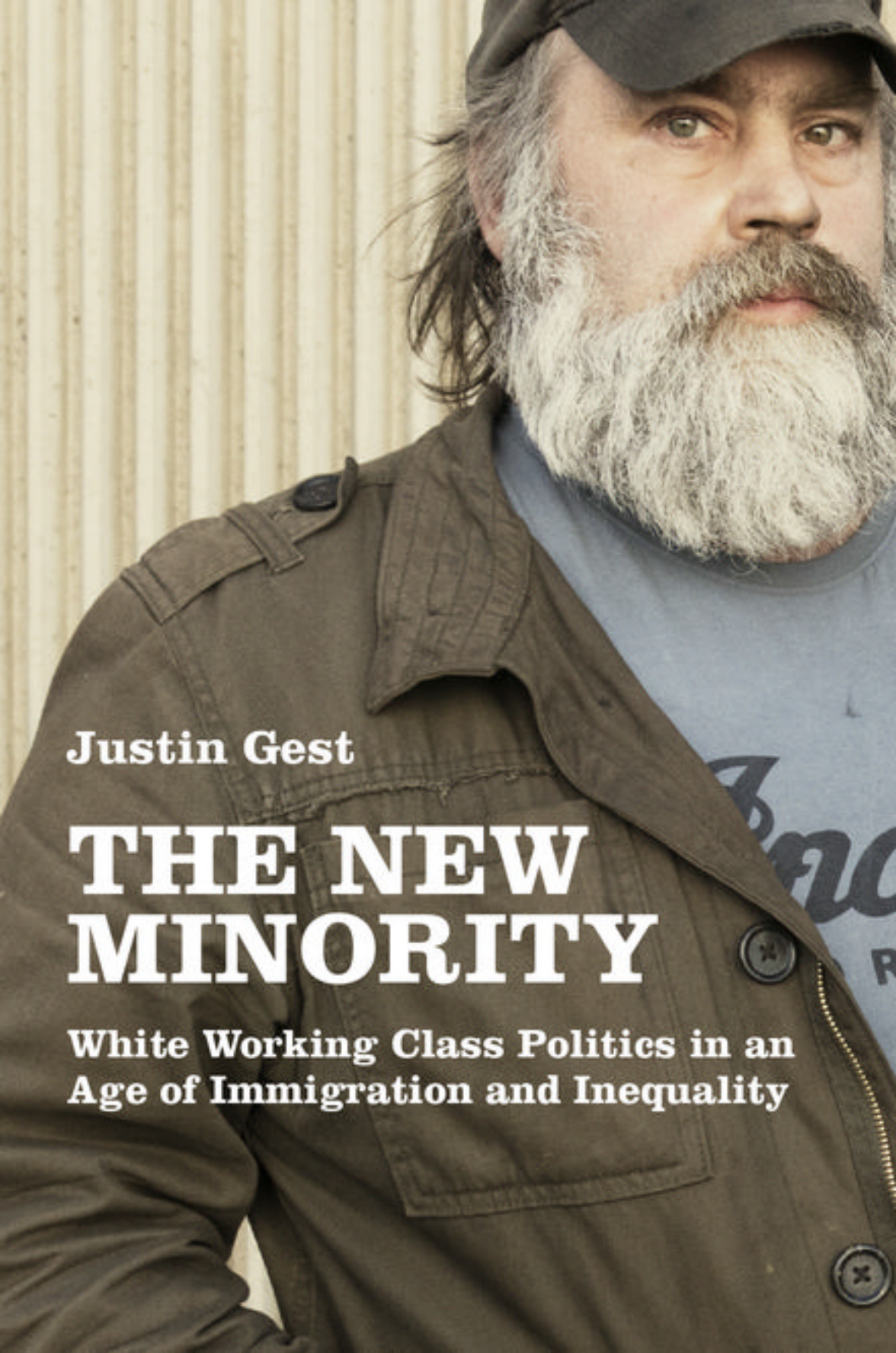

Justin Gest

THE NEW MINORITY

White Working Class Politics in an Age of Immigration and Inequality

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After the Fall

THE POLITICS OF INSECURITY IN YOUNGSTOWN, OHIO

Where had it all gone? The things that had made it a community—stores, schools, churches, playgrounds, fruit trees—were gone, along with half the houses and two-thirds of the people, and if you didn't know the history, you wouldn't know what was missing.
—George Packer

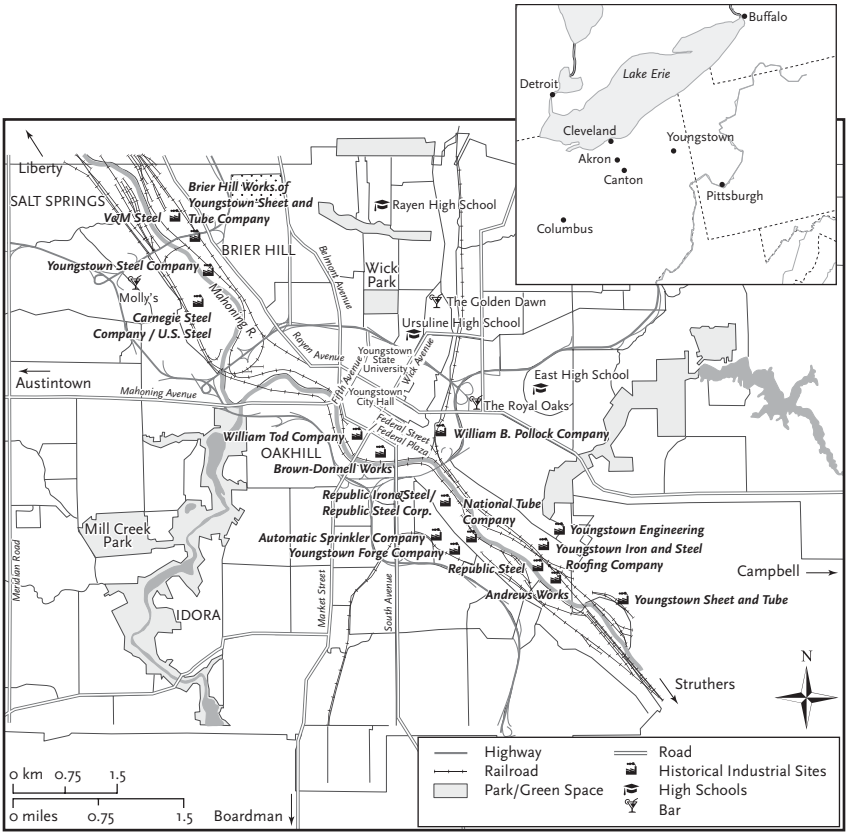
This chapter examines white working class political behavior and its context in Youngstown, Ohio. Based on interviews with 75 people—20 of whom are elites—and ethnographic observation during three months of full immersion, it offers an analysis of subjects' attitudes and actions. I begin with a discussion of Youngstown's history and its narratives of memory. I then explore the multiple forms of economic, social, and political insecurity that condition observed political behavior. In the end, I outline the nature of white working class subjects' marginality.

Collective Memory

There is a post-apocalyptic feel to Youngstown, Ohio.

It is a city with two symphony halls, a world-class art museum, and a large historical gallery and archive. It has a 450-acre wooded green space designed by Frederick Law Olmstead (of New York Central Park fame). Its center features dozens of monumental architectural specimens, a 15,000-student university, a 20,000-seat stadium, five towers of over 12 stories each, and a downtown skyline largely untouched by modernism.

However, its core is decimated. Boarded-up windows are ubiquitous, the city has thousands of empty lots, and relics of old factories and deserted railroad tracks litter the banks of the Mahoning River. There are few pedestrians at any



Map 4 Map of Youngstown, Ohio.

time of day, and very few cars passing under the traffic lights that dangle from telephone wires above intersections. People drive through slowly, like submarines exploring an oxidized Atlantis of brick, mortar, and corroded metal.

There was a time—any local will tell you—when the city was the steel capital of the world, when the city's center was a bustling commercial hub, when you could step off the train on Monday and find a job on Tuesday.

"This place was a boomtown," said John Avery, commencing the common narrative.

"We had a good steel business," said Debbie O'Malley. "If you couldn't find work on one block, you'd find it on the next. [. . .] We put out good products [. . .], good stuff. Those chairs I have from the company are still as good as the day we first bought them."

"When the steel mills were going full blast, working three turns, seven days a week, you'd have to blow the soot off your porch glider but people had good jobs," said Gil McMahon. "You knew everyone on your street."

For years, the foundries and furnaces of about a half dozen companies provided not only jobs, but also housing, loans, supporting industries, philanthropy, and the sites for political organization and social life. "How're things?" one neighbor would ask. "Sweeping the steps," the other used to reply—a nod to the productivity and prosperity symbolized by porches covered in a layer of black dust, often called "paydirt." Indeed, on hot summer days, the ambient air was said to be so laced with graphite particles that it shined in the sunlight.

The beginnings of Youngstown's steel industry date back to 1844, when a vein of black coal was discovered on David Tod's Brier Hill estate (Linkon and Russo 2002: 18). The region had already seen the development of pig-iron blast furnaces, the first of which was developed by the Heaton brothers near Yellow Creek (present-day Struthers) in 1803 (Allgren 2009: 35). A stretch of mills thirty miles long along the Mahoning River developed throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s, including three main plants: the Youngstown Sheet & Tube Company of Campbell and Brier Hill; the Ohio Works of the United States Steel Corporation, just west of Youngstown; and the Republic Steel Corporation, located downtown (ibid.). Rapid population growth fueled the city's meteoric industrialization, thanks to the arrival of immigrants from the Levant and every corner of Europe. By 1930, nearly half the city owned their homes, and by the 1940s, Youngstown's population reached 170,000 (Linkon and Russo 2002: 38; Buss and Redburn 1983: 2).

For over a century, Youngstown was home to an oligarchy of powerful families who structured labor and leisure. The habits of daily life always rotated in turn with the cycles of steel production (Allgren 2009: 38). The cadences of steelwork, the rhythm of labor, set the tempo for the average worker's pace through life. Labor, alongside attendant political and social concerns, was a pervasive oral tradition passed on from generation to generation (Allgren 2009: 39; Bruno 1999: 104; Peyko 2009: 12). Steelmaking and the steelworker—symbols of goodness, productivity, and power—defined the spirit of the city (Linkon and Russo 2002: 67–68). And in turn, from bowling tournaments to amusement parks, steel companies largely defined opportunities for social life (Allgren 2009: 38). Most Youngstown natives spent entire lifetimes gazing up at the silhouettes of hulking mills, man-made creations capable of altering the natural horizon (Bruno 1999: 25). It was an industry town.

To compete, workers unified in some of the earliest agitations to protest labor practices, wages, and working conditions. The Mahoning Valley's first attempt at organized labor traces back to a meeting held by the Mechanics of Youngstown in 1843 (Linkon and Russo 2002: 21). The town's first strikes occurred in 1865 and 1869, when 1,500 coal miners dropped their pickaxes for four months. A third strike occurred in 1873 (ibid.). In January 1916, strikes at the Youngstown Sheet and Tube and Republic Iron and Steel Mill sites turned violent. Four blocks of

East Youngstown were razed to the ground by fire, eight strikers were killed, 12 wounded, and more than 100 were injured (Linkon and Russo 2002: 28–29). Later in Youngstown history, workers would communicate their resistance by instigating unofficial or "wildcat" strikes, creating subtle delays in production, or taking back "what the company owed them" by stealing materials from the job (Bruno 1999: 123–125).

Enduring ethnic segregation and discrimination, however, belied the unity of protest movements. Factories allocated housing and jobs to correlate employee desirability with a social hierarchy that placed white Protestants at the top, followed by the mix of Central and Eastern Europeans, Jews, the Irish, Italians, and finally African Americans at the bottom. Conventional representations of work as the exclusive domain of white laborers and the trumpeting of Protestant values over those of newcomers fed the early rise of the Ku Klux Klan in Youngstown during the 1920s (Linkon and Russo 2002: 28–31). The group gained prominence in local politics by voicing opposition to the perceived growing influence of Youngstown's immigrant population (ibid.). Early nativist sentiments were evidenced by local newspapers' account of how protesting foreigners were spurred on to riot by Bolsheviks (ibid.).

Under circumstances where transparent governance was effectively nonexistent, the growth of the Ku Klux Klan provided the backdrop for a reactionary expansion of organized crime syndicates. Aside from their involvement in illegal activities like bootlegging and gambling throughout the 1910s and 1920s, mafias protected the interests of Italians and other immigrant communities against incursions by others. They also provided for immigrant families during periods of economic decline and defended immigrant access to jobs outside of the mills (ibid.). In this way, the mob was institutionalized as an alternative police force "providing a measure of fairness" in a seemingly unjust, prejudiced, and conflictive environment (ibid.). Sicilian and Neapolitan crime families benefited from flourishing black markets for prohibited substances and gambling, which led many to seek supporters in official public positions (Schneider and Schneider 2005: 34).

"The Golden Days"

By the 1960s, organized crime in Youngstown reached new heights, as rival factions associated with mob families in Cleveland and Pittsburgh converged (Linkon and Russo 2002: 213). Conflict over control of illegal activities provided the impetus for a rash of gruesome bombings that painted a picture of Youngstown as "Crime Town, USA," according to a 1963 cover story in the *Saturday Evening Post* (Kobler: 76). As construction and urban expansion

boomed, organized crime infiltrated both the legitimate business sector and local politics (Schneider and Schneider 2005: 41). Following the dissolution of a truce between the two mob factions in 1977, the Pittsburgh-aligned mob ensured that a newly elected mayor would install a preferred candidate as police chief (ibid.). Such practices continued well into the 1980s; for example, a reform candidate for the 1980 Democratic mayoral primary was intimidated and forced to withdraw from the race (ibid.).

"You couldn't separate the mob from politics," says Bill D'Antoni, a former public official. "Government was like, holy. [. . .] The mafia had a lot of money in grassroots politics. [. . .] The whole Democratic Party was controlled by the mafia. It's money. You need to pay precinct committeemen on election day, you need TV, and generally the mayoral candidate raises money and that's done by cutting deals with people who have money. Everybody respected the mob. [. . .] I don't care if you were a billionaire. You didn't fuck with the mob."

"I don't know why they didn't shoot me. I guess because they still wanted business in the county. They moved their gambling outside the city, like at the Liberty Ramada Inn. We're talking about gambling and maybe drugs. They also controlled the construction companies and the inspectors, so if we paid $10 million for two inches of asphalt on a street, they laid one inch and kept the other five mil. It rained hard a year later and the street looked like Hell. They might as well have just painted the street. If they didn't control you, they could intimidate you. I don't know why but I wasn't intimidated. I was scared, but I didn't take any money. Maybe because I'm a mental case. But I'm like a cat in a fight. I've been threatened. The FBI told me that I shouldn't go out with my friends on Friday nights anymore."

"If you need a project, it takes wealth. It isn't done with just government money here. If you want a job, or to get off the hook with law enforcement, you might be able to do something like that. The higher you go, the more money has influence. And that'll be true in a hundred years. [. . .] Money, not even dirty money, it corrupts you. People expect something back. If you know someone, you can get something. If you have a traffic problem, you get the right lawyer. Anything here can be influenced by money. [. . .]

"When white working class people say that the mafia days were "The Golden Days," they're full of shit. [. . .] We were bystanders to the mobs' competition. The layperson was not affected. They were careful not to have collateral damage. If you're outside of it, then you don't see it. [. . .] They didn't know half of what was going on, and the reason they were happy was because you had a paycheck every week. The mafia was doing their thing, and you didn't care because you had a nice house, a nice car, and 50,000 jobs. Hell yeah they were the good old days, but not because of the mob. It's plain as my nose."

With City Hall sidelined, the public sphere was dominated by three nongovernmental entities: the mafia, the unions, and the steel companies. With conflict concentrated at the top, average citizens were taught early that if they did not get too close, they would not get burned. Many Youngstowners reminisce about running errands for mafia bookkeepers and bootleggers in their youth; they tout the importance of their union membership and comrades; they recall clutch favors called in to government agencies by friends of friends during times of need. However, they generally stayed on the fringes of a war over the city's resources, and remained content with the stability of their jobs, homes, and sense of community shared in Youngstown's churches, clubs, and bars. All the while, politics was managed in backrooms.

The Collapse

The bliss of this arrangement was abruptly interrupted with the swift collapse of Youngstown's steel industry in the late 1970s and early 1980s. "Black Monday," or September 19, 1977, was the day when Youngstown Sheet and Tube announced the closing of its Campbell Works. The closure of the Brier Hill Works would follow five years later. Following suit, US Steel would shut down its Ohio and McDonald Works and Republic Steel would close its Youngstown Works shortly thereafter (Linkon and Russo 2002: 47–48). In a matter of six years, Ohio State Employment Services estimates that 50,000 jobs were lost in basic steel and related industries, costing Youngstown's working class $1.3 billion in annual manufacturing wages. Unemployment climbed to a staggering 24.9% in 1983 and a wave of personal bankruptcies and foreclosures resulted (ibid.). The primary mental health center, Parkview Counseling Center, witnessed a threefold increase in its caseload during the 1980s, with increases in rates of child and spouse abuse, drug and alcohol abuse, divorce, and suicide (Linkon and Russo 2002: 53). Youngstown's per capita murder rate between 1980 and 2000 was often the highest in the country, and stood at eight times the national average during the 1990s (Linkon and Russo 2002: 64–65, 193). Youngstown was up against a transforming economy that valued high technology, the lower overhead of developing countries, and access to sea lanes to fulfill global demand.

Many members of the Youngstown community did resist the prospect of deindustrialization after the mill closure announcements were made. Almost immediately after Black Monday, workers organized a petition asking the federal government to provide better protection for the steel industry (Linkon and Russo 2002: 167–168). Four days later, five buses packed with 250 Youngstowners drove to Washington to protest (ibid.). The city's religious organizations, advocates for the working class community, organized the Ecumenical Coalition of

the Mahoning Valley (Bruno 1999: 46; Buss and Redburn 1983: 23). Legal activists Alice Lynd and Staughton Lynd and the National Center for Economic Alternatives fostered national research networks, recommended legislative agendas, and led the occupation of steel company administrative buildings (Linkon and Russo 2002: 50; Lynd and Lynd 2000). The most highly publicized coalition endeavor involved the proposal for community-worker ownership of the mills. To raise the needed funds, the coalition began the "Save Our Valley" fundraising campaign in conjunction with local banking institutions. However, these efforts were futile. Local union officials inadequately bargained with corporate representatives after the steel companies announced their decision to shut down the mills. Due to infighting and a disorganized approach, local officials had little influence on the deindustrialization process (Bruno 1999: 147; Buss and Redburn 1983: 29). Up against harsh economic realities and without an infrastructure of public leadership or crosscutting social capital, Youngstown struggled to break bad habits and recover.

Without the steel industry providing the resources for side businesses and black markets, attention shifted to government coffers that looked increasingly bigger as the private sector deteriorated. Since 1990, Mahoning County has witnessed the indictment of its sheriff, its prosecutor, a judge, and twice its congressman, Jim Traficant, on corruption charges. In 1998, the city made national news when mafia hitmen botched the assassination of its prosecutor, Paul Gains. More recently, a county grand jury led by Gains indicted the county auditor, the treasurer, a county commissioner (who would become mayor), and the Jobs and Family Services director for accepting bribes from a local business mogul in 2007. The case was eventually transferred from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to the State of Ohio for prosecution. Even though Youngstown's economy is decimated, its oligarchy has continued to preside over a broken city.

Youngstown's residents remain perplexed by their struggle. "We have a city that—I just don't understand why—has not been able to redefine itself since the steel industry wound down in the seventies," said Philip Massey, a salesman who moved to Youngstown in 1979. "I see a nearby city like Pittsburgh thrive, when its industry left in a big way. And now it has a vibrant downtown area, with supported sports teams, and major well-respected universities linked to its progress. They have found ways to become a center for education and research and business—60 miles away. There's a little bit of that in Cleveland, and in Akron, where they have responded with resilience after the loss of the rubber industry. Now you can't swing a dead cat in these places without hitting a new restaurant or development. We're surrounded by success stories. But a reputation as a mob town doesn't help. [. . .] There is a perception that to do business here you need to do it with more than your customers. Sunshine laws don't exist when Vinny

Nono's representatives are talking with city officials. [. . .] I'm just not sure what it is that makes our officials behave the way they do."

People in politics are less perplexed. "It started because for so long a time, it didn't really make a difference who was mayor," explained Marty Nash, a Democratic Party operative. "Before the steel industry left, you had a powerful congressman and a strong economy that would succeed no matter what you did, and a corrupt local administration who ensured the mob could run their operations, and people were satisfied with that. The Democratic Party was handing out hundreds of jobs at a time. Your cousin Tilly who couldn't count to ten could find work. It's patronage, so there was a lot of interest in maintaining the status quo. Then after it collapsed, because there had not been a talented infrastructure of public service, you didn't have anybody sitting on the bench who could check in and take on the tough issues. Then you had a brain drain, and anyone with an IQ above 80 got the hell out of here. That convergence made it impossible to elect good people. Now, more than ever before, there are fewer and fewer public sector jobs. So it's harder and harder to stick incompetent people in these positions."

The result has been an exodus—of business, of social life, of people. After peaking with a population of 170,000 from 1930 to 1960, Youngstown is down to 67,000 residents, according to the 2010 census. Amid this general population decline, African Americans stayed in Youngstown at higher rates than the white population and have consequently ascended from their status as an institutionalized out-group to a near majority demographic. As Table 4.1 shows, over the last 50 years, Youngstown's white population has declined from over 80% of the city to a mere 47% share today. For residents, this shift has been dramatic and fast.

Table 4.1 **White Population of Youngstown, OH Over Time**

Year	Percent White	White Population	Total Population
1960	80.9	134,784	166,689
1970	74.2	103,765	139,788
1980	64.8	74,825	115,435
1990	59.3	56,777	95,732
2000	50.9	41,737	82,026
2010	47.0	31,508	66,982

Note: For 2000 and 2010, respondents were given multiracial options. These statistics include only those respondents that identified as single-race white.

Source: US Census Bureau 1963, 1973, 1983, 1990, 2000, 2010.

Many departing families have fled to the city's suburbs or left the region altogether to pursue work elsewhere, creating a "doughnut" phenomenon whereby the core of Mahoning County continues to be hollowed out. Across the counties of Northeast Ohio, the amount of developed land per person rose 23% between 1979 and 2006, even while the population of the same region dropped by 7% in the concurrent time period (NEOSCC 2013). Today's Youngstown occupies the same amount of land as it did when its population was tripled. Bird's-eye views of the city are peppered with condemned homes and empty lots where houses once stood but were burned down. Abandoned buildings, some of which were the Northside mansions of foremen and steel barons, have become havens for criminal activity. They are used as street hotels by prostitutes, as drug rings by dealers and addicts, and as warehouses to store property hoarded from home robberies.

A key anti-crime measure employed by City Hall is to demolish these homes, leaving open pastures where homes once stood in formerly middle-class neighborhoods. Over 3,000 vacant houses have been demolished in Youngstown since 2006. Residents frequently marvel at how many houses remain on their childhood block. "If you drove around ten years ago, it was like night and day," said Jimmy Plummer, a 26-year-old handyman who also hauls scrap on the side. "It's just a vast emptiness of houses now. People moved, the houses get stripped by scrappers, they get vandalized, they become an eyesore, and then they get demolished. My aunt's street used to have seven houses on her block. It now has two houses, and my family owns both of them."

There is very little external investment into Youngstown—particularly for commercial purposes. The only major retail chains that have branches in the city are Rite-Aid and CVS pharmacies, fast food restaurants, and downscale grocery stores like Family Dollar and Save-A-Lot. Neighborhoods are filled with shuttered businesses: muffler garages, bars, tire centers, roofing and construction offices, maintenance services, and travel agencies. There are few barber shops, gyms, home furnishing outlets, hardware stores, or salons. There are few hobby stores for sports, art, photography, or crafts. There are few copy shops, stationers, clothing boutiques, cinemas, coffeehouses, candy shops, or bakeries. These are not mere luxuries, but staples of the nonessential but nevertheless conventional leisure and service industries inherent to contemporary American markets.

As a result, white working class residents flock to the few, treasured bars and clubs that remain. Nearly all of these institutions—Molly's on the Westside, the Boulevard Tavern on the Southside, the Royal Oaks on the Eastside, and the Golden Dawn and Army-Navy Garrison on the Northside—are narrow, brick structures without windows. Dark and solemn, often without music but always with a TV, they each feature a curved bar near the entrance with intimate booths that stay empty except during meal hours. The owners typically bartend and employ family members. They know their regulars by first name, often after

decades of service during which they have observed the collapse of their community from the inside, wondering when their luck will turn.

"Until you tear down the mills, you won't be able to move on. People will always think, there's always that hope they'll open back up," said Father Candiotti, a local priest. "Just like if you lose a loved one, you grieve for a long time. And when they finally imploded the oldest of the blast furnaces, there was a group of steelworkers who stood watching on a nearby hill, crying. Those were the brutish-looking steelworkers who went to work everyday and finished it at the bar with a double—sitting there, weeping."

Contested Memory

Like a mother who assiduously keeps her adult son's room in the condition of his childhood departure until he returns, Youngstowners are reluctant to alter the structure of their city, desperately preserving what's left of a bygone era in anticipation of its resurrection. The narrative of Youngstown's past is therefore omnipresent. Amid this civic formaldehyde, the community tightly monitors anything new. The white-working class population is a victim of its earlier success, its accompanying dependencies, and a residual conservatism. Everybody in Ohio appears to think that Youngstown has hit rock bottom and has nothing left to lose—except for the people living here.

"We were better off under organized crime," said Ralph Mickelson, a retired steelworker. "All the streets were plowed, there was no nonsense. Now cops have their hands tied behind their backs and a patch over one eye. At least back then, the trouble they created was among themselves. Now we're all suffering."

"[Former Congressman] Jimmy Traficant cared," reminisced Hank Thompson, an industrial painter. "He was always right. Jimmy had his fingers in bad things, but he was the man. He got caught, but they all do it. So you take him out and put in another guy who's stealing instead. When the mobs were running things—the Strollos, the Predos, the Carabbias—you didn't see all these drug houses, car jackings, shootings, and murders. If you crossed them, yeah, they'd knock you off. But you probably deserved it. And they always paid in cash. It was better back then."

"Everybody wants the big stroke," said Bryant Daniels, who formerly held public office. "There have been scrambles for a Lufthansa air cargo hub here, the world's first indoor NASCAR race track, an Avanti car body factory. That drives things. Somebody from the outside is going to rescue us and make it like the steel mills again."

Most now envision the city's comeback hinging on hydraulic fracturing. "Fracking," as it is called, entails the use of pressurized water, sand, and

chemicals to displace natural gas embedded in underground shale foundations so that it rises to the surface, where it may be harvested. The prospect of a fracking boom nearby on city and county land has some residents seeing dollar signs, but others are wary of severe environmental repercussions and corporate irresponsibility. Still others have noted that fracking hubs in Western Pennsylvania and West Virginia have not seen the benefits for which Youngstown hopes. While oil and gas has created thousands of jobs, nearly all of them are being filled by people from outside the region with technical experience or specialized training. Three-star hotels, where workers from around North America stay, are booked solid for months in advance. Fracking's local economic trickle-down effect remains indeterminate. A movement of skeptical residents placed a municipal charter amendment on the 2013 ballot that would ensure citizens greater control over land use decisions. With this question, Youngstown was confronted—vividly so—with a referendum on the narrative of its past.

The results were not close. The amendment lost against the hope that fracking was the key to Youngstown's future. To replace the dilapidation of an enormous local industry, many Youngstowners can only fathom the majestic arrival of another industrial behemoth. There is little sense of organic growth, incremental investment, or structural change to reinvigorate the region. There is a way things are done in Mahoning County, and it is with a signature product and the singular identity that accompanies it—no matter what dependencies or what externalities it creates. The narrative of Youngstown's past constrains its future.

Distrust

For a city so anxious to place so much faith in a single industry with a questionable track record, Youngstowners are caustically distrustful. "There's a lot of anger in the area, stemming from the late 70s and the closing of the steel mills," explained Max Greenfield, who has worked for different public officials. "They just don't believe in promises, in the future of the community, leaders, they're very skeptical about everything. We do focus groups with white working class families and they're highly antagonistic and have almost a fervor to get into an argument. They have a feeling that they've been battered. There have been so many promises made since the fall of the steel mills, and that's the root of it. This was once a wealthy community, and it ain't so wealthy anymore. People know it, and there's a tremendous amount of resentment between the haves and the have-nots."

Nash, the Democratic staffer, said, "[White working class people are] socially conservative, slightly racist, with a huge chip on their shoulder, distrustful of most public and private institutions, extremely cynical, and extremely susceptible to demagoguery. They have a chip on their shoulder particularly as it relates to

private institutions like the steel industry. This is an immigrant community that had difficulty with work and discrimination. This was such a tough town that it's in our culture. In the mills, it was one ethnic group against another and everyone against African Americans. So it remained balkanized for a long, long time."

"Having a chip on your shoulder is a prerequisite for living here. Black Friday saw people lose all of their livelihood in the space of a day, and our inability to recover created a pervasive sense of hopelessness that is also part of the culture. The distrust of private institutions goes back to the way industry treated workers until the union movement formed, and even thereafter. Banks and powerful institutions were always run by white Anglo-Saxon Protestants. We have a reputation as a tough union town, but that's only necessary when you have tough management. They were basically killing workers, and the workers rebelled. It all goes back to what you had to do to earn a living. Distrust of public institutions was after a demonstrated inability to cope with the destruction of the steel industry, the incompetence of political figures, and the fact that most people accepted their corruption. That didn't matter when things were good, but it became a sore spot when things got tight and crime exploded, services weren't being provided, streets weren't getting paved, and everyone was on the take. This city was wide open."

Nash continued, "It's natural to distrust your officials when they can't get the job done. [Ex-Congressman] Jim Traficant couldn't get elected in almost any other congressional district, and this situation set him up to be the king. People feel like they've been failed, and he had a message of 'us against them.' He made people feel like they were fighting back, despite the fact that he was one of the least effective congressmen in the history of the chamber. The guy was corrupt as the day is long, but Jimbo could get away with almost anything because no one here would say the emperor had no clothes."

A key hindrance is that while Youngstown is a city large enough to sustain (and large enough to need to sustain) a veneer of accountability, it is a city that is small enough to operate on a cronyist system of favors. Indeed, despite its culture of intense distrust, would-be whistle-blowers are conspicuously few. Youngstown is tightly knit like a small village. Social networks are very dense, thanks to a society that has added few newcomers and seen many young people leave since the 1990s, concentrating coteries and rendering them relatively static. So even when problems are uncovered, there is a general reluctance to speak out about them, for fear of a backlash or due to established relationships. Dense networks, long memories, and a great deal of arbitrary power keep tongues tied.

"I've had to arrest friends when it's necessary, but I'm not going to pull over a kid I went to school with," said Officer Kilburn, a police patrolman. "I had the chance to break up one of those betting rings with the SWAT team, but I stayed in the station because I knew all the guys we were busting. You can be more

aggressive if you don't have family here. The problem is that if you call out everyone every time something corrupt happens, everyone's going to hate you. Sometimes you have to let things go, or tiptoe around it. [. . .] You need to pick and choose your battles. Just keep names in your black book. It sounds like a movie, but if someone starts spouting off, people here will come after you. Throw a monkey wrench in someone's business? Get ready. The 'Youngstown Tune-Up' is real."

As a result, it is frequently difficult to distinguish rebellious behavior from democratic behavior, particularly under a dysfunctional local regime. Indeed, much like unique species of fish are able to survive around sulfuric vents in the deepest crevices of the sea, Youngstowners have adapted to extraordinarily difficult conditions. Amid severe economic, social, and political insecurity, they identify alternative ways to subsist and create proxies for civil society and governance.

Economic Insecurity

Lost steel industry jobs were always more replaceable than the unique normative structure that welfare capitalism provided. For over half a century, the steel industry was invested in social safety nets, company housing, and community programs that were as much a legacy of unionization as an acknowledgement by steel companies of their dependence on Youngstown's future generations. Welfare provisions were a means of economic reproduction. With the precipitous decline and collapse of the city's mills, municipal government was thrust into the role of "provider," after years of passivity.

However, government did not have the resources to mimic Big Steel. Municipal programs were earmarked for only the very poorest, and City Hall was ill equipped to protect workers from the realities of the neoliberal capitalist forces that were let loose. Today's workers are disenchanted by what they perceive to be a culture of exploitative greed in the local market, and implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) remorseful about how good they had it.

"Nobody cares about the quality of work anymore, what things look like behind the scenes, safety," said Will Macmillan, a union electrician. "The cheapest bid gets the job." Ralph Mickelson added, "There is no work ethic or loyalty—to your employer, or from your employer. It's at the bare minimum. In some instances, hard work pays off, but in others, it gets you scorn from other workers."

A former mill hand, Lou O'Malley, said, "These days, the big boys, the people with the big money don't want to pay the gazeetas. They want something for nothing. We're sending too much of our business overseas and getting terrible quality back. But I guess you've got to go with the flow. The losers are the white working class people."

Such sentiments are reinforced when government agrees to deal with companies that offer their workers few benefits and little stability. Desperate to bring any jobs and tax dollars into the region, and therefore reluctant to impose any conditions on prospective investors, local government bows to companies' whims.

"We will give away the farm," said Katherine Kemp. A middle-aged woman with business acumen and a refreshing directness, she has worked in city planning for over a decade. We met in a dark, wood-paneled bar in the southern suburb of Boardman.

"We got V & M [the city's only remaining steel producer] in the ballpark of 30 million dollars to locate to a place that they were probably already going anyway. We scrambled and pieced together tons of incentives during the federal stimulus."

"How do you compete otherwise?" I asked.

"We don't. Nobody has any reason to relocate to Youngstown or the region. There may be a small reason for logistics companies because of our low overhead and placement between Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Chicago. But until the shale gas companies came along, there's no reason. Our workforce is not distinguished. Our university is lackluster. We do have an aging population, so we can attract some health care companies. When companies do come in, you Google their name and realize that they've been indicted in one state and barred by the Chamber of Commerce in another. We're a magnet for shady types."

"How much does that have to do with politicians' propensity to expect bribes?" I asked.

"Most companies that are decent won't do stuff like that. So it's a detriment. Word gets out about stuff like that. Cheap whores don't get classy johns." She sipped a glass of wine.

"So how can Youngstown attract a decent company?"

"If there's an existing company run by people who grew up in the [Mahoning Valley] region, they'll stay here because they are deeply loyal. The networks are so strong. My dream is that one of them goes Fortune 500, and just doesn't turn into an asshole."

Kemp reclined, and continued, "There's a genuineness about the place. But don't expect to get a good workforce if you're going to pay them nine bucks an hour. You gotta treat people well, or you're not going to do well. Youngstown has a real history of being exploited by employers. Originally, yeah, by the steel industry and the legacy is still here. There is still a strong mistrust of authority and in particular government. Ohio has weak governance structures generally. We sort of cater to companies' economic demands and this area is pretty much the same. City Hall is located on a side street and you can't even see its sign. The government doesn't exploit working class people; we just go along with employers' every demand."

Remarkably, local government is just as obsequious with the fracking industry in discussions about a resource over which Mahoning County holds a monopoly: the land underneath them.

"Everyone is scared shitless to say anything," said Nash, the Democratic staffer. "The Chamber of Commerce, elected officials won't. But they're being short-sighted. We're sitting on $1 trillion. Where else are they going to go? They can't frack in China. We're sitting on the stuff and they got to go through us to get to it. We are so used to rolling over for anyone who wants to come in here; you don't have to do that with energy. Somebody has to take a leadership position on labor and environmental issues to make sure we get some benefit. [. . .] It's a question of leadership, in a region where there hasn't been any."

Crony Capitalism

A key hindrance is that government offices positioned to represent the public interest have a propensity to maximize personal interests first. Most visibly, personal relationships have tainted the redevelopment of downtown Youngstown, where success has been contingent on things other than business. Downtown's purported renaissance features a tattoo parlor, a few restaurants and bars, and a vintage shop. The tattoo parlor was co-founded by a former city police officer. Shortly after its opening, several other parlors in the city were reportedly closed down by inspectors for health code violations, and a competing store was not permitted to open on the same street.

Among the bars and restaurants, Dooney's was owned by the then-mayor's son, Chris Sammarone. After investments from city politicians, the owner of the Lemon Grove bar was accused of falsifying earnings reports in order to raise further capital and resist closure. "He owes so many favors," mused one regular, "they've got him by the balls. He can't rock the boat." The owners of Avalon Pizza have reportedly received special treatment from the former mayor, Charles Sammarone, who forbade city building inspectors from citing blatant violations of safety standards.

The vintage shop, Greyland, is the only clothing or furniture store to open in decades. However, City Councilman Mike Ray has repeatedly threatened to close it as part of a campaign against "thrift stores." Shortly thereafter, a promotional event at the store was interrupted by plain-clothes police officers who antagonized attendees and intimidated the proprietors. The owner was so concerned that he began suspecting any passing police car for weeks thereafter.

"I tried to start a bar downtown, but the mob owns all the liquor licenses," said Freddy Kristeva, a 59-year-old Westsider. "There is a finite number of licenses given by the city, and they bought them all up and control who they go to.

They don't want me competing with their joints, and if I do, they want me to pay 30 grand and agree to buy the pool tables, dartboards, and video games that they rent. They insist on your cooperation or they burn down your building. I mean, it's not that it's a bad deal; it's just control."

The most well maintained buildings outside the university—the city's largest employer—are banks and churches. The highly touted "business incubator," which was cited in President Barack Obama's 2013 State of the Union address, is promising for its facilitation of high-tech start-ups. However, it is next to meaningless for the working class people who are unqualified for jobs as computer programmers or scientists.

In interviews with three business officials in City Hall, Mahoning County, and the Chamber of Commerce, I inquired about Youngstown's sources of economic growth and received three completely different projections. One underscored call centers, food processing, distribution logistics, and metal mining. The second emphasized the arts, higher education, and high-tech start-ups. The third attributed all growth to oil and gas. "Mahoning County doesn't have a five-year plan," conceded Karen Amalfitano, a county official. "It doesn't even have a one-year plan. None of our departments know where we're going to be. We're shooting off the seat of our pants."

"We were always known for our labor unrest," said George Ellis, a member of the Chamber of Commerce. "But our private sector labor force is only 9% union. We've transitioned away from that. I think the culture is changing."

"How is the culture changing?" I probed.

"I heard from a young person that my generation worked to live, while the new generation lives to work."

Under the circumstances, they have little choice.

Instability

"You're constantly reminded that you're replaceable with someone else who demands less money," said Didi Schumer, a hospital clerk. "It's worse as you get older. [. . .] Companies are giving people more work and finding ways to cut people's jobs. Hard work doesn't pay off. They know you'll get the work done, because you're replaceable."

The instability and insufficiency of conventional jobs in Youngstown alters individuals' approach to the rest of their lives. Working under the consistent threat of dismissal, many are reluctant to plan for the future. Companies' unwillingness to pay living wages or provide benefits has many employees keeping one eye on their qualification for government provisions like Medicaid and food stamps, as they ponder career decisions.

"These days, if people get jobs, they hang on to them for dear life," said Hank Thompson, the industrial painter, as he looks up from a welded frame. "You hear about some getting tired of working somewhere and threatening to leave, but who are you going to bump out at the next shop over? A lot of companies will lay you off as soon as business slows. I got a wife and four kids."

He patted his brow, and raised his airbrush. "I'm going to get lung cancer like this. If they would open that racetrack casino [proposed for Mahoning County], I'd take a job there, so I can be in the air conditioning all day with broads walking around me."

Others eschew formal work altogether and partake in an enormous underground economy that is equally unstable. Youngstown is a hub for secondhand sales, garage work, and under-the-table commerce. Without paying taxes on earned income, many individuals feel less of a stake in governance.

"People learned how to get by on the side," said Maddux Miller, a shopkeeper. "And if it wasn't you who was doing it, it was your neighbor or your family member. While organized crime has broken down, the economy has declined and the blue-collar desperation has gone unchanged. The DNA is the same. The history has not left us. People overlook the same activities that made organized crime powerful. Drugs, betting, they just look the other way. It's like Mayberry [Andy Griffith's fictional television town with friendly but incompetent police]."

Youngstown is a locus for the drug trade. Heroin, crack, and marijuana are sold in significant quantities, typically out of vacant or rented properties. "The cash is coming from the [wealthier] suburbs and townships," Maddux explained. "And Youngstown's businesses are subsidized by the dealers who rent out empty rooms in their stores and restaurants—the same rooms that were once used by racketeers, bootleggers, and money launderers. Today's drug dealers are much more localized than before. It's still the Wild West, just lower level. Guys are now block-by-block. There are over 40 gangs that have replaced a small handful of rings. Over the years, we've just gone from a few big hustlers to hundreds of little hustlers. They're on every street."

Citizens also supplement their income by fixing cars in their backyards, mowing lawns for other residents, hauling materials in their trucks, and offering friends handyman services and light construction. Mahoning Valley residents are also prolific scrappers. Many collect, trade, and sell the widest imaginable variety of household wares, memorabilia, and furniture, convening at the twice-weekly Four Seasons Flea Market, estate sales, and pawn shops.

Ralph Mickelson's porch is littered with items he found on the street. "I scrap," he said, hoisting a discarded carburetor. In the corner was a pile of paint buckets stuffed with magazines and newspapers, a bag of charcoal, a jug of antifreeze, a recycling bin, and toddler's furniture. We sat in two recovered office chairs set facing

the front yard. Ralph keeps his eyeglasses and a cordless phone on the rail, with his shotgun just inside the door. "I did a lot of things to make sure my kids ate."

Many young, white working class adults who have yet to leave Youngstown have embraced insecurity as a way of life. Available jobs are increasingly flexible positions that have replaced benefit-earning, longer-term roles and can be easily shed during declines in sales or in response to unexpected rises in overhead costs. Rather than invest in younger employees, many companies work on truncated time horizons and value short-term agility over long-term increases in human capital productivity.

In so doing, the market is imposing a similar myopia on its workers, who are unable to invest in their skill sets, relationships, and subsequent communities. They have internalized the feeling of being replaceable. They are unsure how long they will remain employed and therefore choose not to own homes and continue to weigh the advantages of welfare benefits. In this way, market flexibility has also translated to a social flexibility.

"Considering all our debt, we have basically communicated to our young people that there will be no safety net in the future," said Maddux. "The economy is going to hell and there is nothing you can do about it. So the response has been to stop trying to do anything at all. There's no reason to strive. Nothing is guaranteed."

Though they work in the same contingent jobs as earlier generations, young people often espouse anticapitalist perspectives and have low expectations of the government. They frequently engage in episodic personal relationships and semipermanent domestic arrangements—always ready for the next adaptation, convinced that such independence is what is required to survive Youngstown's next apocalypse.

"You just get used to living from one disaster to the next," a young man mused to me at a flea market. "We can't afford to prepare for the future. So you ride the broken car til the wheels fall off."

Leah Perry confronts the countervailing forces. The 29-year-old clerk at a window manufacturer recently purchased a dilapidated house on the Northside, thanks to a loan she received from a friend—not a bank.

"Banks will not give mortgages on houses that they consider uninhabitable. You need a 'purchase and rehabilitate' loan from HUD [Housing and Urban Development]. They assess the property and estimate its value post-rehab. But there's not a single house in this neighborhood worth much more than $15,000. It's modern-day redlining. They're refusing to lend."

After purchasing the house for $4,000, she personally performed the drywalling, mudding, interior painting, demolition work, floor refinishing, and bathroom retiling with the assistance of neighbors. However, she faces the expenses for more technical work like exterior painting ($12,000), plumbing and heating

($16,000), electric wiring ($2,500), and roofing ($11,000)—amounting to triple the ultimate value of her home.

Within weeks of her purchase, the city had already fined Leah for not painting the house's exterior, a code violation. They would cite her several times at costs exceeding the price of paint.

"If I want a certain quality of life, the only way to do it is to do it myself," she said. "The government just makes it hard to work in their framework, so you either have to do it yourself or give up. [. . .] I don't qualify for welfare or health insurance. I had a better quality of life when I was working part-time at $9.00 an hour. I'm making enough money to exist, but that's too much for the government, because the city doesn't have a program for me. [. . .] [The office of] Jobs and Family Services doesn't take any action. I guess I could do what other people do and not report parts of my income. But I want to live honestly. [. . .] We're all one step from welfare. You are one bad car accident, one unexpected lay-off, one medical bill away from losing your house."

One Step Away

Many of Youngstown's citizens occupy the space between poverty and middle-class stability—a precarious place that incentivizes families to balance their pursuit of a living wage with their maintenance of government assistance. The city's per capita income is $14,996, while the average household earns $24,800 per year. Youngstown leads the country in concentrated poverty, with 33.8% of its households living beneath the poverty line (United States Census 2010).

Eddie and Gillian Phee, both 42, run a stall at the Four Seasons Flea Market where they sell clothing and watches. Both were laid off in 2010 within a couple months of each other. Eddie was working for an aluminum factory that produced siding and window frames, while Gillian worked in logistics for a plastics company. Their home was foreclosed and they have not been able to find work since. They earn about $2,500 per month for a family of four.

"We're stuck between a rock and a hard place," Gillian said. "You can't get a job or you'll lose your medical [Medicaid]. But if I don't get a job, we're not really making enough. Each month, we want our numbers [income] to come in right—high enough to pay the bills, low enough to keep the medical coverage and food stamps. The American Dream works for some people. Other people just live day-to-day. If you do have a dream, this town will find a way to shoot it down."

Will and Caroline Macmillan, 48, are in a different position. She is an art teacher, and he is an electrician who vacillates between jobs assigned by the union hall. "Eight years ago, I ran my unemployment out and the government

refused to grant an extension, even though the whole state of Ohio was struggling," recalled Will. "I didn't know what to do, and I called down to the welfare office. It was tough to go that route. We got a Medicaid card and it was better than my usual union coverage. I realized at that time that the welfare money at $225 per week was half of my unemployment payments and a quarter of my salary when I was working. Why would somebody want to work a minimum wage job if they can qualify for welfare and not have to get up every morning? I mean, I didn't want to work at Dunkin Donuts and lose my Medicaid either."

Caroline, who only works part-time because the couple cannot afford childcare, said, "In 2010, there was absolutely no work to be found. Thank God for the government's extension of unemployment benefits, because we could have lost our house. We otherwise would have had to drain our retirement accounts to make all our payments. [. . .] It was a little humiliating but I always appreciated that [Will] didn't make me come down to the welfare office with him."

"Things have just been so bad for us that the union's stances have weakened," said Will. "This summer was the first time I have ever been told that it was mandatory to work six 10-hour days a week, unless you have a doctor's excuse. Otherwise, the client could fire you. Then they recently added a mandatory eight-hour Sunday on top of that. The general attitude is that, because things have been so bad, that people seem happy just to have a job."

Tess Delacort has owned a secondhand children's store for 18 years. Despite the relative stability, "I feel this sense of internal panic everyday," she said. "Everyone is struggling right now. I have never been more worried, not since maybe I got pregnant as a teenager. My husband was in Iraq and is now suffering from severe post-traumatic stress. He needs to be hospitalized, so he will soon lose his job, which means the family loses his medical coverage. I take ten different meds a day. So right now, I feel like my family is one month away from homelessness. When he got hospitalized, we were on the verge of a divorce. But I just could not tell my kids that I'm leaving their father and letting him commit suicide. We're all hovering just above poverty. Every month is a struggle."

On the periphery of Youngstown, trailer parks are populated by people who once lived on the edge of poverty. None willingly capitulated to the pressures of their circumstances; they encountered unexpected events or made poor decisions. Violet is a recovering addict, who turned to crack after the unexpected death of her stepchild and her ex-husband's departure. Her neighbor, Sam, spent nearly his entire childhood in and out of foster homes after his father killed his mother and committed suicide when Sam was four years old. After a career in factory work, he was diagnosed with lung cancer and, according to his doctors, has six months to live. Down the block, Fran Sulz recently finished a five-year prison sentence for killing her husband, after enduring 20 years of brutal

domestic abuse. She recently enrolled in night classes at the university to "start over." Like Violet and Sam, Fran confronted life's challenges without much familial or community support. Given the short distance separating Youngstown's white working class from the Hillcrest Trailer Park, attitudes toward poverty are unforgiving.

Symbolic Boundaries

In Youngstown, welfare chauvinism is most intense among those closest to qualifying for it. Proximity does not foster a greater concern or empathy, but rather foments greater resentment. In most interviews, white working class people expressed an ability to directly relate to the choices made by people receiving government benefits. Indeed, because they believe that they could just as easily "give up" or "use the system" as welfare recipients are thought to, they are among the least tolerant of such a choice. Concurring with earlier research by Lamont (2000), many respondents place this choice in moralistic terms that reflect their work ethic and integrity. Their resentment is fueled by the way they believe government "rewards" their counterparts.

Stories about people driving into welfare office parking lots in brand new Cadillacs are repeated from neighbor to neighbor to neighbor until it is unclear who exactly witnessed the incongruous scene. Variants of this story describe welfare recipients wearing leather coats and ostentatious jewelry, buying steaks and lobster from supermarkets, and selling their food stamps at a discount and spending the profits on nonessentials. Less acquainted with the choices of wealthy professionals, they are more forgiving or at least less bothered by their behavior. There are no stories whispered about an executive's decision to purchase downscale safety equipment, a stakeholder's drive to close a company, a vice president's gratuitous pursuit to reduce payroll and earn a meager bonus. "Working class white people don't feel like they can control Wall Street or big corporations," explained D'Antoni, the former public official. "They can control their neighborhoods; that's an easier target for their anger."

Such moralistic and logistical distinctions are not always clear. When lamenting the decline of their neighborhoods, many respondents cited the unaccountability of landlords who rent or sell their properties to unsavory individuals with histories of criminal behavior or negligence. However, the same respondents also speak of their own desire to one day move out to the suburbs and sell their own homes to the highest bidder. Others actually rent from the very landlords they discredit. It is also complicated to point fingers at the employment and business practices of companies that white working class people patronize. It is

precisely the denial of health benefits that helps keep Walmart's prices low. It is the inclusion of goods imported from developing countries that make groceries and household essentials affordable.

A more arbitrary distinction concerns the framing of welfare itself. Many respondents did not consider registration for unemployment benefits, disability payments, Medicaid, or food stamps to constitute "welfare." Rather, for them, welfare was exclusively cash assistance—state and federally funded programs that provide money to people with little or no assets or income. In yet another construction of moral superiority, cash assistance is thought to be categorically different from food stamps and Medicaid in that payments are effectively liquid, and categorically different from disability and unemployment payments in that eligibility is not a matter of demonstrable misfortune, only demonstrable need. In this spirit, cash assistance is interpreted to be not a matter of assistance, but a reflection of capitulation and system exploitation.

"There are a lot of people who abuse [welfare]," said John Avery, who handles odd jobs for a small factory. "I'm running around busting my hump, while another guy sits on his porch. That's not right. I get food assistance and medical from the government because of my daughter. But I go to work every day, even after I broke my leg. You have to earn it. [. . . People on welfare] are driving around in new cars and I can't even afford a vehicle. The government pays their rent and utilities, and so they spend the cash on gold chains and a Cadillac, when I can barely afford a Cavalier. [. . .] People will take advantage of things any way they can."

Threaded through such statements is an implicit association between cash assistance—though not other forms of welfare—and African Americans. On the surface, respondents frequently made use of coded language by referring to Cadillacs and gold chains, which are predominantly associated with African Americans in Youngstown. However, other respondents referred to predominantly African American neighborhoods, families with multiple children out of wedlock, and other associations based on derogatory stereotypes. Rather than rely on such cues, I asked respondents to identify these people who exploited welfare. "While I do think that there is a disproportionate amount of black people on welfare," said Caleb Jones, a parking attendant, "it is more determined by a lack of education or income."

"Which black people are more subject to?" I asked.

"Yes."

"Did you ever accept welfare or other government benefits?" I asked.

"Unemployment, yeah," he said, sheepishly. "It was a humbling, disheartening experience for three months. I had philosophical problems with it, but I eventually found work digging ditches for a construction company. You know, it became comfortable to get money in the mail. You can really stagnate. I asked

myself whether I was not working because I can't find a job or because I don't like the jobs I find. Now, I'm poor, but at least I have a job. I don't get what I want, but I got what I need."

Caleb, Will Macmillan, and other subjects who acknowledged their consumption of welfare were each quick to note the allure of indefinite government assistance, and celebrate their progression back to full-time employment. However, their interpretation of welfare was subsequently less in terms of work ethic. Indeed, none of these subjects admitted to indolence. Rather, welfare is here interpreted as a matter of discipline and integrity. As more working class whites or their peers require government assistance, conventional socioeconomic dichotomies and their normative underpinnings are becoming hazier—altering social boundaries more generally.

"Many working class white people are down today," said Father Candiotti, "because they realize that they are becoming the very people they used to criticize."

Social Insecurity

A city that has always structurally divided rich from poor, the managerial class from labor, Youngstown appears in many ways built to unite the proverbial proletariat against the interests of capitalists. While class-based segregation is less apparent today, the Central YMCA serves as an enduring artifact. A labyrinth of hallways and stairwells, it is a conurbation of three buildings that once made up the largest YMCA branch in the United States. Located mere blocks from Youngstown's key government buildings and business offices, the gym attracts a mix of clerks, custodians, construction workers, police officers, politicians, business owners, and teenagers. However, contrary to the Christian egalitarianism that inspired its initial founding, Youngstown's Central YMCA provides little refuge from surrounding hierarchies.

There is literally an upstairs and a downstairs. For an extra fee per month, members are admitted to the Health and Fitness Division, an exclusive, all-male changing facility on the building's fourth floor with a steam room, reserved lockers, towel service, and private exercise space. There is no female counterpart. Other male members use the men's standard locker room in the building's humid basement next to the heavy weightlifting rooms—popularly known as "the dungeon." The Health and Fitness Division's steam room is known to be a de facto roundtable for the city's (male) power brokers, attended by the mayor and others. While the gym offers progressive pricing to low-income members, the extra cost of access to the Health and Fitness Division is not so pro-rated. So the Division—and the division—is largely kept in tact.

More subtly, Youngstown is also developing a linguistic divide, relatively unique in contemporary American society. Situated along a linguistic fault line separating the Northern dialect of the Great Lakes region from the Southern and Inland South dialects of Appalachia, differences in speech are substantially correlated to socioeconomic status.[1] While professionals and middle-class white people generally participate in what linguists refer to as "network standard" American English—largely consistent with Northern dialects—Youngstown's poor white population is more likely to speak with a full Southern shift that features what is colloquially known as a "twang."[2] The high dialect is therefore thought to be learned as a result of social (or educational) pressure, and associated with "overt prestige" (see Labov 2006). While nonstandard dialects are usually considered low prestige, certain dialects stigmatized by the education system—such as Youngstowners' Appalachian twang—still enjoy a covert prestige among working class men for the very reason that they are considered incorrect (Leith 1997: 96).

With such audible and structured divisions between the managerial and labor classes, the nature of steelworking required close coordination among steelworkers, further facilitating ethnocultural bonding. The workplace functioned as a crucible of social bonds where camaraderie and mutual understanding were forged (Bruno 1999: 54, 137). Accumulated grievances led to the evolution of a once-powerful union movement and collective bargaining arrangements. Steelworkers also took note of and ostracized fellow workers who appeared to be "company men" (Bruno 1999: 69). They recognized differences in living conditions, work schedules, earnings, and attitudes between themselves and those they perceived to be of the privileged class (Bruno 1999: 17, 89). However, they also noted such differences within their own ranks.

Balkanization

Youngstown's working class balkanization was largely driven by steel mills' tendency to assign jobs on the basis of race and ethnicity rather than merit (see Allgren 2009: 36; Linkon and Russo 2002: 31–32; Nelson 2001: 155–164). Whereas white workers largely dominated the skilled jobs in steel-shaping units, African Americans were relegated to jobs in the coke plants and blast furnaces. The Irish were typically found in transportation, Italians in masonry, Slovaks and Hungarians before the open hearth, and native-born Americans and English in supervision (Bruno 1999: 73; Linkon and Russo 2002: 32). Vinny Cosenza worked in a plant for 20 years. "In the mills," he said, "the Irish were the first ones to run the open hearth. When the Dagos came in, the Irish wouldn't show them how to do it. When the blacks came in, the Dagos wouldn't show the blacks. But

today, the black man is just as much the little man as the white man." Despite Vinny's realization, interracial working class unity remains rare.

Youngstown Sheet and Tube's worker housing initiative was designed to help the company gain control over its workers (Linkon and Russo 2002: 33–34). The spatial segregation of workers encouraged the perception that they were residents of particular neighborhoods, rather than citizens of the larger Youngstown area (Bruno 1999: 29). Housing was divided into four different sections: Loveland for skilled workmen, foremen, and superintendents; Overlook for American-born employees; Highview for promising foreign-born workers; and Blackburn for African-American and recent immigrant workers (Linkon and Russo 2002: 36). These segregating practices continued well into the 1960s, when banks' lending policies excluded black workers from moving to the suburbs and Youngstown's largely white Westside (ibid.).

Despite the Obama Administration's successful attempt to unify ethnocultural minorities with working class whites in the Upper Midwest, this coalition proved ephemeral. "[Whites and blacks] don't treat each other as if their problems are different; they treat each other as if they are different," Marty Nash explained. " 'At least I'm not a dago, a hungey, and at least we're better than the niggers and always will be.' To a large extent, it goes back to the Reagan days' stories about the welfare queen. It takes attention away from who the real enemies are and the Democrats can't bridge the gap in reality. And it doesn't help when the trades and labor have been racist for so long. They've denied opportunities to blacks too. People are more concentrated on maintaining their piece of a constantly shrinking pie, rather than working to try and make the pie bigger."

Bryant Daniels added, "It is such a racially divided place. They know enough that it's not okay to call someone a 'nigger' or be openly racist. [. . .] They know to be outraged if their child says something prejudiced at school. But they could have put that anger into changing something politically instead of directing it towards other members of their subclass. It has caused a disassociation from politics for white working class people, because the Democrats and Republicans are both afraid to turn them out. [. . .] Fundamentally, blacks and whites are in the same predicament, but they have absolutely no sense of that."

However, it is precisely that shared predicament which appears to yield racial sensitivities among the white working class. They believe that there is an honorable response to poverty—their own—and judge African Americans for their perceived tendency to stray from that constructed and frequently betrayed ideal. Many white respondents are quick to recognize exceptions to their generalizations, but their views go largely unchanged.

"Now there are some damn decent black people, and I'd welcome them into my house," said Ralph Mickelson. "But there's black trash, just like there's white