As Wells (1995b) argues, union leaders were now "responsible for disciplining members and hence responsible for suppressing rank-and-file direct action" (p.220), and upholding the legal structure of the union-management contract. It so happened that this task fell to USW leaders in Sudbury at the same moment that broader rank-and-file worker rebellions were erupting as a wave of wildcat strikes across Canada, led largely by younger workers (Palmer 2009:229-32; Sangster 2004). Sudbury's 1966 wildcat was a high-water mark of this militant surge.

In many respects, the legal strike and contract of 1969 marked the full inauguration of class compromise at Inco in Sudbury. The culmination of the strike was, as the then-

President of USW 6500 put it, a “pattern-setting contract” (Seguin 2008:58). After having seen barely any changes to contract language since Mine-Mill’s first collective agreement in 1944, with 1969’s victory workers gained substantial wage and benefit raises, as well as the first labour-negotiated environmental protection provisions. However, with the exception of joint health and safety issues, management firmly retained the right to organize and control the labour process (Inco/USW 1969), as was now the standard in collective agreements under the system of generalized industrial pluralism. USW’s acceptance of managerial control marked its assimilation into the general postwar settlement, as on-the-job militancy was curtailed and a bureaucratic grievance procedure took its place. As an illustration of how serious Inco was about the issue of workplace control, when the union insisted on settling non-monetary issues first (so as to prevent workers from being enticed back to work with immediate raises), Inco took out full-page ads in the local newspapers announcing their wage offerings (Seguin 2008:59). Moreover, as Roth, Steedman, and Condratto (2015) point out, the 1969 collective agreement also introduced the first language for ‘contracting-out’ select jobs or services previously done by unionized Inco employees. Though the range of jobs was initially small, management progressively pried this opening wider over subsequent decades.

During the next decade and a half, miners made significant material gains through the Fordist pattern of collective bargaining and wage increases tied to productivity growth. However, to the degree that the union was able to bargain issues related to how the workplace was organized, this largely fit into what Russell (1999) refers to as “job control unionism” (p.162). Rather than mount a broad challenge to the breaking apart of

skill and the fragmentation of the labour process, this form of unionism instead pursued a strategy of fairly rigid job control coupled with frequent use of the grievance system. In practice, this meant that the union would bargain job classification schemes into collective agreements, and then vigilantly monitor any managerial abuse of job parameters in the workplace. Partly arising out of the concession of managerial rights to run the workplace, this type of occupational policing by unions formed a new pillar of conflict at the point of production. However, it left unions much less able to impede or influence the introduction of new workplace technologies, as I will discuss below.

For the purposes of this study, it is also important to understand the practical and subjective consequences of this job control strategy. Part of the union's method for carefully guarding job parameters in the workplace involved pursing managerial transgressions through the grievance system. As McAlevey (2014:93-4) argues, when unions channel workplace conflict through grievances they increasingly rely on a trained bureaucracy of professionals to engage in 'struggle' on behalf of workers during the life of a contract. Importantly, this means that workers do not develop the capacities to engage in class conflict and resolve issues collectively on the job. Suppressing worker militancy in exchange for union security and the legalistic system of labour relations that undergirds it cemented "job control unionism" and reliance on trained staff to pursue grievances all but inevitable (Offe and Wiesenthal 1980; Panitch and Swartz [2003] 2009:10-5). More broadly, Sudbury's localized manifestation of the capital-labour compromise set general parameters on class formation, as hired staff and elected union representatives curtailed

workers militancy and encouraged workers to rely on union officials to deal with issues in the workplace (Russell 1990; Wells 1995a, 1995b).

Borrowing from T.H. Marshall, some scholars (Fudge 2005; Standing 2009; Strangleman 2015) describe this period as one of "industrial citizenship," highlighting the forms that unionization and the welfare state took, as well as how workers' place in society and politics expanded. Burawoy (1985) describes this broadly as a "hegemonic" industrial relations system, emphasizing the low levels of direct repression and the degree of buy-in that the institutional structures of the system generate among workers. Panitch and Swartz ([2003] 2009), moreover, contrast the postwar settlement's era of "consent" (p.10) with the coercive repression of labour rights in the neoliberal period. However, integration, "consent," and union security came with a series of concessions as well as advances. The postwar class compromise purged many radicals from unions, set significant legal impediments to solidarity and class struggle, and further circumscribed what remained of the terrain of workplace conflict (Palmer 1983, 2003, 2009; Russell 1990; Wells 1995a, 1995b). By doing so, this class compromise weakened the capacities of workers to respond as capitalism confronted future inevitable crises (Palmer 2003; Panitch and Gindin 2013:111-2). As the eight-month strike of 1978-79 at Inco came to an end, the company was feverishly looking for a way out of the compromise and for mechanisms through which to roll back workers' gains and dispense with the costs of a large unionized workforce (USWA 1987).

## Restructuring and the Re-Making of the Working Class

In this section, I take a wide-angle look at the transformation of the local mining economy in Sudbury. The changes that I identify as reshaping working-class life and subjectivity are not just local matters, but concern the broader political economy of resource extraction, socio-economic policy, and the organization of capital accumulation. Here, I draw out the overarching neoliberal influences on mining and miners in Sudbury, before moving on to consider two key areas: labour-saving technological innovations in the mines, and the flexibilization of the mining business model.

At a macrosociological level neoliberalism has largely been a political project through which economic elites have regained class power by overhauling state functions and transforming conditions of capital accumulation, both within and across states (Glyn 2006; Harvey 2005; Panitch and Gindin 2013). Although the theoretical bases and political practice of neoliberal states often diverge considerably, "neoliberalization" (Harvey 2005:64) as a process of 'freeing' markets from the regulatory frameworks of the Keynesian era, and shifting the balance of power to capital, has largely been successful on its own terms. Scholars continue to debate whether neoliberal restructuring solved the "profitability crises" facing capitalist economies through the mid-to-late 1970s, or instead provided the political mechanisms for continual upward wealth transfers under regimes of perpetually low growth (Brenner 2003; Brenner and Chibber 2017; Panitch and Gindin 2013; Peters 2012). However, what is clear is that a set of policies and political institutions, within nation-states and globally, coalesced around a new and generalized "social structure of accumulation" (Tabb 2012:26).

In policy terms, states have, either of their own volition or due to competitive or political pressures, reoriented themselves toward maintaining an attractive business climate and away from guaranteeing social rights and provisions. This has involved negotiating the freer movement of capital and goods across borders, removing barriers to, and in many cases encouraging, the growth of the finance industry, shifting the burden of taxation away from capital and assets - often generating fiscal crises of the state (O'Connor 1973) - and generally overhauling regulatory frameworks meant to protect labour (Thomas 2009) and the environment. In mining and resource extraction, this loosening of the ties that bound capital has produced waves of mergers and acquisitions, as well as a large degree of capital concentration (Deneault and Sacher 2010; Leadbeater 2008). Under neoliberal arrangements, Canada has combined its place as a resource producer with a role as a financial centre for the facilitation of capital investment in extraction globally (Gordon and Webber 2016), as the state increasingly concerns itself with inward foreign investment directed at natural resources (McCormick and Workman 2015; Peters 2010; Stanford 2008).

In as much as neoliberal restructuring is a project of reviving the power and influence of capital, workers and unions have been negatively harmed at a number of levels. At the broadest, shifting patterns of investment and accumulation have eroded stable and secure blue-collar employment (Bluestone and Harrison 1982; Cowie and Heathcott 2003; High 2003, 2010; Moody 1997; Strangleman 2007). Labour-displacing technical innovation (Clement 1981), global outsourcing to low-wage, lower-regulation production zones, and the growth of service, contract and informal jobs (Condratto and

Gibbs 2018; Roth, Steedman and Condratto 2015; Vosko 2005) have combined to undermine working-class "structural power" (Wright 2000:962). From 1981 to 2012 union density in Canada declined from 37.6 percent to 29.9 percent. These figures mask other negative trends. Because of significant losses of union jobs in the male-dominated, goods-producing sector (manufacturing, mining, fishing, utilities, construction, oil and gas), male unionization dropped more substantially than the overall decline. Moreover, this is true for men of all age groups. While women's unionization rate remained constant at 31 percent (with some drop among young female workers) because of the high union density in health care, education, and social services, men's unionization rate dropped from 42 to 28.5 percent (Galarneau and Sohn 2013).[6] As well, private sector workers fared worse than workers in the public sector. While the unionization rate for the latter grew slightly to reach 71 percent by 2014, union density in the private sector fell to 15 percent, down from 18.1 percent fifteen years earlier (Statistics Canada 2018). Mining regions in the global North have been hit especially hard by these changes. Moreover, finance capital's growth has slowly re-shaped economic logic, and employment relations along with it. As capital searches for outlets for large volumes of surplus amidst the competitive pressures of asset speculation and shareholder demand (Harvey 2015), it increasingly follows the logic of 'short-termism' in which the needs of quick investment return dictate the allocation of capital and the conditions of its investment (Tabb 2012). The latter rarely bodes well for long-term or stable employment relations.

[6] However, despite the loss of male-dominated, blue-collar, union jobs – and the now higher unionization rate among women – a gender pay gap that disadvantages women remains (Vosko 2011:81).

Beyond the structural disadvantages neoliberalism has generated for workers, it has also been characterized by significant attacks on organized labour, either by governments directly repealing or not upholding legal protections (Panitch and Swartz [2003] 2009), or by private employers newly emboldened by shifts in policy and power to their advantage (Workman 2009). Although Canada's union density has not declined as dramatically as in the United States (Eidlin 2018; Ross et al 2015:152-3), the social and positional powers of unions, as well as their abilities to improve members' wages and conditions, have been diminished. Although scholars have been studying how unions have been contending with the deleterious outcomes of neoliberalism, far less attention has been given to workers' micro-sociological and cultural processes of reproducing themselves as workers under conditions of economic restructuring. Insofar as working-class institutions are able to resist losses and concessions, member engagement, mobilization, and commitment have been integral (Bronfenbrenner et al 1998; McAlevey 2016; Milkman and Voss 2004; Ross 2008). Indeed, it is not only neoliberalism's impacts on employment relations in Sudbury that account for the contrast between the United Steelworkers' strikes mentioned at the outset of this chapter. As I have argued in the previous chapter, deeper understandings of class identity are needed that treat cultural and institutional practices as central to the reproduction of classes.

### *The 'Technological Fix' as Class Struggle*

The spatial fixity of nickel mining has meant that mining companies, unlike their manufacturing counterparts for whom off-shoring and plant relocation are options, have

had to rely almost entirely on process innovations to reduce labour costs and restore profitability.[7] This is not to suggest that various forms of technical innovation have not played major roles in deindustrialization throughout North America and Western Europe, but rather to mark the technological fix's central place as a strategy of workforce and cost reduction in Sudbury (Clement 1981; USWA 1987).

As discussed in Chapter 4, many miners' narratives about the labour process draw on a discourse of skill and occupational know-how. This is largely because of the nature of work in the nickel mines historically, before large-scale machinery and mechanization were introduced, as well as an oral tradition among miners that preserves these workplace memories. Into the 1950s, miners worked primarily by hand, acquiring broad knowledge and skills, and largely controlling the cycle of extraction (Clement 1981:23-4). The independence and self-direction necessitated by mining made it difficult for companies to control the pace and direction of labour, but also formed the basis of a prideful, working-class identity. However, as former miner and local historian Hans Brasch (2007) documents, by the late 1950s Inco was beginning rudimentary processes of mechanization, increasing the productivity of labour while simultaneously diminishing workers' occupational independence. Following the introduction of power drills and electrified trolley cars for removing ore, mechanized shaft sinking reduced the time and labour necessary for opening new portions of mines to extraction (p.25-31). These early

[7] Technical innovations also combined with a post-Fordist approach to labour relations, wherein workers and the union were harnessed to the task of improving quality and efficiency. I discuss this program more extensively in Chapter 4. However, since Vale's takeover, management seems to have abandoned collaboration in favour of a more antagonistic approach to labour relations. See Marshall (2015) on Vale's labour and environmental record globally.

innovations transformed the labour process in many respects. However, total employment grew due to a rapidly expanding nickel market. The negative relationship between technical innovation and employment levels would set in later, against the backdrop of a general crisis of oversupply. These first technical changes did, however, begin the transformation of mining into a hugely capital-intensive industry.

The relative boom years of the 1960s, combined with the stable class compromise ushered in with USW 6500's certification, meant that a growing labour force – militant though it was at times – was able to extract considerable gains from Inco, and remain largely protected from cyclical slow-downs and lay-offs turning into permanent job losses (USWA 1987). However, as global economic contraction set in during the early 1970s, Inco began to feel the squeeze of costly collective agreements and decreased nickel consumption and demand globally (Swift 1977). In 1971, employment at Inco, and USW 6500 membership, peaked at 18,224, after which it began a decline, "at first slow and irregular and then rapid and steady" (USWA 1987:3.2). By 1986, when the Steelworkers commissioned researchers to study the impact of new mining technologies on workers, employment at Inco had fallen to 6,518, down 63 percent from its peak fifteen years earlier (USWA 1987:3.3). As USW's study concluded, Inco had spent considerably on research and development between the early 1970s and mid-1980s, and introduced new labour-saving technologies as a direct response to rising labour costs. During this period, USW 6500's strength had not only substantially increased wages, but had also won other benefits, such as extended health coverage, a robust pension system, cost-of-living allowances, and paid holidays and vacations (p.4.9). Moreover, environmental costs had

also increased, as the union and community sought redress for workplace and local health issues, and as various levels of government implemented regulations to address the serious environmental and health consequences of nickel mining (Seguin 2008). At the close of the 1978-79 strike, the downsizing process was already on its way to constructing a workplace that by the early 1990s was "unrecognizable" (Buse 1993:277). By Vale's 2006 takeover, slightly more than 3,000 unionized workers remained (Saarinen 2013:165-6).

Although total job loss is perhaps the most remarkable result of technical innovations in the mines, skill and task reorganization have also been profound. Historically, work reorganization has been a two-sided process in mining: on the one hand, a selection of jobs – particularly in technical design and maintenance – become more skilled, while on the other hand, de-skilling grows as production workers are reduced to machine tenders. As Clement (1981) concluded following the mechanization of the late-1970s, "[t]he second kind of job outnumbers the first" (p.22). From the 1970s, new machinery transformed virtually every facet of mining. The introduction of 'bulk mining' operations greatly reduced labour time and intensity. Developments such as 'in-the-hole' drills enhanced production. Meanwhile, the scooptram, which is mobile rather than anchored in place as previous 'slushers' had been, increased the speed at which ore could be removed, and was utilized in a number of other underground tasks because of its versatility (USWA 1987:4.13-5). Eventually innovations known as 'continuous mining systems,' such as conveyor belts and continuous mucking machines with portable

conveyors and crushers, radically changed not only the labour inputs required, but the nature and pace of work (p.4.18-9).

The composition of individual jobs and the division of labour were both drastically altered as a result. The number of workers tending machines grew, both underground and on the surface, as skills that were once held by individual workers were dispersed or mechanized (Brasch 2007:56-61). The greater division of labour also diminished management's need to directly supervise and discipline workers, a longstanding difficulty for mining managers and supervisors. This is due both to the smaller number of workers required underground, but also because of the regulatory nature of technology, whereby the pace of the machine, rather than the worker, directs production (Edwards 1979). As Clement (1981:82) argued, these labour process changes also functioned as an attack on the independence and militancy of miners.[8]

Labour productivity has likewise increased in surface operations. Full automation of many tasks in the processing mills reduced necessary labour significantly. Moreover, by centralizing control and supervision in a "central control room" operators were able to monitor "ore-processing, crushing, grinding, floatation and product disposal" (USW 1987:4.24). With the process entirely computerized, there comes to be no need for manual labour, aside from maintenance work. The accumulation of these changes in

[8] Technology's ability to undermine workers' skill and craft should be understood to have both individual and collective consequences, with respect to working-class culture. As Aronowitz (1992) argues: "Union power to raise wages and impose a relatively substantial 'social' wage on employers […] is certainly an incentive for employers to institute technical innovation in order to reduce the size of the work force. But equally important in such trades as longshoring and printing was the power of the traditional work culture to restrict managerial prerogatives, especially the ability of the boss to assign and direct the labour force, to impose output norms, and to hire and fire workers at will" (p.233). This is equally true of nickel mining.

extraction, refining, and production has meant that larger portions of the workforce are involved in 'support' roles, such as maintenance, transportation, safety, and security. This means higher skill levels and more continuous skill upgrading for these jobs amidst numerous forms of machine tending, illustrating the double-sidedness of labour-saving technologies (p.4.33).

By the late 1980s, Inco had not only overcome the economic troubles of the preceding years, but the company was making "record profits" (Buse 1993:277) as per worker output soared.[9] Although early retirement inducements substantially increased Inco's pension burden, its leaner operations largely solved the profitability crisis. More importantly, the massive job loss and new workplace relations of the late twentieth century turned future union struggles into more defensive affairs, as miners became a shrinking proportion of Sudbury's total labour force.

The union was unable to stem the tide of lay-offs and job losses. This was partly the result of the determination with which the company pursued its strategy, relegating USW 6500 to bargaining for pain relief rather than prevention. Particularly after the 1978-79 strike – at that point the longest strike in Inco history – union victories, though admirable compared to current conditions, were in large part directed at addressing the difficulties workers faced as a result of technical innovations. However, the union's ineptitude was not entirely due to external circumstances. Rather, the forms of unionism developed under the conditions of the postwar class compromise weakened workers' ability to mount a resistance. With mass member mobilization confined to periods of strike activity,

[9] Between 1981 and 1986, the Ontario Division of Inco as a whole went from producing 133 pounds of nickel-copper per worker's shift to 265 per worker's shift (USWA 1987:4.38).

and with union staff undertaking daily operations on the job and off, the company slowly chipped away at past union gains. Even the bargaining responses to the transformations taking place at Inco illustrate the limitations stemming from a lack of workers' power on the job. As Local 6500 attempted to mitigate the pain of job loss and restructuring by enhancing pensions, guaranteeing recall language, and tightening job classifications, the grievance system became an enlarged battleground, pitting workers against each other as well as the company. The USW's 1987 study on technological change concluded:

> Although grievors may not have cited technological change, this eruption of individual disputes concerned job posting, transfers, promotions, contracting-out and other seniority-related problems, points unmistakably to change, with its accompanying disruptions, as the cause (USWA 1987:5.24).

Yet, the mechanisms for dealing with technological change were as circumscribed as they were ineffective at preventing it to begin with.[10] When management sought to further solidify its gains by reorienting on-the-job managerial practices, by, for example, incentivizing workers to suggest efficiency improvements through a productivity bonus system, the lack of organization at the point of production made this entirely practicable. During the strike of 1978-79, a rank-and-file initiative to democratize Local 6500, and to mobilize women and the community around bargaining and strike activity, ran up against

[10] It is also interesting to note the differences in bargaining approaches and outcomes between the issues surrounding technological change and the growth of contract workers. The union's initial success in limiting the use of contractors can partly be explained by the way this fit within the practices of postwar business unionism. The union found it much easier to bargain over who would be in the bargaining unit than it did over how workplace technology would be introduced and used.

a lack of regional and local autonomy and an ossified Steelworkers International and District 6 (Ontario and Atlantic Canada) who were unwelcoming to then-6500 President David Patterson and other union radicals (Mulligan 2010a, 2010b). Though USW 6500 won many of its demands in 1979, a "right-wing slate" (McKeigan 2008:254) won subsequent union elections and steered the Local back toward a "business union" (p.255) orientation that sought to contain young union militants. Inco, however, was immersed in the process of abandoning the institutional framework that supported such an approach to labour-management relations – as were all levels of government at the time.

By the time that Vale arrived in Sudbury, the union was internally ill-prepared for its new employer's aggressive approach to labour relations. Moreover, workers accustomed to an historic pattern of union practice that largely sidelined them struggled to confront this changing context through subjectivities that were more reflective of employer practices of the previous era.

***Neoliberal Flexibility***

Of the changes that revolutionized nickel mining in Sudbury from the mid-1970s, technological innovations to reduce the size, cost, and power of labour were perhaps the most noticeable. Yet, these were part of structural patterns in the broader global economy to which Inco was both contributing and responding. The cumulative effect of this remaking of the mining business model and labour process put workers at a considerable disadvantage. Neoliberalization (Harvey 2005) was transforming mining, as capital was moving across borders more freely and workers could rely less on stable

employment and a social safety net. In the process, mining firms were restructuring their business model along two key paths: 1) the further globalization of mining – and thus the deeper integration of Sudbury into the global mining economy; and 2) making labour and investment more flexible.

Inco's profitability woes of the 1970s were not strictly the result of increased labour costs and the structural power of its unionized workforce, though they did play a role, and certainly motivated the company to pursue cost-reduction strategies. Labour costs combined with issues related to the global nickel and copper markets to weaken Inco and undermine its powerful position vis-à-vis its competitors. Beginning in the 1960s, the steady growth of nickel consumption began to break down. By 1968, nickel production was outstripping consumption regularly. "Overly optimistic projections" (USWA 1987:4.3) were widespread in both government and industry. Even as production continued to outpace the market's ability to absorb it, nickel producers globally, following faulty forecasts, were increasing production and eroding the mineral's price. The over-production problem was further fueled by new nickel sources coming online, many of which were operated by new producers in formerly colonized countries (Swift 1977:68-73). Inco approached this as both a threat and an opportunity. As Swift (1977) documents, the company pursued extensive foreign investment throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s as part of its attempts to internationalize and gain a foothold in emerging markets with low labour standards and few environmental regulations. Yet, global diversification failed to keep Inco, or Canadian-sourced nickel, in its formerly dominant position. In 1950, Canada had supplied 80 percent of world nickel. As the 1970s

approached, it was dipping below half of world supply and on a downward trend (USWA 1987:2.9). Inco, specifically, fared much worse: while it supplied 90 percent of world nickel in 1950, its contribution dropped to less than 20 percent by 1985 (USWA 1987:4.7). Importantly, as other producers increased output, Inco lost its place as a monopoly price setter and faced greater competitive pressures in an already slack market. It thus had an even greater incentive to pass on these burdens to its primary workforce in Sudbury (Swift 1977:102-3).

Inco's search for alternative overseas investments was representative of its generalized plan to flexibilize its business model. The company undertook this strategy on a number of fronts, but the principles underlying it were the same: to relieve itself of cost burdens, impose competition and market pressure internally, and divest itself of fixed capital and labour that could be obtained cheaper from contract suppliers (Clement 1981; see also Leadbeater 2008). Labour again found itself in the crosshairs of these objectives. The principal means to undermine the security of unionized workers – aside from making them redundant through process innovations – was via the expansion of contract workers and services (Condratto and Gibbs 2018; Peters 2010; Roth, Steedman, and Condratto 2015). Through the introduction of "contracting-out" (Roth, Steedman, and Condratto 2015:13) language in collective agreements, Inco opened a new battlefield in labour relations at the mines. Although the first provisions allowing the company to utilize non-union, contract suppliers appeared in 1969's collective agreement, the union was able to

limit the pattern somewhat during the 1970s.[11] However, subsequent bargaining rounds were invariably characterized by Inco's push to enlarge its zone of flexibility, expansively categorizing select jobs and tasks that could be performed by contract firms and workers. This continued to be a central issue in the most recent strike in 2009-10 (Peters 2010).

Not only does contracting-out reduce the amount of work for and the number of jobs held by unionized workers, it has additional negative consequences on workers' "structural" and "associational" power (Silver 2003:13; Wright 2000:962). By increasing wage competition between union and non-union workers, contracting-out contributes to the decline of secure, unionized positions at the mines and encourages the growth of precarious forms of work in Sudbury. Moreover, by introducing a triangular employment relationship, the primary employer is hidden and the mining firm on whose property the work takes place is absolved of direct responsibility for contracted workers. In addition, the barriers, actual or perceived, to union organizing across the divide, weaken workers' associational power. Contracting-out contains within it a negative feedback loop wherein, the more it grows, the greater difficulty the union has in fighting back against it as they lose potential members and dues (Roth, Steedman, and Condratto 2015:12).

Flexible labour costs were the complement to a business model with greater competition and risk and far less stability. In fact, attacks on labour and this leaner business model are intimately related, as periodic crises in profitability or economic slumps provided the rationale for imposing contract concessions on workers or further

[11] The USWA's (1987) *Technological Change at Inco and Its Impact on Workers* notes that the union had bargained the practice down by a tenth in the 1970s after a period of near free-for-all in the late 1960s when Inco, capitalizing on unclear collective agreement language, had utilized over 5,000 contractors (7.8-9).

reducing the core workforce.[12] As the Northern Ontario Regional Economist's Office reported (Employment and Immigration Canada 1992a, 1992b), slumps in resource prices through the early 1990s meant that miners and processing workers experienced further lay-offs and retirement buy-outs due to production cutbacks. Moreover, as the mining companies cut exploration and development expenditures, spin-off and contract employment fell as well. Importantly, Inco's greater reliance on non-union, contract labour downloaded more of this burden onto contract firms whose workers had no union recourse through which to pose a challenge.

Through the recession years of the early 1990s, most mining companies in Northern Ontario earned profits on favourable exchange rates and "operational improvements" (Employment and Immigration Canada 1993a:3), while revenues lagged and employment declined (Employment and Immigration Canada 1993b). After the recession and the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), growth levels picked up amid rising demand and recovering resource prices. Yet, again the Northern Ontario Regional Economist's Office reported "moderate or no net job *losses* in the [mining] industry" (Human Resources and Immigration Canada 1995:6, emphasis mine). Growth projections were now sufficient only to stem or diminish job losses in the industry, not to generate net employment growth. Moreover, with the Harris government in Ontario re-regulating labour law to the benefit of employers (Thomas 2009) and attacking unions in the public and private sectors (Sears 1999), the Steelworkers' union in Sudbury was no

[12] Sears' (1999) discussion of the "lean state" and the broad organizational logic of lean production is interesting to consider here, particularly the degree to which flexibility and market pressures spread and are applied to social spaces and policies where they previously were not.

less on the defensive than other unions throughout the province. However, as a further indication of Local 6500's move away from radicalism, when unions and community groups organized "Days of Action" throughout Ontario to oppose the government's policies, USW 6500 refused to participate, and because of its votes within the Sudbury and District Labour Council (SDLC), ensured that the SDLC also did not support the march when it came to Sudbury in March 1997 (Nesbitt 2016:240, 264-8).

The late 1990s and early 2000s also saw global mining investment become more diversified as Canadian companies sought to escape "an increasingly unfavourable regulatory climate" (Human Resources and Immigration Canada 1995:7) through overseas investment. However, soon foreign investment in Canada's natural resources grew amid weakened labour standards and de-regulation (Leadbeater 2014). Growing foreign investment and full takeovers of Canadian resource companies rapidly expanded in the mid-2000s as commodity prices soared and the stock valuations of Canadian resource companies followed suit (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2010). In 2006-07, the period of Vale's takeover of Inco, foreign investors poured over $200 billion into Canada, with natural resources as primary sites of investment. This remains the largest inward foreign direct investment in Canadian history (Stanford 2008:10-1). Stanford describes this rush of foreign investment into resources as Canada going "back to the future" (p.16), as value-added manufacturing output slowed and new resource investment produced little employment growth.

Moreover, as USW 6500 would find out in Sudbury, foreign takeovers can significantly harden the labour relations climate (Aguzzoli and Geary 2014). Vale's

promise of no lay-offs at the time of its October 2006 takeover was soon buckling under the full weight of the Great Recession approximately two years later (Brasch 2010:31). By the time that Vale and the Steelworkers entered bargaining, it was clear Vale expected far-reaching concessions in the next collective agreement (Peters 2010:74). After the yearlong strike ended in July 2010 and Vale had gained concessions, such as limits to the profit-sharing nickel bonus, a two-tiered retirement scheme for new hires, and further flexibility in the use of contractors (King 2017; Peters 2010; Vale/USW 6500 2010), the company quickly recovered from the loses of the recession and continued with its project of strategic investment and cost reduction. Since 2010, Vale has explicitly pursued a "margins over volume" (Vale 2018:5) approach to its investment decisions, placing low-performing mines on maintenance and cutting production and investment according to strict profit calculations. As its 2018 first quarterly report concludes: "Vale has adopted a rigorous capital allocation process based on returns. Projects will only be approved if they generate high returns at the current and conservative price scenarios, not depending on future price expectations" (Vale 2018:5).

In this section of the chapter, we have reviewed the consequences of this 'short-termism' (Tabb 2012) for workers and communities who depend on stable investment and employment. Workers at Vale are embedded in a regime of flexible accumulation where they are far less secure in the face of a growing supply of contract labour and a company that makes investment decisions on the basis of short-term profit calculations. The push for flexibility on a global scale comes at the cost of worker insecurity and diminished local control over workers' economic, social, and political futures.

**Social Structures of Accumulation, Social Structures of Subjectivity**

In Chapters 1 and 2, I outlined the problematic and approach of this dissertation, namely, understanding the relationship between working-class subjectivity and material conditions over a period of socio-economic change in Sudbury. In this chapter, I have provided detail on the historical and contemporary political economy of nickel mining as the bases against which workers' narratives in the following chapters will be read and contextualized. In this direction, I argue that material conditions, insofar as they shape the institutional and social space within which classes form, play a role in generating working-class cultures and identities. However, as I have stressed, this does not happen in a straightforward, deterministic way. Rather, we have to disentangle the making of classes empirically (Willis 1981). I have emphasized culture and lived experience in the making of classes, but this is not to distract from how working-class culture develops within the context of what some scholars refer to as the "social structure of accumulation" (Kotz 1994; Tabb 2012).

Regularized capital accumulation – and the social relations in which it takes place – requires a broad political, social and cultural framework to institutionally organize and socially embed its reproduction. Tabb (2012) describes it this way:

> The social structure of accumulation (SSA) framework suggests that periods of growth require a coherent set of mutually reinforcing institutions favorable to capital accumulation. These involve the creation of relatively lasting accommodations between contesting social forces, including stable understandings between capital and labor, the United States and the rest of

> the world, capital and the state, capitalists and other capitalists, and citizens and their government. Institutional stability provides conditions under which the behavior of others, the meaning of events, and the likely outcome of actions can be predicted over the relevant planning horizon with enough confidence to provide consistent expectations, and so encourage investment and promote growth. Such institutional understandings and practices take on a certain solidity so that expectations stabilize, and people can act with confidence that mutually understood rules and norms will be followed (p.25).

The postwar class compromise with its Keynesian state structures and Fordist workplace relations, and the neoliberal regime of re-regulation and labour flexibility, should be seen as two such social structures of accumulation. Without suggesting that each neatly corresponds to ideal typical forms of working-class subjectivity, I wish to emphasize each social structure's influence on the shape of working-class identity and consciousness. As Gramsci ([1971] 2012:303-4) argued, Fordism's significance consisted in how it organized the labour process as well as workers' lives outside of work. Fordism "went beyond a defining technology, or set of techniques, to actually embody a new culture, or way of looking at things" (Russell 1999:53). For Gramsci, Fordism's organization of production necessitated its further extension into workers' private lives. It did so as a "culture of employment" (p.53), whose organization of the workplace depended upon its concomitant shaping of mores, ideology, and consumption. Although Gramsci's argument is limited somewhat by its focus on the culturally repressive aspects of American Fordism, which he saw as mirroring the strict work organization of the factory, the form of his argument is still useful. Social relations in the workplace, and the systemic needs of class reproduction, shape the social and cultural lives of workers outside of work. This is no less the case for the gender division of labour, which was particularly pronounced in Sudbury

where the mines employed few women until relatively recently. Such a large and male-dominated industry limited women's local employment opportunities (Luxton 1990). Social reproduction of the workforce largely fell to women, masculinizing the expression of working-class identity and tying fights for workplace justice to conceptions of 'manliness' (Yarrow 1991:300-3). The reproduction of working-class identity thus occurs across social locations, in the workplace, the family, and in the community. It is intertwined with the gendered organization of labour in both the workplace and the household.

As discussed in the above section on the postwar class compromise, Fordism's influence on the shape of working-class institutions was also pronounced. Within the workplace itself, institutions, apparatuses, and procedures for organizing the labour process and managing conflict streamlined workers' discontent through "prescribed forms and channels of interaction and communication, sanctioned modes of problem definition, enjoined goals, lines of authority, modes of representation, and methods of reward" (Russell 1999:53). This culture of employment bureaucratized and professionalized class conflict, with the corresponding effect of diminishing workers' capacities for rank-and-file struggle. It also shaped workers' class subjectivities and helped define the terrain of struggle. Moreover, as these institutionalized and regularized forms of class practice coalesced, working-class culture in Sudbury was reshaped outside of the workplace. As I will discuss in later chapters, the ways in which these institutional phenomena shaped workers' subjectivity meant that workers actively engaged in the reproduction of this regime of accumulation (Burawoy [1979] 1982, 1985).

During Mine-Mill's time representing workers at Inco, the union undertook the radical experiment of building an alternative "organized workers' culture" (Buse 1995: 269). Using the cultural and social institutions of the unions affiliated with the German Social Democratic Party and the policies of the socialist government in Vienna (Gruber 1991) as models, the union built a network of institutions and organizations serving members, their families, and the wider community. At their height in the 1950s, these included Labour Day picnics and summer fairs, weekly dances at union-built and operated halls, a Mine-Mill Badminton Club and hockey teams, kids' summer camps and outdoor training, and ballet and theatre clubs offering lessons for adults and children, as well as live performances. The innovation and popularity these cultural programs attracted wide attention in the Sudbury area and beyond, turning the sports, recreation and artistic director of Mine-Mill 598, Weir Reid, into a local and national name. Reid, with the assistance of the Women's Auxiliary, put on regular socially-conscious plays from the works of Arthur Mills, Barrie Stavis, and Dalton Trumbo, winning the 1958 Quonta Drama Festival's Best Director award for an Arthur Miller play with a cast comprised of Local 598 miners (Buse 1995:273-7). However, rival union leaders, company bosses, and unfriendly media assailed Reid and Mine-Mill for their Communist connections, going so far as to characterize the large and popular summer camp as an indoctrination centre for children. Upon assuming control of the Inco bargaining unit in 1962, the USW ended these "fringe" (p.280) experiments in building an organized working-class culture. In the wake of this change in union leadership, private and non-work or union related social activities became more prominent. Always a part of workers' cultural lives, activities centred on the

family, gender-segregated friendship networks and pubs, as well as outdoor activities such as hunting and camping took on greater significance. Though social networks might still largely consist of fellow workers, the degree to which these relationships intersected with union activities or were used to address workplace concerns waned. In short, the professionalization of union spaces encouraged the 'de-unionization' of social spaces.

As the neoliberal shift set in from the late 1970s onward, the formal union structures and the cultural forms of the Fordist period left workers with diminished resources for class conflict. As the following chapter will discuss in more detail, this is particularly true with respect to the introduction of post-Fordist managerial strategies concomitant with the other restructuring efforts discussed above (Clement 1981; Russell 1997, 1999). As I will argue, individualizing tendencies built into the Fordist arrangement fit quite comfortably with managerial calls for individual efficiency improvements and personal collaboration with the company. In many miners' narratives, the workplace changes that brought job and skill loss also represented an opportunity to gain personally through incentive pay, as well as the possibility of a more collaborative relationship between workers and the company. As others have documented (Milkman 1997; Russell 1997), it is not uncommon for blue-collar workers to be thoroughly disappointed by the ostensibly humanistic jargon of these managerial initiatives when they run up against the imperatives of profit maximization. After Vale's takeover, the intensification of class conflict illustrated the degree to which workers were teeming with such disappointment (Brash 2010; Gray 2010).

In the following chapters, I use the thematic areas of class identity discussed in Chapter 1 as a window into the relationship between workers' subjectivities and the material contexts discussed above. As Foster (2013) shows, analyzing the internal structures and logics of respondents' talk can tell us much about how narratives draw on social scripts, as well as how they shape ideas and social action. In this case, the social structures of accumulation and the institutionalized forms of class practice influence how miners negotiate the changes to life and work in Sudbury. In the next three chapters, I deal with three particular themes of class identity, showing how the Fordist class compromise and the shape of working-class culture in Sudbury interacted in the making of workers' subjectivities. Through analyses of workers' narratives about work and the workplace; space, place, and culture; and history, family, and the union, I trace the relationship between social relations and workers' subjectivities. In each case, I ask how the historical reproduction of class shapes workers' understandings of current social and political challenges at work and in the community. Throughout these chapters, I show not just the material influences on workers' interpretations of the world, but how subjectivity shapes their ways of explaining and contending with social change.

# Chapter 4

## Work, Management, and Subjectivity: The Making of an Occupational Identity

> The specific economic form in which unpaid surplus labour is pumped out of the direct producers determines the relationship of domination and servitude, as this grows directly out of production itself and reacts back on it in turn as a determinant.[1]
>
> Karl Marx ([1894] 1991:927)

I have organized the empirical chapters of this dissertation around three thematic areas, namely, narratives about work; space and place; and the histories (personal and social) of mining in Sudbury. Over the next three chapters I analyze what I have above referred

[1] Although Marx of course had in mind the distinct social relations of production in different modes of production, as Russell (1999:52) points out, Marx's discussion in *Capital Vol. 3* from which this quotation draws also has something to tell us about the variability and adaptability of the labour process under capitalism.

to as the thematic areas of class identity. For analytic purposes, Chapters 4, 5, and 6 deal with each of these three thematic areas separately, though workers' accounts are by no means so neatly compartmentalized. For example, questions of work and community are often an integral part of workers' narratives about local and family history. When I asked Yves (28 years old): "Your dad worked at Inco. What do you remember him saying about it when you were young?", Yves replied:

> Well, honestly, I remember him being tired a lot. He talked about it being hard work and that [pause] 'Oh, my back's sore' or his arms from the drills. But he also said it was a good job, you know? It's Sudbury, so mining's big. A lot of his friends worked with him, and they'd be over here and everything. They hunted together [pause] drank [laughs]. Yeah, it all sort of went together, I guess. That's what I remember.

Yves remembers growing up with a mining father whose friendship networks and community ties grew out of work. Similar thematic connections appear across the interview data. Yet, by parsing out my three central thematic areas, I have been able to carefully consider the relationship between workers' narratives and the material conditions out of which class identity is developed and reproduced

In this chapter, I analyze the narratives workers tell about work and workplace change. In general, I find that institutional and material circumstances (class and social relations) structure how workers understand their relationships to work and the union. Yet, because workers also draw on social memories in the process of constructing their stories, their immediate "class position" (Cohen [1978] 2000:73) can contradict the class identity that social remembering produces. In the chapter, I move through features of

the labour process in the mines historically and discuss workers' stories about, and responses to, workplace changes. I begin by discussing changes at the point of production during the postwar settlement, looking in particular at the containment of worker militancy that came with the Steelworkers' certification in Sudbury. I then trace the emergence of an occupational identity among interviewees and link it to the labour relations framework of the postwar settlement, as well as the gender division of labour that it reinforced. Here, I begin to analyze how workers' continued attachment to key features of the postwar labour relations framework has shaped their responses to recent downsizing and restructuring. As I discussed in the previous chapter, from the 1970s, Inco pursued an extensive project of displacing workers through technological innovations, which accelerated the loss of individual skills and autonomy for those miners who remained. How workers reshape and articulate a coherent occupational identity in the face of these changes is complex. I will show that the making and reproduction of class identity takes place through collective remembering (Halbwachs [1952] 1992), transmitted from older and former workers to younger workers and family members. The age range of the interviewees (see Appendix A) allows for analyses of the historical changes in the politics of production (Burawoy 1985), as well as the influence of workers' collective memories on their class subjectivities.

The chapter then covers managerial practices, tracing first the consequences of the postwar class compromise and industrial pluralism on the daily organization of surplus extraction in the mines, and second, the later influence of post-Fordist managerial initiatives (Rinehart 2001) on class solidarity. First, I discuss the strategic and

ideological consequences of the union's "job control" (Russell 1999) strategy. Next, I show how features of the postwar class compromise – in Sudbury from 1962 onward – partly set the stage for workers to quite broadly accept the post-Fordist managerial strategies that the company introduced after the profitability crises of the late 1970s and early 1980s. I find that the institutional forms of labour-management relations consolidated during the postwar era influence workers' discussions and responses to workplace restructuring. I show that workers with employment histories that traverse these difficult adjustments discuss the union as a vehicle for managing inevitable downsizing, particularly through the exercise of seniority rules and use of the grievance system (Russell 1999). As Burawoy ([1979] 1982) argues, the rise of the "internal labour market" (p.95-106) and "internal state" (p.109-15) of postwar industrial relations tamed and reoriented workplace conflict by institutionally tying workers' interests to their employer, and by deflecting hierarchal conflict with management to horizontal disputes with fellow workers over the distribution of scarce resources. This can be seen in older workers' accounts of workplace restructuring, as well as in younger workers' descriptions of their current relationship with the union.

In the third section, I analyze instances in which workers have integrated the employer's post-Fordist emphases on 'cooperation' into their narratives about work. I understand their doing this as a way for them to narratively manage growing workplace precarity and mining job loss. These are, in effect, "redemptive" stories (McAdams 2006), which allow interviewees ways to conclude that they struggled successfully with their circumstances. I show how workers' narratives about such issues as technical

change and workplace health and safety draw on the company's material and discursive shifts toward a 'cooperative' industrial relations framework (Hall 1993).

I conclude the chapter by reiterating how forms of labour relations take workers' narratives about their experience of work. As I outlined in Chapter 1, each of three broad frameworks of labour relations (pre-WWII, the postwar compromise, and post-Fordist flexibility), play a role in shaping class subjectivity. This is not to suggest that legal and institutional labour relations frameworks simply act on workers and elicit no conflict or worker response. Every regulatory framework produces zones of transgression operating inside of it. This is certainly the case with labour relations regimes (Burawoy [1979] 1982; Hyman 1975). Yet, the interview data here strongly demonstrates that the state, via its regulation of labour-capital conflict, influences the formation of workers' subjectivities. Interviewees do not simply relay the experiences of their current or former work. Rather, the experiences of their working lives are structured by and expressed through the institutional forces shaping class identity over time. In the case of younger workers, however, the rise of employment insecurity and contract labour often contradicts the ideas and narratives about working-class identity that older workers transmit to them via collective remembering.

## The Labour Process and the Shaping of Miners' Occupational Identity

As Marx argues in this chapter's epigraph, the social form and property relations of exploitation determine the relations of domination in the labour process between the

direct producers and those who appropriate the surplus product. As Marx ([1894] 1991) goes on to explain in Volume 3 of *Capital*:

> This does not prevent the same economic basis […] from displaying endless variations and gradations in its appearance, as a result of innumerable different empirical circumstances, natural conditions, racial relations, historical influences acting from outside, etc., and these can only be understood by analysing these empirically given circumstances (p.927-8).

Studies of the labour process have since attempted to explain the particulars in the 'endless variations' of the social relations of production in capitalist workplaces.

Below I compare the data of workers who began their careers at different points throughout the history of labour relations at Inco/Vale to demonstrate the dialectal relationship between class and workplace organization. Not only does the form of surplus extraction shape the relations of domination at the point of production, as Marx suggests, but it also influences the class and occupational identities of workers. The postwar period saw a significant reorientation of workplace relations as industrial pluralism integrated certain workers into a system of formal industrial relations. This transformed the relations between unions and management in the spaces where wages, benefits, and other issues would be collectively bargained, and also reshaped the politics of production (Heron 1996). As I will demonstrate, the institutional forms of the class compromise generated a strong occupational identity among miners.

***The Point of Production***

As I described in Chapter 3, nickel miners retained considerable degrees of individual skill and autonomy into the early postwar period (Clement 1981). Yet, as technical innovations became more adaptable to underground operations, as a system of formalized labour relations and managerial control provided the institutional mechanisms to introduce this technology, and as high labour costs and low profitability incentivized further 'efficiencies,' mining experienced its own version of skill breakdown. Labour process theory has been centrally concerned with studying the division of tasks, the loss of skills, and the separation of conception from execution (Braverman [1974] 1998). Following Braverman, scholars have traced the reorganization, or 'degradation,' of work in the early-to-mid twentieth century across major industries, particularly automobile manufacturing (Wells 1986) and steel production (Heron and Storey 1986; Stone 1974). Although Taylorized industrial production came somewhat later to the mining industry in the form of bulk mining and other less labour-intensive extraction processes, its consequences for workers were no less considerable (Hall 1993:4-5). Nickel miners went from using a broad range of skills throughout the processes of mineshaft construction, underground set-up, and ore extraction, to tending machinery and operating and repairing mobile equipment (Brasch 2007:25-31; Clement 1981:116-8).

In the previous chapter, I discussed the company-initiated de-skilling and work reorganization, as well as the containment of worker militancy that mechanization entailed. Here I am concerned with how labour process changes affected workers'

subjectivities. As Knights (1990) argues, labour process analysis must be as attuned to the relationship between work organization and subjectivity as it is to the social and technical dimensions of work. However, this attunement needs to go beyond both describing how capitalists and managers impose control on workers, and celebrating resistant workers in various skilled occupations.[2] While the former analyses tend to overemphasize the structural moment in capitalist work organization, the latter imply a notion of worker agency that Knights refers to as "voluntarist" (p.298).[3] As the interview data below indicates, workers' narratives about their lives at the point of production are structured by the broader regime of labour relations. That workers of different age groups describe markedly different experiences at work is not only a matter of the technical organization of work, but also the regimes of labour relations and how they shape workplace experiences (Burawoy [1979] 1982:25-30).

Walter, the oldest interviewee in the study, started work at Inco in 1960. According to Walter, he began his job underground when conditions were far more labour-intensive, and just before the United Steelworkers replaced Mine-Mill as the union representing workers at Inco. Walter's recollection of his early working life thus offers a window into the variation of the postwar compromise consolidated at Inco in the early-to-mid 1960s. Here he describes his first years on the job:

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[2] Few themes have generated as much attention in labour history as craft workers' resistance to industrialization and the division of labour. See Montgomery ([1979] 1992) for a classic example, and Lembcke (1988:4-9), Kealey and Palmer ([1982] 2004:36-55), and Palmer (2017:361-67) for approaches emphasizing the growth of organizational class power among the de-skilled.

[3] See also Aronowitz (1978), Burawoy ([1979] 1982), Gorz (1976), and Littler (1982).

> I started working at Inco in about 1960. I was young, never finished school, done odd jobs around. The mines were hiring a lot. At the time it wasn't what it is now with the pay [pause] with safety especially. But it seemed a hell of a lot better than anything else going on. I got hired on and started in there. I was underground. Of course, it was a lot of grunt work. I was basically a helper, learning the skills of the trade, and that. What older guys I worked with early on were good to me, you know? It was hard work, with the dust and that, and I just remember the darkness. You'd need to walk in some slope, what seemed like forever, and you can't see a thing. So, I got on, and I learned how to bolt and set up, how to drill, how to break up ore. Well, I was doing set-up first, but later on [...] But guys took their jobs seriously. There was pride in it [pause] I could see that right away. (Walter, 74 years old)

In his opening story, Walter touches on important aspects of the labour process and the management of work that were beginning to be transformed in this period. Here and elsewhere in his interview, Walter describes both the independence of mine work and the mutual support workers provided one another. The 'independence' to which he refers has mostly to do with a lack of direct managerial control, as well as workers' possession of a broad range of skills. Yet, the danger of nickel mining necessitated worker cooperation, often in the form of indirect learning from those with more experience on the job.

Walter follows by talking about the union and management in the mine:

> Well, Mine-Mill was still around, you see? You know about them? I was a member, but I was new. I was for the union, or having the union, but I didn't know much about it. A couple of the guys I was working with, you know, and learning from had more knowledge and talked about it to me. I heard other fellas say it was Communist, but I didn't have much sense of that, and it didn't seem to matter much in a mine, to me anyway. But fights were breaking out with leaders in the unions [pause] with the Steelworkers coming in and stuff. I mean, it seemed like a lot was changing. I was new, so I didn't have as much of a sense of it. But I'm working with older guys so I'm hearing it from them.

> But yeah, by the time the Steelworkers were the union, I was hearing stories about guys who were 'troublemakers' getting in trouble with management more, basically Mine-Mill guys, skilled guys getting shit from the company once Mine-Mill was out. (Walter, 74 years old)

In both excerpts, relations with coworkers figure quite prominently. Those with whom he worked introduced him to the skills of the job, and to the cursory politics of the Mine-Mill union. Walter never mentions any formal training, or interactions with management when discussing his early years of mining. He describes the work as difficult, but skillful, and as a point of pride for himself and his coworkers, particularly among those from whom he was learning on the job.

When Walter mentions Mine-Mill and more radical union members, he does so in the context of their being disciplined by management. Although he suggests he was a member simply by default – i.e. being pro-union, he joined the union representing workers at Inco – he was not a rank-and-file activist. In Walter's recollection we can nonetheless read the opening salvo of the gradual management assault and the union bureaucratization that would bring many union militants into the Rand framework. As Palmer (2003) suggests, the period from the 1872 Trades Union Act to PC 1003, the Rand Formula and Canada's version of the Wagner Model was:

> a long, drawn-out interregnum, but it was one in which, interestingly, the zones of toleration and the boundaries of legal constraint that had limited trade union possibilities in the past were expanded greatly, at the same time that they were also hedged in more effectively vis-à-vis legal statutes (p.474).

Though Mine-Mill was the legal bargaining agent at Inco until 1962, this meant little at a company steadfastly opposed to the union's existence. Workers at Inco were, in this sense, still struggling in the "interregnum" in the late 1950s and early 1960s, willing to push forcefully against the constraints of the postwar settlement, yet still contending with a recalcitrant employer. The Steelworkers' certification in 1962 began to change this.

Interviewees younger than retirement age have no direct experience of Mine-Mill and know of it only through the local stories of its radical heritage. Of the three workers who offered first-person accounts or reflections on Mine-Mill, Walter is the only one who was a member. However, all workers who talked about Mine-Mill largely did so by discussing the seeming inevitability of its decline. Leon opined, "Guys I knew said the 1958 strike was a disaster. People couldn't heat their house, eating basically potatoes. Mine-Mill was too radical, I guess. Other unions didn't want no part of it." That many workers draw these conclusions about the Mine-Mill union could also stem in part from the way the union was tamed and integrated into the broader labour-capital settlement as the much-diminished bargaining agent of workers at Falconbridge mining company, as well as Mine-Mill 598's later merger with the United Auto Workers (later Canadian Auto Workers, now Unifor).[4] Thus, workers are not so much pointing to the inevitability of Mine-Mill's decline as to the naturalization of the framework of industrial relations and workplace organization that the class compromise introduced.

[4] See Lang (1995) and Palmer (1995) for history and context on Mine-Mill Local 598 in Sudbury.

However, as I pointed out in the previous chapter, management and the Steelworkers' disciplining of the workforce – particularly those active in Mine-Mill – in the mid-to-late 1960s coincided with a tornado of wildcat strikes across Canada that touched down in Sudbury in 1966 (Palmer 2009:229-32; Sangster 2004). What is especially interesting to note in workers' narratives about this period is that bifurcation begins to appear between legal strike action and work inside the mines. Although workers describe poor conditions and generalized frustration about such things as low wages, dust and poor ventilation, and inadequate rest facilities, 1966 marks the last attempt by workers to use the strike weapon outside of its legally relegated place between collective agreements to address pressing workplace issues. Leon, who started at Inco in 1965, remembers:

> I was pretty scared, to be honest. A lot of guys were angry. And the union, you see, they didn't call the strike, and couldn't support it. People had shotguns they were firing at the company helicopters. I think they were just trying to scare 'em, not actually hurt anyone. But [pause] blockaded roads, the whole thing. I'd been there less than a year, and there wasn't much anybody could do in the mines about it [poor working conditions]. The union guys [elected local officials] definitely wanted it to end, for us to go back to work and wait till the next contract.

The legal framing of this strike action as a "wildcat," by the triumvirate of state, management, and union shapes the stories of those workers old enough to have experienced it. They indeed returned to work without gaining ground on many of the issues that had propelled workers off the job. Homer Seguin, later President of Local 6500 during the 1969 strike and collective agreement, recounts how he spent

considerable time in 1966 advising workers to wait patiently for the next round of negotiations, when high nickel prices would mean striking while the iron was hot (Seguin 2008:45-7). However, his narrative of the 1960s at Inco contains more than a hint of the limitations imposed by the framework of labour law.

It is especially notable that workers who began work at Inco in the 1970s and 1980s rarely refer to conflict at the point of production. The terrain of struggle had moved out of the workplace and came to settle at the negotiating table, with periodic discontent boiling over during legally sanctioned strikes, which were admittedly still frequent for miners in Sudbury.[5] Instead, the interview data contains many personal stories about learning how to operate increasingly complex machinery, and about apprenticing, re-skilling, or otherwise managing to move up the job classification ladder during their careers. Here, Dale describes his path from labourer to mechanic:

> I started in as basically a labourer there. I didn't know much. It was hard work, but once you're in the union, it's stable and everything. I was underground, been underground pretty much the whole time. But, you see, there's plenty of opportunity to move up or learn a trade. So I did that. I'm a mechanic now, have been quite a while. It means my job is a lot more mobile than a lot of other guys. I'm always doing something different, basically working on broken equipment, sometimes underground, sometimes not. (Dale, 55 years old)

Alain, as well, combined his upward career trajectory with union work, including in elected positions.

[5] Including the 1966 wildcat, there have been seven strikes at Inco/Vale between 1966 and 2018 (Brasch 2007). See Cruikshank and Kealey (1987) for historical data on Canadian strike trends, and Krahn, Hughes, and Lowe (2015:360-3) on the steady decline in work stoppages in Canada from the late 1970s onward.

> Well, I started young, underground, did set-up, drilled. I got the impression at quite a young age that I wanted to always do more, you see? Yeah, yeah, I built up seniority and learned new skills. I have been in the mill as flotation operator, when I wasn't doing union work. It's interesting work, more complicated than mining underground. (Alain, 56 years old)

Other interviewees relate stories about their often quite intricate career paths. Most of these narratives are punctuated by lay-offs, or other short-term interruptions representative of the cyclic nature of the nickel mining industry. However, it is noticeable how workers relegate conflict to periods of legal strikes (discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 6), and to instances in which grievances were utilized to challenge perceived unfairness in hiring, recall, or managerial conduct. This is, as Burawoy's work ([1979] 1982, 1985, 1991) would suggest, indicative of a Fordist workplace with a developed "internal labour market" and "internal state" (Burawoy [1979] 1982:96-5, 109-10). As everyday work life becomes less characterized by class conflict – or as conflict is confined to regulated times, spaces, and procedures – the "hegemonic" factory regime comes to be characterized by "the expansion of choices within […] ever narrower limits" (p.94). This expansion of choice is particularly evident in the ways that the union capitalized on aspects of managerial control to push for cooperative wage studies[6] and strict rules of promotion, and in how workers consequently interpret their working lives.

[6] See Chapter 3.

The above features of the Fordist workplace play a strong role in shaping the class subjectivities of workers in this study. Those who were employed during the period when workers achieved formal union recognition celebrate labour's integration as a significant win.[7] Importantly, what they see as labour's advance is a central part of the story they tell about themselves as workers, and thus forms part of the identification that family members or older co-workers transmit to younger workers in the spaces of family and work. It is also instructive to consider how the taming of conflict at the point of production influenced miners' occupational identities.

***Occupational Identity***

Above I have argued that part of the postwar compromise involved steering class conflict away from the point of production and into the prescribed channels of labour law and the "internal state" of the workplace. Although the full implementation of the capital-labour settlement was stunted in the immediate postwar period in Sudbury's mines, its contours and tendencies were clear after the certification of the Steelworkers in 1962. This process is evident in the narratives of workers in this study, particularly when we consider the differences between the oldest workers in the sample who have experience of work before the class compromise, and virtually all other interviewees.[8]

[7] In Chapter 6, I cover more thoroughly how interviewees describe labour's integration into the postwar settlement and union-company relations in the period of Fordist expansion.

[8] The one place in the interview data that defies the general tendency toward limited militancy in the workplace concerns relations with contract workers. A number of workers of varying ages describe growing tension and conflict showing up in the forms of hiding tools and other disruptive behaviours by union members directed against contractors. Whether we want to classify unionized workers' sometimes abusive behaviour toward contract workers as 'militancy'

Moreover, when workers traded greater managerial control of the workplace for union recognition and the ability to bargain over wages, benefits, and pensions, the company could continually introduce process innovations and technological changes in the mines and refining facilities. With workers increasingly disempowered at the point of production, collective bargaining and the grievance and arbitration machinery of the contract and the state became the only means through which the union could attempt to address the negative impacts of workplace restructuring. Yet, workers in this study retain a strong occupational identity, which largely traverses differences of age and skill. I now turn to a discussion of how this came to be.

Labour process theory has been largely defined by a focus on de-skilling and the undermining of craft identity.[9] In consequence, researchers have often suggested that the loss of workers' control at the point of production either limits workers' capacities as a class or weakens their tendencies toward class consciousness, or both. As Lembcke (1988) argues, this is contrary to Marx's argument concerning the relationship between the division of labour and the organizational power of the working class, and, more importantly, is not particularly borne out by history. Unions of the most proletarianized workers in the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), for example, were at the forefront of union organizing in the 1930s in both the United States and Canada (Abella 1973), and often contained the most democratic internal union governance structures

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is debatable. Yet, it is equally difficult to explain this behaviour outside of the context of the employer-directed class struggle – a central feature of which is the use of contract firms and workers to undermine the union. I cover this more extensively below.

[9] See Braverman ([1974] 1998) as the classic example of work focusing on the loss of skill and power at the point of production, and Lembcke (1988) for perhaps the best critique of Braverman-inspired labour process theory.

(Lembcke 1988:4-9, 134-8). In short, proletarianization tended to augment "class capacities" (Callinicos 1987), as de-skilling homogenized workers and diminished status differentials based on craft and other categories. Yet, even though particular workers or industries were proletarianized, they could still retain strong occupational identities. Miners, steelworkers, or autoworkers could simultaneously be militant unionists and be prideful about their sectoral or occupational categories. In fact, occupational identity could function as a resource upon which workers could draw in the process of transforming structural capacities into class struggle. Or, as Harvey (1995) suggests, it could also contribute to forms of "militant particularism," whereby militancy, though harnessed to the task of defending sectoral gains, is not necessarily conducive to building broader working-class initiatives. This is true for most workers in this research, for whom being a miner is not necessarily about skill or craft, but about their conception of mining's place in their community and its history, as well as the virtue of hard work, which, despite the more recent employment of women, still retains noticeably masculinized connotations.

Pride in the identity of being a miner is one of the most salient themes running through interviewees' discussions of work and the workplace. Despite the significant changes to the labour process over the course of the work lives of those interviewed in this study, many workers' narratives contain celebrations of mining and of being a miner. For example, Charles and Tim, separated by nearly two decades, both mention a sense of pride in their occupation.

> I started when things were really going. Yes, just about everybody I knew was applying at Inco or working there. It became a huge part of your life. I mean, the work was hard, awful sometimes, but I was able to raise a family, put food on the table [pause]. Things definitely improved. It was cleaner, the pay got better. It was union, you know. And I felt good about my work. Being at Inco was a common thing because so many people worked there. But it was something to be proud of too. (Charles, 71 years old)

> Working at Inco was good. Right, we had our disagreements [pause] everyone knows that. But miners have a strong sense of pride. It's important work. I could see that right away, especially the way old-timers were. When you'd hear 'em talk about the way things was and that, you knew it was tough. But you knew the workers made it better. (Tim, 52 years old)

Charles and Tim describe their occupational identities in historically significant ways. For Charles, pride is in part secured through the gender division between work and home, and the 'family' wage that supports this gender division. His job allowed him to "raise a family," something that he understands as both a point of pride and a masculine obligation. Notice, as well, that Tim describes occupational pride being transmitted via the stories workers tell to one another about their shared history. Younger workers gain a sense of their shared history within a work environment where workers historically depended on one another for safety and solidarity. When miners recount memories and tell stories, they engage in the transmission of a shared sense of collectivity and occupational identity. This happens in the informal places and practices of social interaction (Welzer 2008). Mining is something in which to show pride because it is historically important to both individual families and the broader community. Older workers tell stories about the importance of mining and the jobs it provides to reinforce

a shared sense of pride. Younger workers listen to and remember these stories at work, and in some cases, at home.

That younger workers incorporate these stories into their understanding of self is evinced by their expressions of occupational identity. Anthony described becoming a miner, following after his father – though not intending to – and feeling as though he is "part of the history."

> Like I said, dad worked there [at Inco] so it was a part of our lives growing up. When I was really young I guess I looked up to my dad and that. I remember it kind of blew my mind as a kid to think he was like thousands of feet under the earth. I was like 'what the hell?' Then when I was a teenager, I didn't think I wanted to work there. People were going to school and leaving town and that. No one in my family told me to do it or don't. I just eventually applied and started working. I'm glad I did. Things have been hard, you know, recently. But [pause] I definitely love what I do. Even being on strike, as much as it fucking sucked, I felt like a part of the history in a weird way. (Anthony, 37 years old)

Ryan likewise speaks of finding his place as "a miner," despite coming to the industry without any family connections.

> This company, Vale, I've been there about three years. It was kind of an accident really. No family or any help from anyone to get into it. I'd been on and off their property and that for maybe a year, year and a half prior to that. I was working for a couple of contractors. I was going a day here, maybe a week there. I was doing high-pressure water blasting for a while. But they sent me to this company and I walked in there and was like 'what the hell is this place?' I had no idea what I was getting into. But I loved it [pause] yeah, still do. Once I got to know guys and that, it was right away, like I was 'a miner,' you know? It's great. (Ryan 29 years old)

Across the interview sample, workers express strong occupational identities, frequently attaching being "a miner" to other discourses about this work's central place in one's life or in their community.

Interviewees also frequently associate pride in being a miner with the histories of class conflict that they understand to be central to making mining a 'good job.' Despite the detectable separation between class conflict and the point of production that I highlighted in the previous subsection, stories about strikes regularly make use of refrains such as "being miners," or "miners fight back." In this way, workers are drawing on an historical association between their occupation and a tendency for class struggle. The loss of skill, or even the overall decline in mining employment in the community, do not seem to diminish the resources that occupational identity offers to the reproduction of class subjectivity. Being a miner remains an important form of class identification, despite the difficulties historically-specific occupational identities can generate when the material conditions that gave rise to them begin to change, as is taking place in Sudbury.[10]

As I argued in Chapter 2, it is important to consider how identity and its preservation influence class, as well as how non-material elements of class take historical shape. Many interviewees correlate a sense of personal dignity with their occupation. Particularly for workers whose formative work years occurred during the 1960s through the 1990s, respect and dignity accrued not only from their work but also

[10] Other scholars suggest that strong attachments to particularistic work-based identities impose additional limitations on broad programs of class solidarity (Foster 2016; Harvey 1995; Strangleman 2007, 2015; Weeks 2011).

from the struggle to gain the rights and privileges that unionization provided. Brian recounts:

> Working at Inco has been the ticket really. I've been able to raise a family, take a trip here and there. It's not all fun and games. It's work and, you know, especially with health and safety, it's serious business. But it's a union job, and I've had it a long time. Guys like me, guys older than me, they put in the work, fought for, you know, to have the important things we have. Having a union has been important. You can't just get told what to do if it's not safe. You got a right to negotiate how things are going to be. A lot of people don't have that. (Brian, 61 years old)

Like Charles, Brian also highlights how he was "able to raise a family" and draws on the shared history of the union's fight for security as sources of pride. Below, Peter expresses the importance of gaining employment at Inco. Interestingly, although he states that his parents "woulda been fine" if he had done any number of jobs; since they advised him to "get a trade," mining made sense to him. His self-conception as someone who likes to "work with his hands" is a classic example of the blue-collar preference for practical skill and knowledge over intellectual or 'impractical' mental labour (Dunk 2003; Charlesworth 2000; Willis 1981).

> You know, my parents always said 'get a trade.' I think they woulda been fine if I did any number of things. But I was always the kind to work with his hands, you know? Getting on at Inco was pretty huge for me. I worked my way up, got seniority and that, because you know things have been up and down [pause] that's the way with mining. Even for summer shutdowns and that. Seniority means you're called back sooner, so it's important. There's stability there, even when it's not your typical full-year, 9 to 5 job. And I mean, it's because it's union, no question. It's not just the boss' world. The union has a say in things. (Peter, 60 years old)

For these workers, it is not simply 'work' that serves as a point of pride, as scholars who bemoan 'the end of work' (Foster 2012; Strangleman 2007) suggest. Rather, it is the forms of work and class relations that unionization generated, giving workers both greater material security and the dignity that came with employers having to negotiate with their union, and the broader public recognizing labour's central place in society. However, with this respectability, as I have argued, came important trade-offs. Class conflict became routinized, regulated by the timetables of contract negotiations and the legal stipulations of the state. And in the case of miners and other industrial workers, class subjectivity was folded into the militancy of sector and occupation, tightening the strictures already imposed by a system of de-centralized bargaining with restrictions on sympathy strikes.

Moreover, labour's integration through the postwar settlement in Sudbury cemented the gender division of labour typical of mining communities, and further circumscribed women's labour market opportunities (Keck and Powell 2000; Vosko 2011). The 'breadwinner model' of paying male wages sufficient to support a family restricted women to the unpaid labour of social reproduction. In the process, miners' gendered occupational identities tied the conception of 'good jobs' to the gender division of labour between workplace and home (Yarrow 1991).[11] For example, Tim

[11] However, as Murphy's (1997) work shows, the work/home dichotomy can obscure the cultural, civil, and leisure spaces where gender is negotiated and challenged. Women in male-dominated mining communities have historically forged independent spaces and networks of resistance. Although I have no direct evidence of this in my interview data, Luxton's (1990) work

positions his wife's work at home when their children were young, and her later work outside the home, as choices made in the context of his secure, union job and wages.

> Inco meant a good-paying job you could support a family on. Mining wasn't just automatically a 'good job,' right. Having a union made it that way. My wife could stay home and be with the kids and that. Once they got a little older, she worked a bit, but things were pretty much taken care of. (Tim, 52 years old)

As workplace restructuring, the loss of secure mining jobs, and the growth of precarious employment transformed many workers' lives, it is in the gender division of labour that we can detect some of the impacts. For example, younger workers who had begun work as contractors in less secure jobs told stories of how their partners worked various, often precarious or contingent, jobs. When their husbands secured full-time, unionized jobs at the mines, some of these women stayed at home, while others continued in paid employment. Below James describes the way his wife combined online retail sales with care responsibilities in the home when he was working as a contractor. She continues this work, though as James' laugh at its meagre earnings indicates, he does not consider her paid work central to their household.

> Like, when I was contract, things weren't as good. We weren't struggling, struggling, but it was tough sometimes [pause] mainly because I didn't know what was going to happen a lot. We had the kids then, you know, and that's when [his wife] starting doing the online sales stuff [selling beauty supplies]. It

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on the Women's Auxiliary in Sudbury is interesting to consider here. Miners' wives were integral to winning strikes. Despite this, the union resisted their having too much autonomy or direct influence on strategy or negotiations.

> wasn't bringing in huge money or anything, obviously [laughs]. But it helped, and it worked at the time with the kids not being in school. She keeps it going still. (James, 34 years old)

James' dismissal of his wife's online work reflects the masculinized notions of work produced through mining. Anthony as well describes his wife's retail work during his time as a contractor. He positions her non-union job, in which she had to deal with a difficult boss, in contrast to his current unionized job at the mine, and indicates that he is pleased that she no longer works there.

> Well, when I was still working for contractors, that's when [his wife] started working in town [in Sudbury], working at [a vitamin/health shop]. We needed two incomes, you know. My money was good but it sometimes wasn't steady, that's the problem. She had a shitty boss and it wasn't a good job. Like, I kind of felt bad she was there at the time. I was glad when she quit. (Anthony, 37 years old)

Thus, the shifts in the local economy and the undermining of mining's relative security cannot help but register in younger workers' narratives. Yet, the partial deindustrialization of Sudbury, represented by job loss at the mines and the relative growth of retail and public service jobs, has in other ways buttressed the occupational identities of miners. As members of a shrinking proportion of the local workplace with the conditions of their jobs under threat, many interviewees react to these changes by reiterating the importance of mining to Sudbury. They reemphasize their occupational identities and what they see as the continued centrality of blue-collar work in an increasingly service-oriented region (Parry 2003).

Miners' retention of a strong occupational identity, even among those who are relatively new to their jobs, is a strong illustration of the argument I am advancing: the class subjectivities workers learn through the processes of social and communicative memory (Halbwachs [1952] 1992; Welzer 2008) sit uneasily with the industrial restructuring that has reshaped the material conditions of work in Sudbury.

## Managing Work, Re-Making Class

In this section, I am concerned with how managerial strategies and class subjectivity intersect. Above we have seen how the labour relations system influences workers' experiences at the point of production, and how, despite these changes, workers developed and reproduced a strong occupational identity characterized by a certain form of militancy and class conflict. Here I show the ways that managing the workplace has shaped and re-shaped class subjectivity. I first cover how the union responded to management's retention of workplace control in the postwar settlement in the form of "job-control unionism" (Russell 1999:12-3), or "job regulation" (Mann 1973:20). I then examine workers' accounts of managerial changes over the course of their work lives for detectable shifts toward 'Post-Fordism,' 'job enhancement' schemes, or other processes that break down old job classifications and harness individual job improvement to the task of increasing productivity (Milkman 1997:138-46; Moody 1997:85-106; Rinehart 2001:157-63,182-200). I argue that new managerial strategies and flexible restructuring have amplified individualizing tendencies present in the postwar settlement. As an example of how such changes are implemented, and their melding with workers'

subjectivity, I explore the nickel bonus at Inco/Vale and workers' support for and defense of the bonus (Peters 2010:87-8). In general, interviewees incorporate post-Fordist notions such as cooperation and flexibility into their narratives about workplace change, even as these contradict their emphases on the historical combativeness of miners in Sudbury.

***Job Control Unionism***

The formalization of Fordist workplace relations entailed union recognition, collective bargaining, and the institutional funneling of class conflict into regular negotiations and grievance procedures (McInnis 2002). But, by doing so, it also determined the limited means through which unions could challenge the organization and management of work. As Burawoy ([1979 1982) and Palmer (2003) in different ways contend, this was a process of expanding union voice within narrower parameters. This was particularly evident with respect to how the Steelworkers addressed technology and the division of labour in the mines at Inco. The task subdivision and 'scientific' organizing of the labour process, though at times a point of contention, became a terrain of struggle, but not in the sense of workers resisting the division of labour. Rather, the union sought to police the parameters of job classifications in order to secure individual workers' job categories, to take wages at the firm level out of competition, to protect the principle and functioning of seniority, and to prevent overwork (Russell 1999:12-7).

All this had an individualizing effect on working-class consciousness. It also molded workers' relationship with their union, helping to generate a service orientation in which

workers call upon union officials for redress when the rules of job regulation are transgressed, whether by management or by fellow union members. Interviewees frequently describe their relationship to their union in these terms. For example, Larry discussed how seniority has been beneficial for him.

> Having the union's been good for me. Mining can be on and off, I mean with shutdowns and so forth. Having your name up the list, what we sometimes call 'bumping rights,' you get protected from any major lay-offs or job loss. And I've had issues in the past, you know, with postings [internal job applications], had to file a grievance, which I thankfully won. (Larry, 45 years old)

James, on the other hand, finds little relevance in the union on a "day-to-day" basis aside from how it protects him from unsafe work, and has assisted workmates who experienced managerial overreach.

> It's [the union] good that it's there when you need it. Like, the right to refuse unsafe work, that to me is the key issue. I've done it and I know so many people who have been like 'no way' and whatever it is gets fixed [pause] and push it till later. But on a day-to-day basis, I don't feel like it [the union] has much impact on my work. Like, there's an office and it's supposedly, there's supposedly supposed to be a union guy in there, I think he's my steward. But I've never seen him in there. I don't know. It doesn't make me angry because I know I could call on it if I needed to. I have friends who needed to, especially when the piss tests started up [urine testing of employees involved in workplace accidents]. (James, 34 years old)

The mechanisms of job regulation functioned mostly in a rearguard fashion once instability and crisis set in. As Larry recounts, seniority provisions eased the rough edges

of a boom-and-bust industry for him. Leon, as well, discusses both the seniority system and the pension incentive scheme as personally advantageous features of the union. “I was working the last years through the downswing. The early retirement thing that the union negotiated really helped me out. Got out before it got bad, or worse, for me” (Leon, 72 years old). Indeed, the Steelworkers bargained revised seniority rules and an early retirement scheme to aid workers soon to be harmed by contraction in the nickel mining industry (USWA 1987, 1988). What stands out about how workers discuss these features of work and the union is the personal and transactional nature of the relationship. In their narratives, the union bargains ameliorative provisions on behalf of workers, and workers individually benefit when they access these rights. Workers do not understand their relationship with their union, or the union’s power vis-à-vis the company, to include the ability to negotiate *how* technology could be introduced, or how potential benefits might be shared (for example, by reducing hours instead of jobs). Workers are describing two key features of the postwar settlement and industrial pluralism. First, the class compromise transformed the relationship between workers and their unions. Generally speaking, unions began to act for workers and frame their actions within the legal parameters set by labour relations legislation. Second, formalized collective bargaining narrowed the scope of union action. As Burawoy ([1979] 1982) describes it, unions had greater choice “within […] ever narrower limits” (p.94).

Job control, once established as a principle and a mode of union negotiation, became the frame through which the union read and responded to the introduction of

new technologies in the workplace. As Roth, Steedman, and Condratto (2015:15-7) show, from the 1970s onward, the union tried desperately to protect job classifications from either undue expansion or total elimination as a result of technical innovations. The union chose not to attempt to steer technology's implementation toward the alleviation of work's most onerous aspects – and potentially develop the creative capacities of workers – and instead battled to mitigate the fallout from job loss and speed-up (USWA 1987:5-6). It is no coincidence that the challenges of managing disruption to the technical division of labour also eventuated in battles over if, when, or how new job classifications would be included in collective agreements. Indeed, collective agreements, particularly in the 2000s, contain expansive lists of job classifications considered officially outside the bargaining unit, while the number of classifications in the contract shrank, in some instances from triple to double digits (USW 6500/Inco 2000, 2003; USW 6500/Vale 2010, 2015).

> We were in a hell of a battle. Yeah, yeah, hand-to-hand combat, we used to say. This was at the negotiating table, as well as in the union. The issue was over how jobs would get eliminated [pause] and what, how do I say, what new jobs or work would not be in the contract. The union had to basically do two big things at once: we, we, have to take care of people getting hurt by what's happening, and then figure out how to stop more jobs from going to contractors. We [elected officials] knew guys were getting more pissed off over the contractors, so we tried to deal with that at the table. (Alain, 56 years old)

Alain's discussion demonstrates a common way that workers imagine the union: they conceive of the union as a vehicle for protecting its current members, but not as an

organizing tool. Alain relayed how bargaining teams attempted to make new job classifications a part of the collective agreement, while at the same time the company sought to utilize the openings offered by redrawing the division of labour to weaken the bargaining unit and adapt a growing portion of the workforce to its need for labour flexibility. Alain did not, however, talk about contract workers as potential union members, and made no mention of efforts to organize their growing ranks; indeed, there were none.

It is not surprising then to find far less favourable narratives about 'job control' and the seniority system among younger workers, especially those who had worked as contractors prior to entering Vale as USW members. James, for example, felt the anger of union workers when he was a contractor, though now as a member he understands why the union tries to limit contract work. He nonetheless concluded, "It pissed me off then, for sure." Below, Ryan is more critical of the way in which seniority and the closed shop function to exclude other workers with limited job choices.

> Like, I was that guy [a contractor] and I was just trying to work, you know? From my perspective, I'd done worse jobs. I get that the union – and I got it then – was trying to protect guys, but, to me, the issue is with the boss, not the guy [contractors] just trying to earn a living. And when it comes to seniority, like, I'm still pretty new [pause]. It doesn't do much for me. This is the issue with the union, in my opinion. I don't know how to say it, exactly. Like, it seems like the better you have it, the more they're doing for you. Honestly, it can come across as a bunch of old guys whining. (Ryan, 29 years old)

Admittedly, seniority is more popular among those who have more of it. Yet, during a drawn-out process of restructuring and downsizing, its operation makes it all the more contentious for those originally prevented from accessing it entirely through being relegated to non-union, contract work. Harvey (2005), for example argues that the "rigid rules and bureaucratic structures" of many industrial unions made them vulnerable to state and employer attacks precisely because flexibility could be pitched as benefiting both employers and those workers excluded from the "monopoly benefits that strong unionization sometimes conferred" (p.53).

The "disadvantage" young workers feel affects the relationship between union structures and class subjectivity. The uneven benefits of union security are a strong instance where we observe how some younger workers' experience of their immediate class situation contradicts the picture of working-class identity that they learn through the processes of social remembering that I described above.

Many workers without contract work experience, on the other hand, have no qualms registering their displeasure with the growth of contractor workers by, for example, hiding their tools, purposefully misdirecting them at work, and otherwise sabotaging their equipment. Larry, for example, sees contract workers as "scabs" or "rent-a-miners,"

> I mean, contractors, as far as I'm concerned – and many other guys would tell you the same – they're scabs. No two ways about it. 'Rent-a-miners' we call 'em. Yeah, if their tools go missing, or someone pisses in their gear, I don't feel too bad about it. (Larry, 45 years old)

When it comes to contract labour – a perennial issue at Inco/Vale – all those interviewees who spoke of it (22 of 26 interviewees) understood it to directly threaten their union and job security. How to respond is another question. While some interviewees favourably discussed the rising tensions and disruptive behaviour that they direct at contractors in the workplace, others, particularly those who have worked as contractors, were less likely to blame or direct anger at their precarious counterparts. This is a nice example of how the constraining nature of a union bargaining unit can limit broader working-class solidarity. Of those interviewees who saw contractors, as opposed to contracting-out, as the issue, none mentioned potentially organizing contractors as union members.

***The Influence of 'Post-Fordism'***

From the mid-1970s onward, employers introduced new managerial initiatives across a variety of manufacturing and resource extraction industries. Whether under the titles of 'Post-Fordism,' lean production, or total quality management, their objectives were largely the same: to loosen the regulatory rigidities of the Fordist workplace, to reduce labour costs, and to transfer greater responsibility to workers without any concomitant gains in power or resources. Many labour scholars have been critical of these managerial approaches, noting how humanist rhetoric about 'job enhancement' and worker autonomy often mask the sizable burdens that workers are expected to take on as part of a more flexible labour process (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005; Drache 1994; Milkman 1991, 1997; Moody 1997; Parker and Slaughter 1994; Rinehart 2001; Rinehart,

Huxley and Robertson 1997; Yates, Lewchuk and Stewart 2001). In mining in particular, post-Fordist managerial strategies have had little impact on the principles of scientific management or the strict retention of managerial control over ultimate decision-making. Rather, the loosening of 'job control,' and the expansion of skills and responsibilities, coincided with an imperative to produce more for less expense (Parker 2017; Russell 1999:128). The humanist rhetoric of the 'post-Fordist' workplace did not match the necessities of capitalist production, particularly a capitalism that was struggling out of crisis (Moody 1997).

At Inco, forays into new managerial approaches were wedded to technical innovations and pushes for greater labour productivity (Hall 1993:5). When Clement (1981) studied this in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Inco was making its first attempt at what it somewhat clumsily called "people technology" (p.204). This involved employing various personality and other psychological tests to select workers and then regulate their attitudes and practices on the job. Inco also significantly changed managerial relations by increasing the levels of responsibility required at particular jobs, in concert with reducing the number of total workers in the mines and processing facilities (USWA 1988). With workers' numerical power waning and job insecurity on the rise, Inco strengthened its position both at the bargaining table and in the workplace. In this context, its new approach involved efforts to make class antagonism even less a part of labour relations. Instead, Inco sought to regulate the efficient conduct of individual workers, to tie workers' attitudes more strongly to the fate of the company, and to

delegate responsibility without any increase in control. In the aftermath of the 1978-79 strike, the company pursued these aims aggressively, as this interviewee described:

> ’78 was really a kind of last-straw moment, I think. Guys had known the company, and probably the industry, were in trouble for a while. So, you know, we fought back, big time. It was a long haul […]. But that really was the turning point, I think. After that you saw Inco start doing all kinds of things differently, new equipment, lay-offs, contractors, you name it. (Tim, 52 years old)

As was also true in potash and uranium mining (Russell 1999), when Inco implemented labour-displacing technology and introduced new approaches to management, the unions and workers turned job enhancement and re-classification into sites of struggle. Technological innovations also disrupted the patterns and pace of work. The company was of course well aware of the disruptive logic of these changes, using them as a wedge to begin to extract concessions with respect to skill and seniority, as well as job and managerial control. In response, the union filed thousands of job classification grievances as management “paid little heed” (Clement 1981:205) to union contracts and attempted to combine tasks across jobs, principally with respect to ignoring the distinction between operators and maintenance workers. As operators were transformed into machine tenders and expected to have functional knowledge of how to work with and fix minor problems with their equipment, maintenance workers were under constant threat of having their skills undermined by operators. In my sample of interviewees, skilled maintenance workers are among the most militant union supporters, expressing a class perspective vis-à-vis their employer that is also firmly

wedded to their occupational position. Given their age, these workers were also likely to have significant strike experience, high seniority, and strong social ties in the workplace.[12] For example, Dale, a mechanic, describes a confrontation he had on the picket line during the 2009-10 strike:

> I was fired up on the line last strike. I mean, they were shipping product out. Never before had I seen that. I got right up the side of the truck with this guy, told him to 'get out' if he thinks he's tough enough. There's a tradition here of dealing with scabs, in my opinion. Driving a truck to haul product [pause] that to me, is no different. We shouldn't stand for it. (Dale, 55 years old)

That some skilled workers retain militant attitudes about particular issues, however, stands out against the general thrust toward 'cooperative' labour relations that Inco/Vale have pursued. For example, the company, as part of its effort to remake managerial relations, has worked to gain greater control over how training takes place. Rather than relying on apprenticeships and other informal processes of training in which workers have control, as was historically the practice, Inco and then Vale began to gradually standardize and codify this in various forms of modular training. In this way, management assumes control and trains to the piece of equipment, not the person. Modular training systems (MTS) also increase the company's labour flexibility, hedging against labour turnover costs in an industry characterized by cyclic volatility. Standardized systems of training cost less, are faster, and most importantly, fall entirely under the control of management. This coheres with an overall managerial strategy

[12] As we will see in the following subsection, it also likely resulted from them not being on a bonus system.

using forms of transference in which workers are induced to perform and think as mini-managers (Hall 1993; USWA 1987, 1988). The 'responsible autonomy' of the previously skilled miner was replaced with a more detailed division of labour wherein management monitors and equipment regulates the pace of work. This was combined, sometimes uneasily, with a production politics that attempts to further mystify class relations at the point of production. Workers are now encouraged to take not only their own efficiency, but also that of the company as a whole, as paramount. Internalizing the "market conditions" of a changed industry, they are expected to think of the conditions of their jobs as a microcosm of the industry writ large.[13] Alain, who at one time held an elected union position, spoke of the need for workers to assume the burdens of the company, and to work toward making its product competitive.

> I mean, things in mining have changed. It's not the same as when I started in there. We have foreign ownership. We have competition over here and there. Unfortunately these are the issues workers have to face, and accept in some ways. We have to work to make the company competitive. It has to turn a profit, which doesn't mean it don't need to take care of its workers. But, you know, jobs depend on it. (Alain 56 years old)

In Alain's telling, if workers can save the company money through improving production efficiency, this not only increases the profit of the company but also protects workers' job security.

[13] See Clement (1981:211-7, 289-90) for historical background of these managerial and training changes.

How these managerial changes affect workers' perspectives on relations at work is further manifest in interesting ways in the interview data. Although maintenance workers express fairly strong opposition to management attempts to usurp control over greater portions of the workplace, many less-skilled workers, and other underground workers in particular, express a general acceptance of these changes as part of working in an industry beset by global competitive pressures. Ryan, a worker with less than three years of experience, summarizes:

> It's the nature of things now, right [pause] global economy and everything. We're competing with cheap product from everywhere. I don't agree with it, but it's out of our control really. The company sells the product or figures out where it will go. We're just mining it. When times are good, we can push for more. But, seems like that's almost over. (Ryan, 29 years old)

Anthony connects new global economic pressures to Brazilian conglomerate Vale's purchase of the mines and their pushing of the union into a strike following the Great Recession in 2009.

> Vale made it pretty clear, we gotta work with them. I think the union tried to make it clear to them to that cash is king, you know? You gotta pay us properly. But definitely, it's a global economy. We got a Brazilian owner [pause] we'll have to find a common ground and work together for everyone's sake. (Anthony, 37 years old)

Of course, tying workers' interests to the company is not new. It has only assumed a greater degree of centrality and emphasis. For example, Inco first developed the

"Employee Suggestion Plan" during the Second World War with the objective of encouraging workers' input through a system in which workers could be paid a bonus for suggesting how to improve efficiency in the mines. Once a proposed change had been implemented and had been proven to generate savings, the company would pass a small portion of the saving on to workers in the form of a one-time bonus. Although the plan functioned throughout the postwar period, it escalated once the company, faced with profitability crises, began implementing post-Fordist managerial changes. The plan fit with the 'quality circles' and other efficiency measures Inco was then introducing. For example, in 1983, Winton K. Newman, former President of Inco's Ontario Division, highlighted the need for workers to take on the burdens of global competition: "at a time when the ultra-competitive nature of the nickel industry has dictated that survival will rest on production efficiency […] we need the insights of employees in increasing efficiency and safety […] more than ever" (quoted in USWA 1987:4.37). This weakened class solidarity in two ways. First, like most individually allotted bonus systems, it encouraged personal acquisition without considering the collective costs to workers. Second, the plan provided the union with no mechanism for bargaining how efficiencies would be utilized, or for militating against resulting workforce reductions.[14]

As was the case with the contradictory pairing of growing precarity among younger workers and the resilience of a strong occupational identity, here narratives also oscillate and sit together uneasily. All interviewees, retired and currently employed,

[14] Over the course of its existence, the Employee Suggestion Plan paid out more than $940,000 for employee suggestions, however, I could not find any official figures on how much this plan saved the company (USWA 1987).

have worked for some portion of their work lives under a managerial strategy in which cooperation is emphasized and labour is expected to put the needs of the company first. Yet, workers are also a part of a community and working-class history in the mines. The social memories that this history generates emphasize class identity, previous strikes, and worker militancy, not cooperation and harmony with the company. This gives rise to what appear to be competing narratives concerning the need for cooperation on the one hand, and the historical importance of class struggle on the other hand. Yet, to the interviewees, these often coexist unremarkably. Alain, who at times advocates greater militancy and action, and who was full of stories emphasizing historical instances of these qualities, also cautions restraint and cooperation when discussing certain contemporary issues. For instance, on Vale's ending of defined-benefit pensions, he says,

> Well, on that, it simply got too expensive for the company. I understand that. What, there are so many retired guys compared to so much less workers [pause] it doesn't add up. Yeah, yeah, on that issue, we had to work together. We still have our pensions, defined-contribution […] guys have to manage it as they see fit. (Alain, 56 years old)

Alain's acceptance of cooperation on some issues (pensions, benefits) and not others (contractors, the bargaining style of Vale) reflects an important point about how Fordism integrated workers. Although it regularized class conflict and provided formal mechanisms for adversarial bargaining, it also generated tendencies for workers to see

their interests as tied to those of their employer.[15] In this way, workers could be expected to rationalize and accept restraint, the sharing of burden, and cooperation when capital cited hard times. Aspects of the postwar settlement thus lent to its undoing, as some workers understood moments necessitating struggle to require the opposite. This speaks to the way that workers were actively involved in the making and reproduction of the postwar settlement. Their subjective attachment to this system of labour relations in part set the stage for its undoing. As the history of and narratives about the nickel bonus will show, the company utilized individualizing features of the postwar settlement to weaken class solidarity.

***Bargaining for Bonuses***

The nickel bonus at Inco/Vale is a striking example of the tendency to extend individualizing features of postwar labour relations through new managerial provisions. Bonuses in resource extraction processes have a long and varied history. Primarily, mining bosses historically thought of bonus systems much as other industrial employers thought of piece-rate remuneration: because supervising miners was difficult, their output could be increased, or their pace regulated, by tying a portion of their pay to productivity in the form of a 'bonus' (Clement 1981). In Sudbury, various bonus schemes have been in operation to induce non-maintenance workers to produce more. However,

[15] Rosenfeld and Gindin (2016) make this point in an especially strong way with respect to the history of unions bargaining over, or to attract, investment in the auto industry. As they conclude, when unions bargain as though cooperation and mutual benefit with employers are the goals, unions are often forced to accept concessions in the name of some unspecified shared burden with capital.

the current version of the "nickel bonus" emerged out of the 1985 round of bargaining, a negotiation undertaken during low international nickel prices and a large company stockpile. With Inco insisting on an agreement containing no wage increases, the union pursued this generalized bonus as an alternative means of raising workers' compensation, one that could appeal to the employer by being tied to the price of nickel and the company's profits (Seguin 2008:122-3). When nickel prices were low throughout the late 1980s and 1990s, bonuses were small and cost the company little. However, with the commodity boom in the early 2000s, nickel rose from $3 to $25CAD per pound, propelling worker bonuses to – in some cases – as much as base salaries. When Vale took over in 2006, containing these costs led their priority list (Peters 2010:87-8).

For the union, maintaining the nickel bonus was a key issue in the 2009-10 strike, along with fighting the introduction of a two-tiered, defined-contribution pension system, and lessening the company's reliance on contractors.[16] Nearly all workers in the sample who participated in this most recent strike discussed protecting the nickel bonus as the primary strike issue; for the others, it was second only to limiting contractors.

> Going after the bonus was huge. That was *the* issue for me, personally. I know keeping the old pension system was a big issue for guys too. Maybe I'm just young and dumb [laughs] but that wasn't a key thing for me. The bonus made a huge difference to my pay. It's capped now and I'll tell you, it sucks. It's like having a huge part of your income that you used to count on just taken away. (James, 34 years old)

[16] These issues are, of course, not unique to mining but rather are a growing feature of union contracts in many industries. See for example Corman, Duffy, and Pupo-Barkans (2018) and Rosenfeld (2016).

The nickel bonus is exemplary of two aspects of the postwar compromise that helped contribute to its undoing and the re-making of class relations to labour's disadvantage. Insofar as the bonus provided significant monetary gains to workers – particularly during a time when the company was adamant that wage increases would be resisted vociferously – it did so in a way that amplified individual acquisition. Depressing radicalism through individual gains is an historic feature of the postwar class compromise. The trade-off wherein management retained the right to control the workplace in exchange for wage and benefit bargaining had an individualizing effect built into it (Gindin 1995; McInnis 2002). Negotiating additional bonuses that were tied to productivity further exacerbated this tendency. Second, by tying workers' take-home pay to productivity and market prices, the nickel bonus further solidified the 'cooperative' tendencies that the company had been seeking by introducing new managerial relations and increased labour flexibility. Through to the end of its ownership tenure, Inco continually reiterated that workers were expected to cooperate with the company in facing the challenges of globalization. In 2002, Inco issued a call for "An Agreement of Co-operation" between itself and the USW locals 6500, 2020, and 6600 in Sudbury and Port Colborne "to focus our mutual resources on future challenges and opportunities that neither organization can accomplish on their own" (quoted in Brasch 2005:53). Inco management in Sudbury elaborated, "[T]he mining industry is having trouble attracting capital. Similarly, we must compete for capital with other Inco projects and initiatives around the world. We have significant work to do right here in Sudbury to become the operation of choice for future investment" (quoted in Brasch

2005:53). USW National Director for Canada sent members a follow-up letter affirming the union's commitment to such a course of action:

> Our focus is to work together proactively from today forward so that we can be prepared for future challenges and opportunities as they arise. The kinds of advantage we seek cannot be delivered by Management or by the Union alone. As a practical matter, the Union finds little benefit in bargaining with a company with little resources and the Company clearly needs the cooperation, insight and partnership of employees to make any significant impact. We need each other […] Working together, we can tell a story and produce a low cost product that attracts investment and insures our long-term viability (quoted in Brasch 2005:53).

However, Inco's cooperative rhetoric at times veiled its restructuring efforts too thinly. In 2003, Inco's demands for cuts to the benefits of current employees and retirees pushed the union into a three-month strike that called the cooperative framework into question. John Fera, then USW 6500 President, wrote after the ratification of the 2003 collective agreement that workers had been working with the company "to find other innovative ways to get our products to the customers at a reduced cost and provide a better product." He continued:

> New and radical ideas were being pursued. Employee involvement and participation was being aggressively encouraged and with the added responsibility also came added authority […] So what happened? Well the company saved a lot of money. They found new ways to successfully promote their product and they also thought they had discovered a way to entice the members of Local 6500 to abandon the very people that had been dealing with this company for 40 years. It almost seems inconceivable that a company that has operated in plain view for all to see for so many years would now think they had become invisible. The arrogance of Inco will never change (quoted in Brasch 2005:96).

Yet, skirmishes aside, the institutional frameworks for limiting class conflict and stitching worker's fates to the vagaries of their employer were firmly in place.

## Narratives of Cooperation

In this section, I look at areas where work narratives seem to have incorporated the employer-led shift toward cooperation noted above. In some instances, workers discuss technology and health and safety in ways influenced by management's insistence on cooperation.

### *Technology and Progress*

Above I have covered how bulk mining technologies and other process innovations transformed the labour process, as well as the ways that managerial reforms accompanied and augmented these changes. Capital-intensive labour processes tend to place workers under more direct managerial control. However, even though workers lose autonomy as work becomes more mechanized, management still needs to gain compliance and consent from workers. Because disruptions in any particular area of a highly integrated and technologically sophisticated division of labour can cause bottlenecks in production, worker buy-in is integral to keep mechanized processes of production functioning smoothly. It is thus not surprising that mechanization and managerial reform went together at Inco. Those workers who remained after

mechanization encountered a company emphasizing 'cooperation' as a labour relations approach. Vale, after its contentious first years in Sudbury, has recently been underscoring this cooperative approach, particularly after signing a five-year collective agreement with the union in 2015 (CBC 2015).

The shift to cooperation partly explains why some workers in the sample retrospectively evaluate technology's effects on the labour process by discussing the supposed improvements it brought to worker safety. For example, Alain offers his historical assessment:

> Mining has went through so many, so many changes, even in the time I've worked here. The equipment is completely changed. Have you gone through Dynamic Earth [a museum containing a closed mine]? It gives a good idea of just how far we've come. I know much has been made, by the union, by many people, even by me [pause] of some of the hard things about, you know, the heavy machinery, the drills that are huge and heavy to operate, the loss of jobs [pause] all that. We in the union struggled for years, like this, you know, to fight back against a lot of this stuff. But I have to say that for the most part, mining is safer than it has been. Partly, that is us [the union]. But it is also the equipment, the technology, being able to monitor dangerous work more easily, and everything. Mining is a lot of ways safer because of this technology. (Alain, 56 years old)

Although technical innovations in mining had their adverse consequences, Alain and other workers also emphasize their progressive dimension. While Alain notes that the union "partly" played a role in improving safety in the mines, he nonetheless narratively positions technology as producing a safer workplace. That a safer workplace resulted from the union working within the limited mechanisms for enforcing occupational health and safety, and seeking to maintain good conditions for those workers remaining

after restructuring, is not considered by Alain and other workers in these narratives. Rather, workers like Alain elide Inco's push for significant productivity gains from a much-diminished workforce by emphasizing technology's supposed safety enhancing outcomes.

That workers speak in these terms about the impact of technological innovation on work is somewhat belied by the increase in accidents and health and safety incidents that initially resulted from the more mechanized labour process in the 1980s and early 1990s (Hall 1993). As the company pushed for greater output through bulk mining, it concentrated more workers in single areas of the mines. In the process, Inco generated more accidents than previous labour-intensive mining had, with serious consequences for both workers' safety and management's bottom-line. As in other cases, union ability to hold employer drives for increased productivity in check were a better predictor of a safe workplace than any particular technology (Tucker 1986; USWA 1987, 1988). Moreover, because the size and scale of production-halting incidents increased during the 1980s and 90s, the company also saw the cost-effectiveness of their own narrowly defined system of safety training and monitoring (Hall 1993).

Last, within some workers' narratives about technology's ultimately beneficial impacts there is also a sense of workers finding a silver lining. Most miners in the sample have a story about how downsizing and restructuring in the nickel mining industry negatively affected them, their family, or their friends. As we will see in the following chapters, workers have difficulty integrating this narrative of defeat into social memories of union militancy and resilience. Other scholars have found similar

‘redemption narratives’ among people who have experienced loss or defeat (McAdams 2006; Portelli 1991, 2017). By reordering the chronology of a narrative, or omitting some aspect while emphasizing another, people narratively manage difficult experiences and find ways to incorporate these experiences into their autobiographical history. Narratively positioning technology as ultimately beneficial inside the workplace is a way for some workers to lessen its clearly destructive impacts on total employment, as well as the material consequences that followed from job loss and the growth of precarious employment in the community.

***Depoliticized Health and Safety***

Many workers’ discussions of health and safety also display the influences of company emphases on cooperation. Among younger miners in particular, health and safety takes a depoliticized, neutral tone. It is not a “union issue” (Dave, 26 years old), but something procedural and in the best interests of both the company and workers. Thus, even workers who hold negative opinions of the union praise health and safety committee work as worthwhile. Dave, for example, made several negative comments about his union, yet volunteers on the health and safety committee:

> I like health and safety. It’s important. We needed someone for joint health and safety, so I volunteered [pause]. A lot of times I have to walk these dummies around from Vale when they come and tell them what they need to hear. But most of the time, I feel like I’m actually making sure guys, especially new labourers, aren’t getting hurt or killed, or doing dumb stuff like sticking their head in the crusher [pause]. The union just seems like a bunch of guys

> whining though. The last negotiation [2015] was garbage. The wage increase wasn't high enough. I voted 'no.' (Dave, 26 years old)

This is a surprising finding given the centrality of miners' struggles in the establishment of occupational health and safety legislation in Ontario, and in the formation of the "internal responsibility" system of joint health and safety committees (Lewchuk, Clarke, and de Wolff 2012; Storey 2005; Tucker 1986). Nonetheless, many workers' narratives frame workplace health and safety improvements as mutually beneficial to workers and the company. This framing of health and safety as a neutral issue stems in part from the ways in which Inco reshaped ideas about workplace safety, which drew from the Ontario government's broader moves to make health and safety less contentious through the internal responsibility system and joint health and safety committees (Lewchuk, Clarke, and de Wolff 2012). As noted above, because capital-intensive and aggressive forms of bulk ore extraction increased structural risks in Inco's mines, the company saw health and safety not simply as a matter of worker safety, but as predominantly a cost concern (Hall 1993). Heightened industrial risk – along with other negative repercussions from the more mechanized labour process, such as elevated diesel fume and dust levels – posed a threat to output and thus to profit. In various internally initiated health and safety programs, Inco defined accidents and other health and safety issues as "downgrading incidents" (Hall 1993:8), i.e. as costs to be avoided, similar to any other disruption to the flow of production. As part of its overall move to a cooperative managerial approach that obscured the class relations of production, Inco sought to reframe the relationship between production demands and

health and safety as equal and non-contradictory. This was a move away from the adversarial approach to health and safety committees that had prevailed since these committees were first negotiated by the union in 1969 (Inco/USW 6500 1969). The company's effort to control health and safety training, and reshape the labour relations environment in which it took place, was thus about both containing costs and dampening class conflict. If narratives such as Dave's, as well as those of the six other workers who discussed health and safety in similar terms, are any indication, the company's effort to move health and safety outside of an adversarial framework and discursively position it as a matter of mutual concern had some purchase with workers.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I covered the first of three of the thematic areas of class identity. In it, I traced how a particular form of working-class subjectivity emerged among workers and linked this subjectivity to the institutional framework and social relations of the postwar class compromise. The mines of Inco were in this sense a local manifestation of the broader political economy of class relations in Canada in the mid-to-late twentieth century. In integrating workers into the framework of regularized capitalism, capital and the state shaped a "social structure of accumulation" (Tabb 2012) that granted workers the right to form unions and to bargain over wages, benefits, pensions, and other immediate issues. In addition, this institutional arrangement organized and influenced the spaces of both the production of commodities and the reproduction of labour power. As I demonstrate through the interview data in this dissertation, the postwar

class compromise also had far-reaching implications for how this particular segment of the working class understood itself. That is, it sharply influenced class subjectivity.

Miners in Sudbury developed a particularly strong occupational identity against the backdrop of this institutional framework. How they were integrated into the class compromise at Inco partly explains why this is the case. As in many mass production industries, the state, the employer, and the union combined to purge radicals from the union and demobilize workers at the point of production. The 'breadwinner' model of unionized, male waged labour entrenched a gendered division of labour and further relegated women to either low-paid service sector work or social reproduction in the home. The strategy of job control unionism limited the mechanisms through which the union could contest managerial control of the workplace, as well as the eventual restructuring necessitated by capitalist crises from the late 1970s onward. However, throughout the years in which the class compromise functioned and workers enjoyed "industrial citizenship" (Fudge 2005), miners formed a collective notion of themselves as working class. Moreover, as comparisons of miners of various ages in this study indicate, workers reproduce this working-class identity through social connections, memories, and the everyday practices of "communicative memory" (Assmann 2008) at work and among family.

Restructuring in the nickel mining industry, however, has in many ways undone the material conditions that undergird the Fordist manifestation of working-class formation. Importantly, capital has contributed to this undoing by taking advantage of the most individualizing aspects of Fordism to weaken class solidarity. The company

combined mechanization of the labour process in the mines with a shift to post-Fordist management and an emphasis on 'cooperative' labour relations. These changes have stretched the capacities of workers to respond in class-based ways. Interviewees in this study began their careers at different points during these transformations and therefore have been impacted by new workplace relations and job and income insecurity to varying degrees. Yet, all workers retain an attachment to the social identity of 'the miner' and use it as a base from which to critique aspects of the new workplace to which they object. Thus, workers do not just relay their experiences of work; they do so through the particular class subjectivities that make those experiences meaningful. Tensions arise when we ask: do workers' attachments to the historical subjectivity of 'the miner' aid in, or detract from, their class capacities?

The workplace is a significant area where class identity is developed and reproduced. Yet, as interviewees tell stories about their work lives, they betray the limited forms of production politics that the class compromise and formalized labour relations imposed on work. Many workers' narratives are characterized by an occupational identity that draws on historical features of miners' militancy but is circumscribed in its ability to broaden its application. Their recollections of the difficulties of workplace restructuring demonstrate the limited means they perceive through which to direct struggle, and often what to my eyes is a contradictory acceptance of features of labour flexibilization. Narratives about the workplace thus portray the historical constitution of a working-class subjectivity that, while effective at generating collective self-identity, has difficulty meeting the challenges posed by

capitalist restructuring locally. In the following chapter, I will consider what role space and place played in the making of class identity of workers in this study, and then address how new international ownership at the mines is redrawing the spatial boundaries of class.

# Chapter 5

## Place, Culture, and Class Formation: The Contradictions of Place and Identity

> In fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.
>
> Benedict Anderson ([1983] 2006:6)

As I outlined in my theoretical discussion in Chapter 2, scholars such as Wood (2016) argue that capitalism's historical tendency is to diminish non-class divisions and antagonisms, as Marx and Engels predicted in the *Communist Manifesto* ([1848] 2008). Others (Bannerji 2005; Camfield 2004/5; Roediger 2017; Seymour 2017) question this 'homogenization thesis,' and contend that capitalism's history of exploiting, and often

magnifying, categorical social inequalities (Tilly 1999) should force us to reflect theoretically on the historical formation of classes and the co-constitution of class and other social divisions.

In this chapter, I explore the relationship between class and identities having to do with space and place as they emerged in interviewees' narratives. In particular, I demonstrate the uneven and at times contradictory ways that ideas about space, place, and belonging contribute to workers' sense of themselves as individuals and as a social group. In this sense, I argue, workers make a series of shifting inclusions and exclusions in the processes of responding to socioeconomic change and reproducing working-class identity.

Scholars use the terms 'space' and 'place' in varied ways across disciplines, making these concepts difficult to concisely summarize. Philosophers and social theorists utilize a particular terminological heritage, on which economic geographers and political economists sometimes draw, though not always in acknowledged ways (Harvey 2006a, 2006b; Kelly 2011; Lefebvre [1974] 1992; Massey 1984, 1994, 2005; Merrifield 1993; Peck 2005; Vermeulen 2015). In this chapter, I am using these terms in a fashion derived from Lefebvre's ([1970] 2003, [1974] 1992) work on urban geography and class conflict in the production of space. Lefebvre conceives of space as involving a dialectical conflict between capital and the state's top-down production of built space, and people's bottom-up desires and actual uses of lived space. According to Lefebvre, there is a continuous dynamic of social conflict over the production, intention, and uses of space (Vermeulen 2015). In this sense, space involves processes and social relations of power

as they are geographically organized. Places, on the other hand, involve the embodiment of meaning in location. This is not, by contrast, to suggest that place denotes permanence or stasis, but rather to explore how spaces are historically made meaningful, how they are socially produced as places in time (Merrifield 1993). As Dovey (2009) points out, place, like space, is not a static concept, but allows us to historicize spatial relations as the way that people attach meaning to the places they inhabit. Places are made in time and are thus in flux, tied up with social, economic, and political processes (Massey 2005).

I use the terms 'space' and 'place' deliberately, finding their necessarily fluid and relational qualities helpful in understanding what workers convey when they speak about attachments to such things as community, nature, and cultural practices. These concepts are also helpful in understanding how workers see class conflict shifting as work and ownership are spatially reorganized in the nickel mining industry. Workers at times strengthen the significance of class as a social category in their lives by buttressing it with meaning derived from notions of place, community, or nation. Thus, as I understand it, workers draw upon place-based identities as a resource in the formation and reproduction of working-class identity. Yet, in other instances, workers re-draw 'boundary lines' (Silver 2003) in ways that reinforce division and inequality, for example by conjuring racialized notions of 'Canadian-ness' in response to the internationalization of mine ownership. National identity is but one particular manifestation of an identity having to do with place and belonging, though it at times takes racist and ethnocentric forms. As I will show, the 'nation,' though a feature of some workers' narratives when

discussing Vale's takeover, sits alongside other place-based identities having to do with region, community, and the natural environment (Cooke 1990; Dunk 1994, 2003).

I draw two key findings from the interview data analyzed in this chapter: first, place-based identities were, and remain, important to how working-class men in Sudbury understand themselves individually and collectively; and second, identities that draw on notions of place are relational and can shift in response to the spatial reorganization of capitalism.

To demonstrate this, I first explore the ways that class, culture, and place-based identities were organized during the postwar class compromise in Sudbury. I begin by considering the ways that institutionalized labour relations and the spatial organization of mine ownership shaped workers' sense of culture and community. I then analyze how workers define their regional identity through ideas about the value of manual, blue-collar work, and masculine hobbies such as hunting, fishing, and other outdoor activities. I argue that a confluence of factors in the postwar class compromise combined to produce a place-based identity among working-class men in Sudbury.

In the second half of the chapter, I turn to the issue of Vale and foreign ownership and its influence on class identity. In some instances, strong attachments to local identities persist, or are reactivated. Yet, in other cases, workers make efforts to recalibrate and forge new and meaningful bonds that transcend local proximity. However, this is no easy task. Building solidarity with other workers employed or impacted by Vale globally runs up against not only individual attachments to place-

based identifications, but also the institutional and social mechanisms that pattern ways of reproducing a class subjectivity that is historically and spatially rooted.

## Place and Class in the Postwar Settlement

In the previous chapter, I showed how the postwar compromise at Inco in Sudbury contributed to the organization and reproduction of an occupational identity among workers in this study. However, the contours of this form of working-class identity were shaped by more than the institutional and social relations of the workplace. Workers also brought cultural ties rooted in the community with them into the mines. Ethnic affiliations, initially quite significant, gave way as a regional identity developed based in part on the culture and landscape of Northern Ontario, and in opposition to 'the South,' particularly the city of Toronto. As well, like other mining communities (Parry 2003; Portelli 2011; Yarrow 1991), many of Sudbury's working class initially had various aspects of their lives controlled by the company, from the houses in which they could live, to the politicians for whom they had the opportunity to locally vote (Thomson 1993). Part of the postwar settlement consequently involved breaking the often stifling paternalism of class and community relations in Sudbury. Workers gained certain rights at work through unionization. They also became autonomous outside of work by, for example, being able to individually own formally company-owned homes. However, in the political realm, Inco and other mining concerns continued to exercise immense power, increasingly at the provincial and federal levels of government (Swift 1977).

The institutions of postwar labour relations, moreover, influenced and limited the

spatial organization of working-class formation. The postwar system legally restricted collective bargaining to the scale of the workplace, thereby sectionalizing the organized working-class, even in cases where more expansive, industry-level bargaining occurred (Wells 1995b). This placed restrictions on class struggle beyond the workplace level and spatially limited class formation. In the process of workers gaining union security and abandoning struggles for greater control of workplace and economic planning, they also saw the state and employers erect institutional limits to the expansion of class coordination and conflict. As I show in this section, these processes had lasting impacts on working-class identity and subjectivity in Sudbury.

***Types of International Unionism***

In Chapters 3 and 4, I discussed how Inco and governments in Canada and the United States contributed to Mine-Mill's collapse in Sudbury and beyond. Although Mine-Mill retained its local at Falconbridge, the United Steelworkers raided its much larger local at Inco. As a result, Mine-Mill was eventually driven out of the rest of Northern Ontario by the combined or complementary efforts of capital, the state, and anti-communist labour leaders (Abella 1973; Lembcke 1988; Swift 1977). Mine-Mill's defeat meant not only the containment of union activists and radical ideas at work and in the community but also the geographical narrowing of workers' conceptions of their common interests. The two processes – deradicalization and spatial confinement – were intimately related. Mine-Mill was among a group of Communist-led international unions whose leaders and organizers were prevented from crossing the Canada-US border, consequently making

these unions dysfunctional as international organizations. Governments were, in effect, limiting workers' attempts to organize against capital at a comparable spatial scale. As Lembcke (1988) argues, "there is a sense in which the history of class relations under capitalism can be understood as a series of flanking actions, with the capitalist class first attempting to expand its geographical options and then attempting to block working-class efforts to keep pace" (p.112).

When the Steelworkers won certification of Local 6500 at Inco, workers became members of yet another international union. However, the Steelworkers' internationalism little resembled its predecessor's. Whereas Mine-Mill had explicitly aimed to organize workers as fractions of a class, understanding this task as one of building toward an international political project of working-class emancipation, the Steelworkers combined the industrial organizing of the Congress of Industrial Organizations-Canadian Congress of Labour (CIO-CCL) unions with a business union approach to relations with employers and its own union members (Brody 1987; Lynd 1972). Much has rightly been made of the role of anti-communism in breaking radical unions and Cold War repression in purging them of key activists in the 1940s (Abella 1973; Lichtenstein 1982; Palmer 1983). Yet, the ouster of Communists masks what was perhaps a more serious consequence. Communist-led unions were not necessarily more radical because Communists led them.[1] Rather, because these unions organized among the most proletarianized sections of workers, they tended to have a much broader

[1] Indeed, particularly in the United States, with end of 'Third Period' and the 'dual union' strategy, the Communist Party began to endorse the Democratic Party and aid the CIO leadership in preventing strikes in steel, while lobbying Roosevelt for favourable labour legislation (Lynd 1972).

understanding of class formation, as well as more democratic organizational forms. Unions of proletarianized workers treated member-driven decision-making and simplified processes of leadership recall as top procedural priorities to maximum worker involvement and collective power. Because their memberships were low in skill – which made their withholding labour less of a threat – to be a powerful class force these unions required high levels of rank-and-file participation. Consequently, their political orientations reflected the material conditions of their members as much as the ideological commitments of their leaders.[2] Although Mine-Mill was not as democratic or proletarianized as other Communist unions, such as the International Woodworkers of America (Lembcke and Tattam 1984), it nonetheless still expressed many of the organizational and political features of this style of radical, international unionism. The Steelworkers, on the other hand, brought organizational and institutional forms with them from the steel industry into their new union local at Inco's mines in Sudbury, as well as the tight leadership control transferred from the Steel Workers Organizing Committee to the United Steelworkers of America union (Lynd 1972; Dubofsky 1987). Organizational forms, as Lembcke (1988, 1991) has shown, reflect the occupational class fraction that they represent at their inception, and once established, spread geographically and persist temporally.

Thus, I understand the regionalized manifestation of working-class identity that interviewees express here to result from two complementary sources. The first, as I

[2] My reading of Mine-Mill's organizational strategy draws heavily on Lembcke's (1988, 1991) empirical research on Communist-led unions. His is an excellent extension and application of Offe and Wiesenthal's (1980) theory of collective action.

have been outlining, is contextual. When nickel miners in Sudbury became Steelworkers and fully entered the framework of PC 1003, the Rand Formula, and Canadian industrial pluralism, they did so as a bargaining unit spatially, institutionally, and ideologically separated from fellow union members in a way that was not the case in the Mine-Mill union. In this way, we may in part understand the regional – or at times national – character of working-class subjectivity to result from "blocked organizational capacities" (Lembcke 1988:112) more so than from the prior nationalistic attitudes of either workers or union leaders. But second, workers brought with them community and regional attachments that were given new life in the circumscribed conditions of the postwar class compromise. As many interviewees express below, solidarity with fellow workers is often motivated by a sense of belonging bred of local proximity and community ties as much as a recognition of shared interests in the realm of production.

Only three interviewees had direct experience with the Mine-Mill Union, although many other workers shared stories about its local significance. As we encountered in the previous chapter, interviewees frequently told stories about Mine-Mill that were characterized by the ostensible inevitability of its decline. Workers who draw this conclusion do so through reflections on the devastating loss miners suffered in the 1958 strike, a battle that remains a key episode in local working-class history. Walter remembered the strike as "a terrible affair," where "people really suffered, trying to keep themselves afloat." Reflecting about his coworkers, from whom he heard about the strike, he continued:

> I suppose a lot of them were still plenty mad about the whole affair. There was definitely a sense that "boy, if we get another crack at 'em [the company], we'll show them." I remember thinking – of course many of these fellas are some older than me, remember – these guys have a lot of nerve, you know? But, the way I see it, that's how Mine-Mill was. That union, it had a lot of problems and people had a lot of problems with it, but it really thought it was out to win big for the workers. And they really got workers to thinking like that […] That's what I thought anyway. Mine-Mill leaders from down south, or the US […] it was not just miners, you know? I mean, maybe because of the Communist stuff, but they were for all workers. (Walter, 74 years old)

It is notable how Walter fits the 1958 strike within his understanding of Mine-Mill's broader political ambitions. Active union members with whom he spoke, he remembers, emphasized how workers in Sudbury built the union and brought "not just miners" together. The Steelworkers' takeover amassed the membership into a new organization that also connected them to workers throughout North America, but according to Walter, not in the same way. Union leaders would now broker these national and international connections, deemphasizing rank-and-file members' role in building international solidarity. The Steelworkers' leadership in Pittsburgh, as well as the leaders and organizers assigned to the CCL and Canadian districts (Abella 1973), would facilitate political coordination across space, while workers were expected to adjust to the limitations imposed by the institutional framework of the class compromise.

Mine-Mill Local 598 was never able to build the capacity, or afforded the legal stability, to realize the ambitions that workers attribute to it. State repression and duplicity from CCL leaders prevented Mine-Mill's most capable organizers, such as Reid Robinson, from organizing miners from Butte, Montana to Sudbury into a spatially dispersed yet institutionally connected class force (Buse 1995; Lembcke 1988). Instead,

the interview data suggest that USW Local 6500 members increasingly thought of themselves in the context of their immediate surroundings. Any number of interview excerpts could be drawn upon to demonstrate this point. For workers in this sample, Sudbury's regional history is an integral part of their conception of self and collectivity. Alain's characterization is typical:

> For miners, I think, the idea of being workers and the image of Sudbury are very close. Sudbury is about mining, you know what I mean? Historically, this is true. When you work there, or your family members work there, it's a huge part of your identity. Yeah, yeah, and you learn about the history. You know about this strike, or that strike, how this thing or that thing was won. Then you think, this stuff has been important to the whole community. Like, you know, some businesses would close up to help the workers on strike at Inco. So when a strike happens, like last time, it feels to me like there's a lot to stand up for. Yeah, that's how I feel. (Alain, 56 years old)

Alain went on to discuss the ways he felt that being a union member connected him to the community. He felt that the strong feelings "guys have about this town and mining," contributed to the strength of the union and workers' historical legacy of "fighting back when the time came."

What is important to emphasize is how the integration of the United Steelworkers and its Sudbury membership into the class compromise buttressed this local identification. This partly stems from the ways in which organizational forms – in this case the Steelworkers' union – coalesce at their inception and then spread spatially. Thus, the Steelworkers union was from the beginning shaped by its efforts to form industrially organized unions and integrate workers into a system of employer-

recognized and state-guaranteed union security. Unions of this form transferred to each new bargaining unit the bureaucratic and institutional arrangements developed to accommodate industrial pluralism in the US and Canada (Wells 1995a), both of which de-radicalized rank-and-file activists and spatially confined class conflict.

This is not to suggest that local and immediate issues were of minor importance to both Mine-Mill leaders and members, or to imply that either encouraged subordinating local concerns to a political project of international solidarity. Rather, what the narratives of the older workers in the sample indicate is that they regard Mine-Mill to have been pursuing a political project larger than that of securing collective bargaining rights. Mine-Mill's ambitions, according to Walter and other workers, stretched beyond Sudbury, or even Northern Ontario mining communities. Mine-Mill leaders thus imagined workers across large spatial divides to share common interests that needed to be organizationally connected and politically developed. In contrast, the Steelworkers union's service relation between members and leaders, and its acceptance of the legal accord with the state and capital, encouraged workers' local and immediate identities.

***Canadianizing Inco, Regionalizing Class***

In addition to the above changes to the local union in Sudbury, how workers think about Inco's previous ownership of the mines also plays a role in their construction of a regional working-class identity. How interviewees characterize the development of their union, and the social bonds that sustain it, are strongly connected to the way they describe the spatial organization of class difference and conflict. Although, as we will

see, many interviewees' thinking about Inco undergoes interesting shifts and changes of emphasis depending on the topic or point in history they are discussing.

Interviewees fit Inco into their narratives in three distinct ways: when they talk about its historical significance; when they emphasize regional class opposition in the course of discussing strikes and industrial conflict and juxtapose Inco's "bigwigs mostly in Toronto" (Dale, 55 years old) to workers in Sudbury; and when they tell stories about Vale's takeover. Workers often remember Inco as more benign, less hostile to workers, and concerned about the well-being of Sudbury and the surrounding community. These themes sometimes appear within single interviews, even when conclusions drawn from each of them are not necessarily compatible or reconcilable.

Workers frequently engage in the first of these ways of remembering Inco when giving general reflections on mining and its place in Sudbury's history, or when they are discussing job loss at the mines and the general shift to a more service-based local economy. As I outlined in Chapter 3, the region's path of development fit into a pattern of resource dependence and stalled industrial development (Clement 1992), as tariff restrictions and corporate policy shaped a mining community that processed or manufactured little of its extracted resources into finished products (Wallace 1993). Furthermore, US capital was from the beginning integral to the development of Sudbury's nickel and copper mines. Yet, as I will show, workers did, and sometimes still do, symbolically associate Inco with Canada, or with Sudbury in particular. As Swift (1977) has shown, Inco progressively "Canadianized" (p.28), both in terms of business operations (by moving its headquarters to Toronto), and symbolically in Sudbury, where

the company's physical, political, and philanthropic presence were unmistakable. As a result, workers think of Inco as a symbol of Sudbury's importance to Canada, and by extension, their own contribution to that success and image. For example, Charles summarizes what he sees as Inco's centrality to Sudbury and Canada, emphasizing how he and others could "get decent jobs" in a place that offered few other avenues to economic security:

> You know, 'the Big Nickel'. That's Sudbury's image, right. When you drive in here even, almost any direction, the landscape tells it. But that was Inco, it was a huge part of what made Sudbury what it is […] gave us a place to get decent jobs without much else around [pause] and was huge for Canada as a whole, as far as I'm concerned. (Charles, 71 years old)

This type of framing of Inco's place in Sudbury takes a nostalgic form, conforming to what scholars of deindustrialization describe as "smokestack nostalgia" (High and Lewis 2007; Strangleman 2013). Those studying displaced workers draw on a rich tradition of studying nostalgia sociologically and philosophically (Davis 1979; Boym 2007; Turner 1987). Because of their emphases on the loss of a feeling of "homefulness" (Turner 1987:150), and the values and social bonds that sustain this, deindustrialization scholars have found much of value in theories of nostalgia. Studying workers experiencing economic restructuring in this way alters us to the interplay between social remembering and present longings (Strangleman 2007). As Turner (1987) points out – and Strangleman (2013) emphasizes when discussing deindustrialization – nostalgia is almost never an uncritical reflection, and so it usually

tells us much more about the present than it does about the past. It often marks an "unease with contemporary culture" (p.33), pointing to peoples' objections to aspects of contemporary life by using what was supposedly better about the past, whether real or imagined, as a yardstick of criticism. In the narratives of workers in this study, Inco often takes on a neutral appearance. The former company symbolizes particular qualities about Sudbury's history, such as the centrality and former stability of blue-collar, male employment, or the transformation of the natural environment in the region. This can sometimes take the form of pointing to industrial landmarks as symbols of a collective history. As one example, the Inco Superstack (see Figure 5.1) figures prominently in how workers discuss Inco and the natural environment.

A piece of industrial construction erected due to pressure from the union, the community, and the provincial government over mounting environmental damage and pollution, the Superstack functions as a symbolic and historical landmark for workers, who imagine that it represents both nickel mining's regional importance and workers' central place in the community. This is especially the case since Vale announced it plans to remove the Superstack and replace it with two, smaller, and more efficient, industrial stacks. The company's official announcement, interestingly, also asked the community to share photos and memories of the Superstack via email, pointing to its local value as a piece of history and memory.[3]

[3] See http://www.vale.com/canada/EN/aboutvale/communities/sudbury/Pages/superstack.aspx

**Figure 5.1: "1976 Sudbury World's Tallest Smokestack." Photo: Peter Forster. Creative Commons. Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic License.**

The question remains: to what end do workers remember in this way? To what does the latent criticism in their nostalgia for a past now undone by globalization and economic restructuring point? Boym (2007) makes a distinction between "restorative" and "reflective nostalgia" (p.13), wherein the former imagines a return to the past, and the latter points to the potentialities and missed opportunities of the past while remaining oriented to the future. In Boym's terms, interviewees tended toward "restorative nostalgia," underlining in particular the former stability of life and work at Inco (Boym 2002). We can read this tendency in Doug's reflection on Inco:

> In a lot of ways Inco was huge for Sudbury. No question, we had to go on strike many times to win things for the men out there. But we have to remember too, that if the mines hadn't been here, there'd have been nothing to strike about, would there? I look around now, with so many people out of work, or they got this job, then that one [pause] the stability of Inco, when so many worked there [pause] that was important. (Doug, 65 years old)

Even though Doug mentions the role that strikes played in creating conditions of stable employment at Inco, the way in which many former Inco employers historicize the company's regional and national significance tends to neutralize class struggle in the making of Sudbury. However, as we will see, themes of class and class struggle become prominent in other instances.

The nostalgic memorialization of Inco in some workers' narratives has also to do with the more general process of "museumification" (High and Lewis 2007:9) of the nickel mining industry. Industry landmarks, as well as former worksites now converted into tourist attractions and a museum, represent a competing narrative that partially frames the mining industry as a relic or an attraction. As Dale (55 years old) states:

> People coming to see the Big Nickel or go to Dynamic Earth I always found kinda funny. It's not where I'm heading to on a day off [laughs]. But it shows I guess how things change, but Inco is still there, in a way.

Industrial heritage tourism is a growing industry that some scholars see as presenting a viable economic alternative or mechanism to aid social inclusion, particularly for communities transitioning away from manufacturing and resource extraction (Edwards and Llurdés 1996; Newman and McLean 1998, 2004; Wanhill 2000). However, as others

point out (Clemens 2011; High and Lewis 2007; Strangleman 2013; Waterton 2007), 'industrial ruins tourism' can often be quite voyeuristic and decontextualized. Visitors are invited to explore the ruination of former workplaces while forgetting that these sites sustained human lives and communities. Moreover – much as I detected in some workers' narratives – industrial heritage sites often expunge class conflict from the historical record and instead present an elite version of industrial development (Waterton 2007).

However, in Sudbury a relatively new mining heritage industry coexists with mines that are still open and highly profitable. Unionized workers, though they might be influenced by the "museumification" of mining, also sometimes read the materiality of industrial heritage in critical ways. For example, some workers use sites of industrial or historical importance as mnemonic devices in the reproduction of working-class identity, remembering them for their particular association with workers' struggles. This is in keeping with the insights of scholars of deindustrialization who highlight the roles that materiality and tangibility often play in how workers actively remember work and workplaces (Dudley 1994). In this study, Walter displayed this impulse to preserve physical reminders of his work by showing me various hand tools he had kept from his early days of mining. Moreover, when we finished our interview, he gifted me a handful of refined nickel balls approximately the size of marbles from a chest drawer in which he had stored dozens. Walter had appropriated this processed nickel as a physical reminder of his many years of labour and class struggle in the mining industry (Radley 1990).

There are thus countertendencies among workers to, on the one hand, remember Inco nostalgically and, on the other hand, underscore working-class identity and class conflict. In the latter instances, Inco often becomes an opponent in episodes of class struggle. In such narratives, the "benevolent monopoly" (Swift 1977:28) ceases to be a member of the community and is spatially repositioned as representative of the powerful forces shaping Sudbury's fortunes from afar. For example, consider how Peter positions Inco in the course of describing the 1978-79 strike:

> During the strike, it really felt like a battle, like it was a real turning point for the community. After, to me, Inco wasn't a part of what I think of Sudbury. Does that make sense? Like, what mattered was profits going to people in Toronto or wherever, not people here being able to support their families and have a decent life. As you probably know, pensions [pause] that was a big issue, and I remember people, workers saying how people here put in a lifetime of work and wanted a guarantee to have a good retirement. Seemed perfectly reasonable to me. (Peter, 60 years old)

For Peter, the experience of striking at Inco exposed how the company placed its business interests ahead of community cohesion. He found the workers' demands for economic security "perfectly reasonable" and questioned Inco's place in the community as a result of its resistance to providing this.

Part of Inco's project of being a good 'industrial citizen' (Strangleman 2015) throughout its years of ownership in Sudbury involved various paternal and charitable activities in the workplace and community, in the hope that it would ameliorate workplace tensions and improve its public image (Swift 1977). In workers' stories, however, strikes denote occasions where Inco failed to live up to this image. In

discussing these instances, interviewees consequently narratively exile Inco from the community. In doing so, workers draw the distinction that Dunk (1994, 2003) also signals between working-class Northern Ontario, and elitist and urban Southern Ontario, where class power and cultural distinction represent modes of differentiation and control. However, this geographical distinction could take the form, as in Alain's recollection, of complicating the internal structure of Inco itself. For Alain, Inco's management was beset by its own set of internal contradictions overlaid on the spatial distribution of power in Ontario:

> Inco, you know, it forced us into strikes, yes. But in my time, there were always managers who were friends, neighbours and so on, you know? Obviously, any company of that size has powerful interests at the top that don't give a shit about the worker here in Sudbury. You might get into it with a manager over this or that issue, but when it comes to a year on a picket line [pause] no one here in the community wants that. (Alain, 56 years old)

"Powerful interests at the top" are positioned by Alain as not *of* the community and therefore as not considering the implications that actions taken in pursuit of narrow economic interests alone might have on the community.

This way of drawing on ideas about community in the framing of working-class identity becomes complicated when managers who are also community members are positioned as, in some sense, allies. Yet, aside from some sympathetic comments about "local" managers, workers drew strongly on notions of place in describing working-class identity in Sudbury. In understanding how this takes place, it is useful to consider Portelli's (1991) distinction between the "residual community" and the "substitute

community" (p.186). In the case of the former he describes the spatial and cultural bonds of organic community, whereas he understands the latter to consist of purposeful and political organization. What is interesting to note is how the "substitute community" of union organization borrows from and draws upon the bonds and meaning of community. A reservoir of meaning in the imagined togetherness and shared identity of locality is put to use in the forging of solidarity and the pursuance of class goals in the workplace. Many interviewees demonstrate this process of regionalizing working-class identity when they describe their work lives and union experiences in Sudbury. For example, Tim explains:

> A lot of what makes Sudbury what it is, is workers' attachment to this place. That might be hard to understand for someone who didn't grow up here or stay here. But, I think anyway, a lot of what explains the strength of the union over the years is how people feel about their community here. If someone is trying to attack that, it's like they're attacking your way of life. (Tim, 52 years old)

For Tim, strong community ties help to explain the reproduction of class identity. In many respects this is a variation on a theme many social historians have identified when the formation of capitalist class relations comes into conflict with established ways of cultural, economic, and political life (Calhoun 2012; Thompson 1991). However, as the interview data in this dissertation demonstrate, this is not only a process confined to the past formation of segments of the working class, but also a feature of their reproduction. That is, place-based identities can continue to influence how workers understand themselves and their interests. Yet, as we will see later, the role

that place and tradition play in the making of working-class identity pose challenges for imagining solidarity beyond the places of community or nation when the globalizing logic of capital necessitates it.

## Male Working-Class Culture

Thus far I have sought to show how the institutional constraints of unionization encouraged workers to think of their class interests in local and immediate terms. I have also distinguished two of the thematic forms in which workers remember Inco and have shown how these take on spatial and class dimensions. Before moving to a discussion of the spatial reorganization of the international nickel mining industry and its effects on workers' understanding of class relations, this section elaborates on features of the working-class culture formed during the post-1962 period in which union strength and the growth of the mining industry produced substantive material gains for workers. Understanding some of the intricacies of this "male, working-class culture," as Dunk (2003) points out, allows us to appreciate how class conflict promotes particular ways of being working class. Importantly, it also opens space for critical reflection on the contradictions and limitations that the postwar compromise generated in the cultural realm, particularly with the rise of mass, individualized consumption.

***Culture and Leisure Activities***

In Chapter 3, I indicated how the social structure of accumulation framework is instructive for understanding how systems of capital accumulation become socially embedded and reproduced over time. Scholars are predominantly concerned with the roles of state regulatory and policy regimes in particular structures of accumulation, such as Keynesian demand-management strategies for example (Kotz 1994; Tabb 2012). However, the ways that culture and consumption fit into the overall system of accumulation and reproduction are equally important. Although capitalist states developed different social welfare regimes with varying levels of social spending and de-commodified services during the postwar period (Esping-Anderson [1990] 1993; Offe 1984), the integration of workers into the system also relied heavily on the growth of individual and family consumption (Fraser 1989; McInnis 2002), and a varying models of social reproduction (O'Connor, Orloff and Shaver 1999). This was particularly true for unionized workers, as labour underwent "profound […] revolutions in the micropolitics of production and consumption, in the very anthropological framework of working-class life" (Fraser 1989:57). Thus, unions were, and remain, in a contradictory position insofar as they must motivate the collective capacities of workers to achieve objectives that workers cannot obtain individually, and as a result, workers who are financially better off may consume in ways that increase individualism. They might, as a result, even come to view social action as less necessary.

Rising levels of individual consumption brought about by union strength produced important changes for workers' lives outside of work. For workers in this study, personal

and social identities are intimately related to cultural and leisure activities, especially those having to do with nature and the outdoors. However, what I wish to emphasize here is how cultural activities fit within the overall system of labour-capital relations as matters of personal and family leisure – as recreation away from work. For example, Dale talks about how union security provided him not only with paid vacation but also with the assurance that steadily rising income could support his personal spending on leisure activities.

> Yeah, like a lot of guys I know, fishing, hunting, camping, all that is big. Matter of fact, a lot of good friendships that came out of work are also the same guys that I'd be going up north with and that […] Being union is a factor there too though, right. 'Cause if I didn't make the kind of money I did, or have the vacation time, or hell, know that I had my job in the years ahead, I wouldn't be doing that stuff regularly. (Dale, 55 years old)

Other interviewees who are middle-aged or older made similar comments. But for younger workers too, employment security figured in descriptions of leisure and recreation. For instance, younger interviewees who had worked as contractors prior to becoming union members described how the union provides the security necessary for higher levels of recreational consumption. James' narrative about his transition into a union position and his first significant purchase – apart from he and his wife purchasing their home – is interesting in this regard:

> Getting in at Vale, after being contract, was a big deal for me. I had made pretty good money doing various jobs in supply before [pause] I didn't have an issue there. But it was the wondering, right, the 'what's the next month

> gonna bring?' type attitude all the time. No guarantees, I guess is what it comes down to [pause]. So, I guess, right, Vale and the union especially has been huge for that. Like, I can look over there at the [new] fridge and know basically what I'm working for, like, the next year. Which means, it might sound not important, but it means me and [his wife] can plan to get away to the cottage we bought for a couple weeks with the kids, get outta town, you know? Now we can afford to do that and it's great. But knowing I can, right? Planning to do it when I know I have vacation and steady work, that's huge to me. (James, 34 years old)

According to James, work prior to Vale was precarious. He lacked job security, which made it difficult to make long-term plans in his life. The most notable changes that James described since beginning at Vale have to do with the predictability brought about by job and income security. One of the ways that this transfers to life outside of work is his willingness to spend money and plan time for things like family vacations, recreational sports vehicles, and hunting equipment.

The relationship between a unionism that is focused largely on augmenting individual consumption and workers' cultural and leisure practices goes both ways. That is, workers whose lives outside of work involve relatively high levels of individual consumption increasingly see the union's function as one of either stabilizing or increasing their ability to consume. In periods of crisis or instances of employer offensives, this limited focus on economic gains makes it difficult for workers and union officials alike to envisage new objectives or strategies to deal with emergent challenges. For example, in discussing technological innovation and job loss with Alain, I asked whether the union ever considered work time reduction or job-sharing as ways to address these issues. His response is instructive:

> I'll be frank, I don't think either side would go for it. I know so many workers, if I told them, 'hey we're gonna go down to, that's say, a 32-hour week,' they'd think, "okay can I get over-time on those other eight hours?" Yeah, yeah, that's the problem. "Cash is king" is the mentality of many workers. I don't know exactly why [pause] maybe it's the world we live in, maybe it's our culture. But "how am I gonna buy a new Ski-Doo?" is gonna be the first thought to many workers if I try to tell them we're gonna cut down hours […] even with same pay, I think it's "no way, where's the overtime?" (Alain, 56 years old)

Alain's explanation is interesting in two regards. With respect to the narrative itself, his frequent use of reported speech (Bischoping and Gazso 2016:53-4) allows Alain to place the responsibility for his negative assessment of work-time reduction on other workers rather than himself. Whether he is reproducing past conversations with fellow workers or instead imagining and embodying their words in his response, we cannot be sure. However, by enacting conversation in his speech, Alain is able to lessen his responsibility for the answer he provides. In addition, when he places responsibility on workers for the union not pursuing an alternative approach to job loss, he deflects consideration from the way that the union's form and practice during the postwar settlement contributed to a culture of individualized, working-class consumption. Alain does not consider that workers might react negatively to policies of work reduction or job-sharing because of the way the union has historically framed both its relationship to its members and the purpose of its existence.

***Nature, Culture, and Gender***

Unionized workers' wages and relatively high levels of individual consumption have contributed to a particular relationship to nature and cultural activities. Hunting, fishing, camping, and in some cases trapping, are popular hobbies among most of the interviewees. This is not to suggest that these are uniquely working-class pursuits. Indeed, the class politics of hunting and other outdoor activities are complex, with business interests, professional lobby groups, and membership organizations vying to influence government, consumers, and public opinion more generally. In some instances, workers' interests correspond to organizations such as the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, while in other cases, hunting tourism may generate conflicts between local residents and outside business interests (Dunk 2002b). Thus, the politics of hunting, fishing, and other such outdoor activities can implicate and complicate a number of conflicts involving questions of class, region, race, gender, and environment.

As Dunk (2002b) points out, white men in Northern Ontario draw on ideas about the tradition of hunting and other outdoor activities in the process of forming their identities. He sees this identity formation as in part a reaction to the politicization of identity among other minority groups. In this, white, male hunters make claims about the links between place, culture, identity and traditions, such as hunting. This is certainly a common explanation among workers in this study, particularly older workers. Charles, for example, speaks about his hunting and camping trips as an important part of his time away from work, and as foundational to many of his friendships:

> I always went away, all the chances I could get anyway. Hunting, camping, you know? Those are big parts of my life outside work. Not so much now, obviously. But I miss it. Going with my dad when I was just a little guy, I kept right on when I grew up, right. Get away with some buddies, have a few drinks, a lot of friendships in that. Yeah, it's a big part of what guys do up here, always has been. (Charles, 71 years old)

There is no doubt that many workers believe these activities to be central features of rural life and thus integral to their identities. Yet, the degree to which they "always have been," as Charles contends, needs to be contextualized. The modern versions of hunting, fishing, and even camping that workers describe were more the product of industrialization and the postwar settlement than they are of generations-old traditions (Dunk 2002b:57-8). The relatively high wages brought about under this arrangement provided unionized workers with access to the array of items necessary to engage in these pursuits, from licenses and modes of transportation, to guns, equipment, and other supplies. Moreover, as I described in Chapter 3, one of the results of the decline of Mine-Mill in Sudbury was the cancellation of many union-run outdoor activities and cultural programs. Thus, in many respects workers faced individualizing processes as they were integrated into the postwar labour framework. Individual mass consumption replaced collective cultural endeavours when the new union local accommodated to Fordism.

The integration of hunting and outdoor activities into workers' identities also takes place in complex relation to ideas about self-sufficiency and independence. Hunting, fishing, and trapping, for many interviewees, represented the assertion of self-sufficiency. Against what or whom workers claim their independence varies, but raises

interesting questions about self-sufficiency and its relationship to class and the formation of workers' identities. These cultural practices arguably can be read as a response to subordination at work. Through them, workers could find outlets to reclaim individual provision and self-sufficiency. Some workers, however, claimed that they hunt, fish, or trap out of a disdain for mass production (particularly supermarkets), rather than as a response to the discipline of work organization. Rick explained:

> Still one of the biggest reasons why I hunt is I think it's important to provide at least some of our food ourself. Like, I don't trust [large retail grocer] to sell quality meat, you know? There's not much you can do, hands-on, in this day-and-age [pause] especially when it comes to getting your food and that. So, yeah, I hunt to be independent that way, as much as I can. (Rick, 32 years old)

However, hunting and its relationship to the theme of self-sufficiency were also highly gendered in workers' responses, encompassing notions of masculinity and family support. Many interviewees described their initiation into hunting as a rite of passage, learned or experienced with a father or other male role model. As a result, hunting is often integrated into more encompassing ideas about the proper conduct of a man who supports his family, and also fits with other scholars' findings on the relationship between ideas about masculinity and rural land use (Saugeres 2002). Workers who see themselves as responsible for family provision often take this quite literally, understanding it as a serious obligation not to be shirked. For example, Leon (72 years old), who has been retired for over 12 years, until recently maintained traplines at his cottage far north of where he and his wife live. Throughout his working years and after,

furs supplied the family with additional income and were an insurance fund during strike years. However, arthritic knees have made it nearly impossible for Leon to continue trapping, something that frustrates him deeply and challenges his understanding of self. "It makes me madder than anything. I was stubborn as all hell and kept going to the last couple years, but, hell, everyone's basically stopped me before I fall down in the woods and die out there," he said.

These themes of masculine independence take on renewed significance with the rise of precarious employment in the region. For some interviewees in the sample who have worked as contractors, hunting may serve as a way to assert control over life away from work. James, Rick, and several other interviewees positioned hunting as a way to provide some of their families' food during more difficult times. James says,

> Even when I was working contract, right, moose hunting [pause] I always went when it was time. Like, I know maybe this ain't exactly your thing, but I'd be able to have enough meat for us for the winter sometimes [pause] We're not wasteful about it. We'd use everything, all the animal and that [pause]. Anyway, it helped when times were tighter around here. (James, 34 years old)[4]

For these working-class men, hunting and other outdoor activities play a strong role in the making of place-based identities. Although they position this as resulting from tradition, hunting and other relatively costly outdoor activities were in part made possible by the rise in disposable income and personal consumption that resulted from

[4] James' apprehension in this excerpt stems from knowing that I am a vegan. James was a key informant during this research project. My veganism and how to relate to it were common themes in his conversations with me.

the Fordist arrangement between capital and labour during the postwar era. However, insofar as workers mean that these cultural activities form a part of their identities and are often taken up as a matter of intergenerational male bonding, they are pointing to an important aspect in the reproduction of a place-based, male, working-class culture.

***"Blue-Collar, Hands-On"***

In the previous chapter, we encountered how Peter and other workers take pride in the fact that they perform manual labour. This is not simply pride in the nature of their work, as it also reflects how unionization improved pay and working conditions, and thus generated respect for blue-collar workers locally and beyond. However, as I argued, the forms that pride in manual labour take among miners also produce limitations with respect to questions of gender and occupational identity. Some workers continue to define their blue-collar pride through notions of the masculine duty to economically support their families, which reinforces a gender division of labour predicated on women's subordination and unequal access to labour market opportunities. With the rise of precarious employment in the mining industry and the broader economy, some younger workers describe two-income households as necessary. As well, the way in which miners reproduce their occupational identities impedes their ability to imagine the many local workers in the expanding service sector as working-class allies.

Workers' celebrations of manual labour have other implications for the shape of their subjectivity, however. Scholars interested in male, working-class culture have

commonly pointed to “anti-intellectualism” and other forms of skepticism toward mental labour and abstract thinking among workers (Charlesworth 2000; Dunk 1994, 2003; Willis 1981). These scholars suggest that workers reject theoretical modes of thinking because of the ways that economic, political, and cultural domination take place through access to and control of knowledge. How owners and managers design and direct work is a clear example of the separation of mental from manual labour. Workers thus experience this separation as management and control of their conduct. Yet, subordination extends beyond the workplace as well. Whether it is a manager on the shop floor, a politician in the act of ruling, or an ‘expert’ in some other system of knowledge production and execution, working-class life is characterized by a lack of control, say these scholars. Thus, workers come to view abstract thought as less valuable than practical knowledge. Workers develop a disdain, so the argument goes, toward forms of abstraction and expertise that are removed from the immediacy and practicality of everyday life, and by extension, for those who deploy knowledge and expertise (Willis 1981:55-7). This is a pattern that holds true for many workers in this study. Dale, for example, when discussing his daughter having moved away for postsecondary school, commented:

> It was a big transition for all of us, for her obviously, but for me too. Hell, I never thought I’d be having so many conversations about things I barely understand! [laughs] Really though, I’m proud of her [pause]. Sometimes I’m a bit lost about the point of some stuff. You know, with me and my work, you know, it’s blue-collar, hands-on stuff. I see the work. There’s a reward to it. She’s almost finished up now, so I just hope she gets something out of it too. (Dale, 55 years old)

Dale's narrative about questioning the value of his daughter's education is playful; he laughs about his frequent lack of understanding. Yet, he also juxtaposes her intellectual pursuits against the practicality of his work. Instead of seeing his daughter's education as, in itself, a rewarding process, Dale is concerned about her finishing school – and, presumably, obtaining work.

Although scholars have identified similar cultural beliefs among working-class men, they have rarely asked specifically what roles unionization and forms of worker organization play in this. Theoretically, we might imagine that unionization could diminish this aversion to mental labour and abstraction, given the long history of relations between left thinkers and the labour movement, particularly through union-provided worker education (Chibber 2017). However, this assumes a particular form of union politics and organization committed to engaging with radical ideas and encouraging mass mobilization (Camfield 2011:38-9; Taylor 2001). Workers in this study have not been involved with such an organization in their working lives. Indeed, commitment to labour education is highly uneven across unions. Rather, as I have argued, the company and the union both worked to de-radicalize workers as they entered the postwar settlement. The union curtailed its demands, accepted management's right to control the workplace, and worked to contain rank-and-file mobilization. The union continues to assign a limited role to workers in this form of organization. During strikes, the union calls workers into struggle, but even so the level of political education remains low. In its daily operations, the union discourages worker engagement, and in the process contributes to the growth of the individualized cultural

and recreational practices discussed above. As the union focused narrowly on economic issues and adherence to collective agreements, it contributed to the rise of mass consumption and the individualization of workers' culture. That many workers disdain intellectualism then is in part a product of the limited place that workers are allotted in both the workplace and the spaces of business union organization.

An interesting contradiction emerges in the interview data from the relationship between how the union limits workers' roles in its affairs and the ways that workers express opposition to mental labour and intellectualism. As Dunk (2003) points out, anti-intellectualism is quite often a vague form of anti-elitism, equally disdainful of economic elites as it is of perceived cultural elites who hold 'liberal' opinions and seem to look down upon workers. When discussing workplace issues, however, some interviewees direct their anti-elitism at boss and union alike. In the previous chapter, we heard from Dave, who expressed his commitment to health and safety work, but who also had negative opinions about his union. At several points throughout his interview, Dave additionally described workers' shop-floor knowledge as more important than management's abstract ideas about how work should be completed:

> A lot of the time, management dummies cause us more issues than you'd think. Like, a lot of the equipment I use is technical stuff, yeah, but we've had training. So, it's a lot of watching and waiting and that, or it's busy work, clean-up etc. When some Vale guy comes in and wants to know why I'm not doing x, y, and z, I'm like 'buddy, fuck, I'm managing my time here. You don't even know how this goes, except on paper.' (Dave, 26 years old)

Although at several points in his narrative Dave complained about the technology with which he works, he also objected to managerial oversight. He expressed the view that in many situations, he and his fellow workers' familiarity and proximity to their work gave them special knowledge and practical skills not possessed by their superiors.

However, Dave and other workers who voiced this opinion about management could also be quite truculent about their union officials. James claimed he rarely saw his steward, who seemed to James as though he avoided contact with fellow workers. Ryan attacked what he felt was a "sellout" of newer workers over the last two bargaining rounds. Such criticisms have often been the impetus for rank-and-file movements from below aimed at democratizing unions and reorienting their strategies and objectives. This has been true in Sudbury, for example during the 1966 wildcat strike, as well as the 1975 union local election campaign (McKeigan 2008) and the 1978-79 strike (Mulligan 2010a). Yet, the interviewees who most frequently expressed such opinions about the union were those who had previously worked as contractors and are consequently the most recent union members. They bring with them experiences of being on the other side of a longstanding union-management conflict over contract labour. As a result, their experiences of employment insecurity have contributed to less developed forms of class consciousness, and their negative judgments about union leadership are frequently extended to the union as a whole. When they express these opinions about the union, they seem less concerned about revitalizing it to address their concerns than they are with criticizing an institution which they describe as perhaps outliving its purpose. Dave, for example, concluded his thoughts by saying, "I guess it's [the union] there if I need it,

but I don't see the point a lot of the time." Not all recent hires – or even those who were previously contractors – felt this way. Paul, for example, described how he was educated and radicalized by the 2009-10 strike, saying, "I came out of that thing a lot more awake to what was going on." Yet, the range of opinions on the union points to the impact that growing precarity has had on working-class culture, beliefs, and identity among the youngest workers in the sample.

Younger workers such as Dave expressed alienation and frustration with the union. Yet, their comments can also be read for their anger over what appear to them as blocked opportunities to access the material security enjoyed by older workers. For some, this frustration is enough to preclude them engaging in union activity. Others, such as Paul, still see the union as a vehicle for change, despite its current faults or limitations. As we will see below, such 'generational' divisions' appear as a significant issue in interviewees' understandings of contemporary issues in the union and at work. Yet, as I have shown thus far, place and culture are important variables in the formation of class identity across my sample of interviewees. As was the case with the occupational or sectoral particularities of class identity, class is given concrete meaning through its attachment to place, at the same time that this particularity impedes the extension of class solidarity and class formation more broadly. This issue is especially clear when we examine how new foreign ownership at the mines as influenced class identity.

**The Spatial Reorganization of Resource Extraction**

Above I have argued that the postwar settlement and the constraints that Fordism imposed on unions had an effect on the spatial organization of class relations, as well as making of working-class identity. I have thus far demonstrated this point by drawing attention to how interviewees define themselves through references to and ideas about place and identity. However, class is an always-unfinished process. The concentration of working-class structural and associational power invariably produces capitalist class responses involving the spatial reorganization of production (Cowie 1999; Harvey 2006; Herod 2001; Lembcke 1988; Silver 2003). As I argued in Chapter 3, extractive capital's options for relocation are considerably more limited than is the case for manufacturing firms. Although Inco internationalized its resource base in the 1970s (Clement 1981; Swift 1977), it pursued technological innovation and workforce reduction as its principle responses to rising labour costs and lagging profits (USWA 1987, 1988). More recently, Brazilian conglomerate Vale's takeover of Inco amid a global resource commodity boom has raised anew issues concerning globalization and international competition in the mining industry (Leadbeater 2008, 2014; Peters 2010). For workers in this study, new foreign ownership at work has also problematized class subjectivity and class identity, leading interviewees to emphasize nationality and community in ways that they do not when discussing their former employer.

***Internationalizing Ownership, Canadianizing Class***

Portelli (1991:158-9), in a study of steel workers in Terni, Italy, describes how shifts in political, economic, and cultural power caused workers to emphasize different aspects of their identities. At times attachments to place could paper over class antagonisms, whereas in other moments being a worker took precedence over identifying as a citizen. Workers in this study engage in similar shifts of emphases, drawing on a language of nationality and citizenship to understand the changes taking place locally as a result of having a new Brazilian employer. When interviewees shift the emphases of place in identity construction, they highlight how narrative expressions of identity are always contextual (Meinhof and Galasiński 2005). They are, in a sense, *doing* identity construction in the process of discussing the changing nature of work and ownership in Sudbury. As they narrate these changes, they are indexing who is 'us' and who is 'them' (De Fina 2011). I am not suggesting that workers now value local manifestations of place-based identity less. The data analyzed thus far suggest that place and locality remain significant points of identification. Rather, I am underlining the work to which interviewees put narrative constructions of identity.

For instance, interviewees deploy narratives about nationality and citizenship as a means of both explaining and criticizing Vale. Workers use their 'Canadian-ness' to mark their deservedness of respect, simultaneously characterizing Vale as lacking care for the standards of labour in Canada. Peter, for example, explains how he sees Vale's arrival in Sudbury and its approach to the workforce:

> Well, I think right from the get-go they decided to break the union. They basically thought that coming in *here*, they could just do as they like, basically treat us like they treat their own workers in Brazil, and that we would have to accept that. But *this* is *Canada*. That's not how things work *here*. Right when they [Vale managers] came up *here* the first time, you know [pause] they were standing there in a parking lot looking at all these workers' new trucks, like 'who do these belong to?' They couldn't believe that miners could afford to drive that. I guess their thought is workers shouldn't have things like that. *Canadian* workers are not gonna stand for that. (Peter, 60 years old)

Peter uses "Canada" and "Canadian workers" to designate both higher living standards and higher expectations when it comes to labour standards. He also frequently refers to "here" to categorize the differences he is highlighting between work in Canada and Brazil (De Fina 2011). As we will see below, this type of attitude and critique produces serious impediments to extending solidarity globally.

Notice as well how Peter begins by referring to himself and fellow workers in Sudbury using first person plural pronouns ("they could treat *us*…" "*we* would have to accept that"), but closes his story with "*Canadian workers* are not gonna stand for that." By doing this, Peter includes himself and other workers in Sudbury – the local workers to whom he referred as the "we" – in an imagined community at the level of the nation (Anderson [1983] 2006). *Canadian* workers would not accept what Vale expects miners in Sudbury to endure. Additionally, Peter's narrative contains within it a story told by several other interviewees: that of Vale executives or managers (who exactly it was varies in some stories) marveling at workers' trucks during their first visit to Sudbury. James recounts the same story, with minor variations:

> I think this about tells it: These executives from Vale, when they were first up here and looking to seal the deal with Inco, they're looking out over the [parking] lot with all these workers' trucks, right. And they're like 'who the hell owns these things? No way it's the workers.' That, to me, says what they thought about the level of miners up here. (James, 34 years old)

The appearance of this story in six separate interviews means it is likely common locally. A similar tale describing Vale managers walking out of the first collective bargaining meeting in 2009 after the union refused initial demands for concessions was told four times. These stories highlight how workers use processes of local storytelling and remembering in the reproduction of working-class identity. In them, interviewees find ways to understand and explain recent changes at work and in their community brought about by the ownership change. The truth or accuracy of these stories is not of central importance. Rather, workers use these narratives as a way to render their current situation meaningful and to reassert a sense of collectivity in opposition to a new class enemy (Portelli 1991, 2017).

Vale's takeover has also caused some workers to reemphasize community over class. In these cases, workers express sympathy for managers that they regard as being harmed or treated badly by Vale. Many managers and supervisors with whom workers have the most direct contact at work are neighbours or possibly even friends of the workers. Vale's outsider status causes workers to downplay the disparities in power and control that exist between themselves and some sections of management. Ian, a relatively new employee, described his frustrations with Vale's control over his immediate superiors:

> Like, sometimes it's ridiculous. These Vale guys won't let supervisors make decisions that they should be making […] and it holds us guys up, you know? It seems like they're obsessed with control at every level. Like, a piece of equipment breaks and buddy [his supervisor] is calling some guy in who knows where – Brazil? I don't know – to make sure he can order something. Just stupid. I feel bad for a lot of managers now. (Ian, 26 years old)

According to Ian, Vale disrupts work through its cost-cutting and direct control of managers and supervisors in Sudbury. Again, he positions this as emanating from "Brazil," juxtaposing the company's foreignness to the local commonalities of those with whom he works – even if the job of some of these people is to direct and manage him. It is a telling example of how the spatial reorganization of production complicates place-based class identities. Ian uses "Brazil" to explain the source of difficulties at work, and in the process includes local managers with workers in his construction of categorical difference. That workers draw on national identity is in part a response to Vale being headquartered in Brazil (Fontes and Garcia 2014; Marshall 2015). Yet, their shift in narrative emphasis also shows the influence of place-based identities in the reproduction of class identity. As the place identified with ownership has shifted from Toronto to Brazil, workers accordingly articulate class opposition in their narratives along national rather than regional lines.

I understand Interviewees' use of national identity as a narrative strategy that has been shaped by the political economy of postwar capitalism. In part, the nation is available to workers as an identifiable category because of the legacy of nationally-regulated welfare capitalism and the way that the nation-state integrated the working

class in the postwar settlement. Marx and Engels' ([1848] 2008) prediction in the *Communist Manifesto* about the fading of national difference appears less romantic when we remember that workers have and continue to lack democratic representation at the international level. Rather, working classes have made gains and won reforms mostly through their respective nation-states. It is at this level that workers have been able to exercise countervailing powers and rights against capital in the forms of collective bargaining rights, national welfare states, and other reformist policy victories. This, consequently, has made workers more dependent on the nation-state against the powers of both national and multinational corporate power (Seccombe and Livingstone 2000:35). That interviewees in this study utilize the language of nationality to critique new foreign ownership should thus not be terribly surprising, even as it generates limitations for how best to strategize and resist the conditions in which interviewees now find themselves.

***Militant Particularism or that "Global Solidarity Stuff"***

Thus far, I have been showing how narratives about new foreign ownership caused workers to emphasize their 'Canadian-ness,' a form of identity not previously present or pronounced in their discussions of Inco's ownership. In drawing on notions of national identity workers are applying new meaning to local solidarities, as we saw with Peter's narrative above. Workers contend that they expect living standards and treatment from their employer commensurate with what they believe to be Canadian norms. Solidarity continues to be organized around local bonds but is given new emphasis as workers fit

this into an imagined Canadian community. Yet, part of the reassertion of national identity in this form also involves closing off the possibility of imagining solidarity beyond locality or nation, whether ideologically or institutionally. As Harvey (1995) argues:

> The move from tangible solidarities understood as patterns of social life organized in affective and knowable communities to a more abstract set of conceptions that would have universal purchase involves a move from one level of abstraction – attached to place – to another level of abstractions capable of reaching out across space (p.83-4).

For workers in this study, the nation has enough "purchase" to anchor or give meaning to place-based notions of working-class solidarity. However, many interviewees find it difficult to imagine workers affected by Vale across the world as allies with common interests and objectives.

That workers find this difficult stems at least in part from how the state and employers institutionally integrated unionized workers, as well as the persistent influence of nationalism as a semi-autonomous political force (Anderson [1983] 2006; Balibar and Wallerstein 1991). But, as much as the nation-state became the location for political reform and policy change, the workplace or sometimes the sector came to represent the limits of a union local's power and influence. Many interviewees recognize the limitations of this arrangement under conditions of global capitalism. Yet, they also have trouble imagining what alternatives might look like. Alain had participated in a

number of global labour conferences and groups, but he indicates his frustration with what he felt was their impotence and lack of action:

> Oh yeah, I used to go to a lot of these conferences, events. We had guys from all over, Brazil, Africa, Mexico. It produced some good stuff. You got a sense of how things were all over the world. But eventually I got fed up. I said 'we come here every year and we talk a lot of shit, about solidarity, about the workers, this and that.' But I said 'when are we gonna act?' Right? Like, a lot of talk is good, but eventually it has to lead somewhere. No one could really tell me what we could actually, realistically do, besides this global solidarity stuff, that seemed to be mostly talk. We all go home to our countries and that's that [pause] fight this employer, that government. I don't know, it was a frustrating thing to realize. (Alain, 56 years old)

Alain describes how he learned about the plights of other workers and labour movements at these events, but expresses frustration because he saw very little that could concretely link struggles across borders. We get the sense that Alain imagines global solidarity to be a possibility from the way he uses "we" to describe he and other union representatives from around the world. Yet, he was frustrated by the institutional impediments he encountered at these events. As well, Alain's interview comments were somewhat exceptional because of his time as a member of the union executive. In this role he had made connections with other union leaders and thus has a unique perspective among interviewees based on these experiences. For other rank-and-file union members, imagining solidarity beyond the nation-state in practice was difficult. Dale, in talking about his experience at events organized by his union which saw Vale employees from Brazil, Mozambique, and Mexico visit Sudbury, mentions how these workers seemed critical of his union local's organizing methods:

> I was talking to a couple Brazilian guys and I definitely got the impression that they do things a lot different down there, the unions I mean. He didn't understand why we weren't downtown fighting for poor people and that. It was a strange thing to me, weird question. I was like, 'well, I know the Local gives to the United Way.' But yeah, these guys had the idea basically that 'union' means a lot more than just workers at a mine [pause]. Couple of them didn't seem to think much of how we do things. (Dale, 55 years old)

Dale reported being genuinely surprised by these conversations, while also somewhat provoked by his interlocutors' criticism of union practice in Sudbury. Both Alain and Dale's stories highlight some of the institutional impediments to workers imagining and building global solidarity. In Alain's case, he found little concretely that workers and unions could do, given the structures of collective bargaining in Canada and labour laws in each nation-state. In Dale's example, the narrow focus of his own union perplexed workers from countries in which social movements and unions have much closer relationships.

Last, for some workers forms of national chauvinism ignited by the bitterness of the 2009-10 strike thwart how imagination of international solidarity can be envisioned.[5] These workers draw on implicitly racialized conceptions of distinction between themselves and Vale workers in other countries, and describe Vale's labour relations as resulting from a "Third World" approach to work and employment. Doug asked, "You musta seen the signs, or photos of 'em, from the strike? 'Vale, go back to Brazil,' that type of thing?" However, in contrasting the company's supposedly foreign standards and

[5] Chapter 6 deals more extensively with workers' narratives and memories of the 2009-10 strike.

ethics to their own, interviewees also imagine workforces in the Global South as passively accepting poor treatment. Yves predicted, "It's gonna be like over in China when a mine collapses and hundreds of people die. That's the mentality of Vale, it seems. 'Just bring in new guys, who cares?'" Matt, as well, reasoned, "I guess in Brazil you can pay people two dollars a day and that. This is Canada though, but they don't get that, I guess." In these examples and others like them, Vale's workers in less-developed countries are depicted as agentless, and often used to demonstrate rhetorically what workers hope to prevent Vale from accomplishing in Sudbury. These national contrasts lump employers and workers together, framing the clash as one between national standards rather than between a multinational conglomerate and a workforce spread throughout many countries (King 2017).

## Conclusion

In his *History, Labour, and Freedom,* Cohen (1988) wonders if Marxists have failed to consider identity as a vital human need not captured by historical materialist categories. For Cohen, the "need for self-definition" (p.138) implies not only a person's need to define oneself but also his or her need to be defined by others and included in a community. As I have argued throughout this chapter, workers draw on forms of local, place-based identity and "imagined community" (Anderson [1983] 2006) in the process of making and reproducing a place-based and masculinized class identity. However, at the same time as identity and class inform one another, workers' place-based identities can limit inclusivity and stymie the expansion of solidarity to those outside of their

immediate lived experiences, particularly workers in the Global South who share the same multinational employer.

I began this chapter by tracing how the postwar compromise in Sudbury shaped the spatial organization of class formation and workers' definition of themselves and their interests. When the Steelworkers replaced Mine-Mill, the resulting changes reached far beyond the realm of the elected leadership and into the lives and culture of rank-and-file workers. Containing radicalism meant not only conceding control of the workplace to management – as I covered in the preceding chapter – but also spatially limiting the institutional organization of workers. As a result, interviewees in this study draw on strong regional identities that emphasize blue-collar, manual labour in articulating what it means to be working-class in Sudbury. In addition, the Fordist rise of mass consumption shaped working-class cultural and recreational activities, reinforcing masculine definitions of identity and responsibility.

More recently, Brazilian conglomerate Vale's takeover of the mines has reoriented workers' place-based identities. Whereas workers describe regional distinctions – particularly between Northern and Southern Ontario – in narratives about Inco, they draw on racialized notions of national identity and 'Canadian-ness' to make sense of Vale's aggressive labour relations. Although some interviewees, such as Alain and Dale, describe efforts to engage with workers and organizations from the Global South impacted by Vale, many interviewees find it difficult to imagine global solidarity due to both institutional impediments and cultural and political differences. This is a particularly strong example of how place and community have figured in the making of

class identity among workers in this study, even as they currently hamper efforts to imagine solidarity and build institutional bonds globally (Harvey 1995). In the following chapter, I turn to “generational discourses” (Foster 2013) and tensions in workers’ memories of union history and their assessments of current issues at work and in the union.

# Chapter 6

## Generation, Memory, and Class Identity: Making Union History and Generating Conflict

> The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living.
>
> Karl Marx ([1852] 1978:595)

Through analyzing interviewee narratives about the workplace and spatial relations in the previous two chapters, I have shown how workers historically developed an occupationally-defined and place-based class identity. However, as I have argued throughout this dissertation, understanding the making of class among workers in this study also requires more than explaining how working-class subjectivity, identity, and consciousness coalesced in relation to the particular material conditions of nickel mining in Sudbury and the more general labour relations framework of the postwar class

compromise. Important as it is to understand the socioeconomic basis of class identity, this is only part of the story. In order to explain the making of class identity as a process we must devote closer attention to how workers reproduce themselves over time, i.e. how they generate a sense of social identity capable of producing collective action (Willis 1981). By what processes, and around what issues, have workers in Sudbury come to identify as members of a distinguishable segment of the working class? As employers and governments erode the material conditions that gave rise to stable and secure forms of unionized employment, how is the process of class reproduction affected? Thus, while I concentrated in the two preceding chapters on the social and political context of class identity, in this chapter I focus on the processes and places of class reproduction, such as within the household and union spaces. In this chapter, I look in particular at collective remembering and generational narratives for their influence on the making and reproduction of class identity, as well as for where they generate points of social conflict.

In the first half of the chapter, I examine workers' narrative making of union history. I show first how workers centre the gains of the postwar compromise in the larger narratives of union history. I then demonstrate how social memory operates within places of class reproduction. In the workplace, the family, and friendship networks, workers engage in the re-narration of historical stories in which the "emotional frames" (Welzer 2010:6) for interpreting the present and the need to maintain group identity take precedence over transmitting facts about the past.

It is in these processes of transmission, particularly across age groups, where we begin to see interviewees alter stories, shift points of emphasis, or reframe historical lessons as they shape the past to the needs of the present. However, historical transmission is also where we witness the cracks in the edifice of generational class reproduction. Workers who were the beneficiaries of the system of stable workplace relations and rising living standards, fit the collective memories of the union's past to what they see as Sudbury workers' current needs. In contrast, I find that younger workers in this study are often in a contradictory position. On the one hand, they learn narratives about the historical importance of working-class and union history in Sudbury and incorporate these into their understanding of themselves. Yet, on the other hand, they experience a world of work – whether through previous contract labour or in the emerging two-tiered system of employment at Vale – that makes the historical narratives of working-class Sudbury seem incompatible with their current circumstances. In the second half of the chapter, I explore how this contributes to generational discourse (Foster 2013) and tension by looking at how workers describe their relationships with the union, as well as interpretations of the 2009-10 strike that differ along generational lines.

## Making Union History

When we study social memory, as Welzer (2010) argues, we face the problem that our object of study is without a corresponding subject. We are in effect studying something that exists between, rather than within, social actors. Portelli (1997), who is somewhat

critical of the concept, contends that in fact, because remembering is an individual act, collectives do not 'remember' at all. Therefore, it is more helpful for our purposes to conceive of *social remembering*, to treat memory not as a static object, but as a relationship and a process. Here, following Halbwachs ([1952] 1992), there is no need to make sharp distinctions between individual and social memory. Memories are inherently social, the products of social relations and structures. People remember, they narrate these memories, or they re-narrate stories transmitted from others, but they do so through social frameworks that aid, facilitate, and constrain these processes (Halbwachs [1950] 1992). In this chapter, I am analyzing the social structures that sustain workers' memories and their processes of remembering (Olick 2003; Olick and Robbins 1998). Moreover, I am attentive to the way that memories move socially and temporally, and how workers reshape memories to fit the needs of the present (Portelli 1991; Welzer 2010). Thus, although memory rests on social foundations, and is transmitted as a social process, it is by no means made up of static, unchanging content.

As I completed the interviews for this study, and particularly as I listened, re-listened, transcribed, and read over the stories that workers told, common themes and stories emerged, though not always in the same way or with similar conclusions. Because workers told similar stories, or emphasized particular episodes and themes in what they considered a shared local history, this raised questions for me about the transmission of social memory. However, it is not only a matter of explaining how social memory is facilitated by workers' informal practices of storytelling and history making. Rather, I also maintain that there are lessons to be drawn from the language that

workers use to frame their narratives. Interviewees' narratives about working-class history in Sudbury are the product of the historically-specific class subjectivity I have identified throughout this dissertation. When we understand the relationship between this class subjectivity and social memory, it becomes easier to explain the contradictions that emerge in the experiences and narratives of the youngest, most precarious-employed, workers in this study.

Below, I first look at the ways in which workers position the postwar class compromise in their telling of working-class history, before turning to how particular episodes, such as the 1969 and 1978-79 strikes, fit within these narratives. Last, I examine the family and union spaces, looking at how social relations in these places influence social memory's transmission.

***Framing Workers' Historical Memory***

Frisch (1990), in what we might call a review of reviews, makes a compelling point about the need to situate oral history accounts within their socio-political context. Reviewers of Studs Terkel's classic *Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression* ([1970] 2005), he argues, got the book all wrong. They read the book as a testament to the American spirit, seeing in it a compilation of tales about hardship, survival, and perseverance. That is, reviewers read testimonies of the Great Depression idiosyncratically, and thus failed to ask how the social breakdown of the Depression atomized people and helped contribute to the types of narratives contained in *Hard Times*. Similarly, workers' narratives of union history and working-class experience in

Sudbury need to be contextualized socially, economically, and politically. Here again, I find that the postwar class compromise plays an important role in how workers understand and explain working-class history in Sudbury. Interviewees describe central episodes in Sudbury's working-class history within a plot structure that centres the postwar compromise, which they understand to be chiefly about how workers and the company came to recognize the value of cooperation,[1] even if punctuated by periods of conflict and struggle. Significant local events, such as the decline of Mine-Mill, or the 1969 and 1978-79 strikes, are integrated into workers' stories in such a way that the social relations of Fordism are normalized and appear as the inevitable and desirable result of worker agency. Moreover, individual experiences are recounted in ways marked by the class subjectivity of the postwar settlement. Even as interviewees describe new managerial strategies and crises in the industry, they underscore how working with the company did, and can, meet such challenges.

As we have encountered in previous chapters, the first noticeable place where workers begin to centre and normalize the outcome of the postwar compromise in Sudbury is in their stories about the defeat of the Mine-Mill union. Leon, for example, describes the failure of the 1958 strike and Mine-Mill's 1962 loss to the Steelworkers in a union certification election as inextricably part of the same story.

[1] As we will see, interviewees emphasize cooperation with the company only under certain circumstances, such as when the nickel mining industry faces moments of crisis, or, as I highlighted in the previous chapter, when they contrast Inco to their current employer, Vale. In Chapter 4, I distinguished between the labour relations system of the postwar compromise, which for workers in Sudbury contained moments of class conflict between collective agreements, to the post-Fordist managerial strategies Inco experimented with in the early 1980s, which advocated 'cooperation' as a way to undermine the influence of the union in the workplace.

> By the time the Steelworkers came in, I guess, Mine-Mill had pretty much had it on account of the strike [in 1958]. Yeah, you know, I don't think a lot of guys faulted Mine-Mill really. I know there were mixed feelings about things, and tension for a lot of years after, between the leaders in 6500 and over at Falconbridge [in Mine-Mill 598], but the way I heard it told to me, there was a lot of respect for the old union. But, you know, like I said [pause] that wasn't the way things were going for workers at the time. The Steelworkers were able to get guys on their side and strike a better deal with Inco. (Leon, 72 years old)

Leon and other older workers do not express harsh opinions of Mine-Mill. In fact, nearly all interviewees, whether they offered first-hand knowledge of the union or relayed stories from older family members or co-workers, positively appraised Mine-Mill's impact on labour in Sudbury. According to interviewees, Mine-Mill retains a mystique among workers who know about it locally. Leon's evaluation above and in Chapter 4 that Mine-Mill was "too radical" is not so much a judgment of the union as it is a statement reflecting Leon's acceptance of union practice under the system of industrial pluralism. Leon and other workers regard Mine-Mill's actions as outside what came to be the standards of Fordist labour relations.

When Walter speaks of stories from the 1958 strike, he emphasizes neither an overly militant union nor a repressive employer. Instead, he describes the strike as a "tragedy," making it appear as an agentless event on the way to a more stable set of employment relations.

> As a result of 1958, things were looking bad already for Mine-Mill, you see. Like I said, I was getting my information about what had happened, what

> things were like, from guys at work mainly. My read on it was that the strike was a real tragedy, for workers, for everyone involved. I mean, it was tough times back then, all around. Inco was in a tough spot. It needed a workable relationship with the workers there. Mine-Mill was doing its best to get the fellas in there what they deserve. But, I don't know, it all just unraveled, I guess. I'm glad I came in [started working] after all that. Mind you, it was still a few years after I started till things started getting better, but hell, I missed an awful episode, as near as I can tell. (Walter, 74 years old)

In Walter's narrative, even Inco is characterized as in a difficult position, needing on the one hand to maintain its business operations, and on the other hand to reach a "workable" settlement with its employees. Walter's characterization of relations between unionized workers and Inco, like that of many interviewees, moves between descriptions of cooperation and confrontation. In these stories, when workers are engaged in confrontations, they are struggling for inclusion, for an employment relationship they believe ought to be both advantageous to the company and able to provide workers with adequate living standards and working conditions. As we will see below, strikes and other conflict are often narrated as examples of the company transgressing the norms of what workers see as standard relations of employment, and shirking its responsibilities to workers and the community. Interviewees see working-class history as culminating in the institutional framework of industrial pluralism, and position union victories as about equitable inclusion in a system of production and exchange.

Of course, in order for such a 'cooperative' arrangement to operate, Inco had to be compelled to accept it. According to interviewees, the struggle for union security was simultaneously a battle to bring Inco into a class compromise in which it too would

benefit. In many respects, workers describe class struggle in the 1960s and 1970s through stories about an employer who refused to see that union rights and the framework of formal labour relations were also to its advantage. Jerry, for example, frames the 1969 strike – a pivotal moment in the union's history because of the robust collective agreement it produced – this way:

> The 1969 strike, that was huge. Up to then, especially times when workers had went out when they shouldn't have, Inco had refused to deal with a lot of issues. Health and safety was big [pause] I mean at work, and pretty much everywhere. The pollution from Inco in those days was god awful. They [the company] were taking advantage of workers and the people in Sudbury, that was how many felt anyhow. It took the workers really going out when nickel prices were high and Inco was desperate [pause] They [the company] had been bull-headed, even about things that I think are good for them. Let's face it, they need the workers, but they need us to play by the rules and feel like we're actually an important part of the thing. After 1969 I think Inco realized that. It was probably an eye-opener. 'You're gonna have to accept us as an important part to what goes on around here and listen to our concerns.' (Jerry, 65 years old)

According to Jerry, workers compelled Inco to recognize the advantage of a more inclusive and interdependent relationship with labour at the mines. This *modus vivendi* is normatively shaped by the institutional structure of collective bargaining and its attendant rules and regulations. Notice, for example, Jerry's reference to the 1966 wildcat strike ("times when workers went out when they shouldn't have"). Or, the way he depicts the outcome of the strike as mutually profitable for company and workers. Instead of a narrative about how workers contained a corporation's quest for profit at any human or environmental expense through collective action, interviewees tell stories

that construe the period when the union was at its strongest as a boon for the company as well.

In these narratives, if interviewees can be characterized as ascribing to the union a fundamental accomplishment, this would surely be the way it constituted workers as an integral part of the local community and of Canadian society more generally. The gains workers made within this period of business expansion and productivity growth are read not as a product of particular historical circumstances, but as the normal state of affairs. Rising living standards and "structural power" (Wright 2000:962) encouraged workers to expect that the class compromise would persist beyond their formative working years, and thus gave shape to the types of stories that older workers transmit to new hires and younger family members about work and the union. When aspects of the postwar settlement's breakdown enter the story, many interviewees frequently adapt their story about labour's place in the mines and what they should expect from their employer, even when they imagine the means to maintain their position as firmly within the confines of labour relations' legal framework and business unionism.

For example, the contentious strike of 1978-79 with which I opened Chapter 3 is positioned in many interviewees' narratives as a turning point, after which both workers and the company were forced to re-evaluate their respective positions for the long-term health of the industry. According to workers, two key themes characterize this strike. First, this was a point at which Inco stepped outside the bounds of the class compromise: its aggressive resistance to a more robust pension system and greater job security showed it to be not holding up its end of the class bargain. Second, in 1979,

workers had to readjust their expectations – which included accepting that total employment would necessarily fall in a technologically-advanced and globally competitive mining industry. Without political programs or employment policies at higher governmental levels to deal with shrinking mining employment in the local economy, workers who managed to hold onto their jobs would need to exercise the grievance system and the machinery of job control unionism to protect their interests, as we saw in Chapter 4. Thus, interviewees conclude that hard bargaining and a prolonged strike were able to protect and extend pensions, but that workers would nonetheless have to accept that work in the mines would have a diminishing place in Sudbury. For workers, union protection and their legal rights under labour law provide mechanisms to adapt to unfavourable circumstances, but not necessarily to challenge them. As Alain describes this, collective bargaining should function as an arena in which difficult challenges can be managed by union and company, each pursuing their respective interests, but with an eye to promoting the health of the nickel mining industry.

> You see, strikes like that [1978-79] and the last one, they do a lot of harm, but they are also times when both sides can see that things need to change, or are changing and we're not dealing with the change in the right ways. You understand what I mean? [pause] With the job loss and the troubles the company was in in the 1970s, and that really kept going for some time, they came after the workers for givebacks and all that, things the union could not accept. And of course, our union wants to promote or protect the workers from all the trouble coming our way. It should have been a time to come together and think through the issues, global competition, all that. (Alain, 56 years old)

Alain goes on to suggest that workers can continue to improve their conditions and terms of employment by bargaining from a position that prioritizes cooperation and the profitability of the company, concluding, "The union also has to acknowledge that we need a company there to bargain with."

Such sentiments are common among those who entered the industry amid relative security and were able to use the structures and procedures of job control unionism to manage the fallout as Inco entered its turbulent period of profitability crises and subsequent restructuring. This shows the way that the integration of unions and workers into the postwar class compromise was ideological as well as institutional. Times of crisis or adjustment offer moments when the limitations of unions' legal incorporation encouraged a certain dependence on capital that is manifest at the level of workers' consciousness. Calls such as Alain's for workers to readjust expectations highlight the circumscribed nature of the class identity encouraged by postwar trade unionism. Importantly, this also highlights how the social relations of the class compromise are reproduced through how workers think, and act, based on their understanding of their class interests. Even when narratives, such as that of Tim below, include discussion of the struggle over new technology, management overreach, and job re-classifications, they often conclude by accentuating how grievances or other union efforts ameliorated the worst aspects of adjustment and returned work to a state of normalcy.

> You knew workers were pissed after [the 1978-79 strike] and as things began to change with management, the contractors, all that. When all the grievances

> and adjusting to new equipment and that [pause] sure, it was a battle. But I think most guys found that, you know, the union had been there through tough times before, and this wasn't no different. They got the company back in line, worked out ways for everyone to be satisfied. (Tim, 52 years old)

As we will see later in this chapter, generational differences emerge around how to understand experiences of work restructuring, growing precariousness, and strike action. Young workers whose fathers or grandfathers worked in the mines find themselves in the position of hearing and re-telling stories about the importance of the union and its victories, yet also feeling as though immediate actions by the union, and their work experiences thus far, do not comport with the historical images they re-narrate. As well, workers explain conflicts over scare jobs, the growth of precarious labour, and concessions in collective agreements through the language of 'generation,' in the process obscuring the political and economic causes of these issues (McDaniel 2004).

Thus far, I have shown how workers frame their stories about union history in relation to the postwar framework. Interviewees describe enthusiastically how this form of unionism made labour a pillar of the local community, as well as a bargaining agent with which the company had to contend. Once constituted as a structural force relative to their employer, some workers imagine that this generated a need to cooperate with the company when crises such as those in the 1970s and 80s emerged. As Inco moved to post-Fordist managerial strategies, its 'cooperative' rhetoric implied that it could avoid confrontational relations with the union. Like other examples of cooperative management, union avoidance figured prominently in the company's approach (Hall

1993; Moody 1997). In the interview data, we can detect how post-Fordist managerial strategies have influenced workers' consciousness. Yet, as I argued in Chapter 4, it is precisely the way that class was molded during the postwar settlement that allowed cooperation to displace class conflict in the 1970s when growth and productivity began to slow and profits became squeezed. Nevertheless, what is clear is that most workers who have known employment security for most of their careers – in contrast to the younger workers I will discuss below – imagine the social relations of the postwar settlement to be normal, desirable, and still relevant.

***Social Memory, Family, and Gender***

Scholars have shown how labour market regulation during the economic expansion of the postwar era privileged white, male workers by crafting policy based on the norm of a standard employment relationship, with social reproduction organized through women's unpaid labour (Bezanson and Luxton 2006; Standford and Vosko 2004; Vosko and Clark 2009). This then determined access to the social benefits and rights attached to paid employment. It also shaped how many male workers came to understand working-class identity, particularly for those in blue-collar occupations. The family, organized around the male breadwinner norm, thus functioned as an institution for the reproduction of labour power. Class and gender identities were co-constituted in that workers in Sudbury formed an historically particular class subjectivity in relation to the workplace, the family, and the community. Here they engaged in the practices of narration and storytelling that are the bases of social memory. Many of the practices of

social remembering take place within the family, where a particular form of working-class identity is affirmed and reproduced.

Many interviewees understand mining to be central to their identities, describing their work as more than a job. Because of the importance they ascribe to their occupation, stories about work proliferate outside of the workplace, and especially in the home. Walter recounts how he often used stories about his work to entertain his family when his children were young:

> I talked about my work all the time. It's such a big part of your life, you know? Around the kitchen table, that sort of thing, with the kids even from a young age. A lot of the time, I'd tell 'em stories about various things I'd done or regular things that happened. When the kids were young I'd try to make it interesting for 'em. As soon as they could understand that, you know, 'dad worked a way underground,' well, hell, they thought that was something. Obviously, sometimes I didn't get into all the most dangerous stuff. Back in those days, it seemed everyone had a close call of his own. I never wanted to scare the kids [pause]. I'd talk about work just so they'd know what I did and what the mines were about and that […] And it was a time for me too, to, I don't know, tell my family about stuff that had me mad from work, things that maybe I wouldn't be talking about it there, maybe to guys after, but [pause]. But you know, it can be different in your family. I think I was pretty open with the wife about my job. It [his job] was tough going sometimes, so I could talk about that at home. She was a big help often times. (Walter, 74 years old)

For Walter, these stories served two purposes. First, through them, Walter could give his family a sense of what his job involved. Though he says that he de-emphasized many of the dangers to which he was exposed in his early career, telling stories gave Walter a means of speaking about how difficult he found his work. Through telling his stories he could figuratively bring his family into the workplace, in the process generating in his

children an appreciation for what he did when he went underground. Additionally, Walter admits that telling his wife about his work allowed him to air his frustrations, which shows how women's work in the home was comprised of emotional support work in addition to the physical labours of social reproduction. Walter's stories, like those of many interviewees, have the effect of affirming the integral place of the male breadwinner in the household of postwar working-class life in Sudbury. Family stories about work can thus be seen as a way to register and reproduce male, working-class identity.

The interviews also show evidence that listening to such family stories was quite powerful in generating ideas about male, working-class identity for younger workers. Yves, who in Chapter 4 discussed how his mining father's friendship networks grew out of the workplace, also talked about how listening to his father's stories about work and the union shaped his ideas about working-class masculinity while growing up:

> Dad talking to us about the mines for sure had an impact on me growing up. I definitely looked up to him, and to a lot of his buddies who were working at Inco and would be around our house. I asked a lot of questions and that. I'm sure he probably got annoyed of me sometimes [pause] and I remember that the shift work was sometimes an issue with my mom. But it was obviously hard on him too. It's hard on anyone, plus add to it that you're doing hard, physical labour, right. But yeah, I think him working there shaped what I thought about working later on, like I thought of it as a good-paying job, you could get ahead, the union was there to protect guys. And he was able to take care of us and everything. (Yves, 28 years old)

Yves developed notions of what economic stability and a typical working-class household look like through listening to his father talk about his work life. For workers these ideas

about male breadwinner, working-class jobs influenced how they see the relationship between class and gender. As Yves also mentions, shift work shaped the gender relations in mining households. Male shift work necessitated additional household labour from women who could expect less time and help in the home from men. As precarious employment grows in the mining industry and in the economy more generally, formally stable work at the mines functions as a yardstick against which those with previous contract work experience measure their economic situation, or that of their families, friends, or partners. Ideas about stable employment learned in the family and through coworkers influence how many workers understand gender relations and masculinity. Class identity is related to notions about the masculine responsibility to provide for one's family.

Family stories thus tend to draw on an historically circumscribed definition of class as primarily consisting of a stable core of unionized, male workers. Even comical family stories about work, which serve to both illustrate the difficulties that workers faced before major union victories and to remind family members of the personal lengths that fathers or grandfathers went to secure employment at the mines draw on notions of a masculine duty to provide. Brad, for example, told a favourite story about how his father secured a job at the mine. He claimed that this memory's retelling is a ritual at family dinners and on special occasions:

> I still remember. Dad would tell this story all the time. His dad had passed, young. He [Brad's father] quit school and was gonna work in the mine, there. But he was a tiny guy, hardly weighed nothing, and he was too young, you know? So, he eats like two bushels of bananas before he's supposed to have

> the physical and get weighted and all that. Well, he gets there, and he's stuffed, right. And the, Christ, they're like 'oh sorry, we don't have time to see you today. You'll have to come back tomorrow.' So, he did the whole thing again the next day! Got the job though. (Brad, 31 years old)

Brad's father's story, though meant as an entertaining tale about the length he went to get hired at Inco, also nicely illustrates what he depicts as a masculine obligation to assist his widowed mother. Similar stories about the importance of family provision also anchor ideas about working-class militancy. Workers understand masculine duty to include striking when necessary, and not solely the need to work and earn for one's family. Dignity and adequate living standards are premised on the centrality of men's place in the household as primary income earners and must be "stood up for when the company isn't treating *the men* right," as Leon put.

***Picket Lines and Union Spaces***

Assmann (2008) proposes that we distinguish Halbwachs' notion of collective memory from cultural memory. He recommends this because, for Halbwachs, processes of objectification and symbolization were outside of the communicative transference of collective memory. Assmann, therefore, describes cultural memory as operating at a macro level beyond the non-institutional and communicative processes of social memory that I have been describing thus far. It, in contrast to the social remembering of individuals in localized groups or families, is "exteriorized, objectified, and stored away in symbolic forms" (p.110). Cultural memory is formalized and its contents, such as

objects, artifacts, monuments, or museums, often operate as sites for the preservation of memory and the continuity of tradition. These things and spaces act as embodiments of collective memory, representing and perpetuating social identity beyond the more limited abilities of individual action and memory to perform these functions.

For many scholars of collective and cultural memory, the nation or nation-state and its symbolization have been key objects of inquiry (Olick 2003), owing to the relationship between the historical study of traditions and nationalism (Hobsbawm [1984] 2012). However, others have also studied the cultural memory of working classes, through oral history as well as looking at various forms of objectification (DuBois 2016; Friedlander 1975; Passerini 1979, [1987] 2009; Portelli 1991, 2011, 2017). For workers in Sudbury, the union and union spaces operate as institutional vehicles of cultural memory. Although the Steelworkers' Local lacks the extensive cultural programming of the former Mine-Mill Union that I outlined in Chapter 3, it nonetheless makes a concerted effort to preserve its local history and impart it to new members (Brasch 2005, 2007, 2010). Beyond official institutional operations, more informal rituals and practices also have the effect of reproducing collective identity because of the feelings of belonging that workers gain from this.

Strikes, in the sense of the cultural memory of the group, play an important role in the perpetuation of a particular working-class identity through processes of remembering. In general terms, many unionized workers experience strikes throughout their careers. However, strikes can also have ritualistic characteristics that are particular to specific occupational or regional workers. Striking generates locally specific traditions,

patterns, and features, irrespective of the individual workers making up the union at any given time. Strikes are moments when collective identity is reaffirmed. Meetings not normally attended by large numbers of rank-and-file members can be transformed into spaces of rejuvenation and problem-solving, provided that formalism and bureaucracy do not pervade them. Thus, picket lines and the union hall become places of memory and identity formation. Like traditional dances, assembling bodies in familiar ways, in many cases while also enduring collective hardships, strengthens and reinvigorates solidarity and social identity. Many workers describe feeling a deeper sense of membership in the union after their first time on strike. Doug recalls:

> Oh yeah, for me that [1978-79 strike] was, looking back on it, a key time in my work life, which is weird 'cause I wasn't 'working' [laughs]. The stakes were high, and guys I was around were up on the issues, really keeping an eye on things as it went along. I had been for the union all my time since I got hired, so I didn't take too much convincing. But like, I remember coming out of it feeling a lot more committed, like we were all in it together. Yeah, it was an experience alright. Don't get me wrong, being on strike is no picnic sometimes, and I don't think guys took it lightly, but there ain't much that brings you together quite like that. (Doug, 65 years old)

Doug tells us that his first strike experience confirmed and enhanced his belief in the union and his feeling of belonging with fellow workers. The act of being together with fellow workers under strike conditions enhanced feelings of solidarity that Doug doubts he would have developed without the strike. How successful strikes are at winning worker gains obviously influences whether workers feel more or less attached and committed to their union, as we will see below with younger workers after the 2009-10

strike. However, even work stoppages that produce less favourable outcomes can still deepen feelings of identification, commitment, and togetherness. Recall, for example, how Paul from Chapter 5 felt that the last strike both educated him and convinced him of the necessity of collective action to defend union rights.

Newer workers learn the importance of collective action and union history while on strike. But they also learn the daily practices of conducting industrial strike action. Hearing interviewees describe mastering and doing such activities as setting up a picket line, talking to community members, or dealing with contractors or delivery vehicles entering the mine's property, one is struck by how seemingly mundane and choreographed they describe these jobs as being. However, it is often precisely their tedious character that turns otherwise monotonous tasks into the grist of social bonds. Picket line drudgery was described as a point of humour and mutual obligation, as commitment to fellow workers motivates participation, and anger at the company generates resolve. Dale's comments about his strike experience in 2003 are typical in this regard:

> Well, it wasn't my first time out, and when you've been around a while, I think it's important to be out there consistently, showing newer guys how it's done and why it's important. When the signs come out and the gates, and you get to the same familiar lines, and the routine of it, right, it sort of all comes back to you. (Dale, 55 years old)

This illustrates how it is difficult to transform union practices when changing economic circumstances or new employer tactics undermine their effectiveness. Patterns of class

conflict are not simply structured by legal formalities, but also by the historical making of class and the rituals of cultural memory. For interviewees with extensive strike experience, work stoppages are times when the group identity of Sudbury's miners is renewed through familiar political repertoires, habits, and traditions. Specific picket locations, march routes, signage and union paraphernalia, even guest speakers and solidarity support, all remind and affirm the culturally and regionally particular characteristics of workers' class identity. We might sometimes be critical of the ossification of union institutions or the rigidity of working-class "repertoires of contention" (Tilly and Tarrow 2007:16-7) when their ritualistic character fails to generate worker gains; but we must also recognize that localized rituals of working-class action perform ideological and cultural functions, bolstering forms of solidarity that, unfortunately, also limit outward expansion and exclude unknown workers. This is the contradiction at the heart of the making of class identity: strong social bonds are sustained and reproduced because of local history, community cohesion, and the practical immediacy of working-class experience. Yet, what nourishes local working-class resilience is exactly what limits its extension. The imagined community that I discussed in Chapter 5 draws on its cultural memory and ritual traditions in the process of affirming its collective identity.

During strikes, the union hall also takes on symbolic importance that workers seem not to attribute to it otherwise. As I have been arguing, a consequence of postwar business unionism was the way it professionalized daily union operations and limited the involvement of rank-and-file workers. For instance, most interviewees rarely attended

union meetings, and only five of 26 had ever held a union executive or committee position. However, during strikes, when mass mobilization and participation are at their height, workers are far more likely to attend general assembly meetings. Interviewees discuss these times as both important to helping workers endure the difficulties of a strike and as moments of collectivity. Alain, for instance, spoke of how the meetings during the last strike were cathartic, and also highlighted how being together in the union hall strengthened solidarity:

> I think the last strike was really tough on the guys. They really got an eye-opener with Vale, the length they will go. So it is important during times like that to have things that keep people together and strengthen the union. It can be very difficult [pause]. Especially, you know, when a strike drags on like that, meetings, they drag on too, but I think they are a time for everyone to come together, to vent, to figure out what is working out there [on picket lines]. Especially this time, with Vale, they were hiring private security, filing injunctions, all this; it was important to be together, regroup, and for guys to hear what is going on at all levels, and on other lines to keep people united […]. As tough as that fight was, I think a lot of people came out more committed to the union, to letting Vale know they wouldn't pull that on the workers again, yeah, yeah, I really do. (Alain, 56 years old)

Alain describes these meetings as essential for planning and conducting the strike, but also as crucial for regenerating resolve and solidarity. Alain and other workers, however, believe that this level of participation is outside the normal operations of work and union activity. They do not imagine mass mobilization to be sustainable for extended periods outside of strike situations. Alain concluded: "Workers were happy to have things go back to normal after the strike, go back to work and have the union work on whatever problems in the contract."

Thus, the union hall seems to take on greater symbolic importance because the union encourages mass worker involvement only during strike activity. The hall appears in many workers' narratives as a site of cultural memory. For example, Walter characterizes the historical significance of the picket line and the union hall as sources of social identity and strength:

> When the strike is on, and you are back in there [the union hall], and out there in the cold [on the picket line], where maybe you've been times before, I think you feel the history. You have a sense of how important it is. I try to make other younger guys understand this. People came before you. They did these things and forced Inco's hand, you know. In the hall, especially, where you feel the history of it [pause] that, to me, is important. Yes, that's why I think, from what I saw anyway, the last strike was still a good one. It was long, but I saw good energy at the hall and on the lines. It was different not being in the old building, but the same energy was there. (Walter, 74 years old)

Walter's comments are interesting because of the way that actual and symbolic space interacts in them. As he alludes at the end of this passage, an act of arson burned the original union hall down in September 2008. Meetings and other events during the "last strike" in 2009-10, therefore, did not take place in the building where all previous ones had. Yet, until Walter makes reference to the fire near the end of his discussion, he speaks about the importance of workers being in historic places while on strike, including the union hall. Thus, although the building itself is imagined as a site of cultural and historical significance, Walter thinks that the social identity it conveys can be carried wherever workers meet and conduct union activity. This is also the message sent by the union in "Rising from the Ashes: The Story of USW 6500," a short documentary made in

the aftermath of the fire (USW Local 6500 2012). In it, continuity and transformation are intertwined. The film depicts the union's historical legacy as contained in the hall in the forms of records, documents, photos, and historic past events that took place there. Yet, this history is also portable. The film functions as a way to register the cultural impact of the union and suggests that the fire is an opportunity to rejuvenate this inheritance. Rebuilding a union space with upgraded technology symbolizes the union's ability to both carry forward its legacy and meet the challenges presented by contemporary issues.

Throughout this section, I have discussed the ways workers frame union history, and how social and cultural memory contributes to the making and reproduction of class identity. However, throughout the last three chapters, I have pointed to areas where the transformation of nickel mining in Sudbury has begun to pose challenges for class reproduction. Such issues as the growth of precarious labour, employer efforts to weaken unions, and sizeable job loss have been slowly undermining the material conditions of the postwar settlement, and thus the context in which the particular forms of working-class subjectivity I have been discussing took shape. In some respects, workers' practices of social remembering sustain a relatively strong sense of working-class identity in spite of socioeconomic change. However, generational conflict appears in other areas of workers' narratives. It is to these areas that I now turn.

**Generational Discourse and Class Identity**

Many scholars treat generations as though they are *real*, identifying them as constituted by historical time or events (Edmunds and Turner 2002; Mannheim 1952), or as Bischoping and Gao (2018) point out, as social scientific categories to be discerned by researchers. However, recognizing that delineating generations is necessarily messy, others have begun to study generations as emergent in discourse, paying attention to how people think and speak about generations and the work to which they put this "generation-as-discourse" (Foster 2013:199; McDaniel 2004; Reulecke 2008). This is not to suggest that the generational categories to which speakers refer have no material bases, but rather to point to the interactions between socioeconomic and political context on the one hand (Peugny and Van de Velde 2013), and the micro-sociological and discursive processes of identification on the other. As McDaniel (2004) argues, generations have a material basis that can be understood to intersect with class and gender. Opportunities are structured or systems of inequality managed and maintained along generational lines. However, McDaniel emphasizes that when 'generation' is used as a way of interpreting and explaining social processes, the effect is to mischaracterize class relations, explaining the results of neoliberal restructuring, for example, as matters of generational conflict rather than class power. By paying heed to what people are doing when they talk about generations, we potentially learn more about social identity than we would by beginning with deductive historical classifications.

In the analyses that follow, I deal with the connections between macro-sociological processes and discourse about generations as it emerged in workers'

narratives. I find that although postwar class identity remains relatively stable – buttressed as it is by the processes of reproduction I have been discussing – it is also responsive to changes in material context. In particular, younger workers in my sample are more likely to have experienced features of precarious employment, such as contract work or two-tiered wage and pension systems. Many also have partners, family members, or friends with similar employment experiences. Such experiences and relationships mean that paid work does not have the same certainty and centrality in their lives as it does for older workers with more secure employment backgrounds. Thus, although employment background does not form the basis for a clear demarcation between generations of workers, it does influence the ways that workers speak about the union, remember and evaluate the most recent strike, and conceptualize others they perceive to be of another 'generation.' In other words, socioeconomic change influences what emerges as an organizing concept in workers' narratives.

In what follows, I find strong evidence of discursive constructions of generational conflict that place strains on the reproduction of working-class identity. Older union members frequently use generation as a discursive device through which to discuss the supposed differences between the work ethics and levels of union commitment possessed by younger workers. However, by looking at how some younger workers understand their relationship to the union, we also see how they contrast themselves to older workers.

***The Union vs. Our Union***

As I have argued throughout, the labour relations of the postwar settlement, and USW's business unionism in Sudbury in particular, encouraged a service relationship between union leaders and members. However, the material gains that workers made through Fordism and industrial pluralism still generated in many older interviewees a strong commitment to and sense of identification with the union.

One way this is manifest in the interview data is in how workers take possession of the union in talk. For instance, many workers make reference to *our* union in the course of discussing historical and recent events. Esa, when describing his first strike, concludes: "That was how I remember it. We felt as though it was **our** union that won the day." In his evaluation of the most recent strike, Alain also uses a plural possessive pronoun when referring to the union:

> Vale made the strike as difficult as *they* could, that's what I think. But, in a way, it's no different than before. *Our* union has only ever won things when we stick together and stand up for *ourselves*. (Alain, 56 years old)

Notice the confluence of "*our*" union and "*ourselves*" in Alain's remarks. He imagines no distinction between the union and the workers who make up its membership. As well, he makes this indexical distinction in his speech against Vale ("*they*") – the *them* in opposition to us. As De Fina (2011) suggests, identity categories are both representative and constitutive. When speakers employ discourse markers of identity to position themselves in contrast to others, they draw on real social differences, but also 'make'

difference anew in the immediate conversational context. Thus, workers who talk about "our union," or refer to how "we" accomplished a particular victory, are making a conversational declaration of collective identity.

By contrast, the youngest workers in my sample often distance the union in their speech. For them, union membership does not make an inclusive "us." Rather, it is something they have, a relationship to an entity 'out there,' separate from themselves. In these workers' narratives, the union can itself become 'it' or 'them' in contradistinction to either the workers as a social group, or the individual speaker himself. In registering his displeasure with the union's handling of the last strike, James draws distinctions between workers and the union in this way:

> Yeah, like a lot of the guys, I was pretty pissed off about how things went. *They* just seemed too much on getting guys all hyped up, like it was gonna be an easy job to defeat this huge corporation […]. When *the union* knew how serious Vale was about getting these givebacks, I don't think **it** was honest with us about that. (James, 34 years old)

Here, James positions the union as an outside institution that failed to provide an honest assessment of the situation to its membership. By distancing the union this way, James and other workers show the gap they imagine exists between themselves and the union. Thus, although growing precariousness and the uneven nature of contract concessions influence how younger workers perceive and articulate this gap, they enact the social categorizations generated from it through their discursive constructions.

***Remembering the 2009-10 Strike***

James' assessment of the 2009-10 strike above is not unique to him. Nine of the 11 interviewees under 40 years old made negative comments about – or in many cases offered disillusioned assessments of – the strike and its outcome. By contrast, older workers were more likely to narratively place the strike within the *longue durée* of union history. Although many acknowledged the strike as a loss or setback, they also treated it as another instance of workers standing up for themselves and taking on the company. Thus, generational differences emerge in workers' memories of and narratives about the strike (King 2017). As they remember the strike in generationally particular ways, they constitute themselves as workers of a particular era in the union's history.

Workers of all ages share an evaluation of Vale's takeover and subsequent attack on labour. As we saw in the previous chapter, local storytelling has played a role in generating unity and opposition toward Vale based on workers' understanding of the company's unscrupulous motives and business tactics. Yet, shared criticism of Vale's anti-labour ambitions does not necessarily translate into similar interpretations across age groups. Older workers and retirees see the strike as a partial success, even if the ensuing collective agreement contained some concessionary givebacks. When asked generally about the strike, many of these interviewees told particular stories about resistance or conflict on the picket line. Peter recalled reminiscing with friends about how "guys used to handle scabs years ago […] with spray-paint on their garage doors or tacks in their driveways." Walter, who spent time on the picket line in solidarity, when

asked what he remembered about the strike, initially replied: “It wasn’t a bad strike, that one. We had a lot of fun on the picket line [laughs].”

In many of their comments, these workers depict staying out on strike for nearly a year as a partial success in itself. Dale, for instance, highlighted this as a sort of victory:

> You know, everybody used to just say ‘we’re gonna win.’ They were there to stay, you know? It was long, but the workers did. Now, the company came back afterward and got stuff here and there. There were a lot of repercussions afterwards. They came out with a lot of different rules and everything else about the workplace and that. (Dale, 55 years old)

In Dale’s narrative, the workers were resolved to stay out on strike and ‘win,’ though it is unclear how Dale or the workers in this story defined winning. In his third sentence as well, Dale does not specify what it was that “the workers did” (i.e., whether they succeeded in sustaining the strike, or in winning it). Yet, he nevertheless evaluates workers’ actions while on strike as at least partially successful. In the process, Dale temporally shifts the concessions contained in the collective agreement to *after* the strike when the company was able to get “stuff here and there.” Other older workers and retirees told similar stories, representing the determination of the strikers as a form of success.

Younger interviewees, on the other hand, assessed the strike as a considerable loss, collectively and individually. “It was brutal,” remarked Anthony, “and I’m still paying off all the debt we [his family] racked up from that.” Notice here how Anthony’s “we” refers to his family, not workers in the union, as in Dale’s account. Anthony

suggests that the individual and familial losses he incurred during the strike outstrip any potential collective gains for workers. A number of young workers openly questioned the clarity or soundness of the strike's objectives. As we saw above, James questioned the union's assessment of the situation before and during the strike. For him, current concessions mean losing things that workers have gained through decades of struggle.

> Honestly, I don't see the point. The union pumped all these guys up at Garson Arena and that. And then the strike [pause] and they lose all this stuff. Like, they got stuff taken away last strike. Stuff that my dad fought for, that these same old timers fought for. I still don't get it. What *was* that? (James, 34 years old)

Along with Anthony and James, younger workers were more likely to describe economic hardships and other burdens resulting from the strike than they were to recount picket line stories of solidarity or steadfastness, such as their older counterparts told.

As we saw in Chapter 4, changes to the employee pension plan were a major issue during the 2009-10 strike. Recall how Alain, an older worker, had rationalized employer-friendly pension reforms, yet advocated resisting the growth of contract labour in the mines. Many newer workers, however, see the move away from defined-benefit pensions as another example of the insecurity they face in the industry. Younger workers' reflections suggest that such concessions have contributed to a two-tiered system that exacerbates generational tension, as younger workers blame older workers for not protecting their futures. As McDaniel (2004) suggests, generational conflict

functions as a way to organize processes of economic restructuring. Rick, for instance, commented:

> To me, it seemed like a sell-out, a major giveaway. I guess it's [his defined-contribution pension] like an investment, but who knows about those, right? I guess a lot of older guys got their pensions secure and maybe that's all they cared about. (Rick, 32 years old)

Pensions offer one example among many that are representative of the growing precariousness of employment in Sudbury – precariousness that is hitting younger workers much harder (Roth, Steedman, and Condratto 2015). When workers and retirees with more secure employment histories remember and assess the strike, they do so from the class positions developed in their formative work years. The majority of their experiences of employment, unions, and labour relations took place during a period of growing union power and rising living standards. The relative prosperity and incremental improvements that these workers gained through collective bargaining encouraged them to expect job and income security, even in an industry characterized by boom-and-bust cycles. Moreover, the lack of a robust universal pension system in Canada left it to unions to bargain these benefits where workers had the structural power to do so. Pensions represent another issue along which the postwar compromise seems to be coming apart, producing attendant generational disparities.

Workers who entered the labour force when the nickel industry was growing or stable thus encountered a situation much different from the one faced by more recent workers. Global competitiveness, downsizing, mechanization, and growing

precariousness leave young miners feeling vulnerable and uncertain. Class positions and employment experiences thus shape how workers remember and describe the most recent strike. Interviewees remembered the strike not as an event detached from their broader lived experiences, but as part of a story about what it means to be working class in Sudbury – a meaning which is partly dependent on the historical and social conditions out of which generational class identities form. This finding conforms somewhat to Mannheim's (1952) theory that generations form around historical events experienced in early adulthood. This is partially true in this case, insofar as these are also workers' early working years. Yet, as we have seen, Inco and Vale have been restructuring the mines for over two decades. The social processes of making and reproducing class identity I have discussed through this dissertation have reproduced the class subjectivity of the postwar compromise alongside these changes. Thus, it seems we are beginning to see the larger subjective consequences of changing material conditions among the youngest workers in this study, particularly those who have experience as contract workers.

Generational differences appeared not only in how interviewees remember the strike, but also in how they fit it within larger stories about the union and working-class history in Sudbury. When older workers or retirees tell their stories about the strike, or when they compare it to previous strikes, they do this from a social position that allows long-range comparative reflections. They can measure the 2009-10 strike against prior conflicts for uniqueness or similarity, as in evident in such phrases as: "We've got a big fight ahead of us. But it's not like we haven't did that before," (Doug, 65 years old), or "I

think we've gotta stick together, that's all. Shut 'em down, like we used to do" (Tim, 52 years old). These interviewees do see the strike as a setback. But in their stories workers fought hard, and this in itself is admirable and worth celebrating. To them, the strike also represents the need to remain determined, to fight harder, and to recalibrate union strategy against changing global circumstances – though, as we saw in Chapter 5, how exactly to do this is difficult for many to imagine.

The historical narrative into which these interviewees fit the strike is characterized by an overall linear improvement of working-class conditions in the mines and the community. Whether on matters of pay, benefits, working conditions, or health and safety, older interviewees understand the union to have engaged in determined efforts to ameliorate the worst aspects of a difficult and dangerous industry. Thus, the outcome of the recent strike is a bitter pill for them to swallow, and in some cases sits uneasily with their emphases on the admirable determination of the strikers. Many blamed the company in their narratives. Although they also pointed out some strategic missteps, older workers did not hold the union responsible for the shortcomings of the collective agreement, and most described the union as capable of refining its approach and meeting the challenges presented by Vale "next time around" (Walter, 74 years old). To them, the future is unwritten insofar as workers are able to "stick together" and "fight," as Alain suggested.

In contrast, younger workers fit the strike into union history in two ways: first, some discussed the strike as a complete rupture with a past of stable employment and industrial growth that they imagine to be foreclosed to them; second, a number of

young interviewees felt that the strike was not worth it, or was a past event about which they are mostly ambivalent.

James, who compared his current, more secure, job with his previous work as a contractor, described the working conditions encountered by earlier generations as unlikely to return: “Things have changed a lot, as far as I hear. I’m happy to have secure work [pause] but I don’t think it’s gonna be like the guys say it was when they started.” In such narratives, the material security enjoyed by older coworkers or family members is either over or unlikely to persist or to return. Instead of a linear process of incremental improvements, younger workers described uncertainty, declining employment opportunities, and a new employer determined to bend the union to its will. These interviewees positioned the 2009-10 strike as representative and encompassing of all these economic trends. Although many acknowledged that working conditions in the nickel mining industry might for some time have been worsening, they still viewed the strike as a definitive event that both confirmed the downward trend of nickel mining in Sudbury and indicated that reversing this to benefit workers is improbable.

Interviewees who felt the strike was not worth the risk, or caused workers to lose far too much, used narratives that emphasized futility. Ian, who was working as a contractor at the time of the strike, thought that given Vale’s aggressiveness, the union should not have struck so soon. “Everyone knew that they came in here ready to go [demanding concessions]. I don’t know why the union thought they could hold them off. It seems dumb,” he surmised. The outcome of the strike left Ian and several other young

workers angry at, and in some cases, indifferent toward the union. Dave, for instance, concluded: “The union doesn’t feel like it’s for me. I wasn’t on strike, but I hear from guys, it was a loss. I stay away from all that” [union meetings and activity]. Workers such as Dave felt disconnected from the union and were thus often dismissive of its current operations. Although some of these workers still nonetheless acknowledged that the union is there to represent them, and could serve an important role in protecting their rights, they described it as inadequate and uninterested in doing so. As we will see below, such beliefs about the union de-mobilize worker participation and feed into a generational discourse that older workers tell about young workers’ lack of commitment.

***Generational Discourse, Memory, and Mobilization***

In the previous discussion I explored how workers of different ages remembered the strike. I did this to show how material conditions, such as the employment relations during interviewees’ formative work years, influenced memories and narratives. However, among the miners as elsewhere, 'generations’ are as much a discursive construction as they are a material force.

Older workers, for example, used a “generational discourse” (Foster 2013:7) to explain what they see as the relationship between younger workers’ insufficient participation in union affairs and the union’s declining fortunes. Alain’s comments were representative:

> We gotta take action. If they strike somewhere else, then we gotta shut 'em down here […] I think that all the workers need to think seriously about this. The problem I see is that a lot of young guys, they aren't interested, they're not engaged. They don't put in the time or effort. Their generation think these things [union gains and rights] are just here to stay. This is a huge problem. Our union can only win when all the workers are involved in the fight. (Alain, 56 years old)

Here, Alain characterizes the younger generation of workers as disengaged and entitled. His succession of statements beginning with "they" accentuates the qualities he positions young workers as lacking, while contrasting 'them' to older workers who ostensibly do possess these traits. This generational discourse functions as a way for older workers to position themselves and contrast the qualities of younger workers that they feel are harming the union. Relatedly, it provides them with part of a story to explain why the union is struggling to meet the contemporary challenges posed by Vale.

According to such explanations, younger workers' lack of commitment impedes the mobilization necessary to challenge the company. In the narratives of workers such as Alain, struggling against a new, international employer necessitates that workers revive and extend the tactics that they previously deployed regionally. Collective action, "the way we used to do it" (Dale, 55 years old), remains the answer to company intransigence in the narratives of these workers. However, they reason that younger workers, through a dearth of effort and commitment, undermine the capacity for such action. Foster (2013) finds similar narratives across a range of occupational groups. Generational discourse function as a type of common sense explanation to make sense of larger social and economic changes.

Yet, the youngest interviewees in my sample shared their older colleagues' concerns about and antipathy toward Vale. As they described it, their lack of engagement with the union stems from what they see as its paucity of attention to their issues, and the ways that younger workers' interests have been harmed in recent collective agreements. However, some older interviewees explained younger workers' disengagement through a generational discourse that emphasized these workers' lack of commitment and willingness to take part in collective action. Thus, although generation can serve as a device for people to make sense of social and historical change, it can also obscure the causes of change, and instead furnish speakers with atomizing and individualizing explanations. Rather than explain young workers' lack of union participation as a consequence of the erosion of stable employment, older interviewees used generational difference to reverse the order and construe the union's recent losses as a result of young workers' weak commitment to the union. This points to a fundamental contradiction at the heart of the union's current circumstances. Improving workers' lives and preventing further losses depends on mass mobilization and member involvement. Yet, the uneven nature of union concessions in recent years generates divisions that militate against broad, coordinated action (King 2017; Peters 2010). In addition, the very nature of trade unionism that the postwar compromise consolidated limits direct and sustained member involvement. This model benefited older workers in this study when capitalist growth and productivity allowed the union to bargain gains. Under conditions of neoliberal flexibility and union weakness, the model fails to deliver such material gains to younger workers.

As a result, younger workers are juggling identities that seem to conflict. They are union members; yet many also have previous experience as precarious, contract workers and feel that recent union concessions hurt them disproportionately. Moreover, older workers and family members seem to attribute to them multiple, fluctuating identities and characteristics. On the one hand, when these older speakers tell stories about, or draw lessons from, Sudbury's working-class history, they include the next 'generation' of workers in narratives that are still ongoing. But on the other hand, the generational discourse that they use to diagnose current union issues positions young workers as different from themselves as well as their predecessors. In so doing, their generational discourse lays at least some of the blame for recent union losses and challenges at the feet of young workers. This tendency to both include and blame young workers appeared in several older interviewees' historical narratives. For instance, stories about the struggle to establish the union or about previous strikes at Inco had this dual character. Through such stories older workers established the importance and contributed relevance of class struggle of the postwar variety in Sudbury. However, on several occasions these interviewees then summarized by using generational discourse as a warning of what might happen to the union if young workers fail to take on the responsibilities that union membership demands. Jerry provided an exemplar of this narrative structure:

> I think sometimes guys get too used to the way things have been, you know? You forget that people had to fight like hell to have not just good work and a pension and that, but hell, to have a union, period. This was tough work up here, and Inco was no picnic in the beginning. I'm sure you've seen this

> movie 'The Hole Story.'[2] They really tell it like it was. Guys had to really fight to get their rights. I never forget that. But my fear sometimes is that, especially a lot of these younger fellas, they take it all for granted, and think maybe the union is just here to stay [pause] maybe it don't matter if they come to this meeting, or stand up and fight when Vale does this or that. That's a bad road to go down. (Jerry, 65 years old)

Warnings similar to Jerry's about the dangers of generational disengagement showed up in six of the eleven interviews with workers over 50 years old. Jerry's narrative, in particular, nicely demonstrates the simultaneous inclusion and exclusion of young workers. With his first use of the phrase "guys," Jerry makes no reference to any particular group of workers, yet is probably alluding to young people. When he again uses this phrase ("Guys had to really fight"), he is making an historical reference to those who established the union and made material gains throughout the subsequent decades. The use of the same pronoun to refer to both to those who fought to establish the union and those who might now be taking it for granted indicates that Jerry broadly includes them in the same group (Sudbury's workers). Who Jerry includes by this reference is also gendered. He did not mention women's involvement in these strikes or in union efforts more generally. However, he closes with a warning about "young fellas," whose supposed entitlement and disconnection he contrasts to the resolve of those workers who came before. Here, he is more specific about who he imagines to be posing a threat to the continued strength of the union.

[2] Jerry is referring to the 2011 National Film Board documentary, *The Hole Story*, directed by Richard Desjardins and Robert Monderie, about the history of mining in the Northeastern Ontario and Abitibi-Témiscamingue regions. Sudbury figures prominently in the film, and several interviewees mentioned and had positive comments about it.

As several of the youngest interviewees stated, these types of generational narratives are not only products of the interview encounter; young workers have heard them on the job or in their families as well. As Dave stated: “Yeah, a lot of old guys like to blame shit on us, how we’re not fighting the good fight like them.” Thus, generational discourse points to real tension between workers of different age groups. This is the case even if by being couched in the language of generation it masks the material forces, such as precarious employment and employer anti-unionism that give rise to division and antagonism between workers. Other interviewees, such as James, notice that his father’s stories about union history often carry with them accusations that workers of James’ generation are putting past victories at risk. This confuses James. As he understands it, listening to older workers’ stories is part of understanding the meaning of being working class in Sudbury. Yet, these stories often carry with them generational scolding. “Like, it seems sometimes like guys like him [his father] are angry about what’s gone down recently, which I get, but they are taking it up with the wrong people,” James explained.

James’ above assessment of his father’s generational discourse is linked to the contradiction that I quoted James alluding to at the beginning of this dissertation: between the working-class subjectivity learned through the processes of social remembering and narration, and workers’ experiences of the changing socioeconomic conditions of mining in Sudbury. Young workers like James juggle narratives about working-class identity alongside descriptions of their own conditions of employment or beliefs about their future prospects in the nickel mining industry. They re-narrate stories

and memories they have heard from coworkers and family members, often identifying themselves as sharing common beliefs and a working-class subjectivity in the process. Yet, they also understand that the material conditions which gave rise to the stable jobs and union structures of the postwar era are eroding, leaving insecurity and precarity for many workers who recently entered, or are now entering, the workforce. For some workers, such as Dave, this recognition extends to criticisms of his union. He admitted: "I hear old guys say we're not working with the union. They're right. I stay away." Others are not so forthright, but nonetheless feel a growing lack of connection that stems at least in part from how union concessions have harmed newer workers.

To understand this dynamic, we should recall Willis' (1981) concept of "penetration" (p.174), which he uses to describe the ways that cultural forms of resistance can critique socio-political structures without explicitly naming their target. Young workers' criticism of, and disengagement from, the union suggests that they feel its structures and practices do not produce results for them, even if they do not articulate the issue in these terms. This at least hints that in their depoliticized critiques and disassociation, there is also recognition that change is necessary. As Willis puts it:

> If there are moments when cultural forms make real penetrations of the world then no matter what distortions follow, there is always the possibility of strengthening and working from this base. If there has been a radical genesis of conservative outcomes then at least there exists a *capacity* for opposition (p.174-5, emphasis in original).

## Conclusion

In this chapter – the final covering the thematic areas of class identity – I have focused on how workers' narratively make union history, and the generational conflicts that emerged in my interview data. In doing so, I have shed light on some of the ways workers in this study were active in the 'making' of the postwar model of trade unionism. In addition, I have highlighted how the limitations and consequences of postwar unionism manifest at the level of workers' identity, subjectivity, memory, and consciousness.

I first traced the making of union history in workers' narratives, looking at how workers framed past events, and at the places where historical memory is transmitted and reproduced. I argued that interviewees centre the postwar class compromise as the natural and desirable outcome of past class struggle. By doing this, they normalize its conditions and judge subsequent union and company actions against the yardstick of Fordist labour relations. Older workers in particular have a strong attachment to the class relations of this period. Postwar labour relations thus count among the material bases upon which miners in this study developed class subjectivity. As a consequence, this class subjectivity shapes how these workers participate (or do not) in their union and engage in class conflict. In addition, this class subjectivity also relies on a gender division of labour predicated on the social and emotional labour of women. Indeed, part of the inter-generational transmission of class identity takes place within a household structured by the 'male breadwinner' model of paid male employment and unpaid female household labour. Social remembering and the reproduction of class identity,

however, also take place in union spaces to which workers attach special meaning. To understand this phenomenon in the interview data, I employed the notion of "cultural memory" (Assmann 2008), and showed how the embodied, symbolic forms of union history in Sudbury shape workers' sense of collective identity and aid in the local reproduction of class subjectivity.

In the second half of this chapter, I turned to discourses and tensions that emerged in the interview data around the question of generations. Here, I found that workers under 40 often narratively distanced themselves from the union, whereas workers over 50 were more likely to take discursive possession of it (referring to *our* union, and using *we* to mean both workers and the union). I then showed the divergent ways in which workers of different ages remembered and interpreted the most recent strike. I contend that the material conditions of employment in different workers' formative work years influenced how they remember the strike, and how they judge the union's actions during and after it. In that section, I looked at how socioeconomic conditions influenced workers' memory, before turning to the ways in which older workers deploy "generational discourse" (Foster 2013) to explain the supposed lack of commitment in union affairs among their younger counterparts. Older workers use generational discourse about younger workers' entitlement to partially explain contemporary challenges facing the union.

Here, we get a good look at the contradiction with which I opened the dissertation. Younger workers learn, and in many cases feel connected to, a working-class identity that is transmitted and reproduced locally and inter-generationally. Yet,

the post-1962 material conditions out of which this class identity emerged have been slowly eroding – and most recently, directly attacked by a new, multinational owner at the mines. There thus emerges a tension between the reproduction of working-class identity, as it proceeds through social remembering and narration, and the lived experiences of workers – particularly the youngest in my sample – who face growing precariousness and an uncertain future at work and beyond.

# Chapter 7

## Conclusion

[A] world without utopias inevitably looks back.

Enzo Traverso (2016:9)

In this dissertation, I have explored the relationship between material conditions and the making of working-class identity through the analysis of 26 oral history interviews with male nickel miners in Sudbury, Ontario. I have shown how a particular configuration of class relations institutionally coalesced after the Second World War, and then traced its longstanding impacts on workers' subjectivity. Through the use of oral history interviewing and narrative analysis, my research demonstrates that the integration of workers and their unions into the system of postwar labour relations

produced particular, and often circumscribed, ways of articulating class interests. Although the institutional forms that labour-capital relations took under the system of industrial pluralism identified with PC 1003 and the Rand Formula played a significant role in shaping union structures and working-class capacity and agency, there is more to the story. The making of working-class identity was not, and is not, simply a top-down phenomenon. The interviews analyzed in this dissertation show the ways in which workers actively participate in the making and re-making of class. This study demonstrates that this incorporation and its reproduction over time also have subjective and ideological components. Concepts from memory studies and narrative analysis have allowed me to inquire about the processes through which class identity is reproduced, and to analyze the subjective consequences of the postwar class compromise.

A contradiction lies at the heart of working-class identity as I have characterized it in this study. On the one hand, workers in Sudbury draw on occupational, place-based, and historical identifications in the process of making class meaningful and durable over time. On the other hand, it is precisely these sectoral, spatial, and generational articulations that limit class formation and solidarity, and constrain working-class agency as the material conditions that gave rise to the postwar compromise come undone. These findings should raise questions about the consequences of the postwar class compromise for worker activism, and provoke new questions about class formation, identity, and consciousness in an era characterized by “coercive” (Panitch and Swartz [2003] 2009) labour relations, neoliberal flexibility, and the growth of precarious labour.

**The Making and Reproduction of Class Identity**

This study grew out of a personal connection to Sudbury, and an interest in the history of miners in the region. I first began to formulate the project with a set of research questions revolving around the impact of the multinational corporation Vale's takeover of Inco's mines and processing facilities in 2006. Knowing that the bitterness of the strike that followed in 2009-10 was still palpable among many workers at Vale, I planned to enquire about how the ownership change was affecting workers.

As I prepared to enter the field, however, I was compelled to deepen my research questions after preliminary discussions with key informants underlined the need to engage with how class formation and class identity historically took shape in Sudbury. As I gathered information about the takeover and the strike, and talked to some workers who would later become interviewees in my sample,[1] it became clear that I needed to pursue much deeper questions about the formation of class identity and subjectivity, and the institutional expression of class interests. Understanding the last several years of labour relations could only be accomplished by reaching back and engaging with workers about the making of Sudbury's working class and nickel mining industry. Sudbury thus offered a research opportunity to engage issues of class formation and class identity as phenomena over time. This dissertation is as much the result of the direction provided by workers, as it is my own research interests.

[1] See Appendix A.

Through this research, I have sought to grapple with the tensions produced when studying class as both a sociological object and historical relation (Burawoy [1979] 1982, 1985; Chibber 2017; Eidlin 2014; Dunk 2003; Palmer 2017; Passerini [1987] 2009; Pzrewoski 1993; Thompson [1963] 1982, 1978; Willis 1981; Wright 1997). Finding theoretical work that relies too heavily on an abstract notion of class and class interest wanting, I have studied the making and reproduction of working-class identity as empirical and historical processes. This has meant exploring the ways that class is both an always-unfinished process of re-making, and inextricably tied to other modes of social differentiation (Bannerji 2005; Bhattacharya 2017; Camfield 2004/5; Fraser 2014; Roediger 2006). Explaining the formation and reproduction of class subjectivity in this study has involved attention to the roles of occupation, skill, gender, place, and age in the making of class. Furthermore, I have been concerned to show how the institutions of capital and the state, as well as the organizations that workers created to represent and defend themselves, shaped class identity among Sudbury's male miners (Callinicos 1987; Harvey 1995; Lembcke 1988; Offe and Wiesenthal 1980). This led me to question how the postwar class compromise in Canada – and its regional particularity in Sudbury – was implicated in the narratives of workers in my study (Burawoy [1979] 1982; Camfield 2011; McInnis 2002; Panitch and Swartz 2003).

In conducting this research, I used oral history interviewing (Frisch 1990; Portelli 1991, 1997; Sangster 1994, 2015) both for its practical research advantages, i.e. encouraging as much interviewee direction during data collection as possible, and for its theoretical orientation, which emphasizes subjective experiences, historical context, and

the relationships between the past, present, and future in narrative accounts. This research approach allowed me to address the subjective features of the making of class in Sudbury and formulate an argument about how the work of reproducing class identity takes place socially and historically. I also used fine-grained analyses (Bischoping and Gaszo 2016; De Fina 2011; Riesman 1993) of workers' narratives to undercover key findings relating to the reproduction of class identity among male miners in this study. I have argued that social remembering (Halbwachs [1952] 1992; Olick and Robbins 1998) and re-narration (Welzer 2008) are key to understanding how workers in this study make and re-make themselves as a segment of the Canadian working class (Thompson [1963] 1982).

**The Thematic Areas of Class Identity**

Interview data has been the primary data source informing this dissertation. Although it has also been my objective to situate these workers' narratives in their historical context, I have used interviewees' accounts as much as possible to deduce a picture of how the reproduction of class identity takes place as a social process.

As workers engage in a narrative construction of class in this study they draw on available discourses that have been given local currency by the institutional forms that class has taken since the postwar compromise. However, I argue that class identity is also made and reproduced through collaborative processes of remembering and storytelling. At its best, constituting class identity in this way provides workers with ways to make sense of the world and their place in it. Workers make and re-make

identity through the processes of remembering and narrating; workers generate a meaningful sense of their present surroundings and the historical legacies that produced them through these processes. However, this narrative construction of class, because it draws on historically particular notions of occupation, place, and working-class action to buttress its meaning, fares less well in aiding working-class men in this study to adapt to the changing local circumstances they now confront. Moreover, because class identity among male nickel miners in this study drew so heavily on these local particularities it also impeded class formation more broadly across space and time.

In Chapters 4 through 6, I analyzed workers' narratives along what I have called the thematic areas of class identity. This organization was partly the result of workers' own strategies of expressing their thoughts, and partly the outcome of my interpretative interventions. However, covering the material in this way has allowed me to present the issues involved in the historical making of class and to explore the pressures bearing on workers and their union in each of the thematic areas.

In Chapter 4, I situated workers' accounts of their work and workplace within the institutional context of the postwar compromise. In addressing these issues, the work of those identified with the "social structure of accumulation" framework (Kotz 1994; Tabb 2012) was helpful in conceptualizing how broad systems of socioeconomic organization integrate social actors, in the workplace and beyond. The labour relations framework of PC 1003 and the Rand Formula made unionization and collective bargaining legal rights for workers, while simultaneously taming and constraining class struggle. Inco, the United Steelworkers, and various levels of government worked throughout the late

1950s and early 1960s to de-radicalize miners in Sudbury. The system of regularized class relations, managerial control, and business unionism that coalesced during this period sharply influenced the contours of class subjectivity. The bargaining unit became, in many respects, the outer limit of class solidarity. Although workers in this study discussed moments of solidarity and alliances with workers outside their workplace or Sudbury during certain strikes or campaigns, they were far more likely to describe how solidarity grew among workers in their own workplace and community. Moreover, after the wildcat strike of 1966, and the subsequent victory in the legal strike of 1969, workers' strike action conformed to the legal stipulations of industrial pluralism. Workers describe how conflict at the point of production diminished – with some resurgence when Inco began mechanizing the mines in the late 1970s – and how rank-and-file member participation in the union came to be limited to moments of legal strike action, or to health and safety committee work. As miners made material gains within this labour relations framework, they simultaneously became institutionally and ideologically disconnected from workers elsewhere in the economy. They became exemplary of a phenomenon that Harvey (1995) refers to as "militant particularism." That is, miners would engage in periods of relatively intense class conflict to expand or defend rights at their workplace, or in some cases within the local mining industry. Yet, the institutional parameters of collective bargaining, and the ideological forms of class consciousness that the institutions of the class compromise encouraged, militated against the union building broad class alliances.

Class identity among the interviewees in this study is thus characterized by a strong occupational identity. However, contemporary issues in the nickel mining industry highlight the contradictory character of this identity. As the company undertook process innovations to reduce labour costs, they deskilled miners and reduced the total workforce substantially. Coeval with these technical innovations, Inco implemented a series of post-Fordist managerial initiatives that emphasized 'cooperation' while diminishing the power of the union (Clement 1981; Hall 1993; USW 1987). Additionally, first Inco and then Vale began to increasingly rely on a growing pool of contract firms and labourers to perform tasks formally completed in-house by union members (Robinson 2005; Roth, Steedman, and Condratto 2015). Combined, these changes have transformed the mines and miners' place within them. Yet, miners retain a strong occupational identity, even though it does not well reflect extant material conditions or provide the ideological tools to confront the changes that have harmed workers over the past decades.

The postwar compromise not only limited class formation sectorally and occupationally, but also spatially. As this labour relations system oriented class struggle and class consciousness towards the workplace, it is also spatially organized class relations. In Chapter 5, I explored this dynamic, showing how a sense of place was and remains important to how workers make class a meaningful identification, even as the content of such place-based identity shifts in response to the spatial reorganization of the mining industry. Although workers emphasize local or regional identity when discussing Inco, they draw on notions of 'Canadian-ness' when they describe Brazilian

conglomerate Vale's takeover of the mines. Thus, while workers change the ways they make place meaningful, they rarely imagine solidarity extending beyond national borders. This partly stems from the institutional impediments to organizing global solidarity, but it is also due to what some workers describe as the different forms that unionism takes in other countries, particularly in the Global South. Dale (see p.214-5), for example, described his surprise at learning of the close relationship that Brazilian unions have with social movements fighting poverty. That workers were surprised by such varieties of social movement unionism elsewhere illustrates how trade unions in Canada shaped particularly limited forms of class consciousness and organization.

As is true with respect to the workplace, the postwar compromise influenced the ways that space and place figure in the making of class. The narratives I have analyzed in this dissertation suggest that this has resulted in contradictory outcomes at the level of workers' subjectivity. One the one hand, place gives class immediacy and buttresses it with cultural practices and local traditions. On the other hand, place-based identities hamper efforts to imagine solidarity at larger scales and build bonds across the space on which global capital organizes ownership, production, and exploitation. These issues appear especially relevant because of the way that foreign takeovers have integrated Sudbury's mining workforce more fully into global capitalism.

Workers' narratives about work and place are also folded within their accounts of local union history. In Chapter 6, I explored how workers frame past events and explained the processes through which interviewees transmit historical memory and reproduce class identity. For older workers, the postwar class compromise and business

unionism produced significant material gains and stable employment relations. Their narratives thus frame this arrangement as an inevitable and desirable outcome of the history of class struggle in Sudbury. Moreover, when older workers remember recent events, such as the 2009-10 strike, they do so from a perspective informed by their attachments to the class relations of the postwar compromise. Older workers maintain an historical sense of their union and working-class culture that presents the union as adaptive and evolving. They envision their union continuing to play a role in maintaining and improving living standards and working conditions. Younger workers, many of whom have experience as contract workers and have been disproportionately harmed by concessions in recent collective agreements, see things differently. Some feel disconnected from the union, while others question its continued relevance or the soundness of its objectives. It is thus along 'generational' lines where we most clearly see the limitations of the form that unionism took in Sudbury from the 1960s onward. Older workers deploy "generational discourse" (Foster 2013) to explain younger workers' supposed lack of commitment to the union, rather than explaining this as a result of the ways that employers and the state have abandoned the postwar class compromise, or through reflecting on the limitations of postwar trade unionism.

By analyzing workers' narratives across these thematic areas, I have shown how workers actively participated in the making of the postwar model of trade unionism, as well as highlighted some of the consequences of this union model as the postwar class compromise continues to come apart. Workers' class identity remains resilient, reproduced through practices of social remembering and storytelling. Yet, workforce

restructuring, foreign takeovers at the mines, precipitous job loss, and the growth of precarious labour have all been slowly undermining the material conditions on which workers made their class identity. After listening to workers' accounts, and studying the various changes that Sudbury has undergone over the past several decades, one senses that class relations and union organization are in need of structural change, yet many workers are wedded to outmoded forms of collective action. Workers across the sample, whether they remain committed to the union, or find that it now delivers them far fewer material gains, think of worker organization in the form of the service model of postwar trade unionism. Yet, the socioeconomic changes these workers confront call for broader organizing along the lines of social movement unionism or other forms of base building beyond the bargaining unit, and beyond the community of Sudbury (Camfield 2011; McAlevey 2016; Ross 2008).

**Making and Unmaking the Postwar Compromise**

In this dissertation I have shown how the social relations of the postwar compromise shaped class identity and class subjectivity. Toward this end, I have built upon sociological and historical research that has studied the political economy of this arrangement of class relations, and its implications for workers in North America (Abella 1973; Burawoy [1979] 1982, 1985; Camfield 2011; Dudley 1994; Fudge 2005; Fudge and Tucker 2004; Heron 1996; High 2003, 2010, 2015; MacDowell 1983; McInnis 2002; Milkman 1997; Palmer 1983, 2003, 2017; Panitch and Swartz [2003] 2009; Wells 1995a, 1995b; Workman 2009). It has been my objective to see class as not only a matter of

social and institutional relations, but also as a question of relations within particular segments of the working class. I have thus studied workers' oral history narratives to understand how the consolidation of the postwar class compromise in Sudbury influenced workers' class consciousness, subjectivity, and identity. This dissertation demonstrates that as workers' make and re-make class identity, they also play a role in reproducing the class relations that industrial pluralism consolidated. As Palmer (2017) contends:

> Always situated in a particular context and a specific social setting, class formation is one part structured necessity (what the social formation determines) and one part active creation (what the particular components of the working class do within the limits imposed upon them) (p.378).

By thinking about class identity and its relationship to class formation – and studying this through the lens of collective memory and subjectivity – I have been able to understand the processes through which workers engage in this 'making' and reproducing of class relations.

That I was not able to include female miners in my interview data is a limitation of this research. As Keck and Powell (2000) and Luxton (1990) have shown, gender has been integral to the organization of mining and unionism in Sudbury, both through the gendered labour of social reproduction, and the vital role that women have played in union support. As I have shown throughout the dissertation, male miners' class identity is often quite gendered, evidenced through frequent uses of "the guys" and "the men." Given the challenges and harassment that women faced when attempting to enter the

industry and gain full-time employment at the mines in the mid-to-late 1970s and after, having female voices in this study would have provided additional insights on the role of gender in the political economy of mining and on the making of class subjectivity. In particular, given that female employment increased concomitantly with changes to the technical organization of production, this raises questions about how workers understood the relations between these changes. Moreover, because Sudbury's local economy has partially deindustrialized and come to be characterized by service sector labour, future research should expand the interview sample to include both female workers in the mines and workers in the local economy more broadly. Such additional data would help to build a fuller picture of the making and transformation of working-class identity and class formation in the region, particularly its gendered and feminized dimensions.

This dissertation demonstrates that workers actively shaped the local contours of the postwar class compromise in Sudbury. Yet, it also underlines the consequences that this local form of class identity had on working-class organization and collective action. As the workers in this study, and their coworkers, friends, families, and neighbours face growing challenges from the ways that global capitalism has embedded them within the national and world economies, the structural and subjective limitations resulting from this legacy are likely to become appreciable. We have seen certain manifestations of this in the way that young workers described their disassociation from the union. Young workers – the most harmed by structural changes in the mining industry – are experiencing postwar trade unionism in decline. They are therefore critical of a form of

unionism that relegates worker activity and participation to iterative periods of conflict between collective agreements. However, their critiques are dissociative rather than pre-figurative, and raise questions about the capacity of their alienation to – perhaps eventually – serve as the impetus for union revitalization.

This dissertation is thus also a contribution to research on union renewal and labour movement revitalization (Bronfenbrenner 1998; Camfield 2011; Fairbrother and Yates 2013; Frege and Kelly 2004; Lévesque, Murray, and Le Queux 2005; McAlevey 2016; Milkman and Voss 2004; Ross 2008; Turner 2005). Scholars interested in these topics have produced important work, particularly when they are able to link labour research to active worker struggles. However, future research on union revitalization could more fully take into account how the limitations of industrial pluralism and bureaucratic unionism manifest in forms of worker identity and consciousness. Renewing labour and encouraging social movement unionism is as much a question of subjectivity, identity, and consciousness as it is of institutions. When we are not studying workers or unions organizing in new sectors, we must contend with the historical legacies of class, organization, and class identity. It is no simple task to make anew what workers have made over decades or perhaps longer. Moreover, there are lessons to be drawn, and questions to be raised, about how various forms of collective organization shape identity and subjectivity, and vice versa. The attacks on 'the closed shop' and automatic dues check-off in the United States, and the frequent use of back-to-work legislation in Canada, give these questions new urgency (Marvit 2018; Savage and Smith 2017). As workers, unions, and scholars engage in various projects to expand

the collective power of the working class or segments of it, they will necessarily have to confront the institutional and subjective legacies of the postwar class compromise and industrial pluralism, as well as workers' practices of reproducing the class identities that they formed within it.

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# Appendix A

## Interviews Conducted[1]

| Pseudonym | Age | Employment Status | Family in Mining | Strike Experience | Contract Work Experience | Held Union Position |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ian | 26 | Employed | X | | X | |
| Dave | 26 | Employed | | | X | X |
| Yves | 28 | Employed | X | | | |
| Ryan | 29 | Employed | | | X | |
| Brad | 31 | Employed | X | X | | |
| Matt | 31 | Employed | | | X | |
| Paul | 32 | Employed | X | X | X | |
| Rick | 32 | Employed | X | X | | |
| James* | 34 | Employed | X | X | X | |
| Ben | 36 | Employed | | X | | |
| Anthony* | 37 | Employed | X | X | X | X |
| Larry | 45 | Employed | X | X | | |
| Pierre | 50 | Employed | | X | | |
| Tim | 52 | Employed | X | X | | |
| Dale | 55 | Employed | X | X | | |
| Henry | 55 | Employed | | | | |
| Alain | 56 | Employed | X | X | | X |
| Peter | 50 | Employed | | X | | |
| Fred | 61 | Employed | X | X | | |
| Brian | 61 | Employed | | X | | |
| Jerry | 65 | Retired | X | X | | X |
| Doug | 65 | Retired | X | X | | |
| Esa | 69 | Retired | X | X | | |
| Charles | 71 | Retired | X | X | | |
| Leon* | 72 | Retired | X | X | | |
| Walter | 74 | Retired | | X | | X |
| Average: | 48.2 | Total: | 17 | 20 | 7 | 5 |

[1] * Designates initial key informants who helped facilitate this research.

# Appendix B

## Interview Guides

The following interview guides were used while conducting fieldwork. I revised my interview guide twice during the course of this research, though changes were minimal. This was done largely to remove questions that elicited short or limited responses from interviewees, or generated discussions that were better covered in the process of answering other questions. I added additional questions in the third iteration of the guide. The reader should also bear in mind that these interview schedules functioned as 'guides' only. In many instances, I did not ask all questions. In other cases, interview prompts and follow-up questions not listed produced more data than the queries listed below. I sought to conduct these interviews in the tradition of oral history. I therefore worked to give interviewees as much space as possible to direct the course of the interview as they saw appropriate.

**Interview Guide 1**

1. When did you begin working at the mine? What jobs have you held there?

2. Tell me about your job in the mine. What does a typical day look like on the job?

3. What do you remember about working for Inco?

4. Were you on strike at any point when Inco still owned the mine? Tell me about it.

5. What do you remember about Vale's purchase of Inco? What were other workers saying about it at the time?

6. Did you follow any news coverage of the ownership change? Do you remember talking to other people in the community outside of work about it?

7. What did the union do during the ownership change?

8. Do you think things have changed at work since Vale took over? How so?

9. How has working for Vale affected you personally? Do you think Vale has impacted workers at the mine generally?

10. Do you think Vale's ownership of the mines has had an impact on Sudbury and the surrounding area? In what ways?

11. Were you on strike in 2009-2010? Could you tell me about it?

12. Was there anything different about 2009 compared to previous strikes against Inco?

13. What do you remember about how workers felt about the strike at the time? Did you feel supported by the broader community?

14. How do you feel about the union's handling of the strike?

15. In your opinion, what was the outcome of the strike?

16. Do you think work at Vale has changed post-strike? In what ways?

17. Is there anything else you would like to talk about that we have not covered?

**Interview Guide 2**

1. When did you begin working at the mine? What jobs have you held there?

2. Tell me about your job in the mine. What does a typical day look like on the job?

3. What do you remember about working for Inco?

4. Were you on strike at any point when Inco still owned the mine? Tell me about it.

5. What do you remember about Vale's purchase of Inco? What were other workers saying about it at the time?

6. What did the union do during the ownership change?

7. Do you think things have changed at work since Vale took over? How so?

8. How has working for Vale affected you personally? Do you think Vale has impacted workers at the mine generally?

9. Do you think Vale's ownership of the mines has had an impact on Sudbury and the surrounding area? In what ways?

10. Were you on strike in 2009-2010? Could you tell me about it?

11. What do you remember about how workers felt about the strike at the time? Did you feel supported by the broader community?

12. How do you feel about the union's handling of the strike?

13. In your opinion, what was the outcome of the strike?

14. Do you think work at Vale has changed post-strike? In what ways?

15. Is there anything else you would like to talk about that we have not covered?

**Interview Guide 3**

1. When did you begin working at the mine? What jobs have you held there? What jobs have you held previously?

2. Tell me about your job in the mine. What does a typical day look like on the job?

3. Do you have family who also work, or are retired from, the mine? What do you remember them telling you about work?

4. What do you remember about working for Inco?

5. Were you on strike at any point when Inco still owned the mine? Tell me about it.

6. Tell me about any union involvement you have ever had.

7. What do you remember about Vale's purchase of Inco? What were other workers saying about it at the time?

8. What did the union do during the ownership change?

9. Do you think things have changed at work since Vale took over? How so?

10. How has working for Vale affected you personally? Do you think Vale has impacted workers at the mine generally?

11. Do you think Vale's ownership of the mines has had an impact on Sudbury and the surrounding area? In what ways?

12. Were you on strike in 2009-2010? Could you tell me about it?

13. What do you remember about how workers felt about the strike at the time? Did you feel supported by the broader community?

14. How do you feel about the union's handling of the strike?

15. In your opinion, what was the outcome of the strike?

16. Do you think work at Vale has changed post-strike? In what ways?

17. Is there anything else you would like to talk about that we have not covered?

## Appendix C

### Informed Consent Form

# Informed Consent Form

**Study name**
Memory, Subjectivity, and Class Formation in a Mining Town

**Researchers**

Researcher name Adam D.K. King

Doctoral Candidate
Graduate Program in Sociology

Email address Office phone

**Purpose of the research**
This research is being conducted as part of the requirements of the doctoral degree in Sociology at York University. I am studying the impacts of ownership and workplace changes at Vale mines in Sudbury, Ontario. The interviews I am conducting with workers as a part of this research will form the basis of my dissertation. Content from these interviews may also be used in other papers, publications, or conference presentations.

**What you will be asked to do in the research**
Research participants will be interviewed about their time at work, their union, as well as their sense of the economic and social changes in Sudbury and in the broader community. Participants will be encouraged to tell their stories about their work life and time in Sudbury. Interviews will last between 45 and 90 minutes. No research inducements will be offered.

**Risks and discomforts**
No major risks are associated with this research. Participants can refuse to answer any questions they do not wish to, and may withdrawal from the interview at any time.

**Benefits of the research and benefits to you**
This research will contribute to knowledge in the disciplines of Sociology and Labour History. Research participants should expect no personal benefit from completing an interview.

**Voluntary participation**: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decisions not to volunteer will not influence the relationship you may have with the researchers or study staff or the nature of your relationship with York University either now, or in the future.

**Withdrawal from the study**: You can stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason, if you so decide. Your decision to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions, will not affect your relationship with the researchers, York University, or any other group associated with this project. In the event you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed wherever possible.

**Confidentiality**
Research participants will remain confidential, unless they choose to waive this. For interviewees who remain anonymous, no identifying information will be associated with the audio recording of his or her interview. These interviews will be stored on a passcode secure desktop computer and a hard drive stored in a locked drawer, and then deleted after a period of ten years. For interviewees who want to waive their confidentiality, their audio interview may be archived with the United Steelworkers at McMaster University after five years.

Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

**Questions about the research?**
If research participants have questions about the research in general or their role in the study, they should contact the Graduate Program in Sociology at York University, 4700 Keele St. 2075 Vari Hall, M3J 1P3 or by phone at 416-736-211 ext. 60312. The supervisor of this dissertation is Mark P. Thomas. He may be reached at or by phone at

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about the process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, you may contact the Senior Manager and Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, York Research Tower, York University, telephone 416-736-5914 or e-mail ore@yorku.ca

**Legal rights and signatures**:

I, _____, consent to participate in Memory, Subjectivity, and Class Formation in a Mining Town
Conducted by Adam D.K. King.
I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

**Signature** _____ **Date** _____
Participant

**Signature** _____ **Date** _____
Principal Investigator

**Optional: Additional consent**
I, _____, agree to waive my rights to anonymity and confidentiality, and understand that the audio recording of my interview will be interview will potentially be archived with the United Steelworkers collections at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario after a period of five years.

**Signature** _____ **Date** _____
Participant