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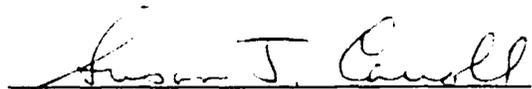
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GENDER, LABOR AND GLOBALIZATION:
THE CASE OF THE TEMPORARY HELP SERVICE INDUSTRY

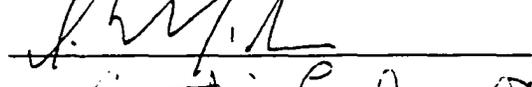
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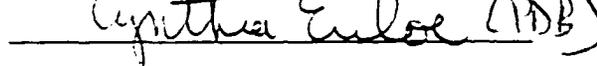
LISA ANNE ADLER

A Dissertation submitted to the
Graduate School-New Brunswick
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Program in Political Science
written under the direction of
Dr. Susan J. Carroll
and approved by









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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Gender, Labor and Globalization:

The Case of the Temporary Help Service (THS) Industry

by LISA ANNE ADLER

Dissertation Director:

Dr. Susan J. Carroll

This dissertation argues that the rise of the Temporary Help Service (THS) industry represents a structural change in the political economy with regards to the utilization of labor. My investigation of the THS industry supports two theoretical suppositions of significance to International Political Economy (IPE) scholars. The first is that firms are playing an increasing role in the process of globalization. This dissertation demonstrates how changing labor practices introduced and proliferated by the THS industry extend elements of globalization like altering experiences of time and space and challenging traditional boundaries and categories. I interviewed owners and managers of THS firms in order to ascertain THS labor practices. I also analyzed the internal company newsletter of Manpower, Inc., the largest THS firm in the world, in order to catalogue and assess THS business practices. My second theoretical contention is that global

restructuring is a gendered process. Economic practices are changing at the same time that gender relations are changing. What is the relationship between these processes? In the case of the reorganization of labor, THS firms refer explicitly to the changing identities of women workers in order to position and sell their product. I analyzed 943 print advertisements produced by THS firms between 1980 and 1990 in order to assess how THS marketing strategies rely on gender narratives.

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Chapter One: Introduction – Gender, Labor and Globalization

There has been a significant change in the utilization of labor across sectors and across national borders. This change is signaled by the dramatic rise in the use of Temporary Help Service (THS) workers. In the U.S. there are over 7,000 Temporary Help Service firms operating 19,400 offices. 3.4 million Americans work for a Temporary Help Service (THS) firm each day (Uchitelle 2000). This is more than twice the number who were temps a decade ago, which was more than twice the number of the decade before. (For more detailed information about the growth of the THS industry, please see Chapter Two).

In 1980, the Temporary Help Service (THS) industry was a relatively insignificant organizer of labor. By the mid-1990's, its premiere firm, Manpower, Inc., was the largest employer in the United States (Segal and Sullivan 1995). With 2.1 million employees worldwide, Manpower claims that they are the largest non-government employer in the world.¹ Manpower's worldwide reach has grown significantly in the last 15 years. In 1985, Manpower reported 1,000 offices worldwide with sales over a billion by 1987. In just seven years, Manpower increased their sales five times to over 5 billion and doubled their offices to 2,000. Four years later, in 1998 they doubled their sales to 10 billion and

¹ July 2000 "About Manpower" at www.manpower.com

claims sales of 11.5 billion from 3,400 offices across the globe (Manpower 1999). These increases are significant because by expanding sales, the THS industry necessarily transforms labor practices.

THS firms are not only expanding geographically, but also by developing new “niches” which provide temporary labor in new job categories. For example, while Kelly Services, Inc. may be best known for their “Kelly Girl” office workers, they have grown to nine divisions which seek to place temporary workers in sometimes highly specialized jobs. For example, Kelly Engineering Resources® provides aeronautical, automotive, chemical, electrical, mechanical, and process engineers. Kelly Healthcare Resources® provides nurses, laboratory technicians and medical technicians. Kelly Information Technology Resources™ provides technicians, systems analysts, database administrators and network designers. The Law Registry® offers lawyers and paralegal professionals. Kelly Scientific Resources® provides biologists, chemists, geologists, biochemists and physicists.²

These developments amount to a structural transformation in the utilization of labor, as “temps” become available and more prevalent across the economy and across the globe. Relations of land and capital both have been transformed in the context of globalization. For example, regional trade agreements like, NAFTA alter the boundaries between states and transform configurations of land. Changes in the rules that regulate financial markets

¹ July 2000 “About Manpower” at www.manpower.com

² Kelly Services, Inc., promotional handout,, n.d.

alter the flow of capital. These structural transformations have been central to the field of international political economy (IPE). Structural transformation in relations of labor are equally important, but have been neglected by IPE scholars.³ Land, labor and capital are the three basic factors of production. In order to understand structural change in the international political economy, we need detailed accounts of changes in each of the factors of production.

Why have IPE scholars overlooked this structural transformation in labor utilization? Historically, IPE theorists have stressed the state as the relevant unit of analysis (Keohane 1984; Gilpin 1987).⁴ In the case of transforming labor practices, it is THS *firms* that have made this change. According to Susan Strange (1996)⁵ it is necessary to turn our attention to non-state authorities, like firms, because firms play an increasingly large role in determining “who gets what, when and how” in the global economy. My research supports Strange’s contention. THS firms affect who gets what, when and how because they change the nature of the labor market. Furthermore, by turning permanent jobs into temporary jobs, they aid in the process of structural adjustment. The THS industry does not set out to make adjustment, the way a developing nation or an agency like the IMF might. They set out to sell temp workers. But the independent actions of these firms add up to economic restructuring as they proliferate temporary work arrangements. If IPE

³ Robert Cox’s work is a notable exception. In his book, *Power, Production and World Order* (1987), Cox begins his analysis of world order with the question of work because he argues these social relations effect forms of state. Cox seeks to categorize “modes of social relations of production” which rely fundamentally on categories of labor.

⁴ As Susan Strange (1994) points out, Gilpin devotes less than 30 out of 400 pages to multinational firms in his classic text, *The Political Economy of International Relations*.

⁵ (See also Stopford, Strange et al. 1991; Strange 1998)

theory continues to focus primarily on the actions of states, it may be unable to account for significant elements of transformation in the international political economy.⁶

Even IPE theorist Geoffrey Underhill (1994), whose insightful analysis exposes the limitations of traditional International Relations (IR) theory for tackling the problems of IPE, ends up relying on the state in the final analysis. In his “framework for progress” for IPE scholars (see p. 34-37), Underhill constructs the state as a great “mediator,” the crucial link between market and politics and between domestic and international. Underhill concludes that the state is “*the* problem of international political economy” (1994 p. 35).⁷ In the case of transforming labor practices, THS firms have often played the role of mediator between politics and the market and between domestic and international. My analysis of the THS industry demonstrates how THS firms mediate between gender politics and economic restructuring.⁸ My analysis of the THS industry also demonstrates how THS firms reorganize domestic labor relations to meet the requirements of the global economy. Furthermore, I demonstrate how the daily practices developed by THS firms reorganize labor within the broader reorganizational patterns of globalization. In this way, we see how global processes are mirrored at the firm level. Specifically, THS firms reorganize territorial identities; they reconfigure time and space; and they challenge traditional conceptual and physical boundaries with regard to labor.

⁶ See also Drucker (1994), and Eden (1991).

⁷ Emphasis in original.

⁸ THS firms have also mediated between politics and the market by negotiating a change in the legal status of employer (Gonos, 1997). I discuss this further in chapter two. More recently, the THS industry has

Gender Politics and the THS industry

On Kelly Services, Inc.'s homepage there is a picture of a woman holding a baby.⁹ Kelly is a labor supply company, what do they have to do with babies? THS workers are not likely to bring their babies to the jobsite. However, images of motherhood have been crucial to the marketing of THS labor. In their marketing campaigns of the 1980's, THS firms refer explicitly to the multiple roles of women in both the private and public spheres in order to position and sell temporary workers.¹⁰ This dissertation demonstrates how transformations in current labor practices sit at the intersection of changing gender relations and changing economic structures. The rise of the THS industry has gone hand in hand with structural change in the labor force including the increase of women into the labor force and the increase of women with small children into the labor force (see Chapter Two).

Furthermore, I am suggesting that particular political economic configurations rely on particular gender relations. For example, the family wage and the stabilizing gender identities that it produced was a precursor for mass production and mass consumption, both of which were the underpinnings of Fordism. Henry Ford did not invent the male breadwinner/female homemaker model of gender relations. He did, however, embrace this model rather explicitly. As Ford writes in *My Philosophy of Industry* (1929), when

played a role in welfare to work schemes, developing programs that turn former welfare recipients into THS workers (Sharpe and Quintanilla 1997).

⁹ See www.kellyservices.com

women and children become "non-workers" they can pursue consumption activities which are necessary for the growth of business:

Gradually, under the benign influence of American industry, wives are released from work, little children are no longer exploited; and, given more time, they both become free to go out and find new products, new merchants and manufacturers who are supplying them. Thus business grows. Thus we see the close relation which home life bears to industry (1929 p. 17-18).

Ford plays a role here in reconstituting (an ideal) feminine identity. Married women, "released from work" will have more opportunities to consume. The female homemaker identity is reconstituted in relation to the economic necessities of Fordism. Ford also had something to say about male identity:

Now in business, the job is the thing - when men are job-centered, they are less self-centered and there is therefore less soil for the interference of personal likes and dislikes, personal pride and personal prejudices. If there is any pride, it is centered in the job; if there is any prejudice, it is with reference to the job. ... If the job isn't big enough to command this sort of allegiance in a man, he should make it big enough; and if he can't do that, he should find one that is big enough (1929 p. 82-83).

While women will be released from work, men must find a job "big enough" to command their allegiance. The gendered order of Fordism is clear: wives need time to buy, men need to be filled up by their job. By incorporating this breadwinner/homemaker model of gender relations into Fordist economic practices, Ford hit upon a combination of production and reproduction that proved very successful in stabilizing both the economic practices of Fordism and the gendered identities of "breadwinner" and "homemaker."

¹⁰ See Chapter Four.

These "gendered identities of Fordism" are also explicitly raced identities. Historically, family wage jobs were reserved for white men. While suspect racial identities that aspired to and were able to achieve the breadwinner/homemaker model of gender relations were more tolerated by the dominant group, the homemaker/breadwinner model of gender relations was typically reserved for white women and white men.

While the Fordist firm benefited from the stabilized gender identities described above, particular groups of women sought to destabilize those identities. Over the past 100 years, many, many women have pursued political activity at the local, national and/or international level to gain access to roles and institutions that had previously been denied to them.¹¹ These struggles have been very successful. Mainstream attitudes about women's roles have changed dramatically since the time when feminists like Betty Friedan (1963) argued that the personal satisfaction of work was something that should not be denied to (middle-class) women. Yet as liberal feminists demanded access to public roles outside the home, they did not succeed in challenging their identification with the home. For the most part, this was not a part of the political strategy (Cott 1987). The result has been the "second shift" for women (Hochschild 1989), and the worker with multiple identities. It is this worker with multiple identities that the THS industry has used to market temporary labor.

¹¹(see Cummings and Schuck 1979; Jeffers 1981; West 1981; McAllister 1982; Lorde 1985; Bookman and Morgen 1988; Gelb and Klein 1988; Isis International and Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (Project) 1988; Waring 1988; Harris and King 1989; Alvarez 1990; West and Blumberg 1990; Calman 1992; Rowbotham and Mitter 1994; Butegwa, Nduna et al. 1995; Minkoff 1995; Miles 1996; Chatty and Rabo 1997)

The dual-income model of gender relations has super-imposed itself on top of the male breadwinner/female homemaker model. Gender roles have been restructured since the day that Ford argued the separate spheres for women and men were necessary for the economy.¹² The construction of the flexible THS worker, which aids in the process of global restructuring, relies on assertions of the *simultaneity* of women's roles in the public and private spheres. The THS industry requires a worker with multiple identities, not only to justify their workers' tenuous status, but also because their workers must be able to shift regularly among multiple worksites. In other words, they require *and* produce a worker with multiple identities.

IPE theorists rightly emphasize the interrelated processes of the market and politics. But what counts as politics? Gender relations have changed due to the political activity of women. The THS industry exploits this change. Selling the idea that THS workers can combine home and work life helps them to sell flexible workers. The sell works because gender relations *have* changed. It is not just that markets are constituted by states, as most IPE theorists recognize, it is also equally true and significant that markets are constituted by the home. What goes on in the private sphere of the home effects what can go on in the public sphere of the market. Changes in one sphere will necessarily effect the other. Any fundamental investigation of global restructuring must be able to account for this relationship.¹³ Many feminist scholars have argued that global restructuring is a

¹² While women have negotiated roles between the "public" and "private" spheres throughout history, this period is distinct because women's presence in the workforce moved from "accepted" to "expected" for women across a variety of classes.

¹³ The relationship between public and private has been central to much of feminist scholarship. Examples of previous work in political economy include: (Hartmann 1976; Rubin 1976; Eisenstein 1977; Beneria and

gendered process.¹⁴ But these studies have tended to focus on women in developing countries. In the case of the THS industry, we see how global restructuring is a gendered story in one of the most wealthy and industrialized economies, the United States.

Globalization and the THS Industry

My investigation of the THS industry is based on U.S. sources. I interviewed THS managers and owners in the U.S., investigated images published in U.S. magazines and analyzed documents published in the U.S. (see below for a complete description of the research design). How are labor practices developed in the US relevant to the question of globalization? There are two significant answers to this question. The first has to do with the goal of the large multinational THS firms to export their services and their practices across the globe. In their financial statements, Manpower and Kelly highlight their global strategies and see their international operations as providing the biggest opportunities for increasing revenues. Manpower currently operates offices in 54 countries and their biggest single market is in France. Kelly operates in 19 countries. The dramatic success of THS firms in the U.S. have provided the infrastructure and the incentive to export the practice of using THS workers to other countries.

Sen 1981; Young, Wolkowitz et al. 1981; Nash and Fernandez-Kelly 1983; Delphy 1984; Leacock and Safa 1986; Walby 1986; Benería and Stimpson 1987; Jenson, Hagen et al. 1988; Hansen and Philipson 1990; Stichter and Parpart 1990; Ward 1990; Eviota 1992; Ferber and Nelson 1993; Nelson 1993; Strassmann 1993; Folbre 1994; Humphries 1995; Kuiper and Sap 1995; Nelson 1996; Albelda 1997; Mutari, Boushey et al. 1997; Mies 1998)

¹⁴ There is a growing body of literature on the relationship between gender and global restructuring (see Beneria 1989; Ward 1990; Bakker 1994; Elson 1994; Sparr 1994; Marchand and Parpart 1995; Bakker 1996; Runyan 1996; Marchand and Runyan 2000).

The second answer to the question of the relationship between THS labor practices and globalization is more conceptual. Globalization signals cultural, political, and economic changes. The culture, politics and economics of labor is being transformed by the practices of THS firms. As firms in a competitive environment, temp agencies must concern themselves with three pragmatic issues: How can we sell our product effectively? How can we provide the service our clients expect? How can we ensure the quality of our product? The daily concerns of those who run THS firms revolve around sales, service, and quality. The practices THS firms develop to promote sales, to offer excellent service, and to ensure the quality of their product also have the effect of reconfiguring labor within the logic of globalization. What do I mean by this term? Since its inception, capitalism has been a global endeavor (Wallerstein 1974). What makes the current period unique? Globalization can be thought of as a redrawing of familiar boundaries, both conceptual and physical (Peterson 1996). Globalization can also be thought of as a transformation in spatial and temporal experience, a “time-space compression” (Harvey 1989). For example, Mittleman writes that due to “changing modes of competition, globalization compresses the time and space aspects of social relations” (1996 p. 3)¹⁵

In the case of labor, THS firms create new geographies of work, which revise the familiar physical boundaries between worker and worksite. In addition, THS practices challenge the familiar conceptual boundaries of labor by collapsing the distinction between formal

¹⁵ A vast literature examining globalization from a host of perspectives has developed rapidly in the last 10 years. Some earlier works include (Featherstone 1990; Robertson 1992; Waters 1995). For more recent

and informal labor relations. Furthermore, THS practices disrupt a series of dichotomous categories. Firms hope to provide a product that is both standardized *and* specialized. THS firms offer both consolidation *and* fragmentation to the contingent workforce. Finally, THS firms materialize a time-space compression for their workers. For THS workers, the worksite is in multiple locations, and the time it takes to contract a worker to a particular workforce is drastically reduced.

How do concerns about service and quality have these outcomes? THS firms define "better service" as the ability to respond quickly to client requests. In order to fulfill this promise, THS firms must add and/or subtract temporary workers to existing workforces at sometimes astonishing speeds, creating what I call the "Disappearing/Reappearing" worker. Causing work relationships to form and dissolve rapidly at multiple locations results in a time-space compression for THS workers.

Another way THS firms seek to provide better service (and lock out the competition) is by forming "on-site" relationships with their clients. This means that a THS firm will create and maintain a satellite office at the client company. Tempworkers themselves blur the boundaries between firms as they work alongside the employees of a company, though they are not employees of that company. When THS firms set up on-site, the boundaries between firms are blurred further. Since tempworkers rotate among various firms in a common location, competing firms may actually share a portion of their workforce. The organization of labor with the use of THS temps challenges the

work see (Baylis and Smith 1997; Gupta 1997; Giddens 2000; Hay and Marsh 2000; Mittelman 2000). For

traditional boundaries between distinct firms. The crossing of these firms' boundaries leads to a multiplication of work identities.¹⁶

Maintaining a quality product is also of significant concern to THS firms. In the THS case, a quality product means a good worker, but the new spatial configurations of work that THS firms create also present new challenges for monitoring worker performance. For THS firms, ensuring a quality product also means devising new methods of labor control, like testing and training. These methods create new paradoxes for THS workers. Testing has a standardizing effect as all potential employees must submit to a sophisticated set of procedures that catalogues the individual as a part of a potential labor pool or not. All potential THS workers are measured and categorized in a uniform fashion. They are funneled through the same bureaucratic processes and take the same battery of standardized tests. This is designed to *standardize* the product.

At the same time, THS firms try to muscle out their competition by offering products that fit the *specific* needs of their clients. THS firms will "partner" with their clients to develop site-specific training and testing procedures. As a result, temporary employees attain specific knowledge of company practices prior to assignment.¹⁷ This challenges elements of Human Capital theory which suggests that as workers attain specific knowledge about a company, they are able to translate that knowledge into better paying

a more journalistic account, (Friedman 1999). For a critical perspective see, (Hirst and Thompson 1999).

¹⁶While I argue that THS firms rely on the multiple identities of women workers to sell their product, I further contend that the methods THS firms develop take that multiplicity of identity to a new level.

¹⁷A THS employee does not actually become a part of the paid workforce until s/he is sent out "on assignment" at a client location.

positions within that company (Schultz 1961). THS workers are cut off from this process since they never actually work for the company in question. Furthermore, they may have to obtain highly specific information about a host of companies in order to maintain regular employment.

The THS industry also simultaneously consolidates and fragments temporary workers. THS firms claim that they can produce large numbers of quality workers in a short time. To ensure that the THS firm will be able to deliver on this promise, it has to create a massive pool of dispatchable potential employees in order to ensure availability. Not surprisingly, recruiting is a significant concern. The goal of recruiting drives is to reach as many people as possible, and convince them to become a part of the THS firm's available labor pool, that is, they must submit to the battery of standardized tests and procedures. Fringe workers, downsized workers, workers who have for one reason or another been cast off are *consolidated* into a single industry which can dispatch them in an organized fashion. Yet, marginalized workers are consolidated even as their identities are fragmented. An individual worker may work for a pharmaceutical on Monday, an international banking organization on Wednesday, and be unemployed on Friday. A worker's identity is fragmented as each work site differs, not only in what is produced there, but also in regards to co-workers, and local policies such as dress, lunch, breaks, etc. The success of the industry creates new paradoxes for labor because the THS industry consolidates and standardizes its workforce at the same time that it requires specification of workers and fragments their lives.

Finally, the practices of THS industries also have the effect of challenging traditional labor categories. The proliferation of temporary services constitutes a casualization of a proportion of the workforce. But what's significant about this casualization is that it is also a formalization. Formally organized as its own discrete industry, the THS industry constitutes a formalization of casualization. Categories like primary/secondary (labor markets) and formal/informal (economic relations) are called into question by the tempworker. Tempworkers experience informal and formal economic relations simultaneously. They are sent out to work in primary sector jobs, although they maintain secondary sector status.

Research Design

This study is based on three sources of data: print advertisements, internal company documents, and interviews with THS owners and executives.

A: Advertisements

As explained previously, I argue that the THS industry relies on the multiple identities of women workers in order to sell its product. This argument is based on an analysis of 943 print advertisements. I examined and categorized 943 advertisements that appeared in trade journals between 1980 and 1990. This number is the universe of advertisements for THS firms which appeared in even-numbered years inclusive of 1980 and 1990 in three national Human Resources (HR) trade journals: *Personnel Journal*, *Personnel*

Administrator, and *Personnel*.¹⁸ I focus on the 1980s because it is in this decade that the THS industry was truly transformed into a vast retailer of labor.

Ads were coded based on three criteria: 1) visual presence of temporary workers; 2) gender of the workers portrayed; 3) images of women projected in the advertisements. The results of this coding are reported and discussed extensively in Chapter Four.

Since I am interested in the way temp workers themselves are portrayed, the 943 advertisements were coded into three categories: 1) ads which pictured temporary workers; 2) ads which pictured people who were not temporary workers; 3) ads which used text only and/or non-human images. My analysis focuses on the first two categories, which represent seventy-one percent of the sample, or 668 advertisements.

Since I am interested in the way that gender identity functions in the marketing of THS workers, I further examined ads in the first category (53% of the sample, or 497 advertisements). These advertisements were further coded in order to discern the number of ads that portrayed temporary workers as women, men, or both. The vast majority of these ads (80%) portrayed temporary workers as women.

Finally, the 398 advertisements that represented female temporary workers were coded based on the images of women that they projected. I identified three broad categories: the working woman, the sexual woman, and the domestic woman. My criterion for

¹⁸In 1990, *Personnel Administrator* became *HR Magazine*; in 1991, *Personnel* became *HR Focus*.

inclusion in the 'working woman' category was that the woman must be shown wearing business clothes or be shown actually working. My criterion for inclusion in the 'sexual woman' category was an image which emphasized beauty, adornment, or sexual innuendo. My criterion for inclusion in the 'domestic woman' category was an image which emphasized caring, enthusiasm for personal service, or called forth impressions of a housewife.

B. Company Documents

The second part of my argument is that the practices developed by the THS industry have had the effect of transforming the labor process, introducing new elements of a time-space compression for workers and new paradoxes for labor.

To investigate the practices developed by the industry I analyzed internal company newsletters from Manpower, Inc., the largest THS firm in the world. As the largest Temporary Help Service firm, Manpower sets a standard that its competitors must meet. Therefore, I use the practices of Manpower as a rough indicator of practices across the industry.¹⁹

The newsletter, called *On-line*, is a bi-monthly created for Manpower employees, that is, those who run Manpower's 3,000 offices in over 50 countries. These newsletters are designed to share business strategies across Manpower's vast network of local offices. I analyzed the universe of company newsletters, 22 covering the time period from

November/December 1991 to July/August 1995. I chose this time period because the early 1990s are a significant period for assessing THS business practices. After the tremendous growth of the 1980's, THS firms consolidated their successes in this period by developing new procedures and strategies for maintaining their current accounts and getting new ones.

These newsletters proved to be an excellent source of information regarding company practices. Since one of the main purposes of the newsletter is to share information regarding successful business strategies, the articles often provided great detail about how a particular branch office functions. In fact, each newsletter's cover story highlights a specific office or region of offices with extensive interviews with the staff on their business practices and sales approaches. Most of the other articles follow a similar format, where specific offices describe particular client accounts and give advice on a host of topics. The 22 newsletters described the practices of 236 different Manpower offices and 199 different customer accounts. These offices were mostly in North America, although there were articles that discussed Manpower offices in Japan, the Scandinavian countries, Europe, and Latin America.

Newsletter articles were coded²⁰ into three broad categories: business strategies, workers, and cases. Articles coded as "cases" were articles that discussed extensively all of the specific practices and interactions between a Manpower office and a particular client

¹⁹ Clearly, it would have been better had I been able to sample company newsletters from several THS firms. However, limitations of time and money prohibited me from doing so.

²⁰ Coding was aided by NUDIST, computer software for analyzing qualitative data.

account. Articles coded as “workers” were articles that highlighted a particular THS worker’s accomplishments, or parts of articles that discussed THS workers. The biggest category was “business strategies,” which was further coded into four sub-categories: sales, service, quality, and training. The “sales” sub-category includes articles or parts of articles that discuss strategies for increasing sales or reports successful sales campaigns. The “service” sub-category includes articles or parts of articles that report strategies on how to improve service to clients. The “quality” sub-category includes articles or parts of articles that discuss tactics for improving quality or report successful campaigns for increasing quality. The “training” sub-category includes articles or parts of articles that report on new training techniques for THS workers.

These articles also were coded to identify the outcomes of THS business practices. I identified articles or parts of articles that discussed: 1) worker identity, 2) experiences of time and space, 3) standardization of office procedures, 4) specification of worker training, 5) fragmentation of work experience, 6) consolidation of labor pools. This level of coding allowed for a direct comparison between particular business strategies and particular outcomes. These results are discussed extensively in chapter five.

Interviews

I interviewed 12 owners and/or executives from Temporary Help Service firms in New York and New Jersey. The interviews were conducted in the spring and summer of 1996. Three of the interviewees were owners of THS firms. Three were vice-presidents of THS firms. The remaining six were managers in branch offices. Three of the interviewees

represented large, multinational THS firms. Four were from medium-sized regional THS firms. Five were from small, local firms. I also interviewed the Senior Vice President of Legal and Government Affairs of the National Association of Temporary Staffing Services (NATSS).

In 1997, I attended the 1997 NATSS annual convention held in Washington D.C. I recorded these proceedings and was able to talk informally with other NATSS staff members.

The owners and executives interviewed are not meant to constitute a representative sample. Rather, the interviews are meant to provide an introduction to the issues faced by THS firms and an overview of the perceptions of THS owners and executives. They are also intended to provide some corroboration of the practices reported in the newsletters. For a detailed description of interview questions, please see Appendix B.

Chapter Outline

In chapter two I begin to address the question of the tremendous growth of the THS industry in the 1980's. I provide a brief overview of the industry, but I mostly focus on the comments of THS owners and executives from interviews conducted in 1996. In these interviews, THS owners and executives place the success of their firms in the broader economic context of global restructuring. However, I contend that structures

change due to the actions of individuals and that it is the actions of the individuals who run THS firms which help to make structural change. In this chapter I demonstrate how THS firms help their clients break with a Fordist past.

In chapter three, I ask, can the theories of post-Fordism explain the rise of the THS industry? The debate within post-Fordism is about the relevance of technology, markets, and social classes for understanding the evolution of capitalism. None of the post-Fordist schools adequately addresses my case. The focus on technology overlooks how the THS reorganization of labor relies on a change in social relations. The issue of fragmented markets may be more relevant to the flexibilization of labor. However, it cannot account for the ways in which the switch to THS labor amounts to a “speed-up” rather than a way to gain functional flexibility for the firm. Finally, a focus on social classes overlooks the role that gender plays in the proliferation of THS labor.

In chapter four I detail the ways in which the THS industry relies on the multiple identities of women workers to position and sell their product. I analyze 943 images produced by THS firms to sell temporary workers between 1980 and 1990. Contained in these images are ‘gender narratives’ pulled from both the public and private spheres. The advertisements demonstrate how THS firms rely on gender to sell temporary labor, which aids in the process of economic restructuring. Feminist investigations of economic restructuring have tended to focus on developing nations. In this case, we see how economic restructuring relies on gender in a wealthy industrialized country.

In chapter five, I demonstrate how the practices developed by THS firms to promote sales, service and quality reconfigure labor within the logic of globalization. Globalization has changed the nature of territorial identity. Globalization has altered the organization of time and space. Globalization has reworked the familiar conceptual boundaries of international politics, like the distinction between “domestic” and “international.” Part of the goal of this chapter is to demonstrate how global processes are mirrored at the firm level. In this way, I aim to show the similarities between global and local processes and to show how the “levels of analysis” are intimately connected.

In the conclusion, I try to place the flexibilization of labor within a broader political economic context which has identified flexibility as the key to economic success. While I do not conclude that flexibility is a new global hegemonic discourse, I do say that the tempworker can serve as a figure for globalization. The tempworker is a boundary crosser who reorganizes territorial identity and temporality.

Chapter Two: THS firms and structural change

In the first part of this chapter, I present an overview of the industry. This overview begins with data on the demographics of THS workers, includes data on the growth of the industry and changes in the composition of the workforce and concludes with a discussion of the history and growth of the THS industry.

In the second part of this chapter, I present the THS industry through the eyes of owners and managers of THS firms. In this way, I hope to demonstrate the role that firms play in making structural change in the international political economy. THS owners and executives place the tremendous growth of the industry within the broader context of global economic change, but their comments also reflect the ways in which THS firms are *making* this change. While the owners and managers tended *not* to see themselves and their industry as playing an active role in making structural change in the IPE, some of what they *say* demonstrates such a role. In particular, their descriptions of “niches,” and explanations of selling strategies, demonstrate how THS firms materialize structural change by seeking to proliferate temporary labor relations into whole new categories of work. Furthermore, in their descriptions of new work practices, we see how THS firms help their clients break with a Fordist past.

An Overview

Demographics

Who are temporary workers? Temporary workers are more likely to be female, black and young. Although women made up less than half of the total workforce, they represented about two-thirds of temporary labor. Black workers account for about 10% of the total workforce, but they constituted 20% of the temporary workforce. And young workers made up nearly one-third of temporaries, but only about one-fifth of the total workforce. These results are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1

TABLE 1

Distribution of Temporary Workers and All Workers by Demographic Factors (%)

	Temporary Workers	All Workers*
Total, 16 yrs & over	100.0	100.0
16 to 24 yrs	32.7	20.1
25 to 54 yrs	57.6	67.4
55 yrs & over	9.7	12.5
Women	64.2	55.0
Men	35.8	45.0
Black	20.2	10.4
White	75.4	89.9

*Includes total of temporary and permanent workers

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data for 1985

Wayne Howe (1986), the economist who compiled these statistics argues that women are so heavily represented in temporary work due to their home responsibilities, and he

suggests that young workers are disproportionately represented because they may be easing into the workforce or trying to schedule work around school. He does not attempt to offer an explanation about the disproportionate numbers of black workers.

Where do THS workers work? Table 2 below outlines the distribution of THS labor across selected occupations. The single biggest category is administrative support including clerical. Technical and sales positions, in addition to administrative support, account for over half of all temporary employees even though these categories are less than a third of all workers. The combined totals of administrative support, service and unskilled blue-collar occupations represent 71 percent of the temporary workforce. The majority of temporary labor is used to fill jobs that are at the lower end of the occupational ladder.

Table 2

TABLE 2
Percent of Temporary Workers Within Occupations

	Temporary Workers	All Workers*
Total, all occupations	100.0	100.0
Managers & professionals	11.0	24.0
Technical, sales, administrative support	52.1	31.6
Administrative support, including clerical	43.3	17.3
Service	10.8	13.7
Skilled blue-collar	4.6	12.1
Unskilled blue-collar	16.9	16.6
Farming, forestry, fishing	4.4	2.1

*Includes total of temporary and permanent workers

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data for 1985

What do THS workers earn? Table 3 below compares average hourly wages for temporary and permanent office workers in specified occupations. Some of the discrepancies are quite large. On average, temporary workers earn almost \$3.00 an hour less than permanent workers in the same job category. The largest difference is between temporary and permanent legal secretaries at \$6.54.

Table 3

Average Hourly Wages of Temporary and Permanent Office Workers

Occupational Categories	Temporary [†]	Permanent [°]
Messengers	4.74	6.39
File Clerks	4.97	6.62
General Office Clerks	5.11	7.56
Typists	5.97	7.67
Key Entry Operators	6.11	7.83
Accounting Clerks	6.61	8.73
Secretaries	7.66	11.21
Executive	7.79	12.41 ^a
Legal	8.06	14.60 ^b

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

[†]BLS Survey, September 1987 reported in *Monthly Labor Review*, March 1989

[°]BLS National Survey of Professional, Administrative, Technical, and Clerical Pay, March 1986

^acategorized as Secretary IV

^bcategorized as Secretary V

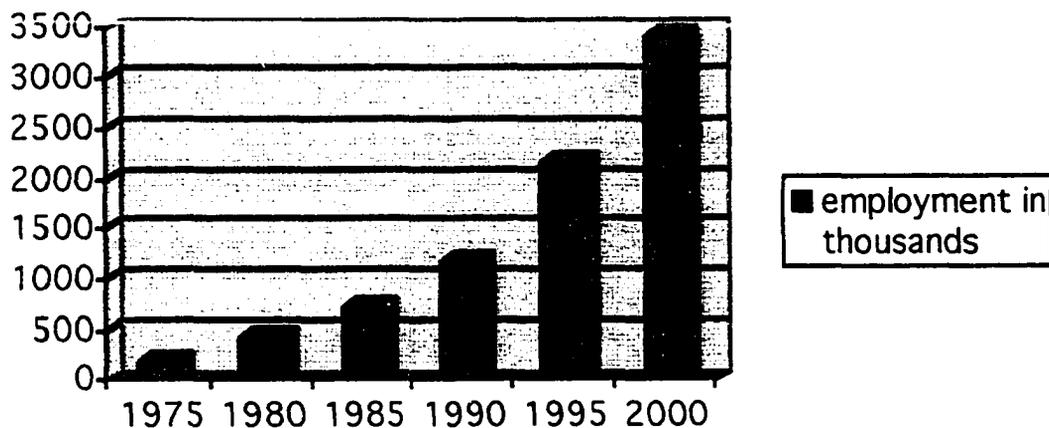
After 1989 the Bureau of Labor Statistics stopped collecting data on the THS industry as a distinct category with its own industrial code. Their aim was to collect data on

contingent workers, defined as workers who have “no explicit or implicit contract for a long-term employment arrangement” (Polivka 1996, p. 3). Contingent workers may include THS workers, but they also include various other kinds of workers. The BLS concluded that there were as many as 6 million contingent workers in February of 1995. These workers were also more likely to be female, black, and young. They were more likely to be employed in services and construction industries. Contingent workers in the 1995 data also earned less than noncontingent workers: \$285 in median weekly earnings compared to \$416 for noncontingent workers (Polivka 1996, p. 22). Data compiled on the THS industry as a distinct category is only available through the National Association of Temporary and Staffing Services (NATSS), the industry’s trade organization.

The number of workers employed by THS firms has grown significantly in the last quarter of the 20th century as demonstrated by Figure 1 below.

Figure 1

Growth of Temporary Workers,
Average Daily Employees 1975-2000

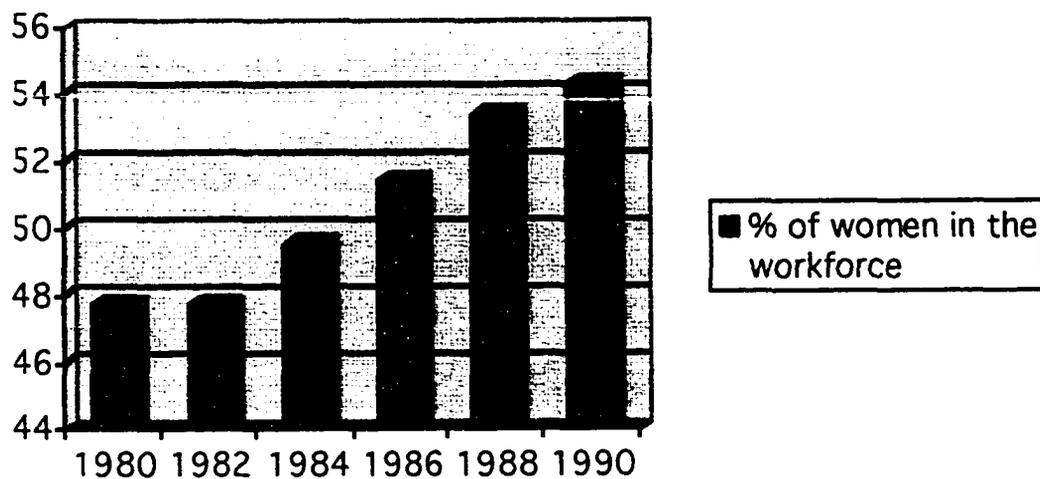


Sources: US Bureau of Labor Statistics (prior to 1990) and National Association of Temporary and Staffing Services.

The rising number of women in the workforce has coincided with the rise of the temporary help service industry. While a large influx of women into the labor force occurred prior to the dramatic rise in the THS industry, women's labor force participation rates continued to grow throughout the 1980's.

Figure 2

Growth of Women in the Workforce 1980-1990

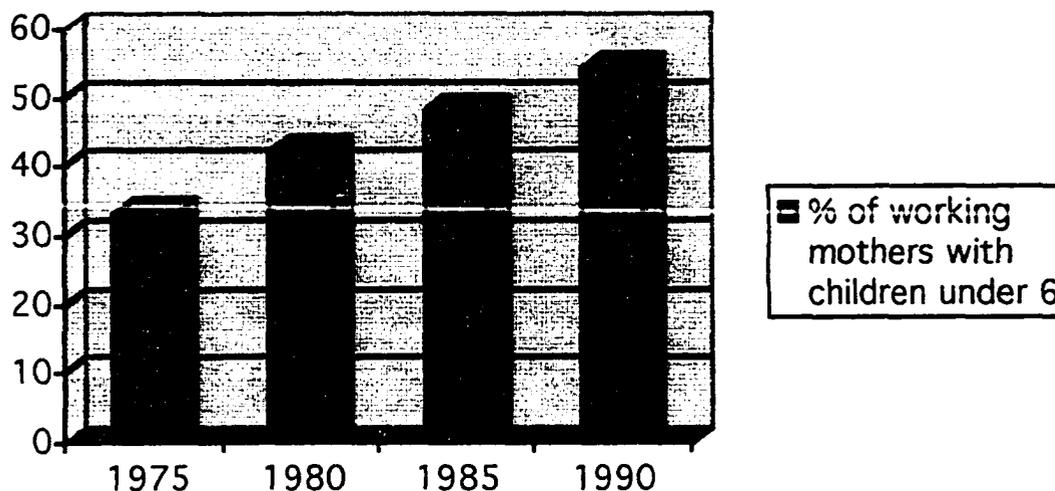


source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

While the THS industry has relied on women workers, they have also relied on the cultural shift provided by increasing numbers of mothers in the workforce. Figure 3 provides information about the increasing numbers of mothers with young children in the workforce.

Figure 3

Growth of Mothers with Children Under Six in the Workforce 1975-1990



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

The THS industry promotes images of the working mother as they tout work relationships as being “flexible.” The construction of temporary workers uses the cultural currency of motherhood to justify itself. The flexible worker can participate in the labor force and still take care of the children. Since women are seen as (potential or actual) mothers, women's work can be made easily into temporary work. However, the paradigm of the temporary worker has become more generalized. Conducted in gender neutral terms, the discourse of flexibility is meant to appeal to all workers. Furthermore, as THS firms seek to sell their workers into more male dominated fields, they aim to spread the concept of temporary labor.

Definitions

The main purpose of the Temporary Help Service (THS) industry is to provide workers on a temporary basis to a variety of firms. While it is true that by using THS workers, companies can escape benefits costs and other costs of maintaining payroll, these costs do not vanish. The THS firm charges a mark-up on the hourly wage their clients pay which can be as high as 60%. Therefore, it is not necessarily cheaper to use THS workers on a day to day basis. The bottom line is that companies have to pay either the benefits costs for their employees or the overhead costs and profit of THS firms.

The THS firm legally employs a 'temp worker', although they perform their work at a different site: the client company's location. This legal and spatial separation of work is crucial to the functioning of the THS industry. The American Staffing Association (ASA)²¹ defines 'temporary help service' as:

a service whereby an organization hires its own employees and assigns them to clients to support or supplement the client's work force in work situations (Lenz 1994).

The spatial/legal separation of work is significant because the functioning of the industry rests in part on the client company being released from the legal responsibilities of maintaining a portion of its workforce. Indeed, this is one of the industry's major selling points: clients may obtain or dismiss workers without actually having to hire and fire them. Circumventing legal obligations is a prerequisite for making labor flexible because law is an institution which defines the relationship between worker and employer. In

order for this relationship to be redefined as flexible, legal relationships must be reformulated. Because it interjects itself into the traditional worker-employee relationship, the THS industry helps to redefine the legal parameters of that relationship.

Reworking the legal status of “employer” necessary for THS functioning was “the result of a protracted campaign carried out by the temporary help industry and its corporate backers over four decades” (Gonos 1997, p. 82). Gonos identifies an economic bias in the literature on contingent work arrangements which assumes that the rise of the THS industry was simply the result of corporate demands for temporary workers. Gonos argues that law and public policy both had to change in order for the THS industry to prosper and he charts

the rather obscure history of the battle that the THI [temporary help industry] has persistently fought since its appearance after World War II to bring about specific changes in law and public policy needed to ratify its version of the temporary employment relationship as legal and legitimate (1997, p. 83).

This battle is still being waged. A series of rulings and statutes have resulted in a doctrine of “co-employment” where the client company may still be held liable for infringements of worker’s safety or discrimination under particular circumstances. However, under co-employment, the client company is substantially protected from worker’s compensation claims and other claims, like unemployment (see Lenz, 1997). In

²¹In 1994, the National Association of Temporary Services (NATS) changed its name to the National Association of Temporary Staffing Services (NATSS). In 1999, NATSS became the American Staffing Association (ASA).

1997, the industry's trade organization introduced a bill in Congress meant to formally define the THS firm as the sole legal employer, but the bill failed to move.²²

Nevertheless, the industry still functions with the assumption of the THS firm as the legal employer. Most clients and workers²³ assume this relationship and the THS firm functions this way in basic operations. They hire and fire workers. They recruit, screen, test, and sometimes train workers. When a worker is sent out on an assignment, the THS firm pays their wage.²⁴ The THS firm is responsible for withholding payroll taxes; making the required employer contributions to Social Security and unemployment insurance; and adhering to other Federal regulations.

The Temporary Help Service industry dates from the 1940's. It got its start in 1946 when William Russell Kelly opened the Russell Kelly Office Service in Detroit with \$10,000 from his personal savings. Kelly's original idea was to provide office support in his own office, but he switched to sending his employees to client locations after several of them made this request. Today, Kelly Services is the second largest THS firm in the world with 1,800 offices in 20 countries.

Currently the largest THS firm in the world, Manpower, Inc., got its start two years after Kelly in 1948 in Milwaukee. Its primary service was to provide unskilled temporary

²² HR 1891 was introduced by Rep Portman in the 105th Congress on 6/12/97.

²³ Workers have good reason to assume this relationship as this is what they are told if hired by a THS firm. THS managers emphasize to their employees that they are "our workers" *not* the employees of XYZ company that they are sent to.

workers to industrial companies. In 1978, three-fourths of Manpower's placements were still in blue-collar industrial positions which are positions predominantly filled by men. Twenty percent were in office support. Yet, just ten years later, this distribution had nearly reversed itself completely (Belous 1989). Only twenty percent of Manpower's placements remained in the blue-collar sector in 1988, and seventy percent were in the office segment, which are categories primarily filled by women. This meant that during the period of phenomenal growth in the industry, Manpower's workforce went from being predominantly male to being predominately female.

Today, Manpower operates 3,500 offices in 54 countries. In 1999, Manpower brought in 11.5 billion dollars in revenue servicing 400,000 clients worldwide with 2 million temps. The third largest THS firm, Olsten Corporation, had its start in 1950 in New York City. Today it maintains 1,400 offices in thirteen countries.²⁵ The global reach of these firms is significant. While global communications make it possible for work to be performed anywhere in the world, the THS industry turns that possibility into a reality by instituting formalized networks for potential temps across the globe. In this way they contribute to the process of economic globalization. Doug Miller, President and CEO of Norrell Corporation describes the move towards global outsourcing:

I see a substantial change in the way work is distributed geographically throughout the world. The decisions about where work is performed will be based on the available skills of the workforce as well as the cost of getting work accomplished. This scenario will present a challenge for businesses to remain

²⁵In addition to these 'big three' multinational THS firms, there are thousands more regionally based and local THS firms in business. ASA reports that there are currently 19,400 offices that supply temporary help just in the United States.

flexible and to anticipate the changing environment and changing work requirements. Global outsourcing could provide part of the answer to this need for flexibility.²⁶

This quote suggests that the THS industry can play a significant role in redistributing work throughout the world. It also demonstrates that even smaller THS firms (Norrell has about 400 offices in 3 countries) try to position themselves as global players.

Although the THS industry enjoyed growth throughout most of its history, it operated with relatively little fanfare for about thirty years. Then, starting in the 1980's the THS industry began to attract attention in the financial and popular press because its growth consistently outstripped growth in the rest of the economy. As early as 1983, THS stock was climbing briskly in contrast to the depressed earnings of other equities (cite). This was while the United States was facing the longest recession since World War II and the highest unemployment rate since 1941. Partly what has made the industry notable is that it became known as a growth industry at a time when other industries were in decline.

By the mid-eighties, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) had taken an interest in the growth of the industry. In a 1986 Monthly Labor Review article, the BLS reported that the number of employees in the temporary help industry had grown by seventy percent from November of 1982 to November of 1984 (Carey and Hazelbaker 1986). This meant that the THS industry was the fastest growing industry among those with employment over 50,000. In the same article, the BLS predicted that this growth would continue into

²⁶From an interview published on the company website. (www.norrell.com)

the next decade. Based on a projected annual growth rate of five percent, (higher than the 4.2% projected for Service Industries and the 1.3% projected for All Industries), the BLS predicted that employment numbers would reach one million by 1995. However, the one million mark was reached just two years later in 1988. By 1995, there were over two million people working as 'temps' every day. ASA estimated its industry's growth at twenty percent a year for the decade of the 1980's. This growth has continued, unabated throughout the 1990's. In 1979, industry payroll was 2.8 million dollars. In 1989, it had grown over four and a half times to 13.2 million. Just seven years later in 1996, industry payroll had nearly tripled again to 31.4 million dollars. In the third quarter of 1997 the number of temporary workers employed every day had grown to 2,631,600 (Steinberg 1998; Steinberg 1998).²⁷ Today, the average daily employment (ADE) of temporary workers stands at 2.9 million. The percentage of male temps has also grown in the 1990s. In 1989 men made up 20% of temporary workers, by 1994, 28% percent were male (Contemporary Times, Spring 1994). We would expect to see this increase in male temps as THS firms expand their services into male-dominated fields, such as engineering and information technology.²⁸

The industry still anticipates dramatic expansion of their overall numbers, especially on a global level. For example, in 1998, after placing the very first temporary employee from

²⁷ For more on industry growth see, (Carey and Hazelbaker 1986; Granrose and Applebaum 1986; Macauley 1986; Pollock and Berstein 1986; Richardson 1993; Uchitelle 1993; National Association of Temporary and Staffing Services 1994; Brandstrader 1996; Uchitelle 1996).

²⁸ For more on the growth of the contingent workforce see, (Christensen 1989; Hartmann and Lapidus 1989; Callaghan and Hartmann 1991; Barker and Christensen 1998; Carré and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Employment Labour and Social Affairs Committee 1998) (DuRivage and 9 to 5 National Association of Working Women (U.S.) 1986).

a temp agency in Italy, Alfredo Maselli, senior vice president and general manager of Kelly Services' International Division predicted that the number of temporary employees in Italy would grow to 100,000 in "a year or two." Mr. Maselli also felt that while Italian companies had no experience with using temps, "using temporary employees will become a normal way for Italian companies to do business."²⁹

While temporary work arrangements are not new, the THS industry is worthy of consideration independently from other forms of temporary workers, like seasonal farmworkers. In addition to its impressive growth, the THS industry is unique for three reasons. First, the practices of THS firms effectively shift the denotation of temporary status from the job to the worker. In traditional temporary work arrangements, a particular job category is denoted as "temporary" or "seasonal" and all of the workers who fulfill that job are considered temporary workers. Temporary status is defined by the job. In contrast, THS firms identify particular workers as temporary. These workers may be sent out to do almost any kind of job. They are likely to be working alongside workers who have permanent status but who are performing the exact same work. Temporary status is defined by the worker. The shift in definition from job to worker ends up challenging the traditional opposition between primary and secondary labor markets.³⁰ Temporary status has usually been associated with tertiary labor markets, yet

²⁹Press release from Kelly Services, January 14, 1998.

³⁰Dual Labor Market theory defines two distinct labor markets that remain insulated from each other. In the primary sector, jobs are stable, better paid and more likely to be filled by white males. Jobs in the secondary sector are insecure, poorly paid, and dominated by women and people of color. These theorists have noted that it is very difficult to enter the primary market from the secondary one, partly because sexual and racial cleavages help to maintain the distinction between the categories (Edwards, Reich et al. 1975; Gordon and et al. 1982). While THS workers challenge the binary opposition between secondary

THS temps are often performing jobs traditionally associated with the primary sector. The effect is that the stability of the primary sector is called into question.

Second, the THS industry is organized as a profit-making entity that attaches itself as a third party to the employment relationship in an on-going fashion. Whenever a temp works for a client, the THS firm captures a percentage of the *hourly* wage. The client is billed and the worker paid based on the hours worked. THS firms prefer a mark-up on the rate paid to the worker of 40%-60%.³¹ This practice is unique, and it significantly alters the employment relation. In the traditional employment relationship, there is an implicit or explicit contract between a worker and an employer. The worker expects to earn a wage and the employer expects to earn a profit based on their relationship. The employment contract sets out the rights and responsibilities of the two parties.

Two of the most relevant issues defined in an employment contract are wages and duration of work. As a third party, the THS firm organizes a portion of the workforce for many different companies. In this scenario, there are two contracts: one between the THS firm and its client and one between the THS firm and its employee. Yet, it is the contract between the THS firm and its client which is most significant because this is the contract which defines wages and duration of work. The contract between the worker and the THS firm is tenuous at best. When hired by a THS firm, a worker cannot expect

and primary labor markets, I also contend that the THS industry creates its own sexual and racial tropes in order to be successful.

³¹According to interviews I conducted with the owners and executives of THS firms, in recent years, the large multinational THS firms have attempted to squeeze out their competition by arranging contracts with

to earn a particular wage. The wage that a worker earns varies according to the assignment s/he is sent on. This price is negotiated between the THS firm, seeking a higher price to increase profits, and its client, seeking a lower price to reduce costs. Even though the negotiation over price is also a negotiation over wages, the worker is not directly involved in this negotiation. The worker also cannot expect to work for a particular length of time. Even in the THS-Client contract, the duration of work is often left undefined. This is one of the main advantages for the client and another big selling point of the industry. Temporary employees know that there is no guarantee regarding the length of their work assignment.

Some may point out that this 'no guarantee' attitude has pervaded all work relationships in the age of corporate downsizing. However, what makes the THS arrangement unique is that there is a third party, organized as its own industry, which has also been highly *profitable*.³² This changes the relationship between work and profit. In the traditional arrangement, an employer organizes workers to perform work that s/he hopes will produce more in value than what s/he has to pay out in wages. The difference is the basis for profit. When a THS firm is involved, there is a second profit element added to the equation because the THS firm must capture a percentage of profit from the same productive relationship. The THS industry is a highly organized third party that makes an additional profit from the traditional employment relation.

other large multinational firms for exclusive rights to provide temp workers. In such arrangements, the margins are shaved thinner and revenues rely on volume.

³²According to their 1996 Annual Reports, the largest three THS firms each continued to increase their profits. Manpower's global revenue increased 11% and the revenue for their US. Operations increased

The third and perhaps most important factor which contributes to the significance of the THS industry is its cross-sectoral and global impact. The success of the THS industry ultimately depends on its ability to transform the labor processes of *other* industries both in the US and abroad. THS executives employ very aggressive marketing strategies aimed at persuading their clients to use temps in more and more types of job categories. As such, the industry has a wide impact beyond its own borders. A focus on the THS industry leapfrogs over a problem that has confounded other considerations of post-Fordist transformations: the question of whether practices found in one firm or industry are relevant in another. By selling its product: temp workers, the THS industry *must export* a post-Fordist production practice: flexible workers. And as THS firms seek to open markets for themselves around the world, this process is occurring on a global level.

Pointing to Structural Change - "the nature of the times we're working in"

Managers and Owners of THS firms place the success of their industry in a broader economic context. They recognize that their firms have benefited from economic restructuring. Each manager that I talked to specifically mentioned downsizing as a factor in industry growth.

14%. Earnings for Kelly Services were also up 14% in 1996, and they reported a Dividend increase for the 25th consecutive year. Olsten reported increased revenues of 20% in 1996.

Now in the 90s everyone is downsizing and so you are finding that companies want to reduce their costs, the liabilities, and how they do that is they have staffers [temps] come in and so you see a rise in the request for staffers. ... I see growth for this company especially with so much downsizing going on. I think it is only going to grow. It is obviously cheaper for them to just bring in people when they need it rather than staff a full staff. [Interview with Maxine Dennis, Operations Manager, Transworld Services.]

Maxine Dennis is an operations manager for a regional THS firm that makes the majority of their placements in the “light industrial” sector. This is considered the bottom-end of the industry. “Less clean” is the way several managers described the light industrial area. These are typically warehouse jobs: sorting, packing, lifting, moving. In the following quote, a THS office manager for the higher-end Account Temps describes the same process for white-collar accountants:

A lot of companies have found a benefit from a monetary standpoint of strategically staffing their workforce and running lean. Maybe they had 7 people in accounting, but not really working to full capacity for four of those folks. So they downsized 4 people, but then they bring in four additional people during year-end, maybe month-end closing, quarterly closings and that type of thing. [Interview with Erin Graham, Branch Manager, Robert Half International Inc.]

In the above example, three people are now doing the work that seven people used to do, but not really. On the surface it seems that productivity has increased as fewer workers produce the same work schedules. However, since three people cannot consistently handle the workload, THS workers are brought in on a regular basis. In this example, the workforce expands and contracts on a monthly, quarterly and yearly cycle. “Strategic staffing” means the ability to expand and contract the workforce at shorter intervals. In the following quote, a VP from a large regional THS firm suggests that this practice

becomes regularized as customers and the industry have learned about each other and that it “works for both of us.”

I think it's the nature of the times that we're working in. Companies are downsizing. The customers have learned, and we as an industry have learned, that there is a market there for temporary labor that works for both of us. So they staff up during peak periods using temps and it works out for them in the long run. In the lab services it's not so much seasonal, but a lot of the lab services are related to the pharmaceutical business, they're working on testing, or whatever, on a new drug that's coming in. So, they hire people for that project. It has a beginning date and it has an end date. After that, there may be another project behind it, there might not be another job behind it. So they have the flexibility to allow them to get good people, qualified people for when they need them. Then if something is behind it, they keep them on board and they move them to another project. But if not, then they have no obligation to keep them on board. And sometimes it's good and bad. [Interview with John Logothetis, Vice President, People Providers, Inc. (Joule).]

Here, flexibility means that firms can get qualified people while they also avoid an “obligation to keep them on board.” In these three examples, we can see how THS firms help companies back out of the Fordist bargain. In the Fordist bargain, productivity increases were linked to wages, which creates a common economic interest between workers and owners. While THS workers may contribute to the productivity of a firm, they do not share in the returns on that productivity because they are not really employees of that firm. Meanwhile, for the permanent employees left after a downsizing, “productivity increases” may seem just like a speed-up. From warehousing to accounting to lab work, THS workers help managers break with a Fordist past.³³

³³ I discuss the relationship between the THS industry and post-Fordism in greater detail in chapter three.

Fordism was a three-way agreement between workers, management and the state. Welfare state policies helped to maintain a national level of consumption that was the corollary to Fordist manufacturing. THS workers challenge welfare state policies like unemployment insurance. By using THS workers in lieu of regular employees, firms avoid having to pay out on insurance claims. In the following quote, an office manager for a large multinational THS firm describes this process:

We're growing at a phenomenal rate. And there are a number of reasons. Corporate downsizing, because of what they have been through in recessions of the past, they [corporations] are afraid to hire permanent people because if they hire permanent people, and then run into a downsize situation in a recession, they would have to lay all these people off and incur unemployment. [Interview with John Dugget, Branch Manager, Olsten Services.]

THS firms are in the position to reduce unemployment claims by their workers because they just have to offer the worker another assignment. In the following comment, a VP from a large regional THS firm explains why THS firms do not incur significant unemployment costs.

All I have to do is offer you a job that is in the same neighborhood of pay rate and doing basically the same thing you were doing while you were working. If you decline, I can fight you on unemployment. You have to accept the job. [Interview with Bill Vega, Vice-President, CareerBlazers.]

The idea, of course, is to keep THS workers on assignment. Most THS workers are looking for steady employment and THS firms only make money if their workers are on assignment. The task is to try to match end dates with start dates and this can be difficult. For example, let's say you are working as a temp and you find out your job ends today.

You call your agency to tell them your current assignment is over and see if they can place you. They have something that starts on Monday, but today is only Wednesday. Since you are signed up at several agencies, you call another agency. They have something for tomorrow but it only lasts for a week. If you take the second job, you'll miss the start date of the first and will end up out of work again in one week. In addition to the general hassle this creates, THS workers may find themselves unemployed for short periods of time in between assignments as they juggle between job availability at multiple agencies. But these short periods can add up to significant bouts of unemployment. THS workers who are not working are considered "inactive," not necessarily "unemployed." This makes the process of claiming unemployment insurance more complicated, particularly if they are employed by several agencies simultaneously. Not only does the THS industry allow firms to let workers bear the brunt of downtime in the economy, but also, THS workers are less able to take advantage of the mechanisms developed under Fordism to ameliorate those costs, like unemployment insurance.

THS managers link industry growth to economic restructuring in the specific reference to downsizing in the quotes above. Owners and managers make sense of this restructuring in the broader context of international competition. In the following comment, an owner of a "mom and pop" THS firm suggests that US companies were able to employ a lot of people in the 60's because other countries had not "caught up" to America.

I think that what has happened in America is that many larger companies used to carry a lot of dead weight. And there was a lot of that going on because in my mind, because the world had not caught up to what America could do, this was in the 60s. What's happened, I think is that many, many companies have discovered

that they couldn't keep carrying this extra weight. All this downsizing that gets so much press has been long overdue. There are a lot of lives that get flipped around, but I think it will all end up for the better. Things happen in time. The industrial revolution, they thought that was going to be the end of the world too. All the jobs were going to go instead of jobs being created. I think that the idea of not carrying a lot of extra people, of using the contingent workforce started to make a lot of sense to a lot of people that had never thought of it before. And so that's one thing that's contributed to the rise [of the THS industry] in my opinion. [Interview with Hal Mamay, Owner, Pace Temporary Services.]

Mamay refers to an adjustment process that he feels is long overdue. While he admits that "lives get flipped around" he is optimistic about the outcome. He states that using a contingent workforce is a good response to global competition. Mamay also compares this use of contingent workers to the economic upheaval of the industrial revolution, which suggests a permanent and significant change. While THS managers tie industry growth to broader economic shifts like international competition and corporate downsizing, they also see the use of temp workers as a permanent change in corporate practices. Pamela McGinnity notes that "Most companies have a budget all fixed in now for temps, whereas before it used to not be that way." In the following three quotes, THS managers discuss this change:

Well it seems like the days when you're with a company twenty, thirty years and pretty much secure, those days seem to be over. And I think what will happen is that if it reaches a situation where the economy is booming again, I'll imagine it's pretty hard for a company if they are accustomed to using temps to then go back to taking on those added responsibilities. So I would imagine that they would just continue with the temp on a long-term basis. In which case, it just becomes a long-term indefinite position. Dennis

My feeling on it is that once they've taken this step and gone with the temps, they can see that they are becoming more profitable because they don't have all the burdens, they have less liability. They don't have to pay taxes, payroll, unemployment, worker's comp. It's all upside to using temporary staffing. Dugget

This industry is just growing and I don't see it slowing down any time in the next five years. The usage is increasing day by day. It's not going anywhere. It's been a steady growth and the clients that we are talking to are using temporary services as part of their business. It's like dialed into their corporate planning. Use of temporary services is actually in the business plan of many of these corporations. It is part of how they conduct business. They've allocated a certain budget for temporary services and they use it in that fashion. It is not fill-in. It's changed a lot. Logothetis

THS managers see the shift towards using temp workers as a permanent one. Companies have grown "accustomed" to using temps and now it is "part of how they conduct business." These comments already hint at the role THS firms have played in this permanent change. THS managers and owners want to say "it's not us, it's the structure." But structures change due to the actions of individuals. I argue that it is these individuals' actions that are changing the structure. THS firms have benefited from economic restructuring but they also promote economic restructuring by promoting the use of temporary workers through hard-nosed selling tactics and the further development of niches.

Promoting Structural Change – "all you have to do is sell it"

There were two career paths to the executive level identified by the people I spoke with. The first was to rise up through the ranks of the firm and the second was to have a sales background. Each interview emphasized the importance of selling and in several instances, the manager would revert to the sales pitch as part of an answer to a question:

My competition is educating the companies about the nature of this industry. That is my competition. We are taking on new sales people and there is more

business out there than you can imagine. We are planning to double in size again. I'm looking to get in just for five minutes, I'm not looking to sell you I'm looking to educate you. My turn will come up. It always does. I'm not looking to make a lot of promises, I'm looking to give you a quality product. [Interview with Bill Grober, Manager Temporary Division, Lorelei Personnel, Inc.]

THS managers are constantly selling. They are selling their workers, they are selling “this agency as a whole,” and they are selling the *idea* of temporary labor by “educating the companies about the nature of this industry.” Grober explains that his office does “several hundred cold calls a day if not more.” A “cold call” means an unsolicited sales pitch. Every owner or manager I interviewed reported that they relied on cold calls to get new accounts except one. Jim Hughes bought a temp division to add to his employment agency when the permanent placements fell off. He did not like selling and explained that he did not have the temperament for cold calling. He was the only one I talked to whose temp business was not booming. The industry relies heavily on its sales people to expand business:

The last service I worked for, that's all I did. I just made cold calls five hours a day. But it worked. We got orders. I couldn't believe it. [Interview with Pamela McGinnity, Manager, High Power Temps, Inc.]

We do cold calls. Cold calls. Cold calls. You have to call the customer. Then you call, you follow up with a little literature, you follow up with another call. After you've called several times, you might just develop something there. I have to talk to the companies to get business. Mamay

That's part of their [sales] responsibility. Go out on the road. Go into an industrial park and hit everybody in that park that might have the potential of using temp services. When we are interviewing these applicants, where did they work before? That's a sales lead. Logothetis

THS firms employ people to get on the phone or get on the road to sell temporary workers. Their success necessarily proliferates temporary work arrangements which contributes to the outcome of economic restructuring. As the following quote explains, success is just a matter of “hitting the numbers.”

And as with anything in sales, it is just hitting the numbers. Make enough cold calls, establish contacts, hit the right people, get in to see the right people. And you do that enough times and you're bound to hit a certain percentage. It's all in the presentation. Maybe they might not have thought about using temps before. Maybe you said something or phrased it and it clicks, you just click. It's the hustle. Dennis

The sales staff is always hustling for more sales. As the following quote demonstrates, it's the hustle that makes the job fun. For this manager, a job selling 80 hours a week is just not as exciting as a job selling 3000 hours a week. But what does make the dull job more enjoyable is the prospect of increasing those sales.

I worked for one service, we had four branches and we were very busy. And our branch broke the record. The owner said if we hit 3000 hours [in weekly sales] you get whatever you want. So we got sent to California for a day and went shopping. I left them and moved a little further away. The other job I got they were doing like 80 hours a week. I said, “you don't need me.” The sales rep said, “you are the fourth rep we've had and if you're leaving don't tell me because I don't think I can go through another customer sales rep.” Then we clicked and we kept getting more and more orders and it was exciting to see that because of our efforts. We kept increasing the hours a great deal and that's exciting. Because you know the only reason it happened is because of the work that you did. That's like Judy and I now. We've raised sales about 30% [in her current position]. McGinnity

Not only do branch offices offer incentives to increase sales, but also THS managers enjoy their jobs when they can accomplish this goal. This manager's desire to increase sales helps to make a fundamental transformation in labor practices. When THS owners

and managers get into their “sales talk,” it seems like selling temporary workers is like selling any other commodity. The next comment compares THS sales strategies to selling something as innocuous as a pencil.

Sales. It is sales in general. It's almost like selling a pencil. It may be different in every sale. I might ask, why do you want to buy a pencil? What do you use it for? What's important for you? Well what's important for me is that I want it to have incredible print quality. I want an erasure that doesn't leave residue. So after you tell me what your looking for, I'll be able to sell you the right pencil.
Dugget

But THS firms are not selling pencils. They are selling labor. Selling labor is not like selling a pencil because labor is one of the basic factors of production. Labor is also unique because it is contained within human beings. Changing the status of labor by “selling it” as temporary is much more significant than selling a pencil.

In addition to “hitting the numbers” on sales efforts, THS firms also promote structural change by developing new “niches” for temporary labor. This means selling THS workers in job categories where there were never temps before. In the following quote, a THS Office Manager describes this process.

Niches are where it's at and there are more and more niches that are going to open up using temps and all you have to do is sell it. Different people have been saying that you can just sell it to the company by saying, “you have never thought about using temps in this field, but you can” McGinnity

As a result, the temp industry is in “every facet of business now” because entrepreneurs in the industry saw the opportunity to sell temps into different niches.

You have to understand the temp industry. People think of temp industry and they think about secretaries. That's not the temp industry. Maybe that was the temp industry thirty years ago, but it's not anymore. The temp industry is in every facet of business now. You have to look at it as a whole. They are hiring temporary executives. Logothetis

[L.A.: What do you think influenced that change?]

People just saw opportunities and they sold it. Different entrepreneurs in this industry saw a niche that could be exploited and they sold it and they opened it up and then other people jumped on the bandwagon. Logothetis

The potential for long-term growth exists because the THS industry can "niche" into other areas. This means that temp workers can be introduced into new industries and new job categories. Moving into new niches, or divisions, is one way that THS firms pursue revenue.

We grew 45% last year. In 1992 we were a 250 million-dollar company now we are close to a 630 million-dollar company. So our growth has been phenomenal. Account Temps is definitely the engine behind the company as far revenue goes. But if you look at the potential of their newer divisions [new niches] and what investors are looking at with our company, that's really where the revenue is going to increase dramatically from those two new divisions. Graham

This strategy of developing new divisions further promotes structural change as the availability of temporary workers advances into nearly any sector. The terms for contracting labor have changed due to the selling activities of THS firms. In this way, they help to materialize structural change. On one hand, THS owners and managers believe that they are recipients of a process that is beyond their control and is not of their making. This comes out in their comments on downsizing. On the other hand, however,

THS owners and managers make their own success through dedicated and determined sales efforts.

Changing Attitudes - "Are we selling bodies here?"

THS managers identified a cultural shift with regard to the relationship between workers and employers. However, like the case with "economic restructuring," managers were unlikely to assign themselves a role in causing this shift.

The company man used to exist. It doesn't exist anymore. The company is loyal to you and you are loyal to the company and that type of thing. It's gone.
Graham

While this kind of work relationship was never available to all workers, it was a cultural myth that helped to define what a responsible worker should aspire to and what they might expect from a company in return if they were able to play by these rules. I asked this manager if she felt that tempworkers had contributed to the demise of the company man. Her answer was confusing. She wanted to say that the role of the temp industry was more "reactive" and not a "cause of it." Yet, she admits that the companies were reacting to a benefit that "we can provide them."

I think it's more reactive. So they reacted to a benefit that we can provide them. They found that maybe they did run a little too lean in their downsizing. Once the downsizing was done, they realized, "we need some help." We have huge downsizings and I think they found that their morale was dropping and as a result, their productivity was dropping. I think it was reactive, I don't think it was a cause of it. Graham

If companies are reacting to the services provided by THS firms, doesn't that suggest a more causal role for the THS industry? This is the same manager who explained how accounting departments can cut down to three people from seven and use temps to pick up the work of those downsized workers. Can we say that tempworkers help in the demise of the company man if firms know they can replace permanent employees with temps?

In the following comment, Hal Mamay, a THS owner places this shift of attitude towards workers within a broader political shift of attitude.

The idea of the large company being this family type thing has changed. And I don't think people are entitled for a job for life. But a lot of people thought that. I think that happened in society over the last hundred years or so. There has been this entitlement mentality growing and growing and growing. And I think it's kind of socialist. Now even the average person is getting the idea that, hey this thing doesn't work, there is a bubble down there that is going to burst. The numbers don't add. Mamay

Mamay's comment reflects the change in the boundary between public and private. The idea that the public company should support the private individual with a "job for life" has changed. The company is not a family anymore. Mamay sees this as part of a cultural shift away from an "entitlement mentality" which he believes is somewhat "socialist." He also sees this as an idea that the "average person" has come to accept. What causes this cultural shift? Mamay suggests that it is because "the numbers don't add." In the following comment, a THS manager emphasizes the role of economic competition within and outside the United States as a primary factor in the cultural shift away from the "paternal company."

The company man doesn't exist anymore. I don't know which came first, but I think competition is what spurred whatever it was. Competition within the US, competition from outside the United States. A few years ago all you heard about was about how great Japan was and how their economy was booming and so on. And Japan used temporary services to do a lot of their work. They would tell you about these employees that had these wonderful jobs, but they didn't tell you that underneath that they were using thousands and thousands of temporary employees. I think that the competition drove that. Big companies like IBM just couldn't keep this paternal operation going anymore. That whole shift changed. Everything has its cycle. Things work for a period of time, then they don't work and you have to do something different. Logothetis

By suggesting Japanese economic success relied on the use of “thousands and thousands” of temporary workers, Logothetis proposes that using tempworkers is an important element of economic success. The idea is that the “paternal” company had “its cycle,” but now it is over. Now companies have to do “something different,” like rely on THS workers.

THS firms further change the culture surrounding the relationship between worker and employer because when workers become products, they lose their place in the negotiating scheme. As I argue above, one way the THS industry restructures labor relations is by interjecting themselves into the employer-employee relationship, making it into a three-way relationship. As a consequence, THS workers are not able to negotiate their work arrangements on their own behalf. Meanwhile, THS managers aim to develop a committed and trusting relationship with their *clients*. The client relationship is of primary importance. As the following comment illustrates, this is necessary in order to compete.

I believe that we can beat the competition with our customer service. We do things that other companies don't do. Like where something is not right, where someone didn't go in, didn't do a good job, something happened. We find a lot of times we compensate the client in saying that "I really feel that wasn't fair to you. You were held up, we would not charge you for that day, or a half a day," ... whatever it is we need to do we do. That's what it's about, customer service. How do you treat your client? Because the client knows you're sincere and that's what you need to do. You need to develop that relationship with them of trust. [Interview with Pat Sahul, Owner, Cameo Temporary Services, Inc.]

All of the THS managers and owners echoed these sentiments. Some said, "We try to make a commitment." Others emphasized, "Our honesty and our integrity." Most of the managers and owners I talked with said that they follow a policy that if the client is not satisfied, they are not billed.

Even when THS managers want to act on behalf of the worker, the structure of the relationship may prevent the worker from gaining access to even basic information about job performance, as the following quote demonstrates. In this example, the THS firm negotiates tempworkers through a central office so that they do not talk directly to a tempworker's supervisor.

We have this one client, a big company, but we don't talk to the [temp worker's] supervisor. They'll call up and say, "we don't need so-and-so any more."

"Okay, why not?"

"I don't know. They didn't tell me."

"Well, is it because they didn't do a good job, or is it because they are just no longer needed?"

"I don't know." And we can't talk with the supervisors. It's not fair to the temporary employee. If they're not very good, I need to know that. But if they were let go of simply because lack of work, I want to know that too. I think this person deserves an explanation to some degree. I don't know. He just got fired, but we don't know why. And even a temporary worker, the hurt is still there when they're let go from an assignment that they've been told is for four weeks.
McGinnity

There is no obligation on the part of the client to offer even an explanation as to why they do not need a particular worker. In this case, due to the bureaucratic structure of the client, the THS agency is also cut off from this information. The THS industry has a dual interest in such information. On the one hand, McGinnity claims that the worker “deserves an explanation to some degree.” On the other hand, if the worker is “not very good” she needs to know so that she can assess whether or not to send him or her out in the future. The THS manager does have interests in representing the worker, but these are distinct from and sometimes in conflict with the interests of the worker.

The attitude that THS managers expressed toward their workers was somewhat contradictory. At the outset, the managers would describe their workers in laudatory terms. This is not surprising as their business is based on the quality of their workers. However, managers also complained about their workers’ “disappointing work ethic.” When THS workers do try to negotiate for better terms for themselves, they may be labeled as not having the right “mentality,” as the THS manager quoted below suggests.

And it is just amazing some people. They'll call us in. They'll call into us say every day, “have you got anything? Have you got anything?” Finally I have something for them, and its, “do you have anything closer? Do you have anything a little more?” So it is just a whole different mentality as to why people call out. And don't get me wrong there are a lot of people with very strong work ethics. And I can't get enough of those. But there is always a group of people who are going to try to get over. They want to do the least that they can and still get paid for it. Obviously people have car trouble on occasion, but your grandmother can only die so many times. Or there is just a whole slew of different reasons.
Dennis

By making reference to an obviously bogus “dead grandmother” excuse, Dennis questions her workers’ dedication. THS managers are understandably annoyed when their workers do not demonstrate a commitment to their jobs, but the issue of commitment is precisely what is at issue in this new work relationship. THS firms have to be committed to their *clients*, but this is exactly what they cannot offer to their workers.

The relationship between THS managers and their workers is also more complex. While THS managers complain about their workers, they also understand their often difficult circumstances. As one manager admitted, “If you are making \$7/hr how good can your car be?” THS managers may be willing to help their workers get to their jobs in order to preserve their own reputations as the following comment demonstrates.

One office manager here drove to a woman's house and gave her money for gas because the woman didn't have enough gas to get to the job. Sometimes you do all these funky things just to get a job filled. I am not calling this customer to say my temp can't make it. McGinnity

This manager does not want to call the customer to admit “my temp can’t make it” because to do so would be to lose face with her client. In addition to jeopardizing a paying account, salespeople are embarrassed if their promises of quality workers seem false. THS workers are always in a precarious position. THS managers are not immune to the uncertainty inherent to the industry. The manager in the following quote discusses giving up a sense of control.

I would say one of the biggest problems is dealing with the people in terms of their sense of responsibility representing us. You work really hard to get a client

and the one time you get an order they [the temps] don't show up. Giving up that sense of control that we would all like to have over our clients when you are a salesperson. There is a lot of uncertainty. Graham

This manager bemoans her workers' lack of "sense of responsibility representing us." She is expressing disappointment that her workers do not have a stronger identity with her THS firm so that they take their assignments more seriously. If THS workers were more strongly identified with the THS firm, then they would not embarrass the THS firm by not showing up for an assignment. In other words, Graham wishes her workers had that "company man" kind of identity so that they were more "responsible" representing her company. When her temps do not present that image, it starts to expose the cracks in the THS system: maybe THS workers are not "just as good" as their permanent counterparts.

Finding and retaining good workers was one of the most common challenges that THS owners and managers reported to me. THS firms must be out searching for new recruits on an on-going basis so that they have a large enough pool of workers to draw from. As one manager stated, "you always have to have 30 more [workers] than what you need." In the following comments, THS managers share some of their strategies for collecting potential temps.

Yes we do recruit. Through many ways. Mainly through referrals. Newspaper advertising. We have someone here right now who does nothing but recruiting. And he is recruiting people to fill specific jobs in specific companies. You have to always be doing that [recruiting]. Contacts. Networking. Unemployment. Doing students through colleges. Whatever way you can get the people. You have to be able to go out and get them. Sahul

Again, referrals are probably the best source of recruiting. Usually people don't refer people unless they're good because it becomes a personal thing. We do a lot of job fairs. We work with the unemployment services that are provided by the state. Classified advertising. We have a very extensive database, names of people who have applied to us over the years and we try to keep going through. Its not one thing, we try to do a lot of different things and you get a little results from each one. We see hundreds of people every week and it's an ongoing process. People finish up, people start. Its' a constant circle. Logothetis

The last two comments discuss various ways that THS firms "go out and get" workers. Yet, both these and many other comments report that referrals are the best source for getting good workers. Logothetis suggests that referrals are successful because "it becomes a personal thing." Referrals work because there is a personal connection between workers and this is typically what is lacking from the THS worker's experience. THS workers are disconnected from their co-workers on-site because they are "just temps." They are separated from their THS co-workers as they are sent out to different locations. In order to encourage referrals, many THS firms have a policy similar to the one described below.

You know if you have a good temp who is really dependable, usually they refer the same type of people. They know we give a referral bonus. So it encourages people to refer. But they have to work for eighty hours and they are not going to work if they are not good. McGinnity

In this example, a temporary employee will receive a bonus if the person s/he refers works for eighty hours. This adds a structural element to the relationship so that the first temp has an economic interest in making sure the friend that s/he referred gets to work on time. Having a personal connection with co-workers helps people feel more dedicated to their jobs. THS workers typically lack such a connection and this may contribute to the "disappointing work ethic" that all of the managers discussed.

In this chapter, I demonstrate how THS firms change economic practices for contracting labor and how they change attitudes about the work relationship. It is clear that THS firms change the structure of labor relations. The question then becomes are these changes indicative of “something bigger?” Is “this moment” in capitalism different in some fundamental way? In this chapter, I argue that THS firms help their clients break with a Fordist past. In the following chapter, I turn to the theories of Post-Fordism because they too are interested in this question of structural transformation. Have we moved onto a “post-Fordist” period? And is that why we see labor being reorganized this way? Is the rise of the THS industry a part of a post-Fordist future?

Chapter Three: Can Theories of Post-Fordism Explain the THS Industry?

In many ways, the "Tempworker" is a good candidate for post-Fordist analysis. The period of spectacular growth of the THS industry falls into the crisis period identified by post-Fordist theorists (Elam 1994). But more importantly, the Tempworker serves as an easy symbol for the renegeing of the Fordist bargain. Tempworkers help undo the assumptions of Fordism in several ways. First, Fordism was in part a bargain between workers and managers. This bargain traded control of the labor process to the managers in exchange for wages that were linked to productivity. Productivity growth was ensured through managerial commitment to research and development. THS firms help to change this strategy for increasing productivity. Instead of investing in new production processes, Tempworkers allow firms to increase productivity by reducing short-term labor costs.

The Fordist bargain also included a state willing to promote a national standard of consumption through welfare policy and labor law. Laws that regulate employers are meant to protect workers and ensure a standard of fairness. Tempworkers can disrupt such policies without directly challenging them because the legal employer is separated from the physical employer. Tempworkers can be dismissed from a job-assignment with

no explanation necessary. Legal recourse becomes very complicated as legal responsibility is sorted through multiple parties.

Finally, one of Fordism's lasting legacies is the social insight that mass production requires mass consumption. Workers need stable wages in order to consume mass produced goods. This promoted the kind of relationship between labor and capital that saw labor through dips in the business cycle. Again, Tempworkers challenge this relationship as they allow firms to easily shed workforces during a downswing.

Post-Fordist theorizing is an attempt to name what is different about capitalism in the last quarter of the twentieth century. While I do not believe that this period will turn all workers into Tempworkers (real or symbolic), I do believe that the labor practices developed by the temp industry represent some relevant principles for understanding how labor is being reorganized amidst globalization. In this chapter, I ask, can the theories of post-Fordism help us make sense of the ascent of the Tempworker?

What's at stake in the post-Fordist debate is the relevance of technology, markets, and social classes in assessing change in the political economy. These variables demarcate traditional lines of debate within the discourse of political economy. In reviews of the post-Fordist literature, the disparate approaches are frequently organized into three schools of thought: neo-Schumpeterian, neo-Smithian (or the flexible specialization school), and neo-Marxist (or the regulation school). The argument between flexible specialization (FS) and the regulation approach (RA) comes down to emphasizing the

relevance of the market or emphasizing the relevance of social classes in the evolution of capitalism. This is a classic opposition. Similarly, the neo-Schumpeterians argue that technology is the relevant predictor of change. Each school agrees that capitalism exhibits identifiable periods of growth and stability which are interrupted by periods of crisis and change. During growth periods, a stable regime emerges where techno-economic structures and socio-political institutions reinforce each other. In a crisis period, such a regime is absent. Each school identifies a crisis period which originated somewhere between 1968 (a period of social unrest in many parts of the world) and 1973 (the thickening of the oil crisis). The schools disagree about the causes of the crisis and the dynamics it presents.³⁴

Neo-Schumpeterians, like Christopher Freeman and Carlotta Perez (1988)³⁵ emphasize technical innovation for understanding structural shifts in the political economy. They build on Schumpeter's view that there are long waves of "creative destruction" which result in dramatic change in the technological base of the economy. Each wave (also referred to as a "Kondratiev") is characterized by a technological revolution which makes quantum leaps in industrial production. The first Kondratiev (the Industrial Revolution) was based on cotton and pig iron. The second, during the Victorian boon, was in coal and steam-powered engines. In the third, low-cost steel reworked industrial capacity in the 1880's and 1890s. After 1930, oil and petro-chemicals played the major role. And

³⁴(Williams, Cutler et al. 1987; Pollert 1988; Wood 1988; Sayer 1989; Boyer 1990; Hirst and Zeitlin 1991; Nielsen 1991; Webber 1991; Curry 1992; Gilbert, Burrows et al. 1992; Jessop 1992; Amin 1994; Elam 1994).

³⁵Other works include: (Freeman, Clark et al. 1982; Freeman 1983; Perez 1985; Perez 1986; Freeman and Soete 1987; Dosi, Freeman et al. 1988).

now, at the onset of the "fifth Kondratiev," microelectronics and information technologies have become the basis of a new "techno-economic paradigm." Perez advanced the concept of a "techno-economic paradigm" as a meta-paradigm that affects the entire economy with its dominant technological style and its own "common sense." Freeman defines a techno-economic paradigm as:

a cluster of interrelated technical, organisational and managerial innovations, whose advantages are to be found not only in a new range of products and systems, but most of all in the dynamics of the relative cost structure of all possible inputs to production (1988, p. 10).

Therefore, in the current "long wave," the relevant technological shift is from cheap inputs of energy to cheap inputs of information. To what degree does the THS industry rely on cheap inputs of information? Certainly, the THS industry has benefited significantly from advances in microelectronics. Their business practices are enhanced by the easy manipulation of information. Is the reorganization of labor by THS firms a part of the techno-economic paradigm described by the neo-Schumpeterians? I argue that the shift towards using THS workers requires a change in social relations, which is more fundamental than the change in technical processes.

The proliferation of Tempworkers is a process of casualization. The THS industry consolidates and streamlines this process of casualization, and therefore represents a formalization of casualization. They make formal workers into informal workers in a formal setting. This is the fundamental change in the THS reorganization of labor. This change requires a shift in the social relations of work, not a technical innovation.

I want to describe two work scenarios that depict "informal" and "formal" social relations of work. In the first scenario, a designated street corner meets the spatial requirements for a labor market. The street location is spread through word-of mouth. Early in the morning, casual day laborers congregate there. Soon, a van arrives. Someone gets out. This person announces what work needs to be performed; the rate of pay; and the number of workers required. Those interested are asked to step forward. Of these, a number is selected. They load into the van and drive off. They are delivered to a worksite they may never have seen before. A supervisor shows them what they are supposed to do. At the end of the day, they are paid. Tomorrow, the process starts over again. These are "informal" workers; their relationship with their employer is "casual." The worker does not expect anything from the employer beyond a day's wages. The employer assumes no responsibility for the worker beyond their daily exchange of payment for services rendered.

In the second scenario, a job listing is advertised in a public venue. Those seeking employment have the opportunity to read a job description before they apply. Several applicants are invited to visit the worksite. During this visit, the applicant will meet and talk extensively with at least one supervisor. The applicant may meet several supervisors and/or current employees. S/he may be shown details of the work environment and have the opportunity to ask questions. S/he may be asked to come back for a second visit to meet even more people. S/he is likely to have an opportunity to negotiate details in the work contract. If both parties agree, they enter into an employee-employer relationship.

The duration of this relationship is usually unspecified. This is a "formal" work arrangement. The employer has contracted the worker to join the formal labor force. Both parties must sign documents to testify to this relationship. Some of those documents must be registered with the State, others are used only for internal company purposes. The worker expects to come to the same job day after day. The employer assumes an on-going relationship with this worker which includes some responsibilities for the worker's health and welfare.

What is different about these two scenarios? The first difference regards the expectations of the parties involved. In a formal work relationship, the parties expect a commitment from each other. In the informal setting, there is no such expectation. The second difference is the security of the relationship. The worker enjoys much more security in a formal situation. The third difference concerns record keeping. In the informal scenario, there are few, if any, records of the worker. A recorded work history is not on file somewhere. In a formal work relationship, a work history accumulates for the worker in written form.

The following scenario was reported in Manpower, Inc.'s company newsletter, *On-Line*. It depicts a fairly common practice among THS firms. Workers can congregate at the THS office and wait there in case a client calls and wants a worker. In this way, the THS office functions very much like the street corner in the first scenario depicted above.

Every day, temps who are dressed to go to work train on Skillware at our Plymouth office, which is close to General Mills. They've previously trained on

basic word processing Skillware, so they already have the skills needed to work at General Mills. They use the time to train on Advanced Skillware. And if General Mills has a last minute need, they can be there in ten minutes. The staff is attentive to the comfort of their buying influence. May/June 94³⁶

This passage explains how Manpower can get workers to their clients very quickly. A client makes a call, ten minutes later an appropriately dressed and trained worker is at their door. Tomorrow, the process starts over again. Like the worker on the street corner, the THS worker contracts for work on a daily basis. They know that they cannot expect to work every day at the same location. As a result, their employment status is insecure. They share the expectations and security of informal workers. Yet, the THS worker has a "formal" relationship with the THS firm, who keeps records on each THS worker. Unlike the worker on the street corner, the THS worker depicted above must perform their work habits even though they have no job. They spend their time sitting at a computer solving word processing puzzles. They are functionally, "at work," except they are not paid unless the client has "a last minute need." The THS firm provides a formal setting for the informal work relationship. In so doing, they change the social relations of work so that a percentage of "formal" workers have the expectations and security of informal workers.

But what about technology, and the insights of the neo-Schumpeterian school? While I am stressing the social aspects here, I do not mean to suggest that technical innovations have no role to play. While THS workers have the expectations and security of informal workers, they have records like formal workers. The record-keeping methods of THS

³⁶Skillware is the name of the software Manpower has developed to test and train its THS workers. A "buying influence" is the individual at the client company who has the decision-making power to hire THS

firms have been enhanced by technical innovations in microelectronics. In other words, THS firms *do* make use of cheap inputs of information. Computerized databases play a significant role in the daily operations of THS firms. Each potential tempworker who signs up with a THS agency becomes a record in a database. These records contain information on personal characteristics and professional skills. These computer databases can aid in the quick retrieval of information that THS firms seek in order to meet their client's needs.

Furthermore, there are the psychological impacts of the technical innovations. If we say that the fifth Kondratiev represents its own "common sense," do THS workers represent that kind of common sense as applied to the organization of labor? So, even when they don't rely on the specific technology, they still represent a part of the meta "techno-economic paradigm" of the fifth Kondratiev?

If we take it more abstractly, emphasizing the philosophical side of a "techno-economic paradigm" we could ask to what degree do information technologies serve as a metaphor by which THS firms can reorganize labor? More specifically, information darts all over the world, shifting alliances and causing alliances to shift. Tempworkers represent that idea with regard to labor. Is this how the "common sense" of information technology would spread out to become a meta-paradigm? For example, you could say that a worker is like a piece of information. They are coded with their skills. A specific set of skills (knowledge of company specific software, for example), can be pooled and organized

workers.

and exchanged, and moved like records in a database (which they literally are). I don't think this metaphor really works, however, because with it, we lose sight of the fact that skills are always embodied in the worker. THS workers may dart around like cheap pieces of information, but they can never lose their flesh and blood quality. Any analysis of the industry must account for the embodied quality of the worker.

Like Schumpeter, the neo-Schumpeterians are likely targets for the charge of technological determinism. Freeman and Perez are aware of this charge, and they try to address it by arguing that the transition from one techno-economic paradigm to the next is likely to entail equally profound changes in the socio-institutional context. However, as Elam (1994) points out, it is always the (old) social and institutional responding to the (new) technical and economic. I am unsatisfied with relying on technology as an explanation of change. I think we need theories of change that can make better accounts for human agency. Technology is very significant, but it has to be put into action by humans. Furthermore, I believe an emphasis on technology causes us to miss the social processes that condition and define technology. Putting technology at the center of an explanation of change does not adequately explain the case of temporary labor. While microelectronics do enhance the THS industry's business practices, I argue that the growth of THS labor practices relies more fundamentally on a changed social relationship.

Flexible Specialization School:

The founders of the "flexible specialization" (FS) thesis seem to focus more on social relationships. American sociologists Michael Piore and Charles Sabel claim that at particular historical moments, societies face choices about the technologies they use to pursue economic development. By emphasizing historical and political factors in explaining these choices, Piore and Sabel reject a technological teleology. In their view,

competition pits one potential way of combining machines and skills against another; the way that succeeds--the technological breakthrough--does so because of the conditions of the moment--not because it is necessarily the one best way (1984, p. 38).

In their well-known book, *The Second Industrial Divide*, Piore and Sabel propose the metaphor of a branching tree in order to conceptualize their theory. A fork in the branch symbolizes an industrial divide, and a particular branch symbolizes the path of economic development chosen. This metaphor is significant because they want to suggest that there are many alternative paths to economic development imaginable. But this metaphor is somewhat at odds with the general framework they propose, which focuses on only two possibilities: mass production and flexible specialization.

By "mass production" Piore and Sabel mean a model of industrial development that uses "special-purpose (product-specific) machines and semiskilled workers to produce standardized goods" (1984, p. 4). Mass production takes advantage of economies of scale and encourages competition based on price and wage. The domination of mass production and the demise of craft production represents the first "industrial divide" which occurred in the early 19th century. Piore and Sabel detail the historical factors that

led up to this first divide. But such divides are more than the sum of their historical parts. They also represent new "technological paradigms" or "trajectories" that mark "the consolidation of new visions of efficient production" (1984, p. 44). Here, Piore and Sabel make an analogy with Thomas Kuhn's theory of scientific revolutions:

As with a revolutionary scientific theory, a new technological paradigm imposes order on the confusing practical activity of the preceding period; and in the process of distinguishing the relevant from the irrelevant in conflicting tendencies, the paradigm creates the preconditions for a new orthodoxy. (1984, p. 44).

While this orthodoxy promotes long periods of technological uniformity, these are punctuated with shorter periods of technological diversification. However, this uniformity is only overcome when market developments combine with changes in the "capacity to control nature" so that it is "economically feasible to disregard the sunk costs and technically feasible to strike out in new directions" (1984, p. 39). Piore and Sabel make the case that such new feasibilities have emerged and that these promote "flexible specialization." But, what are the factors that brought us to this "second industrial divide?"

Like other post-Fordists, Piore and Sabel start with the crisis story of the 1970's. According to them, the main cause of this crisis has to do with the saturation and fragmentation of markets. International Fordism leads to a glut of traditional consumer durables. Increasing diversity and sophistication of consumer tastes leads to market fragmentation. Efficiency gains resulting from mass production are only relevant when a market can accommodate them. "In Smith's phrase, the division of labor was therefore

limited by the extent of the market" (1984, p. 23). In other words, growth is a case of "expanding markets and dividing labor."

The flexible specialization thesis is based on an analysis of the manufacturing firms of the "Third Italy" and their responses to these market trends. According to Piore and Sabel, these firms follow a strategy of permanent innovation, as this is an effective way to respond to saturated and fragmented markets. These firms seek to accommodate change instead of trying to control it. Flexible specialization is a strategy "based on flexible--multi-use--equipment; skilled workers; and the creation, through politics, of an industrial community that restricts the forms of competition to those favoring innovation (1984, p. 17)."

This work on flexible specialization owes an intellectual debt to Piore's earlier work on industrial dualism (Berger and Piore 1980).³⁷ Piore argued that instability and uncertainty of market demand leads to industrial dualism. In a stable market, the division of labor will lead to lower production costs, economies of scale and monopolies. But, due to uncertain market conditions, the size of the industry will be larger than one monopolistic firm. This leads to industrial dualism as it is in this space that a competitive sector can exist simultaneously with the market sector. Piore and Sabel go from industrial dualism to flexible specialization through a simple inversion of dualist theory.

³⁷Dualism was a theory, popular in the 1970's, which sought a single explanation for observed dualisms in economic structure. For example, in industrial economies there was a division between a large monopoly sector and a small, competitive sector; and a stable, high-wage core workforce (predominantly white/male) and an unstable, low-wage periphery workforce (predominantly black/female). In developing economies the dualism was between a modern, organized formal sector and a traditional, informal sector.

As a result of the saturation and break-up of markets, the competitive and unstable sector becomes the norm. In other words mass production works when markets are consolidated, when this consolidation is threatened, firms need to devise new production strategies to be successful. Is THS labor one of these new production strategies? In some measure, yes, because temporary labor may help some firms to minimize their risk in an increasingly uncertain environment.

But how far can we take the FS thesis? Can it help to explain the ascendance of the THS industry? To what degree can we say that the increased use of flexible THS labor is a part of a broader shift towards flexible specialization? To be fair in this application, we should remember that FS is a theory based on manufacturing practices while the THS industry is a part of the service industry.³⁸ The "flexible" in flexible specialization stands for flexible machines. My case concerns flexible labor. However, while FS refers to machines, the notion of an "industrial divide" suggests much more than just the methods by which we make widgets. If the FS thesis signals a real industrial divide, we would *expect* to see it in the service industry, we would *expect* to see it reconfiguring how we organize labor.

The THS industry does indeed promote the flexibilization of labor. But it is not really the kind of flexibility that the FS school means. FS enthusiasts are interested in functional flexibility. "Functional flexibility" means that firms train workers to perform in a variety

³⁸This designation is also problematic. The THS industry provides a service to its clients, but its employees are sent out to various sectors. If a Tempworker is on the assembly line, is s/he a part of the "service industry?"

of tasks (see Williams 1993). Workers would be expected to know different applications of the same machine, (multi-use machinery) or use different machines, and be able to adjust to change quickly. Functional flexibility represents a reversal of the logic of assembly-line production, which divides minute production tasks and assigns them exclusively to particular workers.

THS workers themselves are functionally flexible. They are most likely to maintain consistent employment if they learn a variety of skills that can be applied in a number of work settings. But do they provide functional flexibility to the firm? Some firms may be able to take advantage of the multiple skills of a THS worker who knows numerous software packages, for example. But most firms use THS workers to gain numerical flexibility. Numerical flexibility is simply the ability to vary the size of a workforce. Expanding and contracting the workforce is one way to respond to a fluctuating market. However, obtaining numerical flexibility is not a part of the outcome predicted by the FS thesis. The FS school tends to be fairly optimistic regarding the current trends toward flexibility in capitalism. Piore and Sabel suggest that FS requires more communitarian institutions. Others have suggested that increased flexibility in manufacturing practices improves workers' lives. The logic is that workers with multiple skills are able to offer more to the firm and have a more satisfying work-life. This optimism is not really borne out in the THS case. By providing numerical flexibility to firms, the THS industry helps to make workers less secure.

If THS firms don't provide functional flexibility to firms, then what do they provide? Bill Vega, VP of the temp division at Career Blazers raises the issue of corporate restructuring. In the following discussion, Vega presents the practice of outsourcing³⁹ as akin to the vertical and horizontal disintegration of multinational corporations.

Multinationals ten years ago were in a lot of different businesses. They just bought companies and they were in so many businesses they didn't know where their primary focus was anymore. Much like what ATT is now going to do, they are going to split off their divisions. They are going to lose the unprofitable computer area. Hold on to what they mainly do - long distance. A lot of companies are doing that. They say, y'know what? My primary focus here is to practice law; not to deliver the mail, not to type up documents. I make the most money by being out there in front of the judge and jury. But I need someone to do those documents. I need someone to deliver my mail. So, I, as a vendor, would say, y'know what? Turn over your mailroom to me and what's important to you? That the mail be delivered on time? That the people who deliver it look professional, are courteous, show up everyday? And I will relieve you of that headache and I'll just charge you \$250,000 to run your mailroom every year. ... And we're still only on the tip of the iceberg. We have hired someone who is going to market outsourcing as a viable solution to a lot of problems. [Interview with Bill Vega, Vice-President, CareerBlazers.]

What is going on here? Vega says his company wants to market outsourcing as a solution to "a lot of problems." He wants to relieve the client of the "headache" of having to run their own mailroom. In the same breath, he talks about the independent actions of multinational firms towards fragmentation. The break-up of conglomerations is something that FS would predict. Is outsourcing your mailroom akin to this kind of break-up, a further division of labor? Or does it, in fact, reflect the logic of mass production? As Vega goes on to describe his mailroom example, it's not so clear:

³⁹Outsourcing is a process of turning internal company operations into external company operations. It is

The positions that are generally outsourced at this point in time are more of the productivity ended positions. You'll see a lot of it in light industrial where they might be working the assembly line. Something that is very measurable. But mailroom can be measurable too. There is a lot of down-time in the mailroom where your messengers may just be sitting there. Well, that costs money. You're paying benefits and all these other things and you have ten employees and a manager. If you turn to me, I can run that much more efficiently for you using temps and maybe putting one manager in there that works for Careerblazers that knows staffing. And we'll run that much more efficiently than a law firm. Vega

Vega tells us that the kind of outsourcing he describes is most common in an area that is "very measurable," like "the assembly line." So, we might not expect to find it in a law firm's mailroom, except that the "mailroom can be measurable too." How does the mailroom become more measurable? Vega goes on to explain how Career Blazers can be a better foreman by reducing down-time and paying workers less. So, what is outsourcing? Outsourcing is a type of disintegration, but it is also a speed-up. A "speed-up" is when workers work more for the same or less money. It seems to be what Vega is describing in his example of making the mailroom more measurable.⁴⁰ If outsourcing helps to make the mailroom more like an assembly line, then the opposition between mass production and flexible specialization does not work.

If there has been an "industrial divide," then the THS worker straddles it. On one hand, THS workers must be able to adjust to change quickly. This is consistent with the FS focus on constant innovation. THS workers who are successful move quickly from one task to another. And, by allowing rapid expansion and contraction of the workforce, THS

the practice of taking an area of your business and sending it "out" to be taken care of by another firm.

⁴⁰ Furthermore, THS workers experience another kind of speed-up. THS workers must constantly do the work of securing employment. They must search for available assignments, record relevant information,

workers may also help companies respond to the saturation and fragmentation of markets that Piore and Sabel suggest is the catalyst for the second industrial divide. On the other hand, THS workers provide numerical flexibility, not functional flexibility to most firms. Furthermore, THS workers may signal a speed-up within the framework of traditional manufacturing practices. If company functions are outsourced so that THS firms can reduce worker soldiering, we should question whether THS workers are a symbol of a new era or just the latest tool in the class war.

Regulation Approach (RA):

The regulation school within the post-Fordist debate considers much more seriously the role that class plays in the historical development and transformation of capitalism. Michel Aglietta (1979) is generally considered to be the founder of this school of thought. He writes that the study of capitalist regulation is

the study of the transformation of social relations as it creates new forms that are both economic and non-economic, that are organized in structures and themselves reproduce a determinant structure, the mode of production. As such, it will elucidate the general lesson of historical materialism: the development of the forces of production under the effect of the class struggle, and the transformation of the conditions of this struggle and the forms in which it is embodied under the effect of that development (1979, p. 16).

negotiate among possible conflicting assignments to get the best one and then start all over again. This adds to their overall workload.

Here, Aglietta identifies a process whereby the economic and non-economic elements of social relations become organized as structures which reproduce a mode of production. In this definition, we can see the similarities and the differences between RA and the other strands of post-Fordist thinking. Like the other schools, RA is interested in the process by which these structures are transformed. What is different is that Aglietta emphasizes the role of class struggle in this process. Later, he argues that the "[class] struggle gives rise to a rapid evolution of the labour process, thus creating new social relations" (1979, p. 111).

The essence of Fordism is the relation between production and consumption. According to regulationists, this is a working out of the class struggle. In between periods of crisis, a "pattern of development" emerges as a compromise between the different social classes. This is sometimes referred to as a "mode of development."⁴¹ In each period of compromise, a configuration of social relations creates forms and structures that regularizes the behavior of economic agents.⁴²

The wage relation figures prominently in theoretical formulations of the regulation school. Boyer's (1988) edited volume assesses the change in the wage relation in various

⁴¹The mode of development includes the concepts of accumulation regime, mode of regulation, and industrial paradigm. These terms are defined in the following footnote.

⁴² While different regulation theorists have developed a variety of terms to describe and analyze these relationships, (Jessop (1990) identifies seven different regulation schools,) the two most widely used concepts are the 'accumulation regime' and the 'mode of regulation.' The accumulation regime refers to the system of capital accumulation at the macro level. The mode of regulation refers to the whole institutional ensemble of laws, norms and habits which constitute social relationships in the economic realm. Other common terms include the 'industrial paradigm' (or labor process) which refers to the organization of labor within enterprises; 'mode of societalization,' used by some regulationists, refers to the extent to which productive and consumption patterns become "a way of life."

European countries in the 1980's. Jessop (1992) ends up saying that the best way to define Fordism is in terms of a core mode of regulation that minimally includes: a wage relation where wages are linked to productivity growth and inflation; and a state that plays a key role in managing demand and generalizing mass consumption norms. His method is linked to the concept of a mode of regulation, which is linked to the specification of the wage relation. Aglietta (1979) defines the wage relation, the commodification of labor-power as "*the fundamental relation of production.*"

This focus on the wage relation may be useful for thinking about the relationship between the THS industry and post-Fordism. The THS industry has transformed the wage relation for a portion of the workforce because it is organized as a profit-making entity which attaches itself as a third party to the employment relationship in an on-going fashion. Whenever a temp works for a client, the THS firm captures a percentage of the worker's *hourly wage* for the entire duration of the work contract. THS firms prefer a mark-up on the rate paid to the worker of 40%-60%, although sometimes these margins are shaved thinner by large multinational THS firms in order to capture market share. The following two comments from a Branch Manager for the Olsten THS firm demonstrates some of the debate behind THS strategies for profitability.

I'm looking at it as a regional, but above me they are looking at it as a global. They [corporate headquarters] go out and they secure an international contract that has very very small margins of profit. And sometimes there is no profit. You get into a deal that's not profitable. It's to gain market share; it might be for investors. Maybe there is a profit. But it's not profitable to those local branches, but it's profitable to the corporation. The way it's set up it's always profitable to the corporation. I am beholden to those contracts. They are international contracts and here's the markup. This is what you're going to make. This is the

profitability and that's it. And these are the prices to put in for certain positions. And guess what you're doing? Now you have to fill those orders. So, a lot of that transactional business that you were doing where you have high margins gets lost [interview with John Dugget, Branch Manager, Olsten Services].

This manager is concerned with the profitability of his branch office. "Transactional business" refers to small contracts, where the THS firm sends out maybe one or two temps to a client and charges a high mark-up on their hourly wage. The underlying debate apparent in this comment is a classic one between margin and volume. This branch manager would rather go for small contracts with a high margin, while corporate headquarters wants to pursue large international contracts -- small margin with high volume. Our manager does not want to be told what "prices to put in for certain positions." While the disagreement over margin vs. volume may be a familiar one, in the THS context, it also presents a new twist. "Prices" here refer to the hourly wages that the THS worker will earn that in turn, the branch will bill a client. In other words, THS corporate headquarters decide pay scales for workers in "certain positions" across a variety of locations. We can see how wages are being set by THS corporate headquarters on an international scale. Dugget discusses his position further:

But all these little transactional things, I make more profit on them and if I do it right and stay away from the warehouse, I could definitely be more profitable than I can be with a large contract where I am making very small amounts. Why waste your energy running around having 200 employees when you get 100 employees and be just as profitable? Then you don't have to hire as many people inside staff. What will happen is you'll see that either some of the services won't be filled and the higher-ups will go, "what the hell's going on? This national can't fill the positions!" They [corporate managers] are going to realize that when they have a person here, this secretary who I can make this high profit off of, the same secretary should I put out and make the smaller profit? Dugget

This comment demonstrates how the THS industry layers a second element of profit onto the wage relation. THS firms make money “off of” temporary workers by capturing a percentage of their wages. This branch manager wants to be able to capture a higher percentage of the wages of the workers he sends out. Why bother sending a secretary out for a small profit when you can make a larger profit off of her? The THS industry changes the wage relation because they make it into a three-way relationship. In the organization of THS labor, revenue is created through the mere circulation of workers. Productivity remains unchanged. As long as a THS firm keeps workers circulating, it makes money from the relationship.⁴³

These challenges to the wage relation may represent a break down of the “compromise” between workers and capitalists which constitutes the mode of development. Like the other strands of post-Fordist thinking, the regulation approach has some contributions to make to our understanding of the role that the THS industry plays in transforming the political economy. By focusing our attention on the wage relation, we can see how the industry is making changes. The *TempWorker* can be read as a symbol of class struggle, but the Regulation Approach is inadequate because it cannot account for the way gender figures in how the THS industry markets temporary labor. John Dugget’s hypothetical example is of a secretary, typically a female job. This is not a coincidence. Predominately female secretarial workers were among the first large category of workers

⁴³ Furthermore, the longer a particular employee stays on a single assignment, the larger is the percentage of profit for the THS firm. It takes a certain investment to get a particular person into a particular assignment in recruiting and processing costs. Obviously, this is part of what the THS mark-up pays for. Yet, after those costs have been recouped, the mark-up on the employee’s wages contains a higher percentage of profit for the THS firm.

to be reorganized by the THS industry. The fact that secretarial work, work that tends *not* to be cyclical, was the first big boon of the THS industry demonstrates the relevance of gender to this story. Any theoretical perspective that does not account for the role that gender plays is inadequate.

Chapter Four: How I met the 'Kelly Girl' commuting between public and private

Discourses on "flexibility" pervade debates on how to improve economic performance at the global level. Development specialists claim that "flexible" economies are more successful.⁴⁴ Geographers, political economists, and industrial sociologists are engaged in a debate over new, more "flexible" forms of capitalist production.⁴⁵ Management specialists and the popular press discuss the appearance of the flexible "temp" worker and the ascendance of the industry which organizes them.⁴⁶ In short, "flexibility" is all the rage. But how is the desire for flexibility in international economic discourses materialized into flexibility in the daily practices of firms and workers? In this chapter, I argue that flexibility is a gendered story. I argue that the success of the THS industry has relied in part on its ability to call forth familiar gender narratives associated with the public and private roles of women.

⁴⁴(See Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Secretariat 1986; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 1989; Elger and Smith 1994; Krishna and Thursby 1994; Killick 1995; Killick 1995; Knudsen 1996) For a review of the literature on flexibility and long term development (Syrquin 1995).

⁴⁵(Piore and Sabel 1984; Sayer 1986; Tolliday and Zeitlin 1987; Boyer 1988; Kenney and Florida 1988; Dore, Bounine-Cabalé et al. 1989; Garrahan and Stewart 1992; Storper and Scott 1992; Kenney and Florida 1993; Amin 1994; Harrison 1994; Raynolds 1994; Schoenberger 1994).

⁴⁶(Dohse, Jurgens et al. 1985; Granrose and Applebaum 1986; Tarling and International Working Party on Labour Market Segmentation 1987; Nye 1988; Sarfati and Kobrin 1988; Simonetti and Nykodym 1988; Wood 1989; Stewart, Garrahan et al. 1990; Lewis and Molloy 1991; Colclough and Tolbert 1992; Schellhardt 1992; Castro 1993; Morrow 1993; Williams 1993; Grantham and MacKinnon 1994; Edelman and Conference Board. 1996; Nollen and Axel 1996; Zuckerman 1997).

A 'gender narrative' is a story about what it means to be a woman and/or what it means to be a man.⁴⁷ 'Gender' refers to everyday understandings about 'femaleness' and 'maleness.' Gender is not static, it is actively produced through discourse (Scott 1988; Butler 1990). Gender is reproduced, challenged, and renegotiated in daily practices by institutions and individuals through the telling and retelling of gender narratives. These narratives can confirm or disrupt the store of expectations already associated with "appropriate" gendered behavior. Historically, women have been associated with the "private" sphere of the home. In the last three decades, more and more women have entered into the "public" sphere of work.⁴⁸ However, even though women have entered into the public sphere, this has not substantially diminished their responsibility for, nor their cultural association with the private sphere (Hochschild, 1989). Gender narratives for women now include the story of "the working woman," alongside that of "the homemaker." By referring to these roles *simultaneously* in the images that they produce about temp workers, the THS industry successfully markets the flexible worker.

All over the world, economic restructuring relies on gender. This is true whether changes are market-led (instituted and pursued by the actions of firms), or state-led (instituted and pursued through changes in state policy). In their critiques of Structural Adjustment Policies (SAP's) in industrializing nations, feminists have demonstrated both the negative

⁴⁷For some examples of how gender constructs international politics, see (Enloe 1989).

⁴⁸Historically, this public/private dichotomy has been true mostly for middle and upper class white women. Working class women and women of color have frequently worked outside of the home. However, this fact has tended not to disrupt the gender narrative which associates women with the care of the home.

effects of SAP's on marginalized populations⁴⁹ (women, poor men and children), and also how these policies rely on assumptions about gender for their success.⁵⁰ The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate how restructuring relies on gender in one of the wealthiest and most industrialized countries: the United States. In the US, multinational Temporary Help Service (THS) firms sell labor as temporary by referring to the multiple identities of women workers. Companies that are seeking to reduce operating costs in the face of economic pressures stemming from globalization can alter labor relations without seeming to challenge the breadwinner identity associated with male workers.⁵¹

As Bakker (1994) notes, although "the market" attempts to be a gender-neutral abstraction, women and men often have different experiences as producers or consumers in the market. Assuming its gender "neutrality" tends to ascribe a male bias because the typical actor is assumed to be the (rational, public) male in most market analysis. Bakker wants to make space for the notion that market allocations occur within a political structure and cultural context which may perpetuate the dominance and subordination typical to already existing social relations.⁵² In the case of the THS industry, market

⁴⁹For example, Pamela Sparr (1994) notes seventeen negative ramifications that SAP's have had on women and girls. These include a deterioration of working conditions, increased unemployment (even as more women seek income-generating activity), increased poverty, and an escalation of unpaid work.

⁵⁰See the edited volumes by Pamela Sparr (1994) and Isabella Bakker (1994) for feminist critiques of structural adjustment. I found the chapters by Elson and Brodie in Bakker (ed.) to be especially helpful. For the effects of SAP's on women and poor people see Vickers (1991), Beneria and Feldman eds. (1992), Dalla Costa and Dalla Costa eds. (1993), Sparr (1994), ch. 3-9, and Part II in Bakker (1994). For a related discussion on gender and restructuring see Elson and Pearson (1989), Ward (1990), Beneria and Stimpson (1987), Bakker (1996), Stichter and Parpart (1990). See also Peterson and Runyan (1993), Nash and Fernandez-Kelly (1983), Sen and Grown (1987), Elson (1995) and Mies (1998) for relevant points on gender and international political economy.

⁵¹ THS firms ultimately do challenge this identity as temp labor spreads into job categories traditionally associated with males and as more men become temps.

⁵²See also Marchand (1996), and Runyan (1996).

allocations for labor are reorganized by making specific reference to the cultural context of women's identities.

This process is visible in the images of temp workers produced by the industry. In this chapter, I analyze 943 print advertisements produced by THS firms. 80% of the ads which portray temporary workers show them as women (72% of actual THS workers are women). However, only 58% of these show women clearly in work roles. The remainder deploys familiar narratives of women's private roles such as sexual entertainer, classy girlfriend, nurturing mother or fairy tale princess. Many of these images are not only sexist, but also heterosexist as they are created with the male heterosexual gaze in mind. References to women's roles in the private sphere are used to sell the idea of temporary labor. Women workers, who have multiple identities, become a successful marketing tool for selling flexible labor. Power is the ability to tap into cultural scripts so common that they make something new and different feel old and comfortable. THS firms' authority to restructure work relationships comes from its ability to tap into these powerful cultural narratives about women's roles.

These images of THS workers are both gendered and raced. It is white women who are used as a marketing tool by the THS industry. Of all the advertisements which featured a solitary woman (and this was a very popular layout), there was only one whose race was not unquestionably white. Although the industry is made up of marginalized workers, its preference for white women makes it different from other feminized service occupations that we see around the globe such as domestics and sex workers. We know that

historically, white womanhood has been used as a trope to stabilize changes in economic practices. References to white womanhood help to stabilize uncertain times even as traditional definitions are challenged (Rose 1992). Even though blacks are more likely to be THS workers, the images produced by the THS industry to sell temporary labor are predominantly of whites.

In addition to referring to women's multiple roles in advertising images, THS executives explicitly raise the issue of women's multiple roles when they discuss temporary workers in published articles and books. They promote the idea that women want to be temps in order to combine work and childrearing. Writing in *Personnel Journal*, Max Messmer, the Chairman and CEO of Robert Half International states that temporary employees are "people from dual-professional households who want to gain more flexibility in parenting" (1990, p. 94). This assertion helps to justify the new labor arrangement. Writing in *Personnel Administrator*, Walter Macauley, President and CEO of Adia Services, Inc. makes a similar point by referencing changes in women's roles since the 1970s:

Since the early 1970s, an unprecedented number of highly educated and highly skilled women have been entering the work force. Two-career families have now become the norm. If a working woman is seeking an alternative to full-time employment because of her husband's relocation, child-rearing responsibilities or for any other reason, she will be in great demand – especially as a temporary (1986, p. 62).

Macauley proposes that even though "highly educated" and "highly skilled" women have entered the workforce, they must still negotiate between their own work and their

responsibilities toward husband and children. What's more surprising, however, is his claim that wanting flexibility will put them "in great demand – especially as a temporary." For most workers, the conditions of the workday have not become more flexible. Workers are still expected to be present in a specific place at a specific time and for a specific period. Even the simplest alteration, for example starting the workday earlier or later, is unlikely to be negotiable for temp workers in particular because their negotiating power at the work place has already been drastically reduced. When a temp is offered an assignment the 'specs' (hours, duration, wages, lunchtime) are *given*, not 'flexible.' While the era of the flexible worker is heralded in the business press, we must question how much 'flexibility' temp *workers* actually have.

However, in published texts, THS executives claim that temps not only have "flexibility," but also "power." William Lewis and Nancy Schuman, (1988) executives with the THS firm, Career Blazers tell us in *The Temp Worker's Handbook* that

As temp, you wield a considerable amount of power ... It is up to you to choose when you want to work and where. What you do with all your power and control is up to you (1988, p. 4).

But this appears to be a hollow claim. Most temps - female, secretarial workers - have very little control. It is true that if a temp is at the end of an assignment and does not need the money, then she or he may choose to decline the next assignment. However, most people need the money. Furthermore, declining an assignment may have negative ramifications in terms of being offered future assignments. The counselors at THS firms who are responsible for filling orders must do so as quickly as possible in order to remain

competitive. They are most likely to call someone for an assignment who is most likely to accept it immediately. Declining an assignment is one way to discourage a counselor from calling in the future. As Diane Thrailkill (1994) says in her advice book for temps, 'its a good idea to accept as many assignments as possible, to establish with the agency that they can count on you' (p. 46).

The assertion of the "mother-worker" who requires flexibility is a convenient one for advocates of THS labor. Not only does it justify the flexibilization of labor, but also it can alleviate concern about the lack of benefits for these workers. As management specialists Jack Simonetti and Nick Nykodym claim in *Personnel*: "For many people (housewives, for example), medical insurance is already provided by their husband's company" (1988, p. 38). In this comment, "people" are provided for by their "husbands," so their secondary status as workers should be of little concern. The construction of these myths was a crucial element for the widespread acceptance of THS workers in the 1980's.

The idea that workers seek out temp agencies so that they can combine work and family was not supported in my interviews. There seems to be a gap between the image of temps constructed by the top brass for national distribution and the view from the trenches. Every respondent reported that the majority of their temps would prefer a permanent position. The comment below illustrates that the biggest concern of THS workers is a regular paycheck.

Well obviously, they want to work something permanent. But in lieu of a permanent position, would be happy to work a long-term position. Or even if I'm 3 weeks here 4 weeks here as long as I continue working. As long as I'm getting a paycheck every week that's what their main concern is. [Interview with Maxine Dennis, Operations Manager, Transworld]

In contrast to the idea that “people” are covered by their “husbands,” the following comment demonstrates the importance of benefits to THS workers.

90% of our temporaries are looking for permanent work because they need benefits. I don't think this is something that they desire. It is something that they've had to do. It doesn't pay as well and I think if they had their ideal situation, they'd have a permanent job with a company where they were getting benefits. So that kind of goes against that theory [of wanting flexible time to be with family] because it is not flexible time at all. They are still working a nine to five. [Interview with Erin Graham, Branch Manager, Robert Half International]

The manager quoted below emphasizes the significance of a changing market place:

I can't say that people who apply to work for us are working primarily because of the flexibility and the flexibility that gives them with their outside family life or outside interests. I don't see that as a primary motivator. I see people applying to temporary services because the market place in general has changed. A lot of companies, big fortune 500 traditional employers are not employing the amounts of people they employed in the past. They are getting those services through a secondary source, that being us, a temporary staffing service. And people know that if they want to work for a particular company, they have to go through one of those services. I see more of that than, “I want to spend more time with my family, so I'll just work as a temporary employee.” I don't see that. I don't think you can do that and survive. [Interview with Bob Logothetis, Vice-President, People Providers, Inc.]

The business press may highlight the temporary CEO who has fun moving from project to project, or the temporary lawyer who can fit in more time with her kids (Kirkpatrick,

1988). However, these tend to be the exceptions. The majority of temp workers get assigned to relatively low skilled clerical or warehousing jobs and most report that they would prefer permanent employment (Parker 1994; Henson 1996).

An elision occurs in this discourse of flexibility. Flexibility does not mean that workers are more able to negotiate their work lives. In the US corporate context, “flexibility” refers to a process whereby some permanent workers are turned into temporary workers. Restructuring the labor market to include a sizable portion of temporary workers is simply another part of global economic change. “Flexibility” stands in for a more politicized debate on material wealth. At the international level, public expenditures are forfeited; at the domestic level, job security and health benefits are forfeited. But unlike Structural Adjustment Programs, the flexibilization of a segment of the workforce is not accomplished by national decree. Identities, attitudes, and practices must all shift in order for flexibilization to be successful.

The Gendered Narrative of Temp Workers

The images that I have analyzed are produced by individual firms and appear in the form of print advertisements in trade journals for Human Resources personnel. Advertisements are unique in that they represent a company's own version of how it would like to present itself and position its product (Ries and Trout 1981). Furthermore, as art historian, John Berger (Berger 1972) argues, in terms of its cultural significance, advertisements are as important to our time as oil paintings were in Renaissance Europe.

So, on the one hand we can read the narratives in advertisements as significant cultural productions in general, and on the other hand, we can see them as the *specific* production of an individual company that is hoping to use the message in the advertisement to increase its profits.

I have examined and categorized 943 advertisements that appeared in trade journals between 1980 and 1990. This number is all of the advertisements for THS firms which appeared in even-numbered years inclusive of 1980 and 1990 in three national journals: *Personnel Journal*, *Personnel Administrator*, and *Personnel*.⁵³

The Advertisements

Since I am primarily interested in the way temp workers themselves are portrayed, the first level of coding was meant to isolate the advertisements that clearly showed temporary workers. So, the 943 advertisements were coded into three categories: 1) ads which pictured temporary workers; 2) ads which pictured people who were not temporary workers; 3) ads which used text only and/or non-human images. The results are summarized in Table 4 below:

Table 4

Proportion of Advertisements Which Portray Temp Workers

	Total	Percentage
Temporary Workers	497	53%
Other People	171	18%
Text Only	275	29%
N=	943	

As you can see, a majority of the advertisements portrayed images of temporary workers.

The 'Other People' category is interesting partly because it is the category where men were most often featured. When not portraying temporary workers, THS advertisements frequently presented the 'swamped manager' that temps are supposed to help, or the owners of big THS firms. For example, one two-page ad pictured William Olsten (of Olsten Services) next to a picture of Malcolm Forbes. Forbes is quoted saying that American businesses are facing the "greatest changes and challenges since the industrial revolution." Olsten's picture tells us, "How temporary employment services will fit in" to these changes. The second page of the ad is all text. Here is an excerpt:

Today, we [temporary employment services] serve as a cost-effective management tool supplying something that business desperately needs. Flexibility. Too often, flexibility is the key thing our corporations lack. A curse of American business has been its top-heavy management, its layers, its inflexibility. That's all changing now ...

Olsten goes on to describe in more detail what temps can do and defines this as “flexibility.” He also asserts that “Temporary services are just as attractive to today's workers as it is to today's managers.” Olsten bases this claim on his further assertion that “many people don't want to get locked into a traditional work routine.” This advertisement perfectly reflects/informs the attitudes about THS workers that we saw above in the management literature and business press. Olsten advocates the strategic use of temps and defines this as flexibility, he sets up the opposition of flexibility to rigidity in American business, and he claims that workers also benefit. By picturing himself next to Malcolm Forbes, Olsten presents himself as a leader of American business. In the process of promoting his industry, he defines the problem facing the US economy, offers a solution, and hopes to shape the future.

In addition to company presidents, the “Other People” category often showed the “swamped manager” that the temp worker will relieve. In one advertisement we see two men fully attired in the regalia for fly-fishing. Standing mid-stream, one fisherman says, “I'm glad we could get together, Alan. This is your busy season, isn't it?” The text underneath them reads: “Since he started using Norrell, Alan Parker spends Saturdays fishing his favorite stream.” The text goes on to describe Alan's job as a busy sales manager. The fast-paced environment, unexpected overtime and stress of the office is quite at odds with the picture of the two men in their serene surroundings. The juxtaposition of the description of the stressful office with the image of the two men relaxing aims to lure (male) managers into using temporary workers. We are told that,

Alan knows his permanent staff can be counted on for the routine work, and that when the unexpected workflow begins, qualified help from Norrell is a phone call away. This work is done faster, at less strain on his star employees - so he keeps them longer. And Alan is able to relax.

The big pitch of the advertisement is Alan's relaxation amidst the busy reality of work. The implication is that (predominantly female) temporary workers will allow (male) managers to have more leisure time.

One last example from this category shows two managers, one older with graying hair and one much younger. They are sitting at the end of a long wooden conference table in an elegant, wood-paneled conference room. The older one says, "Your solution to the staffing problem sounds good. Now, how are you going to make it work?" In this scenario, the ambitious young manager can impress his superiors by pitching the use of temporary workers to solve the "staffing problem." The text which accompanies the photograph begins,

It's a hard fought path to the boardroom. A tough course only the smartest can negotiate. Those who finally make it do so by constantly examining all the sources and tools at their disposal. Discarding out-dated ideas. Discovering new ones.

In other words, the smartest, toughest young managers can make it to the boardroom by discovering the "new idea" of using temps strategically. The advertisement goes on describe how one can use temp workers in jobs that are boring and monotonous and therefore unattractive to permanent employees. This presents an interesting juxtaposition. On one hand, the language in the text quoted above is reminiscent of

physical struggle. The manager must face a “hard fought,” “tough course,” where only a few will “finally make it.” Yet, it is the temp worker who is given the hard job that nobody wants to do.

The “Other People” category is interesting because of the scenarios these advertisements depict. From the “big man” leader with his visions for the future, to the middle manager who would “rather be fishing,” to the ambitious young manager fighting to advance his career, these are all typical gender narratives about men at work. They serve to implicate the strategic and regular use of temporary employees with various constructions of male identity. Using temps becomes associated with “fighting hard,” with Saturday afternoon fishing, or is simply the advice given to you by one who is older and wiser.

Temporary Workers Portrayed in Advertisements

I next focused on the 497 advertisements which portrayed temporary workers. In order to further discuss the gender narratives at play in these advertisements, I coded them to identify how many portrayed temporary workers as women. They were coded based on the following criteria: 1) ads which pictured temporary workers as women; 2) ads which pictured temporary workers as men; 3) ads which pictured temporary workers as both women and men. The results are summarized in Table 5 below:

Table 5**Proportion of Advertisements Which Portray Temp Workers as Women**

	Total	Percentage
Temps as Women	398	80%
Temps as Men	25	5%
Temps as Both	74	15%
N =	497	

The vast majority of advertisements which show temporary workers portray them as women. This is not very surprising considering that the majority of temporary workers *are* women although more and more men are becoming temps. In NATSS 1994 survey of the temporary workforce (conducted by Lauer, Lalley & Associates, Inc., a Washington-based economic/market and public opinion research firm), the proportion of male temporary workers had increased to 28%, up from 20% five years earlier (NATSS, 1994).

Ads which did portray temps as men typically showed them working in traditionally male-dominated fields. For example, one ad hawking the "latest Kelly Breakthrough - a way to test light industrial temporaries" pictures two men operating machinery in a

factory setting.⁵⁴ Another ad which shows both men and women is for a THS firm which specializes in scientific temps and reads, “Our temps don't type!” The advertisements that used group photos to portray temporary workers show them as being more culturally diverse. The “our temps don't type” ad shows seven workers all in long white lab coats standing together in a group. A white male seems to be leading the group, as he is standing in the front and in the center of the photograph. The workers standing behind him include a black woman and a black man. Several other advertisements using a group photo to represent temporary workers included people from different races. There were no black men represented in ads that showed a single male.

There was one ad, however, that used a black male as one of two focal points. In this ad, Staff Builders is marketing its TRAINAD system where “trained, supervised teams of temporary personnel complete big jobs in record time.” The top of the page reads “BIG JOB HELP.” In the picture, two temporary workers, one white female and one black male face a seated white male manager. Both workers stare intently at the manager. The woman holds a chart and appears to be speaking. The man holds a notebook with a pen to the paper. He is ready to write down whatever the manager says. This portrayal reasserts gendered and racial markers of office hierarchy. The white woman and black man are helpers, who conveniently disappear when their help is no longer necessary.

Images of Women Portrayed as Temps

⁵⁴In 1995, NATSS reported that industrial temps made up about 30% of the industry as measured by

The final level of coding focuses on the 398 advertisements which portray female temp workers. Even though THS firms are interested in selling workers, not all of the ads place female temp workers clearly in that role. This is in direct contrast with the advertisements which portray male temp workers. Only slightly more than half show women in work roles and these make up the “working woman” category. There were two other major themes represented in these advertisements: the sexual woman, and the domestic woman.

My criteria for inclusion in the “working woman” category was that the woman must be shown wearing business clothes or be shown actually working. My criteria for inclusion in the “sexual woman” category is an image which emphasizes beauty, adornment, or sexual innuendo.⁵⁵ My criteria for inclusion in the “domestic woman” category is an image which emphasizes caring, enthusiasm for personal service, or calls forth impressions of a housewife. While I have created distinct categories in order to discuss the variety of images of women portrayed in the advertisements, these categories overlap to a great deal. In many cases multiple narratives are operating in the advertisements. There is often a fine line between the “working woman” and the “sexual woman.” I tended to err on the side of the working woman category.

There were other ads that seemed to defy categorization. Two THS firms conducted ad campaigns organized around “type-offs.” These ads typically pictured a group of women

Payroll (weighted averages using size class payroll weights) (Press Release, 9/22/95).

standing around applauding the winner who was sometimes holding a trophy. Several ads made an analogy to a horse race, with the finalists pictured at a racetrack, captions such as, “Win, Place & Show.” In one ad, a collage of images includes a jockey on a horse. Another type-off ad was more ambiguous. It highlights a photograph of a smiling woman with a ribbon pinned to her blouse under the large caption, “Would you settle for a runner-up?” These advertisements do not fit the working woman category because the women are not pictured working and they are not pictured in business clothes. They do not fit the sexual woman category either. Although the ad with the caption asking about a runner-up suggests a beauty pageant, it also presents an enlarged image of the ribbon which includes the words “typing contest,” and “2nd place,” and “125 WPM.” I categorized these advertisements in the domestic woman category because I thought that the “type-off” called forth images of a “bake-off.”

The results are summarized in Table 6 below:

Table 6

Representations of Women Temp Workers in Advertisements

	Total	Percentage

⁵⁵While it is true that many companies use sexualized images of women to sell their products, THS firms are unique in that they are actually trying to sell women workers. In fact, in more than one instance, the advertisements claim that the woman in the picture is an actual temp worker.

Working Woman	231	58%
Sexual Woman	127	32%
Domestic Woman	40	10%
N =	398	

The 'Working Woman' category is important, not only because the industry is trying to sell women workers, but also because it helps to resolve a quandary that the industry finds itself in. At times, the industry presents temp workers as housewives who are simply working for "pin" money. This image of temps is necessary in order to reduce anxiety about the lack of benefits and job security for a growing percentage of American workers. But at the same time, the industry must persuade its clients that the temp worker is competent and skilled enough to handle crucial company operations. Consequently, advertisements must portray women temp workers professionally. Furthermore, the industry must put forth a professional image to combat a popular stereotype of the flaky and irresponsible temp worker. As a temporary employee herself, Mendenhall (1993) indignantly points out the negative way temps are portrayed in movies and television shows. The working woman category attempts to dispel the image of the scatterbrained temp worker by portraying women as competent and trustworthy workers. Industry executives will even reference the women's movement for creating educated women who want to work. For example, one advertisement played on the feminist slogan, "never underestimate the power of women" by proclaiming, "Never

underestimate the women of Manpower” over a picture of an attractive woman assertively putting paper in a typewriter.

But even in the Working Woman category there are ambiguities. In the text of some ads, we are told that the temps are fresh and can make you feel good, “They sweep in like a fresh breeze,” states one ad. And another promises, “Her skills, experience and background just fit your needs. She keeps your business humming, your productivity up, your morale high. She makes your day.” Several ads place the temporary worker outdoors, walking toward the viewer with a big smile. She might be your lunch date.

While we may be unsurprised by the images of working women in the THS ads, it is surprising how many images are *not* of working women. Thirty-two percent fell into the “sexual woman” category.

One ad from this category screams “Screen Star” and features a dark-haired woman with a seductive smile and sultry eyes. The image is complicated by the presence of a computer, which our “star” is draped over. The text which describes her is full of sexual innuendo, she will “perform magnificently” and “command a repeat performance.” Also she knows the “way you like things done.” It’s the combination of the caption, the sultry woman and the text which qualifies this ad for the sexual woman category. The woman pictured in the advertisement calls forth a “woman as entertainer” narrative as the ad wants to tell the story of the sexy movie actress. The employee, (who we are told is an actual temporary worker) is in an ambiguous position. She is at once positioned within

the public sphere of work and the private sphere of sex and entertainment. It is this ambiguity which allows for the construction of a “flexible” class of workers.

Another series of ads emphasizes a sterling silver necklace designed by Tiffany. The idea is that Manpower awards its best temps with (not higher pay, but) a sterling silver necklace. We are told repeatedly in the text that the presence of the necklace, which brands the woman with the Manpower insignia, represents the woman's superiority as a worker. The suggestion is that you know our temps because they are the classy chicks with the Tiffany necklace; and that Manpower temporaries are the kind of women who deserve to wear expensive jewelry. The ads feature headshots of different women, all beautiful and looking somewhat coy. Most gaze up at the camera, head tilted. One poses with the necklace laying on her wrist and her hand on her neck. One caption claims, 'She'll spoil you for someone else.' Another asserts, 'Neckwear for the very talented.' Another simply states 'Sterling Lady.' The ads assert that the women are workers, but there is a disjuncture between what we see and what we are told. The image of the “sterling lady” is more consistent with the category “girlfriend” or “lover” than “worker.” Again, the women are situated ambiguously. And the reader is told suggestively, “You decide who will wear the silver necklace by Tiffany.”

There are many more examples like this. From the woman perched on the edge of a desk, skirt above the knee, a shadow of a tree in the background and the caption, “Great things happen under the talent tree,” to the Marilyn-esque woman with her finger to her

lips under the caption, “Western won’t tell ...” the theme of work seems to take a secondary role in these portrayals.

These ads in the domestic woman category typically portrayed the caring, nurturing woman. One example showed a woman with a very sympathetic look on her face. She looks excruciatingly forgiving. She is attractive, but not beautiful. The woman is leaning forward with her sleeves rolled up and she looks prepared and able to handle any mess. The text emphasizes caring:

The difference between temporary help companies isn't computers or training or procedures. It's people. Who care.

The text eschews things associated with the office in favor of a personal, caring approach. The image itself is practically devoid of any reference to an office environment. In the bottom left corner, the viewer can barely make out the corner of a typewriter. Again, the worker role is not clearly apparent in this image. Yet we are led to believe that the woman in the picture is an example of a 'temporary hero.'

Another ad features a glass slipper with the heading, “At Western, the perfect fit isn't just a fairy tale.” The image obviously refers to Cinderella, a woman famous for her beauty and charm, but not necessarily known for her professionalism or office skills. The text guarantees that finding your princess “isn't just a fantasy.”

The stories told in these images and texts about temporary workers are gender narratives pulled from both the public and private. The women in the advertisements are positioned ambiguously. They are not simple representations of working women occupying the public sphere of work. The images are more complicated as the narratives refer to women in private roles. This combination is necessary as THS firms seek to exploit the popular (and true) notion that workers are also spouses and parents. By referring to the private sphere, they can create the illusion that by offering flexibility to workers, they are helping them have private family time. Ironically, while the private domestic sphere is acknowledged by the public work sphere, the domestic is re-privatized in that the responsibilities for family life are placed firmly at the feet of the individual. For example, one of the benefits for client companies that THS firms consistently emphasize is that the company only pays for the time the worker is on site. If a worker must leave early to pick up a sick child or perform any other domestic task, the employer is freed from responsibility. Though the promise of (private) family life is offered to the worker through the discourse of flexibility, this promise is only a mirage. Not simply because flexibility itself is a mirage for the worker, but also because temporary workers are typically denied the elements of work life which make family time feasible and enjoyable, e.g., a family wage, medical benefits to care for dependents, vacation and holiday pay so the family can be together.

I have argued that the reformulation of labor as flexible in the United States has relied on the reproduction of familiar gender narratives. By referring to the public and private roles of women in the images that they produce about temporary workers, the THS

industry smoothes the disruptive process of structural adjustment. By creating images of the working woman alongside images of mother and girlfriend, the industry reduces anxiety about the contested status of its workers. If women can occupy work and non-work roles simultaneously, they suggest, then temp workers can too. The industry relies on gender to make new and tumultuous processes seem familiar and unalarming.

Whether market-led or state-led, structural adjustment relies on gender to smooth the unsettling process. In state-led structural adjustment programs, assumptions about gender palliate harsh policies: women are expected to “pick up the slack” when state expenditures shift away from social policies (Elson, 1994). In the market-led adjustment promulgated by the THS industry, gender narratives help to sell temp workers.

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Chapter Five: New labor practices and the logic of globalization

Globalization has changed the nature of territorial identity (Mlinar 1992). Globalization has altered the organization of time and space (Mittelman 1996). Globalization has reworked the familiar conceptual boundaries of international politics, like the distinction between “domestic” and “international” (Peterson 1992; Underhill 1994; Strange 1998). In this chapter I argue that new labor practices developed by the THS industry reconfigure labor within this logic of globalization. Part of the goal of this chapter is to demonstrate how global processes are mirrored at the firm level. In this way, I aim to show the similarities between global and local processes and to show how the “levels of analysis” are intimately connected.

In the last decades of the 20th century, workers, like citizens, have had their territorial identities challenged. As discussed in chapter two of this dissertation, the “company man” identity does not set the standard for relations between worker and employer anymore. THS workers challenge the territorial identity of the workplace because they are constantly shifting from one workplace to another and they are asked to identify with their legal employer (the THS agency) and their shifting physical employers simultaneously. Globalization requires the multiple positioning of subjects. As globalization makes the boundaries between states more permeable, new labor practices

developed by the THS industry make the boundaries between firms more permeable. A stable notion of “place” is less likely to root either the citizen or the worker.

Globalization alters experiences of time and space. New labor practices developed by the THS industry create what I call the “Disappearing/Reappearing Worker.” The disappearing/reappearing worker reconfigures time and space for contracting workers to join a particular workforce. THS firms make it possible to appear workers at a particular location with shorter and shorter lead times. They also make it possible to disappear those workers with virtually no notice. Workers cross spaces rapidly, joining and leaving particular workplaces in quick succession. They are here today, gone tomorrow.

Globalization challenges familiar conceptual boundaries. As I have already argued, practices developed by THS firms collapse the distinction between formal and casual labor. THS workers call this dichotomous construction into question. As I demonstrate in this chapter, THS firm practices develop new paradoxes for labor. THS workers are standardized by firm practices at the same time that THS firms hope to specify their workers to fit the needs of particular clients. Furthermore, globalization is simultaneously an integrating and disintegrating process. THS firms must consolidate a contingent workforce in order to meet the demands of their clients at the same time, however, they fragment their workers lives.

In this chapter, I analyze the internal company newsletter, *On-Line*, from Manpower, Inc., the largest THS company in the world. As the global leader, Manpower sets a

standard for the industry. These newsletters proved to be an excellent source of information regarding company practices. The main purpose of the newsletter is to promote successful business strategies across Manpower's vast network of THS firms. Therefore, the articles often provided great detail about how a particular branch office functions with extensive interviews with staff members on their business practices and sales strategies. The 22 newsletters covered the time period from November/December 1991 to July/August 1995 and described the practices of 236 different Manpower offices and 199 different customer accounts.

An analysis of the newsletters led me to focus on the issues of sales, service, and quality. Identifying that THS firms are primarily concerned with sales, service and quality is not particularly unique or surprising. What is surprising is how these daily practices of THS firms are linked to broader outcomes which reconfigure labor within the reorganizational patterns of globalization.

Sales: turning permanent jobs into temporary jobs

Everything derives from sales. Sales strategies link up with service and quality because these become major selling points. In a competitive environment, THS firms offer more services in order to distinguish themselves from their competitors. They must also provide a quality product in order to satisfy their clients and maintain their accounts. The three practices are interrelated, but driven by the focus on sales. Newsletter articles distinguish four strategies for increasing sales: 1) expanding an existing account, 2)

expanding into new geographical regions, 3) expanding into new companies, 4) expanding into new job categories.

THS firms frequently see new opportunities for using temps in companies that they already service. For example, in the passage below, a branch office describes how they convinced a client who used temps in one area of their business to use them in another.

It took some time to persuade Brookshire Brothers to consider using Manpower in the warehouse. Brookshire Brothers used our temps in their office and was very impressed with them. But for a long time, they just weren't interested in using an outside firm to help staff their warehouse. I kept running into the warehouse manager at various business functions. Every time we met, I just took the opportunity to explain the benefits of using Manpower. Mar/Apr 95

Eventually, this branch was successful in convincing the warehouse manager to use temporary workers. Any foot in the door is an opportunity to sell more temps. For example, when Manpower staffed a special warehouse project for Nissan, they report that, "Our new goal is to give them an office demo" (Jul/Aug 92). When they finally get the opportunity to provide some data entry people to Jostens, a company that had told them "no" since 1967, they use the opportunity to sell them on the idea of production temps (May/Jun 94).

Overcoming obstacles to a sale is a significant theme in the newsletters. Numerous articles reported how conducting seminars, organizing events, and networking with the press provide wonderful opportunities to further sell temp workers. The excerpt below describes how one office overcame obstacles that had prevented its technical manager

from gaining an audience to sell technical temps. It also displays the tendency that THS firms have to view all situations as a potential opportunity for a sale. In this case, follow-up on a seminar (delivering the attendee's certificates of accomplishment) gets the technical manager in the door:

Two buying influences came to a recent seminar. They already used our office and light industrial temps. We knew they had technical staffing needs, but our technical services manager couldn't get an appointment. I asked if I could bring her along when I delivered their certificate of accomplishment and they agreed. Norma was able to uncover Monarch's technical needs as well as additional light industrial needs. Jan/Feb 94

This client obviously has a permanent staff of technical workers. The THS firm hopes to make a percentage of that staff into temps. The THS firm "knew" that the client had "needs" for technical temps even if the clients themselves did not know it. The technical manager from the THS firm was able to "uncover" those needs. If the sales staff can get in the door to see the buying influence (the person who makes the decision about purchasing temp labor), then they can explain how to use more temps and influence the decision to buy them. Like with most products, the sales process is designed to create needs. Unlike most products, this sales process turns permanent workers into temporary ones.

Newsletter articles highlight the importance of educating the prospect. As the passage below demonstrates, even companies that are not interested in temporary labor can be persuaded through an education process that includes an explanation of the THS firms' training and testing. By emphasizing their training and testing programs as selling points,

the agency finally gets a few orders. By seeking to offer more and more services to the client, the THS firm hopes to expand the account. The goal for the THS firm here is to make themselves "indispensable."

They told us they did not use temporary help anywhere and were not interested. We persisted. We educated them on how temporary help can supplement their permanent work force and what type of training and testing Manpower provides. We finally got a few orders for office as well as manufacturing positions. We showed them how and why creative temporary help would work. The contract has grown to more than 100 temporary employees per day on average, or about to 1/4 of Uarco's workforce at times. We work hard to make ourselves indispensable to our customers. Every year we look to offer them more innovative and cost effective ways to use our services. Nov/Dec 91

This story opens with an unwilling prospect. Persistence finally pays off with a few orders. Through continued education on the "creative" use of temporary workers, the THS firm is able to grow the account so that *one-quarter of the client's workforce is now temporary labor*, even though the client was initially disinclined towards using temps. Salespeople from THS firms play a significant role in the transformation of labor practices. Reluctant companies must be educated in order to understand their need for temporary labor. The THS firm persuades and sells as a part of this education process, and as the following comment illustrates, this process is "never finished."

Gradually, customers were ready to listen to me explain how good temporary help can be. That education process continues today, because we still run across companies that don't know what temporary help can do. But even when companies know us well, the education process is never finished. There's always new training, testing or staffing strategies to introduce. Sept/Oct 93

Popular accounts of the growth of the THS industry have suggested that companies require temps to be competitive (cite). But if clients must be persuaded through

systematic selling strategies to use temps, that explanation is called into question. Structural explanations can help to identify the source of a crisis, but not why one solution is chosen over another. As I argue in chapter two, structures change due to the actions of individuals. The sales staff seems to be a dedicated group of individuals as the following passage demonstrates.

In the passage below, branch owners describe their strategy for pursuing new accounts in small towns. They realize they have to “become part of the community” and “build trust” if they are successfully going to sell the “whole concept of temporary help.” In order to accomplish this, these owners move their residence for the bulk of the workweek.

‘In smaller markets, you can’t just open your doors for business and that’s it. You have to become part of the community. People want to see you in the grocery store a few times before they’ll trust you.’ To become part of Clarksburg, Loren and Diane lived there Monday through Thursday, returning to the Charleston office on Friday. ‘Building business in Clarksburg meant knocking on a lot of doors. It took time. We had to sell not only Manpower but the whole concept of temporary help. We’ve been told we work Level Threes [smaller companies] like nobody else. We have to. Our area doesn’t have the concentration of Level One and Level Two customers that other areas have.’ May/June 92

Here we see the geographical spread of temporary labor into small towns. While the spread of temporary labor is not restricted to large companies in big cities, selling temps in small towns requires particular measures. In order to build the trust of the community, these THS owners had to be seen “in the grocery store.” This shows the sophistication and the dedication of the sales staff.

The passage above and the passage below both describe the process of expanding temporary help into small towns. These reports are both from the early nineties, a time when the THS industry was already well established. Nevertheless, there are still some communities "not accustomed" to using temps. The branch office described below sees their "number-one mission" as reaching such enclaves.

Employers in smaller communities are not accustomed to using temporary help. Our number-one mission is to establish relationships, educate prospects and provide exceptional service. Nov/Dec 91

We can see by the passages quoted above that the THS industry makes a concerted effort to expand the use of temporary workers into all kinds of communities. In fact, in one article, a branch office excitedly reports that soon there will be temps "north of the North Pole."

Soon Manpower will even have customers north of the North Pole. In August one of the world's largest mines will open north of the town of North Pole. They've already committed to using our technical workers. Jul/Aug 94

As this passage illustrates, Manpower works to get commitments from companies to use temps before their operations are even in place. Several offices described in the newsletters discuss how they track down companies that are moving into town, or opening new facilities and try to convince them to use temporary labor. For example, in the following segment, a THS salesperson visits a job site which is not yet in operation in order to sell temporary labor to the company that has been contracted to staff a

warehouse. She happens upon a person not from the contracting firm, but from the warehouse owner and manages to steal the account:

Vickie followed up on a story that AMR would be contracting with Lear to operate a warehouse. She visited the site to prospect with AMR, but chanced upon a person from Lear. She adeptly conveyed Manpower's ability to serve the facility. He saw a better arrangement, changed his mind about AMR and contracted with Manpower. The initial order was for 21 people. Mar/Apr 92

The manager's original goal was to sell temps to AMR, the contracting firm. In this way, a portion of the warehouse workers would have been temporary. However, given a happenstance opportunity, the manager was able to sell the temp concept to the warehouse owner. Consequently, the overwhelming majority (if not all) of warehouse workers will now be temps. The THS office described below pursues a similar strategy.

I found out where they were leasing space until their new building was complete, and started stopping by each week to see who I could meet. The first department to move in was a marketing department, and we secured their order for a secretary. That order was just the first step. When the new building was complete, the building operations manager was the first person to move in. We got his order for a secretary right away. As new departments moved in, I made a point of stopping in at MetLife three or four times a week. I wanted everyone to know my face and know that Manpower was ready to meet their needs. I was there so often that I got to know the security people very well and when they saw me coming, they'd just wave me in. Jul/Aug 95

These excerpts describe the geographical spread of temp labor, both into new regions, like small towns and into new companies, or companies that had not used temps before. Yet this is not the only source of expansion that THS firms see for their services. I have shown how THS firms seek to expand the use of temp labor geographically and within their existing client base. Strategies for expanding the use of temps do not stop here. THS firms aim to expand temp labor into whole new job categories:

When Home Office [Manpower's Corporate Headquarters] introduced retail lockbox training I realized that I'd never actually seen that job done in the banks we called on. I asked about it at a bank we serviced and they referred me to an entirely different unmarked building where their Operations Center was located. The Proof Supervisor was impressed that Manpower understood banking operations and that we could develop industry specific training. She believed that we were serious about taking proactive steps to try to meet their needs. We had a temporary staffing solution to offer and we started servicing them. Sept/Oct 94

Thus, THS industry opens up new job categories where it can place temporary labor. The Corporate office developed a way to train temps in a specific procedure and the branch office ferreted out where the operation of this procedure was located. While the Proof Supervisor may have been impressed with Manpower's understanding of banking operations, it is just assumed that using temps to perform these operations is a preferable situation.

Service: reconfiguring time and space

Providing excellent service is a big issue for THS firms. It was frequently mentioned in both the newsletters and interviews as the best way to distinguish a firm from its competitors. But what does this mean in the day to day? How do THS firms provide better service to their customers? One of the first elements has been the temporal expansion of THS service. The following passage shows how having constant access to temporary workers who can be dispatched immediately becomes linked to the promise of superior service.

We got [the client's] attention with our ability to offer service seven days a week, 24 hours a day. We told Gary that we all wear pagers and invited him to call us any time, and he did. He called our Wichita manager on a Saturday afternoon to ask for two temps for the second shift. She filled the order immediately. It was clearly a test, and one that we passed with flying colors. Nov/Dec 94

As this passage demonstrates, "service" comes to represent a temporal expansion as THS firms promote the idea that a client can have the option of requesting temporary workers at any time of the day or night. Superior service means constant access to temps. When the managers are less willing to be on call themselves, they devise other methods to provide constant access. For example, this branch office came up with this special system:

To better serve customers who operate 24 hours a day, and use Manpower temps on all shifts, the New Orleans team developed a special system. They trained an in house temp who works out of her home to handle customer requests from 5 p.m. to 8 am and on weekends. She has complete information on our temps and so when customers need additional help, she can make the assignments. Jul/Aug 92

Yet, in addition to this temporal expansion, there is also a temporal compression. The test of the service guarantee is not only to provide workers at any time, for example, "a Saturday afternoon." but also to get them to a particular location immediately, e.g. "for [today's] second shift." This represents a temporal compression as workers are expected to be on site with very little notice. The shorter the lead-time necessary for producing a worker on-site, the better. For example, in the following passage, a branch describes how it can get workers at a particular job site in just ten minutes.

Every day, temps who are dressed to go to work train on Skillware at our Plymouth office, which is close to General Mills. They've previously trained on basic word processing Skillware, so they already have the skills needed to work at General Mills. They use the time to train on Advanced Skillware. And if General Mills has a last minute need, they can be there in ten minutes. The staff is attentive to the comfort of their buying influence. May/Jun 94

Workers must perform their work habits even though they have no job. They get dressed for work and they spend their time sitting at a computer solving word processing puzzles. They are functionally, "at work," except they are not paid unless the client has "a last minute need." In that case, the worker can be there in ten minutes. This temporal compression comes from a changed social relationship, not from a technological advance.

It used to take a certain amount of time to hire workers. Traditionally, an employee-employer relationship was established at a time prior to the time when the work commenced. One of the implications of the rise of the THS industry is that the industry has organized a new social relationship which takes this step out of the employment process. One of the consequences of this changed social relationship is that the worker is unable to negotiate any aspects of the work relationship. Since they are denied access to the employer (i.e. they are not even employees of the company where they work), they have few opportunities to influence the conditions of work.

The race to offer better service results in a temporal and spatial compression as workers move quickly between job locations. The THS firm greatly reduces the time necessary to expand and contract a company's labor force. Consequently, workers move through space differently, they move from firm to firm without negotiating with any firm except the temp agency. The client company's relationship with the THS firm eliminates the

time-consuming process of contracting with individuals to join the labor force. As they move in and out of jobs, workers cross spaces rapidly. Not only does this increase the fragmentation that certain workers experience, it also creates what I call the disappearing/reappearing worker.

The disappearing/reappearing worker emerges from the THS emphasis on service. As the following quote from a manager at a regional THS firm illustrates, customer service gets defined as a disappearing act. If the worker is not satisfactory the THS firm can make them disappear (faster and for free).

I speak to the clients in the language that they can understand. You must explain yourself to them. For example, we do enforce a four-hour guarantee. If someone is there and its not a match and they are not getting the work done, we will pay the applicant for their time and we will not bill the client. That is a four-hour guarantee we enforce. Bill

The commitment to the employee is reduced to four hours. Any temp worker who goes out on assignment understands that they may be working for only four hours, even if they have been told that the assignment is much longer. The other interesting thing about this quote is the use of the term "applicant." This manager is discussing a temp employee that has already been sent on assignment. Being sent on assignment is the point at which one becomes an employee of the THS firm. Yet, if it is "not a match," the employee's status is immediately reduced to "applicant." The worker's identity is constantly in flux. The applicant/worker, or worker/non-worker identity is in constant interaction and this reduces the time between identity shifts.

The corollary to the disappearing worker is the reappearing worker - the promise that we can make a worker appear faster than any other company. The same manager quoted above continues:

The biggest complaint I hear from clients is a response time. We have a thirty minute response time which means if you give me a job order to fill, if you are requesting a lab tech, we will call you back within 30 minutes or 45 minutes and tell you we're still working on it, or here's the name of the person and the bill rate is that communication level is what your clients are looking for. Bill

The "communication level" that "clients are looking for" is concerned with how quickly the agency can "appear" a worker. THS firms have to disappear and reappear workers on a quicker and quicker basis in order to compete with each other.

So far I have highlighted the temporal implications of the service guarantee and the way this influences the relationship between time and space. There is an additional element to the spatial changes. THS firms sell on-site operations to their clients on the basis that they will be able to provide better service if they come on-site at the client location. With an on-site arrangement, the THS firm conducts some of its operations at the client location. On-site operations can include recruiting, orientation, checking in workers, and providing other labor management tasks. Providing these services becomes the selling point in proposing on-site service. The result is a spatial incursion by the THS firm at the client's location. The following excerpt describes some of the services that the THS firm can provide if it comes on-site.

Bob proposed on site service and sold our buying influences on the benefits. We'll be able to provide more services, such as orientation and drug testing.
Sept/Oct 93

As THS firms start to assume more responsibilities at the client location, they also start to blur the boundaries between firms. The THS firm functions as though it is part of the organization, for example, by providing services such as orientation and drug testing (to their temps). Yet they are not a part of the organization. Temp workers themselves blur the boundary because they work at a particular jobsite alongside the employees of that company, yet they are not the employees of that company. When the THS firm sets up on-site, this boundary is blurred further. As the next passage illustrates, arranging a vendor-on-premises relationship may take an "enormous adjustment" on behalf of the client company. This adjustment is necessary as the company must make its facilities available to non-employees. The passage also lists further responsibilities that an on-site coordinator can assume.

Today, Manpower has an on-site coordinator at the customer. This was another enormous adjustment, because for many years, their facilities were only for their employees. But then they saw all the responsibilities from benefits administration to performance reviews that our coordinator could handle for them. Mar/Apr 95

This passage illustrates how the spatial expansion of THS service can lead to formerly distinct boundaries becoming blurred. In some recent past this company's "facilities were only for their employees." Such an arrangement marked a firm boundary between different sets of workers. This arrangement has now changed. The worksite is a setting for employees with varying affiliations and so the boundary between firms becomes more readily permeable. And it is not just that temp workers are the employees of a different

firm. Temporary workers circulate among a host of worksites. This is the nature of the job. Therefore a THS employee who is working at a particular client location may have been at a different work site the day before. As such, competing firms in a common locality may actually share a portion of their workforce. This also raises questions not only about the boundaries between firms, but also about the identification process of the worker. Can the THS firm expect a worker to identify simultaneously with the products and processes of competing customers?

The blurring of boundaries creates new problems of identity and security, which the on-site coordinator can then address as part of the sales pitch. By coming on site, the THS firm can monitor its percentage of the workforce closely. In this way, "threats to security" of the work site can be minimized. This passage shows how the on-site coordinator can help maintain the security of the facility.

I told Chad that our on-site coordinator could distribute and collect timecards. To keep security tight, we could provide reports showing which temps were on the job each day and create temp worker ID badges. Sept/Oct 93

Providing identification for temps is a frequent topic in the newsletter articles. It is usually connected to discussions of on-site relationships. However, it is ironic that the sales pitch to come on-site, the focus is on mitigating against the blurred boundaries that the THS/client relationship creates in the first place.

New global processes have the effect of reducing territorial identities. This process is mirrored at the firm level. THS practices which have reorganized labor also reduce

territorial identity. Worker identity is not rooted in place. THS workers must be reoriented towards a constant flow from place to place. It is a movement away from the space of place and towards the space of flows. This process occurs at both the international and domestic levels.

Quality: new methods of labor control

THS firms must ensure a quality product. If they do not, they open themselves up to their competition, and they stand to "lose face" if their workers do not measure up. THS firms aim to sell temps to more and more companies for more and more tasks. In their sales pitches, they sometimes make extraordinary claims. "Quality," comes to mean the ability of a worker to perform on demand in a multitude of employment situations. THS firms have developed three approaches to try and ensure the quality of their product. The first is testing, and this leads to a standardization of their product. The second is training, and this provides a move towards specification. The third is recruiting and this leads to a consolidation of the temporary workforce.

The quote below is from a VP in a successful regional THS firm. He discusses how the need for standardized testing came about. He points to the fact that his customer's "need things," and that this led to standardized testing:

In the early 70's there were a lot of fly by night operations, there wasn't a lot of control, not much in the way of regulation. People would just send you out on a job if you sounded good on the phone. If you said you did whatever, they sent you. Our customer base is a lot more educated. They need things. And so, we've

gotten standardized testing and so forth. I think that, even then, still there was a negative connotation to temporary help. We've just begun now to really change that image. Vega

In this passage, the standardized testing which is currently common is contrasted to a period in the past when "there wasn't a lot of control." In order to have more control, THS firms developed extensive bureaucratized methods to process each applicant. Testing is one of the more sophisticated elements of this standardizing process. Branch offices test applicants on more than simply their typing speed. They are often able to administer tests on the specific software that their clients use, various office equipment, and dexterity levels required for production work.

Through standardized testing, THS firms hope to control a situation that is potentially uncertain. The new spatial configurations of work present new challenges for labor control. Ensuring a quality product comes to mean devising new methods of labor control. Standardized testing to ensure quality is also aimed at establishing a particular level of work.

THS managers also hope to change the negative image of temporary workers through their efforts at standardization. The level and extent of testing quickly becomes a selling point. For example, in the following passage, this branch office describes how they use tested temporaries as a product sample to the customer:

We talked to the director of human resources about the difference between temporaries and tested temporaries. We offered him two Ultradex-tested temporaries free of charge for four hours of assembly work. He kept the two.

then asked for five more. Now we have more than 30 temporary workers at Miller. March/April 93

Ultradex is Manpower's system for testing the dexterity levels of potential production employees. The Ultradex machine also sets the level of work and therefore becomes a method of labor control. In the following passage, the managers "liked what they saw" because what they saw was a method that established a particular level of work. In the parlance of the Branch Office, Ultradex demonstrates their "dedication to quality."

We set up the tests so the managers could try Ultradex for themselves. They definitely liked what they saw. We got this business because we provide a quality product and demonstrate our dedication to quality. It is a real tribute to Ultradex. Any Manpower office that's not using Ultradex to increase market share is not only missing the boat; they're missing the pier. Bob expects daily orders to approach 900 sometime next year! Nov/Dec 91

According to this office, Ultradex testing provides the quality product that leads directly to increased market share. Testing serves various functions. In the passage above it produces a quality product through standardization (all 900 potential employees become part of the same quality product as they must all go through the same standardized test.) In the passage below, testing is associated with increased accuracy. Ultradex selects "the right temporary workers" for the clients needs.

Hardinge makes products that must perform very accurately. Ultradex showed them that Manpower is concerned with accuracy too. Specifically with accurately selecting the right temporary workers for their needs. Hardinge's belief in Ultradex means that temporaries assigned to the company go through all seven skill assessments. We Hardinge people who have a high level of proficiency on each assessment. Jan/Feb 95

In the newsletter article quoted above, Ultradex testing is credited with selecting the "right" temporaries for the job and the specific needs of the client are highlighted. These needs can be met through increased testing on Ultradex. THS firms want to be able to provide the right temps for a clients' specific needs at the same time that their methods for assuring quality have a standardizing effect. As the relationship between a THS firm and its client becomes more regularized, THS firms promise to provide a further specified product. For example, the passage cited below details all of the specifying procedures that a potential employee must complete before he or she is permitted an assignment at a particular company. The result is a potential worker who is very familiar with specific company practices. The worker has already committed a substantial amount of (unpaid) time even though the company has made (and will make) no reciprocal commitment.

So, all of the workers we send to Amoco not only go through our interview and testing procedures, they also receive in-depth safety training. If workers pass the test at the end of the course, they receive cards that certify them to work at Amoco. Then, the workers return to Manpower to learn more about Amoco. We discuss Amoco's specific safety and emergency procedures. By the time they report to Amoco, they are well versed in the work they will do and the safety procedures they will follow. July/Aug 95

The passage below describes a similar process. Temporary workers are dispatched to complicated jobs and must know them before they arrive. The THS firm partners with their client to train the potential worker. But a temp worker is paid only after they have been sent on an assignment. Again, the THS industry redefines a social relationship. In the past, a company hired an employee and then trained her or him. In the temp worker relationship, the costs of training are pushed off onto the worker.

The customer assistance representative job is quite complicated and the learning curve is huge. We asked Manpower to help reduce that curve, and they responded with high quality training. It includes information about P* customer service philosophy and policies as well as the specific [computer] screens used on the job. The temporary workers also complete the Manpower philosophy and telephone skills modules of Manpower's quality training. The day of training in [Manpower's] office means that temporaries are familiar with the Support Center's system when they arrive at Pitney Bowes. Nov/Dec 94

Before they even arrive on the job site, the temporary worker has very specified knowledge about a particular company even though they are not employees of that company and they have no legitimate claim on the company. The next passage follows in a similar vein, but also raises some further issues. We see that the THS firm plays a significant role in providing specified training so that the potential worker has customized information about the job-site before they arrive. This passage also highlights the multiple identities temporary workers are expected to maintain as they "are really working for three different organizations."

Today virtually every job requires the skills needed to deliver quality service, especially when the workers come face to face with customers, as Manpower temporaries do. They also come face to face with the customers' customers. And with Manpower's new quality service training, our customers can feel confident in our temporaries' ability to deliver service beyond their customers' expectations. This project marks the first time Manpower has customized "Putting Quality to Work" to meet a customer's needs. Customization consists of selecting the training modules that are the most appropriate and revising portions of the workbooks. Manpower customized the workbooks, rewriting workbook questions and analysis to more closely reflect what the [temp] customer representatives do. We wanted to stress that the customer representatives are really working for three different organizations, Manpower, Hewlett-Packard and Hewlett-Packard's customers. Hewlett-Packard and Manpower wanted the trainees to understand that quality service is recognized and appreciated by all three. May/June 94

This passage reflects one of the ways that the identity of the temp worker is fragmented. First, the temp worker must assimilate the expectations of differing organizations. Second, the temp worker must learn customized information. This is so that the customer can "feel confident" about the temp's "ability to deliver service." While the employer may feel confident about the employee's abilities, the employee cannot feel confident about their relationship with the employer. This leads to a fragmented identity as workers may be required to learn specifying information and tactics of several different firms in order to maintain regular employment.

While the THS industry contributes to the fragmentation of the work lives of a portion of the labor force, they also must consolidate that labor force. THS firms claim that they can produce large numbers of quality workers in a short time for their customers. For example, this branch office reports that:

One reason we got the order is that we didn't bat an eye when the buying influence said he needed 150 people. We explained that our automated retrieval system would help us quickly identify skilled candidates. Our data entry testing and training would ensure the highest quality temporary workers. Jan/Feb 94

Although this passage highlights elements of the "Manpower system" which contribute to their ability to produce large numbers of workers, the power of this system is negligible without large pools of people to draw from. To ensure that the THS firm will be able to deliver on its promises of service and quality, it has to create a massive pool of dispatchable potential employees in order to ensure availability. Not surprisingly, recruiting is a significant concern that cuts across all segments of the industry. In the

newsletter article quoted below, this branch office describes some of the methods it employed to recruit large numbers of potential employees.

They would ask for 60 workers the next day, or call Tuesday for 280 workers to start Saturday. To attract the people First Data needed, the staff distributed flyers at schools, employment offices, and on cars, ran radio ads and stayed open during the evening and some Saturdays. They also used publicity. We asked the Strategic Information Department [at "Home Office," the corporate headquarters] to write a press release about how First Data and Manpower were teaming to provide jobs in Tulsa. Jul/Aug 95

The newsletters and interviews are full of examples where the task is to deliver massive orders for workers in a short period of time. This is increasingly the challenge that the industry faces. What is interesting about the passage quoted above are the traditional methods deployed for reaching potential workers: flyers, radio ads, and newspaper publicity. The goal is to reach as many people as possible, and convince them to become a part of the THS firm's available labor pool, that is, they must submit to the battery of standardized tests and procedures. In this way, the marginalized labor force is consolidated.

In this chapter, I link the daily practices of THS firms to their broader implications in the international political economy. As THS firms seek to expand their sales, they transform the environment for contracting labor. Sales efforts also lead to the emphasis on service and quality as different THS firms must compete with each other to demonstrate their superiority. Service leads to a time-space compression as the goal ends up being to get workers on site as quickly as possible, or to disappear them if they are not satisfactory. It also leads to blurred boundaries between firms as THS firms seek to come on-site in

order to secure their relationship with a client. Quality leads to increased paradoxes: standardization through testing; specification through training; and consolidation through recruitment. Yet, the whole temp worker experience means a fragmentation for the workers who must agree to work on these terms. Furthermore, THS workers experience a speed up. They must constantly secure employment. This increases their workload. They must also absorb the costs of training and the risks of the business cycle.

Chapter Six: Conclusion- The tempworker figures globalization

The daily practices developed by THS firms to sell and manage their workforce parallel broader changes in international political economy. THS firms reorganize territorial identity at the firm level so that identifications with worksite(s) are a fluid process. They organize a time-space compression with regard to the labor process. They force us to re-think some fundamental categories that have been used to define labor like "formal" and "causal." Whether called globalization, post-Fordism or something else, these changes figure prominently in the debate on the reorganization of capitalism. THS firms make these changes just by selling temporary workers. THS firms sell temporary workers by making reference to the multiple roles of women in the public and private spheres. The industry produces images that refer both to the "working woman" and to the "nurturing homemaker" and projects these images simultaneously. Gender relations have changed qualitatively since the "golden age" of American capitalism. The THS industry relies on this change in order to market temporary labor, not only by relying on the women workers who have joined the labor force, but also by selling the story that workers *can* "have it all."

THS managers claim that their firms can provide the flexibility that is "so necessary" for a successful business to compete in "today's world." In this way, THS managers and

owners participate in a global conversation about strategies for economic success. From the 'Euro-sclerosis' diagnosis to the 'Japanization'⁵⁶ of production factories to the Structural Adjustment Programs developed by the World Bank and IMF, discourses of flexibility emerged in the 1980's as a solution to economic woes in a number of contexts across the globe.⁵⁷ Not only do THS firms capitalize on this international discourse, but they also materialize flexible economic relations by providing flexible labor across sectors and across national borders. By providing a particular kind of flexibility to firms -- the ability to expand and contract their workforce, literally at a moment's notice -- the THS industry helps firms shift some of the risks of the business cycle onto a percentage of their workforce. As the success of the THS industry has turned permanent jobs into temporary jobs, the effect is structural adjustment. The proliferation of temporary labor is one piece of structural change in the international political economy. If we fail to look at the actions of firms, we will miss important changes in the international political economy.

But, the tempworker is a worker in the public realm who never fully occupies that position. The THS industry requires workers whose status as workers is constantly in flux. The simultaneous reference to the public and private roles of women workers serves two purposes. It responds to the reorganization of gender relations by claiming

⁵⁶This term refers to the adaptation of "flexible" manufacturing techniques pioneered in Japan to Western factories (see Oliver and Wilkinson 1988; Bratton 1992; Elger and Smith 1994; Sheldrake 1996).

⁵⁷One of the notable elements of this "flexibility discourse" is how it operates in theoretical perspectives that are frequently opposed. Neoclassical theorists (e.g. Olson 1982) and institutionalist perspectives (e.g. Piore and Sabel 1984) have both argued that achieving 'flexibility' is the key to economic success.

Marketing is all about telling the right story. The point of exchange in a marketing society relies on the semiotic. The stories told about tempworkers are just as significant as the material reality of tempworkers. The story about them has to do with the boundary between public and private: that people seek flexible work arrangements so that they can combine their responsibilities in the private and public spheres. The THS case demonstrates how changes in the relationship between public and private figure in new economic practices. Feminists have long argued that the public and private spheres are inextricably linked, that investigations of one must entail investigations of the other. This case demonstrates how the reorganization of the public/private boundary helps to make available the flexible identities necessary for the proliferation of THS workers.

Reconfiguring the Public and the Private

Janine Brodie (1994) wants to extend feminist analysis of global restructuring towards a focus on the ways in which restructuring relies on a shifting of the boundary between public and private.⁵⁸ Brodie is referring to the shrinking of the public sector as the

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⁵⁸ Brodie argues that feminist analyses of global restructuring tend towards two directions. One, to note the underlying androcentric assumptions of the neo-classical theory which guides it (Bakker 1994; Elson 1994; Sparr 1994). Two, to note the differential impacts of restructuring on men and women (Vickers 1991; Beneria and Feldman 1992; Dalla Costa and Dalla Costa 1995).

welfare state is cut back. The emergence of the welfare state expanded the public as the state took responsibility for activities previously deemed the responsibility of the private sector or the family. Brodie identifies a “reprivatization discourse” contained within the politics of restructuring which “seeks to recode the realm of the political constituted by the Keynesian welfare state” (1994, p. 55). This means reducing the state’s role in the economy by reducing state spending and regulation. Brodie points out that this recodification also redefines citizenship as it reduces the scope and kind of claims that the citizen can legitimately make on the state. By seeking to reduce the public role of the state and reassert the private authority of markets, Brodie suggests global restructuring represents a battle over the boundary between public and private.

The proliferation of THS workers is a part of this reprivatization discourse. The THS industry helps to reduce the scope of the public because it undercuts support for the private lives of workers. THS workers challenge the Fordist bargain between workers and managers. Part of this bargain was the firm’s public support for private family life in terms of a family wage (allowing women the “time to buy”), benefits to support the family and vacation time to be with the family. THS labor allows the firm to shed this kind of responsibility, at least for a portion of its workforce. These benefits were attached to the public sphere of work, but they are reprivatized in the discourse of restructuring. Keynesian state policies and Fordist labor practices are both cut back in restructuring discourses. The worker’s claims, like the citizen’s claims, are reduced and the realm of political negotiation shrinks.

I have highlighted another way that the boundary between public and private is at play in the development of new labor practices. THS firms refer to the changing boundary between public and private as they use women's private roles to help sell flexible labor. What is different here is that workers hold these roles simultaneously. While women have negotiated roles between the public and private spheres throughout history, this period is distinct because women's presence in the workforce moved from "accepted" to "expected" for women across a variety of classes. More and more women hold both roles (worker, homemaker) *simultaneously*, producing a worker with multiple identities. Today's woman is expected to integrate these identities whereas her foremothers were asked to choose between them or to deny one or the other. Furthermore, as gender roles are challenged on a number of fronts, more men are willing to claim both roles for themselves.

Brodie employs the language of the regulation school and she suggests that global restructuring signifies the development of a new mode of regulation that has replaced the welfare state. She warns of a crisis, however, because this new order lacks a coherent plan for social reproduction. "Indeed," she writes,

its phallogentric and patriarchal underpinnings appear to blind it to a fundamental contradiction. It places women simultaneously in the workforce and in the home (1994:58).

Who puts women in both spheres at once? It depends on which women we are talking about. Some women have demanded access to the paid workforce. My analysis suggests that it is this simultaneity of positioning that makes the new order possible. If it is the

contradiction that Brodie claims, then it is the contradiction that transforms the system. Globalization requires the multiple positioning of subjects.

“Flexibility” in a Broader Context

While this dissertation is about the flexibilization of labor promulgated by the THS industry, discourses of flexibility are not just about labor, quite to the contrary. Part of what makes the THS case interesting is that the flexibilization of labor is occurring within a broader political economic context where flexibility has become a goal in and of itself. Flexible THS labor proliferates at a particular historical moment of global capitalism. To what extent can we say that flexibility is what characterizes that moment? In the 1980s and 1990s states and firms both justified economic restructuring through discourses of flexibility. At the international level, economies are exhorted to be “flexible” in order to be competitive. Those who promote SAP’s in developing countries discuss the need to eliminate “rigidities” from the economic structure. At the domestic level, managers and CEO’s claim that firms need to be flexible in order to be competitive and profitable. Downsizing is couched in terms of eliminating “rigid” corporate structures and increasing the flexibility of the organization. We can see that international and domestic levels of analysis are connected through discourses of flexibility.

Furthermore, flexibility comes to stand in for a more politicized debate on structural adjustment. By substituting “flexibility” for “adjustment,” the political implications of

economic change are sanitized. Adjustment requires dislocation. It is often a painful process which creates hardships for some and opportunities for others. In contrast, “flexibility” does not have this connotation. Promoting flexibility gives the impression that everyone can be winners because flexibility refers to the ability to respond to change. Robert Cox notes that framing political economic practices so that they appear to be in everyone's interest is an important step in creating hegemony (1983; 1987). Those who make the case for flexibility in economic practices have tended to frame it in universal terms.

For example, in *The Rise and Decline of Nations* (1982) Mancur Olson links “rigidity” with poor economic performance. According to Olson, the ability to respond to change swiftly is a hallmark of the market system. He contrasts the flexibility of healthy market relations to the rigidity associated with “distributional coalitions.” For Olson, the market is ‘naturally’ flexible. But he constructs this flexible market at the expense of politics. Since politics results in rigidity due to the logic of collective action, it must be forfeited in the name of economic progress. In *The Logic*, Olson argues that politics is not “natural” in *The Rise*, he argues that it is bad. For my purposes, what’s more important is how “flexibility” gets constructed in Olson’s theory. Olson aims to construct a universal theory of economic growth. In doing so, he frames flexibility in terms of being in “everyone’s interest.” The preferred outcome of “flexibility” derives scientifically from Olson’s application of “universal” principles of human behavior based on the “laws” of collective action.

Killick (1995) attempts to systematize the study of flexibility and apply it on a global level. His edited volume, *The Flexible Economy*, is based on two propositions. The first proposition, which he describes as "innocuous," is simply that economies with flexible structures can expect faster and more persistent long-term growth than those with rigid structures. The second is that flexibility itself is a distinctive concept, worthy of study on its own, and not dealt with adequately within the literatures on market efficiency or long-term growth (1995, p. 1). What is most interesting about this debate on flexibility is what seems to be at stake politically. The subtext for the discussion of flexibility of national economies is the policy of adjustment. Killick links these two explicitly:

In enquiring into the determinants of the flexibility of economies we are thus implicitly agreeing on the importance of adjustment - but as a permanent condition rather than a creature of the 1980's - and exploring the conditions which determine the success of adjustment efforts and their costs (1994, p. 7).

According to the proponents of adjustment policies, Keynesianism and welfare statism have caused serious market distortions and resulted in rigid and inefficient economies. Such advocates believe that government interventions are at the root of slowed or even halted economic growth. However, an important elision occurs between the discourse on adjustment and the discourse on flexibility. In the adjustment discourse, there are winners and losers as economic policy shifts away from public expenditures. Yet, everyone wins in a flexible economy because flexibility refers to the ability to take better advantage of the changing situations that different economies/firms/individuals face.

From Olson to Killick to Just-In-Time manufacturing practices, flexibility has entered into a discourse of economic success that is framed in universal terms. Does the abstract ideal of the flexible economy, the competitive edge of flexible production, and the proliferation of flexible labor add up to something bigger? I think it does precisely because these changes have paralleled changes in gender relations. The possibility for transformation exists at the intersection of culture and economy (Gramsci, Hoare et al. 1972; Haraway 1997). The THS industry was able to position its product at precisely this intersection. The “tempworker” proliferates at the crossroads of a gendered “multiple identity” and an interest in “economic flexibility.” The THS industry has been able to transform labor practices on a global scale because it has been able to direct cultural shifts and economic upheavals into selling its product.

I have demonstrated how the individuals within firms develop strategies to pursue profits which also have the effect of reconfiguring labor within the logic of globalization. I have also demonstrated how women’s multiple roles in the public and private spheres have been used to sell THS workers. The widespread cultural acceptance of women’s multiple roles has resulted from changes in gender relations as women organized politically to challenge “separate spheres” ideology. Not only do THS firms market workers with specific reference to these multiple roles, but also, the idea of holding various roles aids in the THS reorganization of labor which also requires that workers hold multiple roles simultaneously. The proliferation of temporary workers as an increasingly pervasive method of employing labor is the result of a combination of changes in cultural and

economic practices. In fact, this is what makes the case so interesting, because it suggests the possibility of a broader change.

Not everyone will work for a THS agency in the global economy in the future. Nevertheless, the tempworker still functions as a figural representation of labor relations under globalization. The spatial and temporal reconfigurations made by THS workers reorganize the workplace, and this effects all workers. Furthermore, the “false promise” of the THS industry represents a fundamental question for our society in the 21st century: how can we accommodate individuals’ roles and responsibilities in both the public and private spheres? While women’s private roles are highlighted in the images produced about temporary workers, support for these roles is denied by the institutional structure of THS labor organization. Feminist activists should work towards making institutional changes that would fulfill this “false promise” for all workers.

The Next Step

I have demonstrated how the THS industry has transformed labor practices with a U.S. case and I argue that the multinational THS firms based in the U.S. have a global reach that they seek to expand further. The next step for this research is to ascertain the degree to which these multinational corporations have infiltrated into other national economies, and what kinds of marketing strategies they have pursued to promote flexible labor in other cultural contexts. This research should be conducted on a country by country basis.

A new case study should begin by investigating the political process a THS firm negotiated in order to set up shop. What kinds of lobby efforts (if any) did THS firms pursue in order to become established in a new country? It would then be necessary to investigate THS firm operations. How many offices does a Manpower or Kelly have in a particular country? What kinds of local firms are operating? Interviews with owners and executives would be useful to document business practices. It would also be necessary to collect demographic information about the THS workers in a particular country. Do THS workers in other country share the same profile of THS workers in the U.S.? Finally, it would be necessary to look at the client base of these THS firms. Do THS firms in other countries have as diverse of a client base as THS firms in the U.S.? This information would provide for useful comparative analysis of changing labor practices across the globe.

In proposing further research, i would also analyze the particular marketing strategies of THS firms operating in other countries. Do THS firms rely on gender in order to sell flexible labor in other cultural contexts? If so, in what ways does gender operate? I suspect that gender does play a role in the advertising efforts of THS firms in other countries. For example, a 1998 commercial aired during the World Cup Soccer Tournament in Spain depicts a soccer game in action. The viewer sees a player running down the field, he is distressed, he makes a phone call from a cell phone, he speaks hurriedly, he tosses the phone to the sidelines and rushes down field where the opposing team is about to kick a goal. We see the ball flying in the air and at the last minute it is caught by the goalie who is a female Manpower employee. This commercial depicts the

“liberated woman.” The THS goalie is the only woman on the field and not only can she play sports, but she can also save the game. In this advertisement, there is no reference to women’s private roles. Do THS firms in other countries focus more on images of women in the public realm in order to encourage women to join their workforce? In order to answer this question, it would be necessary to gather systematic data of THS firm marketing campaigns. This would provide interesting opportunities for comparison in how gender is utilized in changing political economic practices.

Appendix A

Interview Questions

The first set of questions focused on the background of the respondent. I was interested in the process that led the individual to a job in the THS industry. The second set of questions focused on the particular firm in which the respondent worked. Did the company have a sector specialization (i.e. clerical, industrial, etc.)? What was the typical number of placements per week? Had the company experienced growth or decline during the interviewee's tenure?

The next three sets of questions were intended to illuminate office practices. I asked about the biggest challenges facing the firm, including strategies for dealing with turnover and recruitment. Other questions focused on issues of competition and marketing. What kinds of marketing tactics did the firm use? How did the firm respond to competitive pressures? Still other questions focused on the THS workers. What was the composition of their temporary workforce? What kinds of issues came up in managing this workforce?

The next two sets of questions were designed to get the respondents to share their perceptions about the growth of the industry and its future. I asked them what they thought accounted for the tremendous growth of the industry starting in the 1980's? I asked them about their perceptions of cultural shifts, including worker attitudes and family structures. I also asked them to share their perceptions of international competition. Finally, I asked what they thought the future held for the THS industry and what kind of strategies their firms planned to meet that future.

The final set of questions asked about membership in trade organizations.

Each interview lasted from one to two hours. All but one was tape-recorded. (One respondent declined to be recorded and I took written notes in this interview.)

My recorded interview with the NATSS Vice-varied from the format followed in the other interviews. It focused on current legislation that NATSS was supporting.

Questions

About the Interviewee

1. What is your title and what are your job responsibilities?
2. How long have you been at this company?
3. How long have you been in the THS industry?

4. How did you get in this business?

About Sector and Growth

5. In what sector (clerical, technical, manual) is most of your placements?

6. Has there been a change in your primary placement sector?

7. About how many placements do you do a week?

8. Has your company grown or declined since you've been here?

9. What factors do you think have influenced this growth or decline?

Challenges/Turnover/Recruitment

10. What's the biggest challenge that your company faces?

11. Do you have a problem with turnover?

12. Why do you think turnover is a problem / how have you been successful reducing turnover?

13. How do you recruit employees?

Competition/Marketing

14. Who are your main competitors?

15. This industry exploded in the 80's and 90's - how do you compete with the seemingly endless numbers of THS firms?

16. What kinds of marketing strategies do you employ to capture new accounts?

17. Do you rely on print advertisements to appeal to potential customers?
18. If so, what is the message you try to impart to represent your company and distinguish yourself from your competitors?
19. Is there a specialized staff specifically for marketing new accounts?

Composition of the Workforce

20. Would you say that your employees are predominately male, predominantly female, or about even?
21. How do you explain the gender composition of the temp workforce (if lopsided, why so / if proportioned, why do you think it changed because in the 80's temps were disproportionately female?)
22. What is the racial composition of your employees?
23. Would you guess that most of your employees are in their 20's, 30's, 40's, or 50's?
24. What kinds of issues come up in managing a temporary workforce? Is it different from managing a permanent workforce? How so, or why not?
25. Do you think your workers choose to be temps so they can spend more time with their family? What percentage do you think follows this strategy?

Thoughts on the Growth of the Industry

26. What do you think accounts for the dramatic growth that the industry experienced starting in the 1980s?
27. Do you think there has been a fundamental shift in employee/employer relations since the 80's or do you think that there have just been minor changes at the margins?
28. What role do you think changing notions of family responsibilities have had in conditioning this shift?
29. What role do you think increased international competition has had in conditioning this shift?
30. What role do you think the gender composition of the temp workforce has had in conditioning this shift? (i.e. do you think the fact that in the 80's temps were primarily women that this had an influence on the rise of the THS industry?)

The Future

31. What do you think the future of the THS industry will look like?
32. How is your company preparing for this future?
33. What do you think the future holds for the American worker?
34. Do you think industry and/or government will be able to respond to the changing demands of the American workforce?

Memberships

35. Does your company belong to any state or national association like the National Association of Temporary Staffing Services?
36. Why or why not?

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