Exposing Invisible Labor

Introduction

Conceptualizing Invisible Labor

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This volume brings together an interdisciplinary group of scholars to pose two fundamental questions: what counts as work, and why are some forms of work invisible? We focus on forms of labor that occur within formal employment relationships but are not conceptualized as work and so remain hidden from view—sometimes in the public imagination, sometimes from consumers, and sometimes from the workers themselves. When their work is erased, the workers themselves are sometimes rendered invisible as well. We ask what forces and trends are preventing employers, consumers, and employees from "seeing" the work that is done and blocking regulators and policy makers from addressing its impacts.

Visible labor has traditionally been defined as work that is readily identifiable and overt. It is located in a physical "workplace" and is self-recognized as work by management, employees, and consumers. It is typically paid, occurs in the public sphere, is directly profit generating, and has historically been full-time, long-term, and state regulated.

Starting in the 1980s, however, sociologists began to write about work that falls outside that domain. Arlene Daniels's (1987) article "Invisible Work" solidified and propelled the field, becoming a reference point for the social science literature. Centering on the household and voluntary work performed within it, Daniels's article noted the gendered character of this invisible work, observing that women are often

associated with kinds of labor that are widespread throughout society and yet not conceived as work and, moreover, not valued.

Subsequently, Marjorie DeVault's (1994) research on *Feeding the Family* showed how activities like preparing meals have been considered "act[s] of love" or "expression of a natural role" (Star and Strauss 1999: 10) rather than work activities. Other scholars expanded the analysis to women's work performed inside the home but more clearly associated with income-generating and productive capacities such as piece-rate electronics assembly, auto parts assembly, seamstress work, and snack food production (Boris and Prugl 1996). As DeVault (2014) outlined in her recent Presidential Address to the Eastern Sociological Society meeting on "Invisible Work," many of these early writings (Kanter 1993; Rollins 1987; Smith 1988) were crucial academically, enabling scholars to "see" the work and visualize workers in places previously invisible to conventional sociology.

Our analysis considers how the concept of *invisibility* applies to a larger range of labor performed inside formal employment relationships. We take our inspiration from Arlie Hochschild, one of the most influential theorists on the dynamics of invisible labor within the context of paid employment. Her early work uncovered how emotions become commodities for employers in the service economy, who compel workers to undergo "feeling management" to present genuine care for their clienteles (Hochschild 1983). The emotion work done by flight attendants, she explained, was a form of labor that generated significant profits for the airlines and represented a core part of the brand marketed to consumers.

In other scholarship addressing the concept of *hidden labor* within the context of paid employment, invisibility has typically been associated with minimum-wage jobs or the underground economy. This implicit pairing is particularly apparent given scholarly attention to recent expansions of low-wage sectors of the labor force such as low-end service work (Ehrenreich 2010), seasonal farmwork (Griffith and Kissam 1995), and inner-city retail and fast-food work (Newman 2000). The notion of *invisibility* has also been widely discussed in relation to the Global South, where the marginalized workforce is connected to other dynamics like child labor, urban slums, and the poverty of rural households.

Expanding this focus, our analysis considers the meaning and significance of visibility *across* class and social hierarchies. Our authors examine jobs that span a range of pay scales and workers who hail from diverse social classes, including retail workers, computer workers on

crowdsourcing Web sites, sexualized servers, virtual receptionists, college students functioning as brand ambassadors on campus, white-collar workers in organizations, and engineers. We balance our perspective to account for a range of occupational positions that include the middle and professional strata of the workforce. Our authors consider the role of affluent or middle-class workers in retail; the increasing use of unpaid internships that are disproportionately available to college-educated, economically privileged students; and the status of skilled knowledge workers on the Internet.

Broadening the category of invisible labor matters for several reasons. First, work that is not seen is not valued, either symbolically or materially. Second, if workers themselves do not see their efforts as valuable work, they are less likely to organize, appeal for public support, or challenge their working conditions through the legal system. Even if they want to mobilize, the invisibility of their work—and in many cases, of the workers themselves—may make it difficult for them to gain political traction or support from consumers. Finally, and most crucially, if the state and legal systems do not acknowledge the labor, it will not be addressed in policy and law. A prominent theme running throughout this book is how invisible labor is often unregulated.

This book adopts an interdisciplinary approach that integrates perspectives from law, sociology, industrial relations, critical race and feminist theory, science and technology studies, and global and international relations. These varied intellectual traditions offer complementary approaches to provide a wide-ranging (but by no means complete) picture of contemporary invisible labor. Nuanced social science analysis enables us to mark and track subtle dynamics of the labor process that have been overlooked. Structural, policy, and legal approaches facilitate our inquiry into how these uncovered dynamics could fit within the regulatory system. In so doing, they allow us to bring two major fields—sociology and law—into conversation with one another. While the sociology chapters provide ethnographic detail and new conceptualizations of invisible labor, the legal chapters explore the limits of regulation in protecting invisible workers. Together they deepen and complicate the social and legal implications of such labor.

This introduction begins by defining *invisible labor,* contemplating and mapping its forms along a spectrum. Next, we chart the trends that have spurred the proliferation of invisible labor. Then we outline the chapters in the volume, organizing them around several themes for conceptualizing labor and invisibility: "Exposing Invisible Labor,"

"Virtually Invisible," "Pushed out of Sight," "Looking Good at Work," and "Branded and Consumed." Finally, we consider the implications of revealing invisible labor for the intersections of gender, race, class, nationality, and disability.

DEFINING INVISIBLE LABOR

The word *labor* has multiple meanings, and we use the word intentionally here. *Labor* may refer to work itself or to tasks that are performed ("She labored at the construction site all day"). Within critical social theory, the labor process has referred to the larger context of work, like the sequence of tasks in a production process, the role of a job within an organization, and especially the relations between employees and managers. At the same time, *labor* may refer to a collective group of workers themselves (the "labor force" or "labor movement").

We define *invisible labor* as activities that occur within the context of paid employment that workers perform in response to requirements (either implicit or explicit) from employers and that are crucial for workers to generate income, to obtain or retain their jobs, and to further their careers, yet are often overlooked, ignored, and/or devalued by employers, consumers, workers, and ultimately the legal system itself.

We also seek to highlight ambiguous work that lies at the intersection between paid and unpaid labor. For instance, some work within the context of formal labor is *un*paid, such as the time spent preparing for the performance of aesthetic labor (which we discuss in more detail below). Some work is *under*paid either because employers (as well as others) do not see the full range of tasks that the worker is performing and from which employers benefit, or because the law lacks rigorous regulation in the area, such as tipped service work.

Sometimes invisibility is not strictly related to "seeing" or to a visual act. As our authors discuss, there are many instances when invisibility is a *symbolic concept*. In this sense, it may refer to market devaluation or to a social judgment that labels some tasks as "not work." Invisibility happens because these tasks are associated (and confused) with leisure, are considered to be part of consumption, are seen as voluntary, and fall outside the legal structure. Of course, the term *invisible* may also refer to the *visual act* of not seeing the workers or not understanding that they are performing work. An example is when an Internet platform obscures which tasks are performed by humans and which are performed by computers (Cherry 2009).

This analysis attempts to complicate our understandings of the interplay between the work and the worker as center points of invisibility. Even though these two factors are tied together within the labor process, their visibility may vary independently of each other. Critical in this regard is uncovering the complex and multilayered process of foregrounding and backgrounding labor. Many useful typologies have revealed how this process operates (Nardi and Engeström 1999; Star and Strauss 1999): visible work done by invisible people (domestic workers, librarians); visible people whose labor is relegated to the background (the care work of nurses); or the hidden tasks of visible labor (like informal conversations, storytelling, and humor that may aid the work environment). Along these lines, we show many examples of this foregrounding and backgrounding process. An example is when the work is visible, but the worker is invisible (like when a nonperson—a robot or a hologram—performs the work or when a campus brand ambassador markets a brand, appearing in the guise of a voluntary consumer). An opposite case occurs when visible workers perform work that is invisible (like the emotion work performed by Hochschild's flight attendants). We seek here to situate the concept of invisibility in deeper contexts of the political economy of labor.

We also aim to highlight the range of participants in the employment relation who have significant roles in viewing labor. To each, labor may be invisible in different and consequential ways. *Consumers* may be unaware of the conditions of the labor for the products they buy or the services they contract. *Managers*, for instance, may not witness or recognize the range of preparations that workers do for their jobs, sometimes at their own cost (like taking accent lessons to improve diction for sales work). Or consider the example of *the worker* as viewer. Work may be hidden from the worker himself, as we will show. For example, retail store clerks desire jobs in prestigious brand stores because buying and wearing the company's clothes is to them a form of leisure (notwithstanding that these activities may also be a condition of their employment). These clerks perform these activities without realizing that they are also doing work in promoting the brand. Crucially, some work is invisible as a policy matter: regulatory authorities may be aware of the work, but a choice has been made to underregulate it, as is the case with tipped labor.

But not everything qualifies as "invisible labor" for our purposes. Our authors are concerned with activities that are *tied to a job and its rewards,* often as required by the employer. Among the range of formal

and informal work activities, we focus on those that are performed for the benefit of the employer and from which the employer reaps profits.

Likewise, we do not suggest that invisibility and devaluation are synonymous. To be sure, there are many counterexamples. Some forms of devalued labor are readily visible, such as fast-food worker (Leidner 1996) and nail technician (Kang 2010). Alternatively, some kinds of labor that are valued by the market economy may be well hidden from the public, like the shift of stock market traders from open-floor styles of buying and selling futures contracts to trading on electronic platforms (Levin 2005). A critical point, however, is that by "devalued" we do not necessarily mean "lowly paid." Certainly, the value of a task may be signified by remuneration, but that is not the only criterion for invisibility. Instead, we focus as well on a more basic principle of value in labor: whether the task is recognized as worthy of inclusion in the category of "work"—and regulated as such.

SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTING THE INVISIBLE

Conventional approaches would say that the invisible and the visible are manifest in themselves (that is, neutral, or uniformly viewed the same way). The premise of this view, as summarized by Hall, Evans, and Nixon (2013), is that "'things' exist in the material and natural world; that their material or natural characteristics are what determines or constitutes them; and that they have a perfectly clear meaning" therein (p. xix).

Yet sociologists and cultural studies theorists have urged us to understand these categories as *socially constructed*. This is the idea that social phenomena are products of interactions among individuals, groups, and communities. The related concept of *representation* explains that meaning is not conferred on objects themselves, but rather created in the way we incorporate cultural objects into our daily lives, the way they come to represent or symbolize ideas and feelings, and in turn, the way those meanings regulate and set norms for subsequent action (Hall, Evans, and Nixon 2013).

Accordingly, we argue that many social actors are involved (directly or indirectly) in the generation and promotion of labor as visible or invisible. For instance, authors in this volume examine how the act of seeing and the visible are socially constructed. Chapter 7 discusses Berger's seminal writing on this topic in his book *Ways of Seeing* (1972), noting how artists have historically represented smiling laborers in their

paintings for the wealthy. Several of our chapters (9 and 10) examine the labor of frontline service workers, and the role of stylists, cosmeticians, breast enhancement surgeons, and others in cultivating the "right look" for women employees. This echoes the writings of feminist media scholars such as Walters (1995) on the way that women's appearance is crafted for viewing by men.

Dynamics of visibility, therefore, may serve to obscure and even *misrepresent* those being viewed. This is especially common when marginalized groups are objects of the visible. The field of cultural studies has been important in exposing patterns of inequality within representation, and demonstrating how systems of patriarchy, classism, heterosexism, and imperialism (Said 2014) shape what appears in the media, culture, and society. Visibility, in this sense, is problematic because it can be a tool of power. The act of putting people (like workers) on display can be harmful to them in certain situations. Foucault's (1979) theory of visibility provides an example of how this is carried out (in other words, through the dominating practices of observation and surveillance).

Yet our interest is in the reverse analysis as well. Instead of only asking who is *seen* and why, we also ask who and what are *not seen*, and with what implications for the labor process. Invisibility is socially constructed, just like visibility. Ironically, in fact, there are many overt tasks that go into making particular kinds of work invisible. Evidence is in the labor of editors and photographers who, in their daily routines, decide, shape, and subtly manipulate what is not seen by the public. Along these lines, chapter 4 begins with a discussion of virtual content editors, who delete and moderate comments and disturbing images on social media. Described more below, these are workers who "do" (that is, create) invisibility within labor.

Toward this end, we focus on how people and things disappear in the employment context. Disempowerment is embedded in this dynamic, given that the rewards and compensation for labor are typically dependent upon the visibility of the worker, the work process, or the worker's visible output.

A SPECTRUM OF VISIBILITIES

In short, invisibility is a multivalent concept. We depart in our conceptualization from many accounts of invisible labor in exploring the range of permutations of invisible labor—including the ways these forms may

seemingly contradict each other. Toward this end, we map invisibility along a spectrum.

On one end of the scale are the *absent and disappeared* workers. An example is the job of "content moderator," which Miriam A. Cherry discusses (chapter 4). These online laborers who monitor social media for unethical or objectionable material illustrate a case in which everything about the labor process is invisible. The worker is invisible to the user, as there is no sign or trace of her presence on the Web site (e.g., Facebook). Users may even presume that the work is done by a computer. The job is invisible, often outsourced overseas to places like the Philippines or India. Finally, the work is invisible because there is no tangible product. In fact, the purpose of the job is literally to erase content.

Near this "invisible" side of the scale (but not quite at the very end) are several other cases in our volume: crowdsourced coding engineers, internationally outsourced clerical workers, migrant farmworkers, and disabled workers in sheltered workshops. Here, the workers are not visible to the consumer and sometimes are not even visible to the employer. Moreover, some are physically confined and shielded from the formal labor market. Some are digitally wiped from corporate images and advertising (like Mexican American fruit pickers) and from existence (like video secretaries in organizational front offices).

At the other end, some workers are *hypervisible* and almost serve as a foil to the disappeared workers mentioned above. Groups like Abercrombie & Fitch sales workers, college campus brand ambassadors, and Hooters waitresses are not only well apparent to most parties; they are in fact deliberately spotlighted by employers as part of the service relationship. This trend reflects a growing employment sector with requirements to represent the firm's brand as well as to serve as its interface with consumers. Ironically, visibility marks these employees as appropriate candidates for that product or service, and brand-friendly aesthetics are often a central qualification for the job.

This situation is perhaps most apparent in the example of "breastaurant" workers (as Dianne Avery, chapter 9, shows), whose physiques as well as labor in serving food and drink are both highly visible to the consumer. What is hidden in this case is not the worker herself but rather the unstated or stated requirements to achieve visibility *in the right way* and the labor those requirements entail. This labor may include, for instance, enduring breast augmentation surgery, donning makeup, and accessorizing oneself so as to attract sexual attention.

These are the invisible efforts required both to obtain the job and then to earn sufficient tips to garner a living wage, given the subminimum wage paid to these employees.

Another example of the hypervisible is labor trafficking. Workers in forced or coerced employment situations are common around the world, with estimates of 20.9 million (Owens et al. 2014). Some cross national borders, responding to fraudulent promises by recruiters or becoming captive to traffickers who withhold their passports. Yet many are hidden in plain sight. They may work in frontline service jobs and interact with the public (Owens et al. 2014), in industries like restaurants (busboys, waiters), hospitality (hotel bell clerks, room cleaners), and hair salons (braiding hair, sweeping floors). Invisible in this case is neither the worker nor the work, but rather the system of egregious exploitation, which brought these workers here, which they live under, and which they cannot reveal to anyone.

The majority of our cases, however, fall between these two poles. One might consider these *semivisible* types of labor. Either the worker or the work is unrecognized. The invisible labor may be central or peripheral to the occupation, and the number of viewers may vary from a few to many. These jobs may have some commonalities with visible labor in that they are located in the public sphere, physically identifiable, and formalized on the books. However, they are devalued socially, politically, and economically in ways that subordinate them relative to visible labor. It is this contradictory nature of invisibility within visibility that we seek to tease out.

TRENDS PROPELLING THE INVISIBILITY OF LABOR

In accounting for the rise of invisible labor, we locate several trends that have emerged in recent decades to make certain types of work and/or workers less visible.

First, we have seen a *rise in precarious work* (Ross 2009; Vosko 2006), "employment that is uncertain, unpredictable, and risky" (Kalleberg 2009: 2). This expanding group of workers is experiencing an increased likelihood of unemployment, job insecurity, contingent and nonstandard work, and shouldering expenses like health insurance and pensions. This degradation of labor is felt by a range of workers, from fast-food servers (Ehrenreich 2010; Newman 2000) to engineering consultants (Barley and Kunda 2004). Significantly for our purposes, precarious work often contributes to the invisibility of labor. As jobs

become fragmented, their parts become increasingly dispersed and hard to see. Nevertheless, while precariousness is a driver of invisible labor, not all precarious work is invisible. In this volume, we focus on the point where these two dynamics meet: when the undercutting of stable, permanent employment also involves, or even leads to, the hiding of those jobs from view (see chapters by Evan Stewart [7] and Adam Arvidsson, Alessandro Gandini, and Carolina Bandinelli [12]).

Second is the *expansion of the service sector.* The basic foundations of the economy have shifted as most of the new jobs are in service work; that is, they are jobs that involve performing a function for customers rather than producing goods. This transition to a service economy has vastly increased the share of workers who are interacting with the public and who are evaluated according to the quality of that interaction. The provision of the service is often defined precisely by the employee's ability to be invisible—to blend in and do the job fluidly without being noticed (Suchman 1995).

Third is the *rise of consumerism,* which has intersected in significant ways with the expansion of the service economy. Consumerism involves the growing social pressure to buy goods and services even when they are not needed. It also involves a changed understanding of the self for the everyday citizen. The rise of large shopping malls has coincided with a loss of public space for politics (Cohen 2008). Accordingly, one's consumer identity has come to take precedence over other social roles, particularly the role of worker or citizen.

Closely related to the rise of consumerism is an *increased reliance on corporate brands* to create value. When service businesses rely heavily on branding, they depend upon frontline workers to convey the brand's meaning (including associated immaterial, subjective, and affective meanings). Employers must more aggressively manage the consumer-worker interaction. Ultimately, the lines between consumption and work are blurred for both employees and consumers. Brand culture makes and remakes the relationship between consumer and worker through interactive engagement online (Banet-Weiser 2012).

A fourth trend is the *growth of technology, communication, and networks.* In what Cherry (2011) calls "virtual work" and Scholz (2013) calls "digital labor," current technology is restructuring previous jobs and generating new types of employment. We examine how the Internet, networks, and mobile devices are transforming the foundations of where, when, and how work is performed. Technology has created entirely distinct categories of work such as crowdsourcing, social media

blogging, and even virtual assistants. In the process, technology obscures the worker from the view of the Web site user or ultimate consumer and, in addition, elides the line between leisure and work.

Advancing technology also leads to trends of surveillance in the workplace, which shape new patterns of invisibility and visibility of employees through the collection of big data on worker practices and the visual monitoring of worker movements (Poster 2011). Our chapters also consider the rise of new media (like the transfer of content from television to Web platforms like YouTube) and its role in hiding (or revealing) workers who are behind products and services offered in the market. A critical factor in the expansion of such platforms is the growth of labor market intermediaries—that is, new kinds of online actors and businesses that intervene in the matching between labor supply and demand. Indeed, many of the virtual jobs that we discuss in this volume are provided not directly by an employer but rather through an organization on the Internet that acts as a go-between for the employer and the worker. The role of such networked organizations is becoming paramount in reshaping the conditions of employment, the structuring of job rewards, and the means of directing grievances for workers.

A fifth trend is *globalization.* Our authors consider several transnational dynamics that are reshaping invisible labor. One is *the rise of large multinational firms.* The geographic dispersion of business is altering the nature of everyday work. Global firms are setting up subsidiaries abroad and gaining massive influence on employment systems. Wal-Mart, as Eileen Otis and Zheng Zhao discuss in chapter 8, is the largest private sector employer in the world and ranks second in the *Fortune* Global 500. This development has significant implications for the visibility of labor both in the hosting country (for workers on the shop floor) and in the home country (for the production process more broadly).

Globalization of labor also includes trends of subcontracting and outsourcing. Rather than sending a whole organization abroad (as described above), firms in the United States are increasingly sending parts or divisions of their operations to third-party firms in other countries in the Global South (Poster and Yolmo 2016). While firms have traditionally offshored their lower-level work in manufacturing (to places like Mexico and Southeast Asia), they have recently expanded to offshoring many kinds of professional and office work (to places like India and the Philippines). Such labor includes both pink-collar work (in clerical and customer services) and white-collar work (in engineering, medical, and legal services), as Winifred R. Poster discusses in

chapter 5. Thus labor is submerged from view on a transnational scale.

Finally, a key feature of globalization is *the migration of labor.* The movement of workers across borders is reshaping the labor process and which types of labor are visible within it. Citizenship has historically been tied to labor in the United States through the making of the ideal "worker-citizen" by national founders (Glenn 2009). Denial of citizenship is therefore integrally linked with the control of labor, as many migrant groups have been incorporated into types of work only ephemerally and temporally based on the employment needs of particular industrial sectors (Lowe 1996). Maintaining the status of the noncitizen worker serves to restrict wages, mobility, and capability to organize. We see the impact of this phenomenon today in the experiences of undocumented workers, of which there are 9 million in the United States (Gordon 2009). Many work in underground businesses that are "structured to avoid detection" (p. 24) and live in fear of deportation.

INEQUALITIES AND INTERSECTIONALITY

Our analysis is informed by critical sociology and legal studies and by frameworks of race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, and disability. These frameworks operate as systems of inequality that structure the labor process and create unique dimensions of invisibility for particular groups of workers.

An important contribution of this volume is recognizing *disability* as a factor structuring invisibility. Although rarely discussed in the literature on work in the contemporary economy, disability is a powerful axis of stratification (DeVault 2008; DeVault 2014). Despite advances in medical technology, the numbers of disabled people are skyrocketing—up to 14 million (Joffe-Walt 2013). Our analysis considers the disabled through a prism of agency, that is, as active participants in society through their labor rather than as objects to be cared for or those upon whom work is done. Pendo's chapter (6) shows how the majority of disabled people express a desire to participate in the formal workforce. Yet, ironically, the United States government has defined the disabled precisely by an inability to work. Pendo illustrates how this issue continues to operate in the labor market, given that both state programs and private benefits systems funnel the disabled away from full employment even when accommodations could be made for them to participate in meaningful ways.

Our project also explores *race* as an element of invisibility. The existing literature has insightfully outlined how managerial and other informal practices produce difference and racial inequality in the workplace. It is important to recognize, however, how the visibility of those dynamics has changed over time. In the pre–civil rights era, these racialized practices were often explicit. Yet in the post–civil rights era, these practices can be much more subtle. As our authors Wingfield and Skeete (chapter 3) examine, "racial tasks" at work are now seemingly neutral—and hence invisible to outsiders—while still producing racial inequality.

Using different terminology, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2006) calls this "color-blind racism." David Roediger and Elizabeth Esch (2012) call it "whiteness as management" (p. 14). Jennifer Pierce (2012) illuminates a process of "racing for innocence," as the white lawyers she interviewed would explicitly deny racism while simultaneously practicing exclusionary behavior against African American employees. Significantly, rendering these practices visible not only illuminates how racism operates but also facilitates our understanding of practices and policies that may bring about change. A critical race view of invisibility, therefore, helps us recognize how everyday labor practices produce structural racial inequalities.

Of particular importance for racialized invisible labor is the gap in research on Latinos. In a sociopolitical context that has tended to define race/ethnicity in terms of a black-white binary, Latinos have been underrepresented in the scholarly literature (for discussion of that gap in labor studies, see Romero, Hondagneu-Sotelo, and Ortiz 1997; and in sociology, see Saenz, Douglas, and Morales 2013). Excellent studies on Latino labor have emerged in the last few decades across the occupational scale, from meat packers (Miraftab 2012), to secretaries and garment workers (Segura 1994), to attorneys (García-López 2008). This field can hardly keep up with the growing presence of Latinos in the current employment landscape of the United States. Latinos are already the *largest* ethnic group in two U.S. states (surpassing whites) and the fastest-growing ethnic group nationwide. They comprise a highly diverse group from many different national origins, languages, and ethnicities, yet their common experiences represent significant dimensions of immigration and citizenship that structure invisibility.

An emerging theme in this literature is the overrepresentation of Latinos in lower-paying service occupations of invisible labor. This includes janitors and street vendors (Zlolniski 2006); housecleaners and home

childcare workers (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001); day laborers, car wash attendants, and car valets (Cleaveland and Pierson 2009; Valenzuela 2003); and gardeners (Huerta 2007). Focusing on Latino workers, and the racialized construction of these jobs, yields valuable insights on invisibility. Space and sound can be critical markers of tensions in their work. Latinos are often under contradictory pressures to be visible and invisible at the same time, or to reduce their visibility in situations where they are hypervisible. Gardeners, for instance, face legal ordinances banning leaf-blowing machines in favor of quieter, back-bending labor by hand (Cameron 2000). Day laborers face challenges in hiding from police within the public spaces of parking lot employment queues (Cleaveland and Pierson 2009).

Our volume considers several additional sectors where Latinos are increasingly employed: farmwork, retail sales, and security guards. Geographically, chapters examine regions of the United States where immigration has been especially high. Stewart (chapter 7), by focusing on Florida, sheds light on the integral role of Latinos in farmwork. Two-thirds of the workforce in U.S. agriculture is Mexican born, and one-half is undocumented. Yet rather than showcasing these Latino workers in television and Internet commercials for fruit products, companies represent the workers as talking and dancing oranges or else as white male farm owners. In this way, the ads "racially code the farmworkers as white and conflate ownership with labor" (p. 000). To counter this, Stewart offers statistics on Latino immigration, as well as descriptions and images of the conditions of picking fruit and its impacts on workers' health.

Williams and Connell (chapter 10) base their study in Texas, where one can see the effects of ethnically mixed workforces on upscale retail work. Latino workers report discrimination on the basis of language since employers favor accents from Austin (located toward the center of the state) over those from El Paso (closer to the Mexican border). Employers also segregate workers spatially, initially assigning Latino workers to the stockroom instead of the showroom floor. Similar policies of racialized job channeling are also implicated in the "backstage" work that Otis and Zheng discuss (chapter 8).

Finally, Wingfield and Skeete illuminate the experience of Blacks and Latinos as security guards (as well as janitors and maintenance workers) in chapter 3. Their discussion provides a vivid account of contradictory roles in these jobs: using the *visibility* of their bodies for gatekeeping functions vis-à-vis the public, while using the *invisibility* of their bodies to appear inconspicuous to higher-level coworkers.

In short, our chapters illustrate a standard of whiteness deployed by employers that operates at both affluent and low-wage levels. Stewart describes an explicit case of "whitewashing," as the bodies of farmworkers are changed from Latino to Caucasian through representations of the brand in the media. Williams and Connell's study reveals an implicit standard of whiteness as salesworkers, whose bodies and voices fail to conform to the mainstream Euro/Anglo model, are channeled into nonvisible jobs or not hired.

These examples, moreover, signal a deeper, racialized dynamic that pervades other chapters: the erasing of workers' identities (ethnic as well as national) for the purpose of masking covert employer practices that consumers and the public in general may find objectionable. Poster (2007b) explains how firms hide the process of outsourcing and the transfer of white-collar work overseas to India by attempting to Americanize the accents, names, and settings of the workers. In Stewart's analysis, firms hide the "underlying racial power structure that keeps their workers in a profitable, but highly precarious, state" (p. 000).

Still, the analytical strategy in the book is not merely to note the *misrepresentation* of labor by Latinos and other peoples of color in the media and digital world, but also to detail *the lived experiences, practices, and images of that racialized labor*. Our aim is twofold: to uncover the process of labor masking, while also to reveal the actual workers and the work that they do.

Our authors give renewed attention to *class* by charting burgeoning sectors of both low-wage and high-wage (or class-privileged) invisible labor. Starting at the bottom end, scholars have noted how the working poor are "Invisible in America" (Shipler 2008). At a time of unprecedented prosperity, millions of Americans live in the shadows as employees who earn poverty-level wages. Updating and expanding this analysis, Warhurst (chapter 11) documents how working-class employees in the United Kingdom are excluded from the labor of the service economy because they lack the right look and sound for middle-class interactions.

Alternatively, Crain (chapter 13) shows how educated and wealthy youth are persuaded to work for nothing in prestigious internships, learning to see work as a privilege rather than an economic exchange. Firms appeal to this demographic to exploit their social connections, simultaneously playing on their desperation for work within an ever-shrinking market of professional jobs. Williams and Connell show how class itself is manipulated by upscale retail employers. They deliberately

select affluent employees, counting on the fact that those workers will be motivated by the status of the brand rather than the need for remuneration, and thus will be less likely to agitate for higher wages.

Several authors look at the downgrading of office and professional jobs, and what may have been formerly well-remunerated work. Arvidsson, Gandini, and Bandinelli (chapter 12) consider how skilled knowledge work is degraded through organizational transitions to flexibility, project-based work, and deployment of freelancers. Cherry and Poster (chapters 4 and 5, respectively) expose the undermining effects of invisible labor for the middle class, by transforming engineering, data coding, and call centers into micro tasks, crowdsourced labor, and virtual receptionist work, some of which earns cents on the dollar.

Finally, *gender* is central to many of our chapters. While previous discussions have laid a solid foundation on the connection of women to the invisible labor of housework, volunteer work, and emotion work, our project explores how gender is interwoven with contemporary patterns of the globalized, technologized, and consumerized labor market. Firms exploit women's sexuality through the disembodied process of digitizing them into software programs (chapter 5) and through the embodied process of selling their sexuality through niche restaurants and retail outlets (chapters 9 and 10).

As critical race and feminist scholars have demonstrated, systems of inequality are interlocking and indivisible (Collins 2000; Crenshaw 1989; Poster 2002). Groups may experience contradictory locations of privilege and subordination on different axes of inequality. For women of color, this phenomenon results in particularly troublesome experiences of double or triple discrimination and opposing demands among the multiple subordinate groups with which they are affiliated. With intersectionality in mind, we do not structure our analysis by separating sections according to these axes of discrimination. Rather, we intersperse and connect race, class, gender, and nationality throughout the book.

ORGANIZING THEMES

The chapters in this book are organized around five broad themes emphasizing the role of invisibility in the labor process. These themes are neither exclusive nor independent. A given type of labor may involve several intersecting and crossover processes at one time. We separate them here for the purpose of outlining the range of ways that work or workers may be erased in the workplace.

Exposing Invisible Labor. We begin by theorizing what counts as work and what makes work invisible, laying out some of the costs of invisibility. This introduction initiates that process by conceptualizing invisible labor. John W. Budd (chapter 2) then explains how relatively narrow conceptualizations of work in conventional thinking dictate how we recognize, remunerate, and treat work. This explanation is helpful in understanding how particular forms of work are valued and why. He argues for training the mind to think more broadly about the forms that work takes in order to enable the eye to see it. Adia Harvey Wingfield and Renee Skeete (chapter 3) provide a much-needed critique and understanding of invisible labor from a racial perspective. Their concept of *racial tasks* pinpoints the wide range of activities (often informal and unstated) that employees of color must do "to preserve and uphold whites' advantage in work settings" (p. 000). With their broad framework that crosses organizational hierarchies (from elites and CEOs, to middle-level management, to lower-level custodial staff), Wingfield and Skeete reveal how invisible labor is structurally distinct for minority versus majority employees in predominantly white workplaces.

Virtually Invisible. This section of the book considers managerial strategies to erase, transform, or digitize the worker's body. The disembodiment of labor is carried out through the aid of technology and outsourcing.

Miriam A. Cherry (chapter 4) outlines several types of "virtual work," in which new technologies are mediating where, when, and how labor is done. Employers are using digital tools like algorithms, robots, and Internet platforms to make workers invisible to consumers or other end users of Web sites or services. Focusing on what goes on "behind the Web site," Cherry illuminates the hidden labor of warehouse workers processing orders for Internet giant Amazon.com, crowdsourcing workers for Web sites like Amazon Mechanical Turk, avatar representations of employees in virtual worlds like *Second Life,* and Internet users who may not even realize they are doing work for corporations as they play online games. Cherry's analysis raises fascinating questions: Should virtual work count as "real" work? What should be the boundaries between work and play online? When is an Internet user deliberately or unknowingly also a worker? In the world of virtual work, playing a game might actually function to assist a computer network in improving its image-searching process. Thus the boundaries among workspace, work, and leisure are blurred.

Boundaries are further deconstructed when globalization interacts with virtualization. Winifred R. Poster (chapter 5) considers how outsourcing and automation allow employers to avoid the expenses of hiring a live on-site employee such as a receptionist, traditionally the "human face" of the company. Her analysis takes us to South Asia, where a $16 billion industry has developed in back-office work by incorporating 2.8 million cheap, educated, English-speaking employees. Through outsourcing, employers transfer customer-service phone work and data processing from the United States to "virtual teams" of workers in India whom they may never see or with whom they may have only minimal interaction. Through automation, on the other hand, employers replace the receptionist with various kinds of computer programs (avatar assistants, interactive screens, and holographic kiosks), bringing the issue of "disembodied" labor into sharp relief. These examples illustrate how workers are deconstructed into the component parts of their humanity and employed selectively—for their voice and relational capacity, for the body they display to customers, and for their words delivered electronically through texting and chatting. In the process, gender, sexuality, race, and nationality are manipulated to emphasize those qualities that employers believe will appeal to their customer base in the United States.

Pushed out of Sight. Alternatively, labor may be hidden from public view when it is separated architecturally, institutionally, or socially. Recent trends have expanded the spatial segregation of workers. Physical labor becomes invisible through dynamics of the service sector and globalization that submerge work needed to sustain the consumer economy. Much of this work occurs behind the scenes, geographically and/or temporally (Poster 2007a; Zlolniski 2006): workers telecommute from home, warehouse workers perform manual labor at Amazon.com, cooks and caterers prepare packaged food, and nighttime janitors clean offices while those who work in them sleep.

Our first example of "out of sight, out of mind" labor involves marginalized disabled workers. Elizabeth Pendo (chapter 6) explores how persons with disabilities are spatially segregated into "sheltered workshops," where they are invisible to consumers and outside the formal labor process altogether. A sheltered workshop is a state program of supervised, exclusive workplaces for physically disabled or mentally handicapped adults. Conceptualized either as job-training programs or as alternatives to competitive employment, many sheltered workshops

nonetheless lack meaningful opportunities for education and training, fail to provide meaningful "work" experience, confine persons with disabilities away from other workers, and pay a subminimum wage.

Evan Stewart (chapter 7) explores the submerging of one of the most arduous types of physical labor—farmwork. He reveals how both the work and the workers are erased in the marketing representations of the product. Using the methodology of visual sociology, Stewart examines television commercials for major orange juice companies and their distribution on Internet channels like YouTube. Strikingly, while these commercials foreground the *production* of the juice, they simultaneously remove the *worker* and the *act of growing and picking* the fruit from the images. Stewart argues that this seeming contradiction serves a deliberate purpose: to mask the racial and immigration status of the employees, the egregious conditions under which they work, and the ultimate source from which consumers receive food.

This section also explores the embodied manual labor hidden in retail settings. Eileen Otis and Zheng Zhao (chapter 8) explain how Wal-Mart produce workers, who perform heavy lifting and other kinds of physically demanding labor, are hidden from customers when in the "backstage" area of the warehouse and ignored when they are in the "front stage" stocking the shelves. While "directly under the nose of customers" (p. 000), they are socially invisible. The authors also reveal how the transnational nature of retail submerges this process even further as Wal-Mart traverses the globe into countries like China. Otis and Zhao note how globalization not only renders the worker invisible but also hides the fundamental activities of food production. Activities that used to be done in public markets in full view of consumers (like "peeling, polishing, and separating" [p. 000]) are now done behind the scenes in Wal-Mart storerooms. In the process, global retail has co-opted the food sales chain between farm and customer and steamrolled local street vendors.

Looking Good at Work. The chapters in this part of the book explore situations in which workers are deliberately put on a stage in order to showcase products and services for the benefit of the employer. These are the "hypervisible" workers described above, for whom what is hidden is not the worker or her work but rather the labor that occurs behind the scenes and the employer policies that incentivize it. Many of the jobs discussed in this section fall under the category of "aesthetic labor." Employers may mandate or suggest that workers look and act a certain way, display a particular habitus, adopt a particular way of

speaking, and purchase and model the brands they sell. These dynamics have become particularly salient with the rise of the service economy. Because the work is interactive with consumers, employers emphasize and encourage this aesthetic quality as the primary function of the job.

Dianne Avery (chapter 9) explores these issues in the context of the "breastaurant" industry, which requires its food servers to conform their bodies to the company image. Highly sexualized waitresses are required to follow dress and appearance standards designed to generate corporate profits. Paid a subminimum wage for the traditional labor they perform—restaurant service work—the real allure of the job lies in the high tips, eroticized glamorous image, and semicelebrity status that Hooters girls can achieve only by investing in expensive undergarments, cosmetics and beauty treatments, plastic surgery, and breast implants (as well as by tolerating sexual harassment). Weak minimum-wage laws and unregulated tipping economies conceal the costs to workers and the benefits to employers of this business model.

While the workers in aesthetic jobs are highly visible to consumers, the management practices that shape the workers' visible identities are not. As Christine Williams and Catherine Connell (chapter 10) illustrate through their study of upscale retail sales work in stores like Express and Victoria's Secret, employers utilize a selection process that privileges certain types of workers. These workers have a social class habitus that makes them likely to shop at the store and to regard the job as a form of leisure rather than as a way to make a living. Seduced into the jobs by the allure of a prestigious brand, retail workers miss the implications of these practices and unquestioningly accept unpleasant and onerous working conditions and low wages.

Chris Warhurst (chapter 11) describes similar dynamics in his research on hospitality, call center, and retail work. He emphasizes the vocal aspects of aesthetic labor and the search for workers who "sound right," using the case of the UK service sector. He explains how employers that depend on aesthetics mandate that workers assume particular appearances, present a certain habitus, and adopt a particular way of speaking. These employers are willing to invest in a workforce that "sounds right," to the point of offering workers training in proper ways of speaking and presenting themselves.

Branded and Consumed. Branding is a theme that pervades this volume. Many of the chapters discussed above address the invisible requirements of the job to embody, integrate, or transmit a corporate image. Otis and

Zhao recount how stockroom employees at Wal-Mart perform physical acts of branding (i.e., literally sticking the label on the fruit). Avery and Williams and Connell show how restaurant and sales workers transform their bodies to represent the corporate brand, either directly by wearing the name of the company or else more subtly through their dress, makeup, and style. Some of these workers even have this process laid bare in their job titles: "brand representatives." Poster shows how branding extends to the realm of digital work, as the "bodies" of virtual secretaries (i.e., the kiosks on which their video screens stand) are labeled with corporate sponsors. Alternatively, Stewart's case shows how branding may involve removing the worker (or certain kinds of workers according to race, class, nationality, and citizenship) from the corporate image altogether. In this section, we continue this discussion by considering two forms: self-branding versus employer-mandated branding.

This section is also concerned with the new category of "consumer-worker," in which employees become invisible by being recoded as consumers (chapter 10, p. 000). The contemporary labor process turns consumers into workers and workers into consumers. On one hand, employers capitalize on prospective workers' desire to affiliate with the brand by hiring them off the floor while they are present as consumers. On the other hand, employers encourage or mandate consumption as a part of the job and fool employees into believing they are not "working." These hiring and employment practices blur the lines of labor agency for workers themselves: are workers consuming items on their own initiative or because they have to do so to survive in the current market? These analyses raise deeper questions about whether such consumptive labor is consensual or coercive and whether the work performed is labor or leisure.

Adam Arvidsson, Alessandro Gandini, and Carolina Bandinelli (chapter 12) describe the recent pressures for "self-branding" among knowledge workers. Against a backdrop of intense competition for jobs and an increasingly precarious standing, knowledge workers must construct themselves as entrepreneurial subjects responsible for their own market success. Yet these personal brands have evolved into public entities that are negotiated in competition with others, and they ultimately structure our social relations both within and beyond the workplace. This development should concern us, Arvidsson and his colleagues explain, because we are witnessing the construction of a new form of sociality imbued with a different conception of value and ethics. Uncovering this process is vital to the health of our democracy.

Combining an analysis of branding and consumption, Marion Crain (chapter 13) focuses on explicit practices firms use to brand employees, exploring how these practices alter the conception of work. She offers accounts of workers who are paid to represent the brand in retail jobs at Abercrombie & Fitch, Starbucks, and Apple as well as accounts of "brand ambassadors" who live the brand on college campuses. Employers may require employees to purchase and model the brands they sell, offering (in lieu of compensation) discounts on merchandise, the promise of marketing experience, and the lure of affinity with a prestigious brand. The rise of unpaid or lowly paid internships for college students offers another example of substituting brand allure (with résumé value) for wages, rendering student interns consumers of the firm's brand. By converting workers into consumers, Crain suggests, communication between workers is constrained by the brand itself, limiting the forms that resistance might assume. She asks what the ramifications are for democracy when citizens learn to quit rather than speak up when responding to unacceptable workplace conditions that structure their lives.

We close the volume with a concluding chapter outlining future directions for research and considering the larger policy implications of the continuing invisibility of labor.

We invite readers now to journey with our authors over terrain that spans the globe and covers many different types of occupations and settings. We hope that through that journey, some of the invisible will become visible.

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The Eye Sees What the Mind Knows

The Conceptual Foundations of Invisible Work

JOHN W. BUDD

Work can be invisible in two broad ways. First, within the domain of work, some forms of work are celebrated and highly valued while other forms are marginalized or not even socially recognized as work. In this way, undervalued and overlooked forms of work are "invisible labor." The classic example is unpaid household work, but the chapters in this volume illustrate that invisible labor can take many forms. Second, within the broader sociopolitical/socioeconomic realm, other issues and interests are commonly prioritized over those pertaining to work and workers. For example, labor standards are seldom at the top of the international, national, or local political agenda; employees are typically invisible in corporate governance in Anglosphere countries; and individual members of capitalist societies are seen more as consumers than as workers. In this way, work itself generally is undervalued and overlooked and therefore also warrants an *invisible* label.

The different forms of the invisibility of work undoubtedly reflect complex sets of factors, including power relations, gender norms, and labor market dynamics. This chapter focuses on the conceptual foundations of invisible work. The premise of this chapter is reflected in an adage that states that the eye sees what the mind knows. We see and value work only when it conforms to our mental models of what work is. In the public imagination, why is work less visible than other key aspects of human life? It is so because dominant ways of thinking about work reduce it to a curse or a commodified, instrumental activity that supports consumption. So we

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do not think of work as having deeper value; therefore, we overlook work in favor of other human activities. Similarly, why are certain forms of work invisible? They are because when we think of work in certain ways—especially as a commodified, instrumental activity—forms of work that are considered different from or only weakly fulfilling these dominant conceptualizations of work are devalued and rendered invisible.

In these ways, then, how we think about and how we conceptualize work have real consequences for what is seen and valued as work. Unfortunately, conceptualizations of work are frequently narrowly conceived and are typically unstated. To better understand issues of invisible work and questions about what forms of work are valued and why, it is important to *explicitly* consider the diverse ways in which work can be conceptualized. This chapter therefore draws on my 2011 book, *The Thought of Work,* to present a framework of ten conceptualizations of work that synthesize contemporary and historical thinking about work—and invisibility.

By making these conceptualizations explicit, this chapter provides a foundation for thinking more clearly about how we define work and for gaining a deeper understanding of why (some) work is invisible. By broadening our thinking on work, this framework can further provide a foundation for crafting inclusive definitions of work that recognize not only the deep importance of work for individuals and society but also the value of diverse forms of human activity that should be fully embraced as work rather than overlooked or marginalized. In short, in order for the eye to recognize wider forms of work, we need to train the mind to think more broadly and deeply about work.

BROADENING THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF WORK

Work can be a challenge to define. It is defined here as purposeful human activity involving physical or mental exertion that is not undertaken solely for pleasure and that has economic or symbolic value. The first part of this definition ("purposeful human activity") distinguishes work from the broader realm of all human effort. The second part ("not undertaken solely for pleasure") separates work from leisure while allowing for work to be pleasurable and thereby recognizing that there can sometimes be a nebulous boundary between work and leisure. The final part ("that has economic or symbolic value") allows work to be more encompassing than paid employment by also including unpaid caring for others, self-employment, subsistence farming, casual work in

the informal sector, and other activities outside the standard Western boundaries of paid jobs and career aspirations. The purpose of this broad definition of work is to encompass the diverse conceptualizations of work found across the spectrum of work-related theorizing and analyses, not to precisely delimit what is and is not considered work (Glucksmann 1995).

From this broad definition of *work,* I identify ten conceptualizations of work that capture the rich ways in which work has been modeled in the behavioral, social, and philosophical sciences; these conceptualizations provide the range of possible individual and social meanings of work: work as curse, freedom, commodity, occupational citizenship, disutility, personal fulfillment, social relation, caring for others, identity, and service. These conceptualizations are summarized in the middle column of table 2.1 (on page 000) and presented in the remainder of this section. For the rich bodies of scholarship that lie behind each conceptualization, see Budd (2011). The connections to invisible work are briefly noted in this section and then described more fully in the following section after the entire framework of conceptualizations has been presented.

Work as a Curse

For thousands of years, work has been seen as painful toil necessary for survival that conflicts with life's more virtuous or pleasurable pursuits. When it is assumed that God or nature requires all or some to engage in arduous or dirty work, then work is conceptualized as a curse. Seeing hard work as a God-given curse has deep roots in Western thought. The Judeo-Christian tradition and Greco-Roman mythology share a common story in which humans originally did not have to work (at least not very hard), but a displeased god (for example, the Judeo-Christian God punishing Adam for his disobedience in the Garden of Eden or Zeus punishing humankind because Prometheus stole fire for it) punishes humans with toil. Hard work is thereby seen as a necessary part of the human experience but not as one of the higher purposes of the human experience. So by emphasizing the importance of other human activities, seeing work as a necessary evil contributes to the invisibility of work.

Elite segments of societies also tend to see the lower classes as occupying their natural place in the social and occupational hierarchy. Perhaps most famously, Aristotle reasoned that nature creates humans of varying intellectual abilities and that the intellectually inferior are naturally

Work as . . .	Definition	Implications for Invisible Labor
1. A Curse	An unquestioned burden necessary for human survival or maintenance of the social order	Devaluing of work is preordained by the natural order; other human activities are more important.
2. Freedom	A way to achieve independence from nature or other humans and to express human creativity	Work that fails to achieve economic independence or lacks creativity is less likely to be valued and visible.
3. A Commodity	An abstract quantity of productive effort that has tradable economic value	Visible work is exchanged in primary labor markets; high pay is required to indicate economic value.
4. Occupational Citizenship	An activity pursued by human members of a community entitled to certain rights	All forms of work should be valued more highly, with rights provided to all types of workers.
5. Disutility	An unpleasant activity tolerated to obtain goods and services that provide pleasure	Work that does not support high levels of consumption is less likely to be valued and visible.
6. Personal Fulfillment	Physical and psychological functioning that (ideally) satisfies individual needs	Work that does not provide intrinsic rewards is less likely to be valued and visible.
7. A Social Relation	Human interaction embedded in social norms, institutions, and power structures	The invisibility of work reflects socially created institutions and power structures.
8. Caring for Others	The physical, cognitive, and emotional effort required to attend to and maintain others	Though frequently invisible, caring work should be valued as real work.
9. Identity	A method for understanding who you are and where you stand in the social structure	All forms of work should be valued more highly and be more visible.
10. Service	The devotion of effort to others, such as God, household, community, or country	Though frequently invisible, service toward others should be valued as real work.

NOTE: Table by John W. Budd.

suited to be slaves. More recently, the belief in a natural ordering of work is reflected in Herrnstein and Murray's (1994) claims in *The Bell Curve* that contemporary America is stratified by genetically determined intellectual ability. The marginalization in contemporary Western societies of some occupations as "women's work" or as fit only for minorities or immigrants can similarly reflect a belief in a natural social hierarchy. In this way, less desirable forms of work are conceptualized as a curse of the lower classes, a view that in turn renders this work invisible to elite segments of society, who see themselves as engaged in more valuable forms of labor.

Work as Freedom

For much of human history, work was typically seen as forced by God, nature, custom, law, or physical violence. The centrality of the individual and freedom in modern Western thought, however, provides the basis for conceptualizing work as a source of freedom in several ways. One strain of this thinking is freedom from nature. This line of thought emphasizes the creative nature of work that is done independently of the daily necessities of nature. In this way, a worker is a creator—someone who "rebels against nature's dictates" (Mokyr 1990: viii) and is able "to impose culture" on the natural world (Wallman 1979: 1). Ideally, creative work allows us "to be ourselves, set our own schedules, do challenging work and live in communities that reflect our values and priorities" (Florida 2002: 10).

Other ways of thinking about work as freedom pertain to individual liberty from the coercion of other people. John Locke famously argued in the seventeenth century that labor is the foundation for political freedom because it establishes ownership of private property. In other words, by being able to control the fruits of your own labor, work can be a classical source of liberty not from nature but from other humans and human institutions. This theorizing on the roots of political freedom also has important implications for economic liberalism (Macpherson 1962). When work is conceptualized as one's own property, workers become free to sell their labor for pay if they so choose. Moreover, when a person's work is hers and hers alone, there are no social obligations or limitations on how much she can accumulate through her work. Wage work and unchecked capitalist accumulation are therefore given moral approval, and the foundation is laid for seeing work as an economic commodity to be bought and sold in free markets. Such perspec-

tives are reinforced by the legal systems of capitalist economies in which work is seen as an activity undertaken by individuals who are free to pursue occupations of their choosing and to quit at will. From this standpoint, employment is a contractual relation between legal equals, albeit with continuing tensions between the unrestricted freedom derived from legal principles of free contracting and the lingering influence of status-based standards (Deakin and Wilkinson 2005). Seeing work as freedom is important for the invisibility of work because work that fails to fulfill the standards created by various perspectives on freedom—such as work that lacks creativity or fails to provide economic independence—is devalued relative to work that meets these standards.

Work as a Commodity

The emergence of Western liberalism created a new conceptualization of work: "What could be more natural in a social universe composed of separate and autonomous individuals whose chief occupation was trading commodities back and forth than that some individuals should sell the property in their labor to other individuals, to whom thereafter it would belong?" (Steinfeld 1991: 92). In this way work comes to be seen as a commodity in which an individual's capacity to work—what Marx called "labor power"—is viewed as an abstract quantity that can be bought and sold. Diverse forms of concrete labor are all reduced to sources of economic value that can be made equivalent by exchanging them at an appropriate set of relative prices. Work is thought of as a generic input into a production function, and employers and workers buy and sell generic units of this commodity called *work* or *labor* (or *labor power* in Marxist terminology).

Mainstream (neoclassical) economic thought embraces the commodity conceptualization of work. Employers are assumed to maximize their profits by utilizing the optimum amounts of labor, capital, and other inputs to produce goods and services for sale. Work and workers are thus treated like any other factor of production. On the supply side, work is something that individuals choose to sell in varying quantities in order to earn income and maximize their individual or household utility. Employers and employees are therefore both modeled as treating hours of labor as one of a number of quantities to factor into the relevant optimization problem; marginal analysis determines the optimum amount of labor to buy or sell in the labor market no differently than it determines the exchange of other commodities. Moreover, when one

sees work as a commodity, its allocation is seen as governed by the impersonal "laws" of supply and demand. The intersection of labor supply and labor demand determines the terms and conditions of employment, and work is analyzed like all other economic commodities—"the theory of the determination of wages in a free market is simply a special case of the general theory of value" (Hicks 1963: 1). The commodity perspective is instructive for considerations of the invisibility of labor because it reveals why paid work, and especially highly paid work, is privileged over other forms.

Work as Occupational Citizenship

Work can also be conceptualized not as an activity undertaken by autonomous individuals but as one undertaken by citizens who are part of human communities. To see workers as citizens is to decommodify them, to give them a status as more than just factors of production or individuals seeking personal fulfillment or identities (Standing 2009). Specifically, citizens should be seen as having inherent equal worth and thus being entitled to certain rights and standards of dignity and self-determination irrespective of what the market provides. Work, then, is conceptualized as occupational citizenship when we think of what it means for workers to be citizens of a human community.

Industrial relations research (e.g., Budd 2004) and legal scholarship (e.g., Crain 2010) frequently argue that citizen-workers are entitled to minimum working and living conditions that are determined by standards of human dignity, not by supply and demand, and to meaningful forms of self-determination in the workplace that go beyond the freedom to quit. Closely related approaches include conceptualizations of workers' rights as human rights, the International Labour Organization's campaign for decent work, and various theological and ethical approaches that emphasize that work should respect standards of human dignity. From these perspectives, the invisibility of work is a significant concern because all forms of work should be valued, and all workers should enjoy decent conditions, although there tends to be a bias toward traditional views that equate work with paid employment.

Work as Disutility

In mainstream economic theorizing, individuals are modeled as rational agents seeking to maximize a utility function that is increasing in the

consumption of goods, services, and leisure. Work is a central element of an individual's maximization problem because work yields goods and services directly through self-production or indirectly through earned income. However, the physical and mental activity of working is seen as *reducing* one's utility. This perspective on work has two roots: seeing it as a painful or stressful activity and seeing it as something that is less pleasurable than leisure since work involves the opportunity cost of reduced time for pleasurable leisure (Spencer 2009). In either case, work is conceptualized as *disutility*—an unpleasant activity tolerated only to obtain goods, services, and leisure that provide pleasure. This conceptualization further perpetuates the negative views of work that originally arose from seeing work as a curse and therefore has similar implications for the invisibility of labor.

When imperfect information makes employment contracts incomplete, economists frequently assume that employers face a principal-agent problem—how to get the agent (in this case, a worker) to act in the interests of the principal (in this case, the owners of the organization). This assumption is made because work is being conceptualized as disutility, so workers are presumed to want to exert minimal levels of effort ("shirking"). By assuming that monitoring workers is typically difficult or imperfect, theorizing in personnel and organizational economics thereby focuses on solving these principal-agent problems by using optimal monetary incentives to combat disutility by making additional worker effort utility-enhancing (Lazear 1995). This monetary emphasis parallels the materialistic focus of the work-as-a-commodity perspective and similarly privileges highly compensated jobs, an effect that renders other forms of work invisible.

Work as Personal Fulfillment

A focus on the positive and negative physical and especially on the psychological outcomes that are inherent in work creates a conceptualization of work as personal fulfillment. In this way of thinking, work is cognitively and emotionally directed by the brain. Mental states such as attitudes, moods, and emotions can affect individuals' work behaviors; the nature of one's work—such as the job tasks, rewards, relations with coworkers, and supervision—can affect one's mental state. As such, work is viewed as an activity that arouses cognitive and affective functioning. Ideally, work should be a source of personal fulfillment and psychological well-being that satisfies needs for achievement, mastery,

self-esteem, and self-worth (Turner, Barling, and Zacharatos 2002). But work with mindless repetition, abusive coworkers or bosses, excessive physical or mental demands, or other factors that comprise unpleasant work can have negative psychological consequences.

The centrality of cognitive and affective mental processes for conceptualizing work is emphasized most strongly by scholars in industrial-organizational psychology, organizational behavior, and human resource management. Some key foundational research topics that result from conceptualizing work in this way are individual psychological differences such as cognitive ability or personality, job satisfaction, organizational justice, and intrinsic work motivation. Human resource management scholarship builds on the conceptualization of work as personal fulfillment by assuming that to be effective, human resource management practices must satisfy workers' psychological needs by managing their cognitive and affective functioning. This is typically seen as a win-win situation by embracing a unitarist vision of the employment relationship that assumes that the interests of workers and their organizations can be aligned: Psychological needs can be fulfilled through fair treatment, intrinsic rewards, and placement of workers into appropriate jobs; employees will reciprocate by being hardworking and loyal; and high levels of organizational performance, including profitability and shareholder returns, will result. An important implication for the invisibility of labor is that work that fails to conform to these norms is seen as anomalous and therefore receives less attention and respect.

Work as a Social Relation

The extrinsic rewards of work emphasized in mainstream economics or the intrinsic rewards emphasized in psychology underappreciate the extent to which work is embedded in complex social phenomena such that individuals seek approval, status, sociability, and power. The social context also provides constraints such as (a) social norms that define the boundaries of acceptable behaviors or work roles or (b) power relations that define access to resources. To regard work as consisting of human interactions that are experienced within and shaped by social networks, social norms, and institutions and that are socially constructed power relations is to conceptualize work as social relation. The invisibility of work is therefore seen as constructed by these social forces, and the path to combatting problems of invisible labor is to change these social forces.

Three major approaches to thinking about work occurring within a rich social context are instructive. First, the social dynamics of interpersonal work interactions are highlighted by theories of social exchange and social networks (Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005; Portes 1998). Work is thus seen as a social exchange consisting of open-ended, ongoing relationships occurring within networks of social ties based on trust and reciprocity that have imperfectly specified obligations and a multiplicity of objectives. A second approach to conceptualizing work as a social relation focuses on the importance of social norms for how work is experienced and structured. These norms can stem from direct, interpersonal contact—such as norms in work groups to limit output or work effort—while other norms are organizational in nature, and still other work norms are societal-level constructions.

A third social relations approach emphasizes socially constructed hierarchies and power relations. For example, Marxist-inspired theorizing on work embraces a social relations conceptualization of work by seeing capital–labor or employer–employee power dynamics as socially constructed. Work, then, is viewed as contested terrain in which employers and employees continuously seek control and make accommodations. This dialectic of control and accommodation can occur through formal policies, rules, and other structural features of the employment relationship (Thompson and Newsome 2004) as well as through an organization's culture and other discursive elements (Knights and Willmott 1989). Another approach that emphasizes socially constructed hierarchies consists of feminist theories of patriarchy and gender (Gottfried 2006).

Work Caring for Others

The traditional conceptualizations of work in the social and behavioral sciences and in the accompanying research that primarily focuses on paid employment to the exclusion of unpaid household work and other caring activities that do not produce economic commodities are criticized by feminist scholarship for ignoring gender issues (Gottfried 2006). Feminist thought rejects the resulting devaluing of "woman's work" and asserts that it should be seen as real work. Specifically, it is work as caring for others—the physical, cognitive, and emotional effort required to attend to and maintain others.

While caring for others is not limited to unpaid household work and is not the exclusive domain of women, it powerfully affects the gendered

work experiences of women. Housewives are frequently seen as unproductive, working women are often saddled with a majority of the burdens of household work, and women in the workplace face gendered expectations about appropriate occupations and work behaviors that are frequently rooted in idealized visions of caring, domesticity, and femininity. In feminist theorizing, this gendered nature of work—and thus the invisibility of "woman's work"—is the result of socially constructed norms and power dynamics, not maternal instincts or other biological features (Jackson 1998).

Work as Identity

To help understand who they are, individuals create identities that enhance their comprehension of where they fit into the broader world. Given that work is a significant part of many people's lives, work can be conceptualized as identity—that is, as a source of understanding and meaning (Leidner 2006). Work can be a source of meaning on several levels. The personal identity dimension consists of stable attributes and traits that an individual sees as making him unique, including descriptors related to his work. The social identity approach highlights identity construction via categorizing oneself into various groups, such as one's occupation and employer. The interactionist approach focuses on the role of social interactions in creating individual identities. From this perspective, the social roles attached to occupations and careers are a major source of one's self-presentation and identity. Identity related to class and class consciousness is also rooted in work.

At a more fundamental level, work can be viewed as a central element of creating a species identity for humans. The importance of work for humanness was most famously advanced by Marx's ([1844] 1988) argument that "in creating an objective world by his practical activity, in working-up inorganic nature, man proves himself a conscious species being, i.e., as a being that treats the species as its own essential being" (pp. 76–77). It is from this belief that self-directed work is the essential quality of being human that Marx further argued that the commodification of work causes alienation—the loss of humanness experienced when workers are forced to sell an inherent part of themselves. In the 1981 papal encyclical *Laborem Exercens* (On Human Work), Pope John Paul II articulated the importance of work in terms strikingly similar to those presented by Marx: "Work is one of the characteristics that distinguish man from the rest of creatures, whose activity for sustaining

their lives cannot be called work. Only man is capable of work, and only man works, at the same time by work occupying his existence on earth. Thus work bears a particular mark of man and of humanity, the mark of a person operating within a community of persons. And this mark decides its interior characteristics; in a sense it constitutes its very nature" (Preface, emphasis omitted).

While the differing views on work as identify differ as to the depth of work's contributions to an individual's identity, they all share a concern with the invisibility of work because work should be valued and respected, not invisible, in order to contribute to a positive self-identity.

Work as Service

Since the early years of the Christian church, work has been seen as a way to serve God's kingdom by preventing idleness (leading to sin), providing for one's family, and generating surpluses for charitable giving. Later, Martin Luther and John Calvin further enhanced the status of daily work by believing that everyone's (nonsinful) occupation represents something that God summons us to do by providing special gifts or talents—that is, a calling: "something that fits how we were made, so that doing it will enable us to glorify God, serve others, and be most richly ourselves" (Placher 2005: 3). Furthermore, today's Christian theology of work is frequently complemented by a conceptualization of work as an act of cocreation with God, as captured here by Pope John Paul II (1981) in *Laborem Exercens:* "Awareness that man's work is a participation in God's activity ought to permeate . . . even the most ordinary everyday activities. For, while providing the substance of life for themselves and their families, men and women are performing their activities in a way which appropriately benefits society. They can justly consider that by their labor they are unfolding the Creator's work, consulting the advantages of their brothers and sisters, and contributing by their personal industry to the realization in history of the divine plan" (sec. 25).

Whether for religious or secular reasons, a popular way of serving a community is through volunteering. Even though volunteering is typically unpaid or minimally paid, it should be seen as work because it involves effort, produces value, and is structured by the same factors that shape paid work, such as labor market opportunities, individual motivation, social norms, and gender (Taylor 2005). There are diverse reasons why individuals pursue or are encouraged to pursue volunteer

work, civic service, and community building. Helping others who are impoverished frequently stems from humanitarian concerns motivated by religious and/or ethical principles. In a very different vein, the classical republicanism school of thought in political philosophy emphasizes civic virtue in order to hold a community or a nation together. Serving others is also advocated as a way of repaying one's debt to society, while military service is frequently seen as patriotic service for one's country.

Confucianism provides another foundation for seeing work as service. Specifically, the centrality of the family in Confucian thought means that in East Asia work is frequently seen as serving the multigenerational family and the common good, not the individual. As the East Asian countries have become industrialized, Confucian values have also carried over into the employment relationship for wage and salary workers. The Japanese ideal of lifetime employment in which employees are recruited for and expected to stay at the company for their working lives can be seen as a reflection of the Confucian importance of familial reciprocity and loyalty, even if this ideal is a reality for only a minority of the workforce. In other words, working for the family becomes working for the corporate family.

So in addition to contemporary Western conceptualizations of work that are typically individual-centric—whether serving an individual's and her immediate family's needs for income, psychological fulfillment, social recognition, identity, and caring—work can also serve God, humanity, or one's country, community, or family. In these ways, work can be thought of as service. This view connects to concerns with the invisibility of work because individual-centric norms on work tend to exclude service-based forms of work from definitions of real work and therefore deny service work the same social legitimacy and economic value as afforded to other forms of work.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF WORK FOR INVISIBLE WORK

This framework of ten conceptualizations of work can deepen our understanding of many aspects of work. Of particular interest here are the implications for invisible labor (see the last column of table 2.1 on p. 000). Taken individually, each conceptualization helps reveal why some forms of work are valued more than others. Taken as a set, the conceptualizations explicitly uncover the limits that have been placed on what counts as work and thereby illuminate the aspects of work that

need to be added to our mental models of work in order to reduce the invisibility of specific forms of work. Moreover, the set of conceptualizations provides new insights as to why work in general is often invisible in the public imagination, the political arena, and other domains. The next section first discusses the implications of the conceptualizations for the invisibility of specific forms of work and then concludes with implications for the broader invisibility of work.

The Invisibility of Specific Forms of Work

The earliest conceptualization of work as a curse devalues work by seeing it as a predetermined burden, especially for those who are viewed as naturally suited for certain types of tasks. For example, when caring activities are seen as the natural realm of women because of female biological and personality traits, these activities then become less valued as work because they are regarded as women's natural roles. Similarly, if certain types of individuals are seen as being equipped for performing only mundane or other undesirable tasks and as lacking the aptitude or drive for mastering more complex jobs, it then becomes easier for elites who hold these prejudicial views to dismiss concerns about the conditions endured by these workers because they are viewed as these workers' natural burden. In these ways, women and ethnic minorities have been discriminated against for centuries, and their work has been rendered less valuable and therefore invisible by elite segments of society.

When work is conceptualized as a commodity, then what counts as work is that which is perceived as creating economic value by being exchanged in labor markets. Unpaid household work, indigenous activities like hunting, and other nonmarket forms of work are therefore dismissed—as illustrated by the long-standing and prejudicial labeling of indigenous activities as "primitive." Moreover, when markets are seen as the arbiters of value, as in mainstream neoclassical economic thought and in neoliberal market ideology, not only is market exchange required to indicate value creation, but the level of compensation is also taken as an indicator of the value and importance of the work. Lowly paid work is therefore devalued and rendered less visible than highly paid work. The conceptualization of work as disutility reinforces this last implication because from this perspective, the raison d'être of work is supporting consumption, so unpaid or lowly paid work that fails to support high levels of consumption is less likely to be valued and visible.

Those who embrace the commodity and disutility conceptualizations of work generally see markets as natural (witness the rhetorical support for "free markets" and markets' lack of regulation) while also assuming that work is not pleasurable. These views are similar to those associated with seeing work as a curse—just replace the determination of natural forces with the determination of the market. In contrast, a social relations perspective on work sees markets as socially determined via laws pertaining to property rights, contracts, fraud, coercion, and other key elements that ultimately reflect and reinforce power relations between competing groups. A social relations conceptualization of work also emphasizes the importance of social norms. As such, a social relations perspective on work importantly implies that whether specific forms of work are visible or invisible is the result of socially created institutions, power structures, and norms. The invisibility of labor is therefore within our control as a society.

Other conceptualizations highlight different aspects of these norms and thereby illustrate why different forms of work may or may not be invisible. When work is viewed as freedom, then forms of work that fail to achieve economic independence—such as unpaid household caring activities—or that lack creativity, such as low-skilled, repetitive jobs, are less likely to be valued and visible. Similarly, if work is embraced as personal fulfillment, then work that does not provide intrinsic rewards is less likely to be valued and visible, though this viewpoint can be a double-edged sword because if real work is supposed to be hard (recall curse and disutility), then work that is overly pleasurable might be dismissed as not being true work. Work done solely for an individual's pleasure is not recognized by the U.S. legal system as real work and therefore is not covered by employment and labor law (see chapter 13). The conceptualizations of work as caring and service also reveal that when these forms of work fall outside the norms of what is deemed to be work, these forms of work are then rendered invisible. Caring activities, for example, might be seen as acts of love rather than work. Similarly, volunteering might be regarded as a duty, an altruistic activity, or other things, but not as real work. As such, it is invisible.

Individual conceptualizations of work are also important for revealing why invisible labor is a problem. Seeing work as personal fulfillment and identity brings the importance of physical safety, psychological well-being, and the ability to craft a healthy identity to the fore. These standards are harder to achieve when work is invisible because invisible work can have fewer legal protections and less social recognition.

Consequently, all forms of work, including caring and service work, should be valued as real work rather than left as invisible. The occupational citizenship and freedom ways of thinking about work also highlight the connections between work and democracy. Invisible labor can be detrimental to democratic participation by denying workers the resources, the agency, and the skills to be fully deliberative citizens whose voices will be heard. Feminist scholarship that critically explores the conceptualization of work as caring also shows how norms that render household work invisible have negative ramifications in the sphere of paid employment. Specifically, beliefs about the gendered body in the workplace and the caregiving responsibilities of women lead to employment-related discrimination as men and women are segregated into different occupations, given different roles and levels of responsibility, expected to sell or tolerate differing levels of sexuality, and paid differently for performing comparable work.

The General Invisibility of Work

Turning to the invisibility of work generally, the broad set of conceptualizations of work helps us understand why this invisibility is the case. Specifically, the conceptualizations as a set reveal the narrowness with which work is viewed, especially in the dominant neoliberal market paradigm. The combination of seeing work as simultaneously a curse, a commodity, and a disutility reduces work to an unpleasant activity beyond our control—that is, we must take what God, nature, or the market determines. And this activity largely has instrumental benefits, especially productivity for society and income for individuals and their families. From such a narrow perspective, it naturally follows that individuals should be seeking pleasure and deep meaning from other life spheres. Moreover, if work is largely about economic productivity and value, then public policies and organizational strategies will prioritize conditions that are seen as fostering value creation—such as labor market deregulation and unfettered corporate decision-making—rather than prioritize labor standards and worker well-being for all workers.

Note carefully that it takes a broad conceptual foundation to reveal not only how work is conceptualized but also how it is not. The extrinsic emphasis of the neoliberal market ideology overlooks other critical aspects of work that are highlighted by other conceptualizations, especially freedom (and thus democracy), psychological health, identity, caring, and serving others. With a truncated recognition of the deep

benefits of work along with a perceived lack of control over work and its conditions, other elements of life are regarded as more important and within our control. So work becomes invisible relative to other spheres.

Lastly, the conceptualizations of work also point to strategies to reduce the invisibility of labor. While seeing work as a curse or a commodity largely puts work beyond our control, the occupational citizenship conceptualization of work advocates institutional intervention to improve market-based outcomes. Even more robustly, a social relations perspective highlights the need to change deeply held social norms, an action that could then bring greater recognition to work generally and also to undervalued and overlooked forms of work. Other conceptualizations point toward the needed changes in norms—we need to reduce the degree to which work is seen as a curse, a commodity, and a disutility while seeing work more inclusively as being a necessary source of psychological health and personal identity as well as a way to care for and serve others.

. . .

The fact that specific forms of work can be invisible underscores the importance of thinking carefully about definitions and conceptualizations of work. Indeed, the argument of this chapter is that our mental models of what work is critically shape our beliefs about who is valued as a worker and what is valued as work. Just as importantly, our intellectual visions of what work is determine what work is not and therefore deny recognition and the corresponding economic, psychological, social, and legal resources to those whose activities are not deemed to be work. Crain (chapter 13), for example, reveals important problems that result from the narrow definition of work used by the U.S. legal system. Moreover, considerations of invisible labor should not overlook the fact that work in general is often rendered invisible because it is overshadowed by other human activities and other sociopolitical/socioeconomic interests. Again, the argument here is that these dynamics reflect, at least partly, the embrace of limited mental models of work that have the unfortunate effect of blinding us to the true depth and breadth of the importance of work.

On multiple levels, then, the extent to which work is visible and valued, or is not, rests in important ways on how we think about work. It is therefore essential that we explicitly identify alternative ways to think about work and understand their implications for invisible labor. To

really understand invisible labor, we need to recognize not only what is valued but also what is not. So a broad conceptual framework is needed. In practice, we also need to broaden the dominant conceptualizations of work in order to give all forms of work the recognition that they deserve. Work should not be narrowly seen solely as a commodified economic transaction that provides income but instead should be robustly visible as a fully human activity necessary for reproductive as well as productive activities that have deep importance for our individual and collective material and psychological health as well as for the quality of democracy and other social relations (Boyte and Kari 1996; Budd 2011; Crain 2010).

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Maintaining Hierarchies in Predominantly White Organizations

A Theory of Racial Tasks as Invisible Labor

ADIA HARVEY WINGFIELD AND RENÉE SKEETE

Sociological research has been adept at highlighting ways that labor markets and workplaces, far from being neutral, objective structures, can actually serve to perpetuate various forms of inequality. In particular, one of the key ways that markets and work settings accomplish this action is through differential treatment of whites and people of color. Factors like employer preferences, structural discrimination, job queues, differential access to social networks, and other issues collectively work to create stark racial disparities (Kirschenman and Neckerman 1991; Reskin and Roos 1990; Roscigno 2007; Royster 2003). As a consequence, racial minorities are often concentrated into lower-wage, lower-paying jobs and are sparsely represented among the higher-status, more influential positions within organizations and in professions more broadly (Acker 2006; Tomaskovic-Devey 1993; Wilson 1997). Thus, structural and organizational patterns become one way that racial hierarchies are perpetuated in work settings.

While we have many examples of racial incidents at work, there are few theoretical arguments offered that make sense of why such instances occur. Sociologists who study work and race generally lack a theoretical apparatus designed to connect the organizational structure of the workplace to the cultural and social practices within that serve to reproduce racial inequality. We attempt to address this deficiency here by emphasizing the ways that the job requirements and implicit responsibilities associated with work at different levels of the organizational hierarchy