

feisty, and emblematic of a regional culture, but additionally the material and social circumstances of these workers' lives fostered a multiple consciousness. Both "artisanal" and "proletarianized," both distinct among women workers and rendered symbolic of a certain form of Spanish womanhood, both gendered as women workers and representative in some contexts of Spanish workers more generally, cigarette workers were deeply conscious of the own symbolic resources at their command. Their political and labor activities drew upon varied rhetorics of religion and nationality, independence and communal identity, giving them both a flexible vocabulary of consciousness and an ambiguous status within the overall development of Spanish working-class and female politics.

Geoff Eley's commentary on Clark's and Radcliff's papers underlined the importance of such projects to the recasting of the largest historical interpretations—especially in labor history—in light of the history of gender, and called for continued studies that, like these, are anti-reductionist and sensitive to the particularities of place, rhetoric, and representation, but that remain engaged with the largest questions of local and national class formation.

## North American Labor History Conference: Men, Women, and Labor: Perspectives on Gender and Labor History

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In a recent article in *Reviews in American History*, Richard Oestreicher observed that historians of women and historians of workers have much in common, "yet they remain discrete and largely separate academic tribes." Addressing the North American Labor History Conference in October 1991, Alice Kessler-Harris noted in response that "historians of women and historians of workers are sometimes the same people." Many of those people were on hand in Detroit for the conference. "Men, Women, and Labor: Perspectives on Gender and Labor History," suggesting that class and gender are not exclusive categories of analysis.

The panels explored the nexus of class and gender from a variety of angles. Conventional wisdom tends to associate gender with issues of culture, and class with the material relations of the workplace. Collectively, these papers demonstrated that the boundaries between material and cultural analysis, and gender and labor history, are not impermeable. For example, several papers examined how gender ideology shaped work environments and workplace technology. Margaret Hedstrom's "Why Gender Matters in Office Automation, 1950–1980," suggested that ideas about women informed the design of office technology and shaped the process of office automation. Assuming that office work was routine and un-

skilled, systems analysts overlooked the creative and decision-making dimensions of the job and failed to incorporate them into the development of technology.

In another analysis of clerical work, Sharon Hartman Strom's "Beyond the Youthful Clerical Worker: Age and Marital Status in Office Work, 1910–1930" examined ways in which social and cultural perceptions of women based on their age and marital status segmented the work force and affected women's work experience. The infusion of a larger cultural prejudice against older women, according to Strom, not only resulted in employers discriminating, but created antagonism among women and prevented collective action.

Other papers problematized "masculinity" as a gendered construct, examining the ways in which gender influenced the articulation of class goals, working-class culture, and discourse. Francis Shor, for example, examined the connections between such "masculine" attributes as virility, potency, and power, and the IWW's construction of its public image. Joshua Freeman's "Hardhats: Manliness and Construction Work since World War II" noted that the construction worker became the archetypal image of American labor at a time when the paid work force was becoming increasingly female. Freeman challenged static notions of masculinity by charting the transformation in male identity from the manly respectability of the republican craftsman to the lewd vulgarity of the postwar hardhat.

As commentator Ardis Cameron noted, several papers suggested that "categories of class, ethnicity and gender are not separate and distinct from each other, but are interdependent concepts which both shape and are reshaped by the social world they purport to describe." For example, Lawrence Glickman's "Inventing the 'American Standard of Living': Gender, Race, and Working-Class Identity, 1880–1925" explored the process in which ideas about race, gender, difference, and hierarchy were embedded in working-class ideas about consumption. According to Glickman, the "American standard of living" was a demand constructed in opposition to women and minorities. As a result, he concludes, the emerging ideology was primarily male and nativist.

A roundtable discussion of Ava Baron's new book *Work Engendered* provided a forum where participants (many of them contributors to the volume) summarized the major themes that punctuated the conference. Panel members offered their perspectives on Baron's book from the vantage points of Europe and Latin America. Both Michael Jiménez and Sonya Rose, for example, encouraged the audience to think about gender in global economic terms.

In the plenary session, "Approaches to Gender in Labor History," historians Leon Fink and Alice Kessler-Harris referred to Oestreicher's discussion of the gender/class dichotomy. In "Culture's Next Stand: Gender and the Search For Synthesis in American Labor History," Fink, like Oestreicher, suggested that the "tribes" seem to have met in an ideological and conceptual stalemate, where the gender/class dichotomy rests at an impasse. Fink also discussed the "dichotomy" in relation to labor history's other methodological impasse—the problem of synthesis. Fink identified two trends toward synthesis, one restoring an institution-

al emphasis, the other calling for more systematic attention to class formation within comparative capitalist development. Neither, he observed, integrates gender. Surveying the work in women's history, Fink remarked that gender also has failed to provide a sufficiently inclusive or satisfying analysis. He concluded, however, that gender history has endowed the old culturalist current with a "tougher, more self-critical angle of analysis" and therefore could lead toward a synthesis based on a "second act of culture-centered studies."

To transcend the class/gender dichotomy, Alice Kessler-Harris suggested that we step back and take a long view of history and the way that "work"—and by extension, labor history—became constructed historically as male and workplace-centered. Kessler-Harris noted that wage work is a mere "blip" in the history of labor; she suggested redefining and broadening the concept of "work," embedding it in a context that recognizes the persistence of household and community throughout and beyond the period of industrialization. In conclusion, Kessler-Harris suggested that reconceptualizing work around the household and community might enable a reconceptualization of class that would recognize the "significant, perhaps crucial" role in which gender and other elements of human identity affect the formation of class.

Judging by the level of controversy engendered by Kessler-Harris's remarks and the intriguing possibilities evident in the papers presented, the labor history "impassé" promises to open up an even more fruitful dialogue within the tribe.

## Social Science History Association

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Several hundred people, from a wide range of disciplines, gathered in New Orleans between 31 October and 2 November, 1991 for the sixteenth annual meeting of the Social Science History Association (SSHA). While the Labor Network of the SSHA organized thirteen sessions, many of the other 105 sessions also dealt with issues of interest to students of labor and working-class history. Unfortunately, many panels had to run concurrently.

A session entitled "General Strikes and Labor Strategies in Comparative Perspective" featured papers by Roberto Franzosi (University of Wisconsin, Madison), Daniel Greenberg (Pace University), and Tony Rosenthal (University of Kansas). In his paper, "The Red Years (1919–1920): The Factory Movement in Italy," Franzosi discussed the data he compiled on class conflict after computerizing numerous Italian socialist and working-class newspapers. Greenberg's essay, "The 1919 Winnipeg, Seattle, and Buenos Aires General Strikes," suggested, as did Franzosi's, that the employers and the police served as the catalyst for violence