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REVISITING CLASS: LESSONS FROM THEORIZING RACE AND GENDER IN ORGANIZATIONS

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This paper examines some of the reasons that social class has been relatively neglected by feminist scholars. The study of gender and organizations has expanded rapidly in the last ten years, and considerable progress has been made in theoretically bringing together gender and race. Yet class, although regularly invoked as one of the necessary three analytic categories, has not been re-theorized in a way that facilitates its use in a combined analysis. The paper proposes ways in which feminist insights about gender and race could be used to rethink class, with a focus on bringing class relations into our understanding of gender and work organizations. Finally, it concludes by exploring two intellectual strategies for studying class and its intersections with gender and race in the on-going life of work organizations.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The study of gender and organizations, a relatively new focus in feminist social science, has expanded rapidly in the last ten years. However, scholars in this field have not responded very energetically to the strong argument that feminists must not only examine gender patterns in social life, but must also bring class and race into the analysis in order to give a full account of the complexities of individual experience and social structures. This argument has been widely accepted among feminist scholars since the 1980s when feminist writers and academics who were also women of color or Third World women began pointing out that most feminist scholarship was actually about white, middle class, heterosexual women, and consequently ignored the lives of women in other class and race situations. The validity of this claim was accepted by many feminist scholars, who then expressed the commitment to studying “gender, class, and race.” But, it was easier to make the pledge than to carry it out in a thorough-going way. Researchers could add women of color to a sample or study in-depth the experiences of minority or working class women, but a conceptual integration of “gender, class, and race” was more difficult to achieve. Considerable progress has been made in theoretically bringing together gender and race (Glenn, 1999), but class, although regularly invoked as one of the necessary three, has not been retheorized in a way that facilitates its use in a combined analysis (Acker, 1999). This has particularly serious implications for the study of organizations because class-based inequalities affect organizational processes and important aspects of class relations originate in these processes.

In this paper I first look at some of the reasons that class has been relatively neglected by feminist scholars. Then, I examine some ways I earlier proposed (Acker, 1999) in which feminist insights about gender and race could be used to rethink class, with a focus on bringing class relations into our understanding of gender and work organizations. Finally, I propose two different intellectual strategies for studying class and its intersections with gender and race in the on-going life of work organizations.

II. WHY FEMINISTS FORGOT ABOUT CLASS

Class was the central concept for understanding structurally based inequalities at the time that the present feminist movement emerged in the late 1960s. Feminist theorists attempted to modify male-centered class concepts, hoping to more adequately account for women's subordination within what were seen as "general" theories of societal processes. These attempts at modification were undertaken within Marxist, structural-functional, and occupational/categorical theories. None of these attempts were wholly successful; class concepts modeled on social reality seen from male perspectives could not be easily reshaped to take into account female reality (Acker, 1980, 1999; Sokoloff, 1980). Although a massive amount of research was being done on sex segregation, the gendered wage gap, practices of discrimination, and women's experiences in the labor force and work place, efforts to theorize class within a gender perspective declined as scholars were dissatisfied with the results. Thus, debates over the issues almost disappeared by the middle of the 1980s (Beechey, 1987; Barrett, 1992). This meant that the old conceptual formulations that rendered women invisible and that failed to explain different gender situations within class societies persisted. When feminists began trying to put together gender, race, and class, the available concept of class was one that had never been successfully revised from a feminist perspective (Acker, 1999). In addition, when feminist scholars began to develop gender analyses of organizations, the concept of class was in deep eclipse in feminist work. Therefore, this area of research and theory developed without much attention to class.

A number of factors contributed to feminists forgetting about class. First, the debate had run into a dead end. There was not much more to say. Some of the impasse can be attributed to the type of discourse into which feminists had tried to enter: Marxist feminists had, on the whole, attempted to modify the structural Marxisms that were predominant among intellectuals in the 1960s and 1970s. These were highly abstract theoretical formulations positing relations among conceptual categories in which it was difficult to see any human agency or any concrete, embodied practices involved in making structures (e.g., Wright, 1985). Given that these abstractions contained an implicit male point of departure and assumptions about men's working lives (see, for example, Hartsock, 1983), inserting women and, for example, unpaid labor undermined these assumptions and threatened to upset the systematic formulations themselves. An additional problem was, however, that class theory itself was in a crisis, or so numerous male writers had been claiming since the early 1970s (e.g., Giddens, 1973). The world of production and capitalist relations was changing as the old industrial working class began to decline and the heavily female service sector rapidly expanded. The old theories seemed inadequate for representing these changes. Anxiety over the adequacy of class analysis does not seem to be directly reflected in feminist discussions, but I think that it contributed to "forgetting."

The political-economic climate also contributed to forgetting about class. In the 1980s, as we all know, there was a shifting of influence and power away from working-class based interests and towards interests allied with big capital and big organizations. Not that capital had ever been less powerful than labor, but with the Reagan era in the U.S., neo-liberal economics and the celebration of free-market capitalism, backed by anti-labor legislation, there emerged the powerful argument that capitalism is "the only way." Class relations embedded in capitalist processes, it followed, were part of "the only way." Class relations, including inequality and

exploitation, as intrinsic to the fundamental and necessary organization of society became more legitimate than ever, while gender and race based inequalities, at least in public law and public discourse, were illegitimate. Discussions of class, particularly from a Marxist or working class perspective, began to be cast as irrelevant. What was relevant was how to organize production in the most efficient ways, how to tap the knowledge and creativity of employees, how to use new technologies to the fullest—all in order to win the competitive battles on the world economic stage. The collapse of the Soviet Union and of socialism there and in the Eastern European countries furthered the marginalization and irrelevance of class theories linked to socialist discourses. To talk about class was no longer cutting edge, it was old fashioned. Attacks on class exploitation were out of step. In this climate, many scholars began to develop feminist thinking in other directions, including towards analyses of culture and the ways in which cultural constructions contributed to the reproduction of exclusions and oppressions based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexualities, etc. This development was also part of the intellectual scene as “gender and organizations” began to emerge as a distinct domain of feminist attention.

Class relations are, however, still in existence. Economic power, exploitation, and capital accumulation have not disappeared, but are the dominant reality as globalization of production and finance capital has accelerated. Changes in class relations, and gender and race relations as well, are related to changes in production, economic organization, and technologies, so that understanding class is as essential as ever for understanding societal problems and individual fates, including the often differing fates of women and men. Large organizations, both private and public, are the major players in global economic processes, or in the “new world order.” Top managers’ decisions help to shape class relations, including increasing inequalities everywhere, as well as competitive strength and global financial markets. Looking at class processes within and between organizations is, thus, essential for understanding the functioning of organizations as well as understanding the often gendered outcomes of organizational changes for managers and other employees. However, a concept of class that is still implicitly built on assumptions about men’s working lives is inadequate for the task. In the next section, I explore the possibilities for rethinking class using feminist insights, focussing on class processes as these occur within organizations.

III. RETHINKING CLASS FROM A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

My rethinking of class is rooted in a much-modified Marxist understanding of class: “class” refers to economic, including production and distribution, relations of dominance and subordination that produce inequalities and contradictory interests. Mainstream organizational theorists do not talk about organizations in the language of class, but it seems apparent that fundamental class processes take place within work organizations. The wage relation, fundamental to understanding class in Marxist theory, is a relation structured primarily, although not entirely, within organizations. Organizational hierarchies contain and replicate dominance-subordination relations that are characteristic of class. Of course, bureaucratic hierarchies do not always and perfectly replicate class hierarchies of societies as wholes. Relatively small organizations, for example, may be primarily middle and working class in composition. However, on the whole, much of what is designated as “class processes” actually occurs in formally organized social entities and can be usefully studied in those contexts.

Certain feminist insights that originate in our attempts to comprehend gender can help in rethinking class (Acker, 1999). These are, first, that class, gender and race are interrelated in practice; class relations are formed in and through processes that also form gender and race relations. Second, class is best understood as social relations constructed through active practices, not as categories or classifications of people according to socio-economic characteristics or occupational status. Third, the complexity of class processes come into view when we study them from the viewpoints of different participants within organizations. Finally, we need to expand the notion of “the economic” in order to develop a concept of class that can encompass the economic situations of white women and people of color (Acker, 1999), as well as encompass contemporary changes in world class structures.

A. CLASS, GENDER AND RACE AS INTERRELATED

Class, race, and gender interconnections can be traced in the historical development of contemporary capitalism, both within and between particular states and nations. That is, the same concrete historical processes produced what we now call class, race, and gender. For example, the slave trade between emerging capitalist powers was integral to the early development of capitalism. Slavery constituted the conditions of exploitation and oppression in which the lives of black and white women and men in the United States were constructed as different and unequal. Slavery was not the only economic organizational form that shaped race, gender and class relations, but it continues to be a salient one. Slavery was not a mass of free floating relations, it was organized and occurred within and between organizations as they engaged in production and trade. The consequences of this history can be seen today in the ways in which class relations are patterned along lines of gender and race. For example, the “ruling class” within large organizations is still primarily a class of white men, while certain sectors of the “working class” are almost entirely female—clerical workers, nurses, teachers—or are entirely male—skilled trades.

Class, race, and gender patterns are not just the shards of history, but are continually created and recreated in today’s organizations, although variations in these patterns are great. Gender and

race based exclusions and segregation are everyday features of organizational life. In some cases, as in an advertising agency studied by Alvesson (1997), class lines are identical with gender lines. In other cases, such as a college that I and Don Van Houten recently studied, women were well represented at the upper levels while clerical workers were almost entirely women and skilled blue collar workers were almost entirely men.

The interweaving of gender, race, and class is more fundamental than the persistent distributions of men and women, white people and people of color, into particular class related positions, for the creation of such positions was almost always through processes in which gender and/or racial vulnerabilities and assumptions played a part. In some instances, class relations appear to be gender or race relations; the boss-secretary relation is both a class and gender relation. The wage relation itself, which is at the core of class as conventionally defined, can be seen as “gendered.” The notion that the wage relation is a gender-neutral contract between employer and employee is, as Carole Pateman (1988) has argued, based upon the idea that labor power can be separated from the self and sold as the individual’s property. But this idea is dependent upon the concept of the abstract individual of liberal theory, an individual who of necessity has no body if he is to represent a generalized human being. That individual is, in the genesis of the concept, a man. “When the individual has a female body, problems of separation of the self from the body’s ability to labor become evident, particularly when we consider that one meaning of to labor is to give birth. If we can argue that labor power cannot really be separated from the embodied self, then what we sell in the wage contract is that body, that self. The embodied self is always gendered, thus the wage relation, too, is gendered.” (Acker, 1999, 57).

B. CLASS RELATIONS AS ACTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES

This view of class relations is markedly different from the view that begins with an abstract, theoretical construction of class, assigns groups and individuals to positions within the construction and then hypothesizes correlations between class positions and such things as political convictions and affiliations. If we see class as an ongoing and frequently changing outcome of concrete practices, we focus much more on the process than on the “correlates of class.” This is the contribution of the many labor process studies that followed the publication of Harry Braverman’s *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (1974). Class relations are, to some degree, created outside the local organizational context where corporate decisions are made. Class relations are emergent in widespread management rules and procedures that are textually mediated and increasingly abstract, as Dorothy Smith (1990) has pointed out. Studies of wage systems (Acker, 1989; Steinberg, 1992) carried out as part of the pay equity movement in the U.S. provide examples of widespread, textually mediated managerial practices that replicate class inequalities as well as gender and race inequalities.

Class relations are written into laws, governing practices, and union-management agreements that specify, support, and sometimes limit the power of employers to control workers and the organization of production. Class based inequalities in monetary reward, control over resources, power, and authority are accepted as natural and necessary for the ongoing functioning of the socio-economic system. Thus, at the end of the twentieth century in the U.S., class exploitation and inequity have far more legitimacy than gender and race-based exploitation and inequity, which are illegal and defined as discrimination in many countries. No one with any political or

economic power, at least in the United States, discusses eliminating wage labor and mandating a communal and cooperative organization of production, although many at least claim to be in favor of eliminating gender and race inequality, discrimination, and segregation. This has not always been so. As waged work was established in the nineteenth century, it was called wage slavery, not a fitting occupation for free white men (Glenn, 1999). Labor unions have attempted to at least reduce absolute employer power. At other times, social movements, such as the radical feminist movement, have experimented with cooperative and collective forms of organizations in which equality and participation were central goals. At the present time, such opposition is very low, even as management has adopted the language of participation and empowerment, while retaining full power to organize, locate, and terminate employment.

Because of the legality of class and the widespread legitimacy of class inequalities, class relations may be more integral to work organization than gender or race relations. I have argued (Acker, 1990) that gender is deeply embedded in organizational history and present processes. I still believe that this is so, but at least at the present time, challenges to class patterns may be more difficult to make than challenges to gender and race patterns.

C. TAKING THE STANDPOINTS OF DIFFERENT ORGANIZATIONAL PARTICIPANTS

Feminists have argued, convincingly I believe, that to develop knowledge about different women's situations, the social world must be viewed from their diverse standpoints. The standpoints of different organizational participants, both women and men, can be points of entry into ongoing class processes within organizations. For example, in a recent study of organization change in which I participated, clerical workers had a much more critical opinion about inequalities and the possibility for democratic participation in their organization than did professional workers. Consciously attempting to take the standpoint of the relatively more powerless members of organizations, particularly white women and people of color, can make visible the many ways in which class relations are mediated by gender and race. Taking a variety of standpoints is also a method of examining new forms (or recreated old forms) of class/work relations. For example, tasks that used to be done by formally employed persons are now being done by "independent contractors" who have different relationships with the employer. Contractors' total compensation may often be less than the total compensation of regularly employed workers because contractors do not usually receive benefits such as medical insurance, pension schemes, and vacations. We might say that the wage relation is still in place, but the rate of exploitation is higher. (Of course, some independent contractors such as management consultants may earn more in the contractor role than they would as organization employees.)

Taking the standpoints of different organizational participants may also make visible contradictions for particular individuals or groups between organizational class situations and class affiliations in the larger society. For example, university faculty from working class backgrounds face a more problematic environment in academia than faculty from upper middle class backgrounds (Barker, 1995). Or, middle class women may find themselves in jobs such as secretary or research assistant in which they are subservient to men of similar class backgrounds. This was probably more common in the past when women were actively excluded from anything but peripheral, female-segregated positions, but it is still a potential.

D. EXPANDING THE NOTION OF “THE ECONOMIC”

Feminists have long contended that what counts as “economic” must be broadened to encompass the unpaid but economically valuable work of women. This implies expanding our notions of the bases for class relations by moving outside the discursive boundaries of existing class theories, which are, it can be argued, constructed from the perspective of capital as well as from the perspectives of working class men of earlier generations. I have found that taking the standpoints of women is a useful strategy for thinking about class, arguing some time ago that relations of distribution are, along with relations of production, the processes that comprise class structures (Acker, 1988). While distribution through wages, profit, interest and rent, the components of distribution in Marx’s writing, are all important, taking the standpoint of housewives, elderly poor, the chronically ill, or the unemployed reveals that other relations of distribution are essential to survival in industrial societies, and thus can be seen as economic and as components of class structuring. Distribution through marriage and other family relationships and through the welfare state are essential economic transfers. Increasing inequalities in class structures worldwide, even as productivity increases, can be traced to very complex changes in various relations of distribution. Organizations are major sites of distribution, and distributional practices within organizations enter into the construction of class/gender/race inequalities for organizational participants and for the society as a whole.

Private organizations are also major players in political battles over, for example, welfare programs, pension provisions, and the funding of medical care, further participating in class processes on a societal basis. I wish to emphasize two points here: first, class processes are political as well as “economic,” and placing strict boundaries around these concepts tends to obscure the close connections. Second, in attempting to understand class as related to gender and race within an organizational perspective we should not lose sight of the fact that organizations are not bounded entities and should not be studied as such. Political conflicts in which large corporations invest large sums of money and influence have consequences for class processes within those organizations and in the surrounding world. Class relations extend beyond the boundaries of nation-states as well as beyond the boundaries of organizations, and organizations acting in their own interests have a large impact on the shape of those relations. For example, the movement by managers of large organizations of much garment production out of the western and northern countries has altered class conditions for many women workers in both the industrial north and low-wage countries in the south and in Asia. Thus, thinking about the changing contours of class in any particular place may necessitate thinking across boundaries of various sorts.

IV. STUDYING CLASS (AND GENDER AND RACE) FROM AN ORGANIZATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

I want to suggest two different, but complementary, strategies for examining class processes within a gendered and raced conceptual frame. The first strategy is based on suggestions I have earlier made (Acker, 1990) for looking at gender in organizations. The second strategy is based on the analysis I have used in a recent study of organizational change (Acker and Van Houten, 1999).

A. POINTS OF ENTRY INTO ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESSES

If we think about organizations as ongoing processes consisting of routinized practices and non-routine events, it seems clear to me that these processes should be seen in their full complexity, as living phenomena in which formalized procedures and rules are both invented and used in cooperative and collaborative relations by people who of necessity give meaning to these practices and derive meaning for their own existences in the process. This approach is, I think, a necessity when attempting to comprehend the gendering of organizations (Acker, 1990). While seeing organizations in this holistic way, it is still possible to enter the processes, and begin the effort to understand them, through different points of entry. I have suggested (Acker, 1990) that these are 1) the routine practices that constitute the activities of the organization, 2) the images, rationales, and ideologies that explain and legitimize the organization, 3) the ongoing interactions of participants in which activities are performed, and 4) the processes through which individuals cope with organizational life and understand themselves in relation to their work. I suggested these points of entry as a tool for understanding how gender is built into organizational structure, but they are equally useful for getting at class processes and relations. Of course, many of the examples of gendered processes are examples of class processes as well.

Class is embedded in all work organizations in the basic structure of organizational relations, as I argued above. Class is embedded in the wage relation and in the very fact of the employment contract in which the product of labor is owned by the employer. Class, as well as often gender and race, is replicated moment by moment in the supervisory relationship and in the making of managerial decisions. Class, gender, and race are embedded in the technical details of wage systems (Acker, 1989) and in the construction of work schedules. The transfer of some, or even many, rules and decisions into computerized systems does not change their class-consequences. Similarly, transferring certain previously supervisory responsibilities to individual employees or to “teams” does not always alter their class producing functions. Employees still, in the usual case in the U.S., have few rights to determine or even challenge aspects of the employer-employee relationship. This is dramatically evident in the rights of employers to counter efforts at unionization. A typical example was an effort of lower level hospital employees to unionize in my town. The hospital hired management consultants to help them resist the union. On the advice of the consultants, meetings on working time were held with employees to convince them not to vote for the union. Supervisors held individual sessions with employees to urge them to vote against the union. Employees risked losing their jobs if they refused to attend any of these meetings, and they felt threatened about negative consequences if the union won. The union did

not have similar opportunities to influence employees. The union lost and management retained the prerogative to determine all routine practices.

Images and beliefs about organizations legitimize, reinforce and even help to create class relations. Gender images are intertwined with representations that have class implications. The leader or the successful manager still has a masculine image, even though some women are now in such positions. The organization as fierce competitor in a challenging and dangerous market arena is a masculine image that, at the same time, confirms the necessity of a strong leader and, thus, a hierarchy of power and control. Class divisions are symbolically and materially defined in the arrangements of work space, in the size and location of offices, in access to restrooms and lunch rooms, and in conventions about dress. Many organizations foster ideologies of equality for their staff, with visions of empowerment and participation, and even with the elimination of private offices. To the extent that these ideologies are accepted, and often they are not, such beliefs obscure the underlying class relations. Talk about “diversity” and the importance of fostering diversity may be another ideological form that substitutes for more structural attacks on inequality such as affirmative action. I say “may” because, of course, some diversity efforts are probably successful, and affirmative action, although structural in intent has actually been of limited scope (Reskin, 1998).

Interactions in the workplace are another point of entry into class, gender and race relations. Management-union interactions are only the most obvious examples. Evidence on varying gender/class interaction patterns is embedded in many studies, going back as far as the Hawthorne Studies of the 1920s. These documented different structures of interaction that management (and researchers) permitted workers to form (Acker and Van Houten, 1974). Male workers organized themselves into solidarity groups that then presented a unified face to managers, while female workers were prevented by both the organization of their work and management intervention from forming such solidarity groups. The labor process literature contains many examples of the interpersonal interaction patterns in which superordinate-subordinate relations are recreated as work tasks are carried out. These may be intrinsic components of necessary tasks or occur as conventional performances that could be easily separated from the tasks. Interaction patterns that confirm class differences may show variations by gender and race. For example, Jennifer Pierce (1995) describes how male trial lawyers interact differently with female and male paralegals, consigning the women to clearly subordinate, secretarial type roles, while treating the men as junior co-workers. In status terms, if not in class terms, the male paralegals have a superior position to the female paralegals. Interactions between whites and people of color in the workplace often and simultaneously confirm racial subordination as well as class and gender subordination.

The last point of entry into class processes in organizations is through the feelings and coping efforts of individuals and small groups. Class relations in organizations may be as difficult to handle emotionally as are gender or race relations. Resentment against supervisors seems to be fairly common. Anyone who wants to avoid being fired and who is in a subordinate position must deal with feelings about subordination in some way. Those feelings may vary from complete cynicism through mild anxiety or indignation to terror. At least this is what I have observed in the course of a number of organizational studies I have done. Feelings of self-worth and identity become involved. In my experience, most people cope and say little, but sometimes,

under some conditions, coping turns into organization. For women and people of color, class coping strategies may be more complex than for white men who do not have deal with other stereotypical perceptions.

B. INEQUALITY REGIMES—ANOTHER STRATEGY

The understanding of class in organizations can be pursued with another concept, inequality regimes, that refers to particular, historically specific configurations of class, race, and gender patterns within specific organizations (Acker and Van Houten, 1999; Connell, 1987). We can argue that every organization has an inequality regime, including radically egalitarian feminist organizations (Ferree and Martin, 1995) and egalitarian cooperatives such as those of Mondragon (Hacker, 1990) in which women were consigned to lower level and traditionally female jobs. However, the precise patterns of inequality vary widely from hierarchical, authoritarian and severely unequal to flat organizations with relatively equal power and rewards.

Inequality regimes vary along a number of dimensions. First, the bases of inequality may vary, although usually class, gender and race divisions are present. Other bases for inequality include sexual orientation, age, religion, ethnicity, and physical ability. Patterns of inequality may be more or less visible to both insiders and outsiders. In addition, the visibility of inequalities may vary with organizational position. Often, inequality is so much taken for granted that invisibility is enhanced. An organizational crisis can suddenly reveal inequalities previously invisible. This happened in an organization I recently studied when a crisis over lack of progress in racial equality revealed long standing gender issues that had been hidden (Acker and Van Houten, 1999).

The legitimacy of particular forms of inequality also varies. I argued above that class inequalities are highly legitimate in U.S organizations, with that legitimacy enforced through laws and perpetuated by the weakness of organized labor. Historically, and in other societies with stronger socialist-oriented labor movements, class inequality has had much less legitimacy, especially among the working class. Ideologies support the maintenance of inequality regimes, or advocate opposition. At this moment, ideologies confirming the necessity and inevitability of policies and practices that perpetuate inequality in a free market economy seem to be ascendant in the U.S., in spite of competing ideologies about reducing hierarchy and empowering organization members.

Different occupational and hierarchical groups may have competing interests in relation to maintaining or reducing inequalities. At the same time, class based groupings may be driven by gender and/or race divisions in interests. For example, during pay equity efforts, groups of male workers sometimes saw their wage superiority threatened by women workers' demands for equity. Thus, common class interests in raising levels of pay were undermined by these divisions (Acker, 1989). Organizing practices that maintain or lessen inequalities also differ. Restructuring of hierarchies, departments, and divisions of tasks, facilitated by new technology, are taking place in many organizations. A great deal of recent research shows that, although restructuring may reduce certain inequalities, it may also relocate and reproduce in new patterns old inequalities of gender, class and race.

Methods of control and modes of compliance with inequality regimes are also various. Controls may be exerted directly and coercively, or they may be built into technology or into bureaucratic procedures. Controls may be implicit in recruitment measures and promotion patterns. For example, women may be preferred for certain jobs because they are believed to be more amenable to control than are men. Promotion patterns tend to screen out those who are clearly different from the group in control, thus controlling through guaranteeing similarity of views and behaviors. Controls are also exerted through policies about dismissal. Ultimately, work organizations may fall back on violence as a means of control, for example, forcibly removing non-compliant employees from the premises or calling in the police to control strike activities.

Compliance is most often based, I believe, on the perceived legitimacy of the organization and its practices. But, compliance may also be based on calculated self-interest (Jackall, 1988). Few people have alternatives to work in an organization if they want to ensure their own survival. Self-interest may often be accompanied by positive feelings of accomplishment that reinforce compliance. Arlie Hochschild's (1997) study of a large corporation suggests that many people would rather be at work than at home because at work they find support, approval, and accomplishment that is lacking at home. This is probably the most effective form of control. How widespread it may be or how persistent over time is another question. Location in the organizational class structure is probably a mitigating factor, although Hochschild reports this finding for both professional and production line workers. Hochschild also notes that spending long hours on the job is often a prerequisite to career progress. Thus, self interest probably combines with feelings of accomplishment to ensure compliance.

This inventory of characteristics of inequality regimes could be used as the starting point for a detailed description of any particular organization. While an organization as a whole might be built on systematic inequalities, and this is almost always the case, particular sub-units might be fairly egalitarian, particularly in this era of "team work." Some basic divisions usually exist, including the class divide between workers with little autonomy and little control over pay levels and job security and workers with high degrees of autonomy and control. Gender and race divisions also usually exist, with women and people of color disproportionately at the lower levels of class division and segregated into particular types of jobs. For example, in the U.S. in large corporations, minority professionals seem to be disproportionately in human resources and diversity sorts of positions and disproportionately absent from line positions. This, of course, has been the situation for white women for a fairly long period of time. In spite of some changes towards greater equality, these basic patterns persist.

V. CONCLUSION

Class relations are created and recreated in the ordinary processes of organizational life. Gender and race relations are closely intertwined with class in these processes. Indeed, what looks like class from one conceptual point of view may look like gender and/or race from another point of view. It follows that to understand gender and race, we must also understand class. Class processes are not simply interior to the rather arbitrary boundaries conventionally set for organizations, but extend outward, shaping what we call “the class structure” of a particular country. At the same time, class processes within organizations are not peculiar to a particular location, but are formed in accordance with surrounding laws, social conventions, and markets.

The increasing pace of globalization of production, markets, and competition is facilitated by changes in organizing. Companies and public entities shed workers, outsource production and services, hire part-time and contract workers, eliminate layers of middle management, transfer previous management functions down the hierarchical line or into computers, and increasingly make customers and clients do organizing work (Glazer, 1994). What are the implications for class processes both within and outside organizations? As organizing boundaries become more permeable with significant operating processes being moved outside formal limits, what are the implications for our conceptualization of class relations? Are new class forms emerging? Are there changes in the connections between class, gender, and race within organizations? What are the impacts of changes on class, gender, and race relations in the wider society and on a global basis? Thinking about class, gender, and race in an organizational frame provides one promising avenue to a better understanding of present changes and an approach to assessing the reasonableness of claims that a major shift in global society is underway.

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