



# Roepke Lecture in Economic Geography— The Lives of Others: Body Work, the Production of Difference, and Labor Geographies

**Linda McDowell**  
School of Geography  
University of Oxford  
South Parks Road Oxford  
OX1 3QY  
United Kingdom  
linda.mcdowell@ouce.ox  
.ac.uk

**Key words:**

gender  
migration  
economic transformation  
post-war decades  
service employment  
caring

## abstract

In this article I address one of the key aspects of feminist arguments about the economy—that is claims about domestic and caring labor and its necessity for capitalism. I address who undertakes caring labor, in what social relations, and in which spaces in Western economies, where deindustrialization and the rise of service-dominated employment have been associated with a transformation in the nature of work and the composition of the workforce. I review the ways in which this contemporary economic and employment change has been theorized by economic sociologists and economic geographers, in particular by labor geographers—that part of the discipline to which I feel the greatest connection—suggesting that changes in what is often termed reproductive labor have been relatively neglected at the expense of a focus on immaterial, high-status employment in knowledge-based economies. Through a historical example, I then illustrate the production of difference between women workers in caring jobs in the United Kingdom, arguing that closer attention to the intersection of embodied social attributes adds to explanations of continuity and change in the labor market as well as revealing a legacy of discrimination.

2 The focus in this article is on women, on their waged work, and on small-scale geographies in the sense of the home and the workplace, rather than on economic change at a wider scale. One of the most significant changes in economies such as the United Kingdom and the United States over something like the last four decades has been the significant rise in women's labor market participation rates. In the United Kingdom, for example, virtually all the jobs created since 1970 have been for women workers, filled in the main by women with children. This rise has had an undoubted impact on many women's and men's lives in what we now term the post-Fordist era. I want to suggest that one of the most significant correlates of women's rising participation rates has been the transfer of domestic labors, which are undertaken in the household for love, into the market where they are commodified. If this transfer is placed at the heart of theories about the changing nature of work and employment, I suggest that a reassessment of theories about, *inter alia*, the end of the working class and the rise of the knowledge economy, about epochal transformations of the economy in general and employment in particular, is warranted. The caring labors of reproduction are still largely undertaken by women, whether in the home for love or in the market for money, where they remain undervalued and underpaid. They are also largely ignored by many of the mainstream theorists who claim that there has been a transformation in the nature of employment and crucially in its location, in an apparent shift toward affective, creative, and immaterial labors beyond the workplace. Caring labor by contrast, exhibits a different geography: it is embodied, hands-on labor demanding copresence, in which productivity gains are all but impossible. It is undertaken in thousands of, often small-scale, workplaces, including other people's homes, and it is still undertaken by women, often minority women, women of color, and women who are recent migrants. These women, I argue, are constructed as appropriate workers for this intimate work on, and with, the bodies of strangers. These labors by minority women, whose voices are too seldom heard in labor geographies, are at the heart of the argument here.

In what follows, I lay out an argument about the implications of the rise of reproductive employment in the service sector, focusing on what is termed interactive, or body work, at the bottom end of the labor market. I show how this focus illustrates a paradox in which both change *and* continuity are evident in the nature and distribution of employment, criticizing the dominant theories of an epochal change in the nature of waged work and its significance in the construction of identity. I then argue that the reproductive laborers are distinguished one from another by their embodied social characteristics, which are used to construct a hierarchy of eligibility for interactive body work. I suggest that the feminist notion of intersectionality, with its focus on the intersection of class, gender, ethnicity, and nationality, provides a useful framework for the analysis of the nature of caring labors in capitalist economies. I lay out a theoretical argument that combines feminist argument with those of labor theorists, constructing what Wright (2007) has termed an inter- or multidisciplinary *tool kit*. Through a historical example, I then show how the coconstruction of employment characteristics and types of femininity creates migrant women as particularly appropriate employees in the provision of commodified caring.

The empirical examples are drawn from my research with migrant women workers in the United Kingdom in the post-World War II era (McDowell 2013), where I demonstrate the paradox of both temporal change and continuity in this form of work. I focus on the immediate postwar years to show not only the ways in which migration and caring employment are connected, but also the development of a relationship between femininity migration and care, the legacy of which remains in the United Kingdom today. Behind the arguments about continuity and change, developed both theoretically and empirically,

is the reevaluation of the claim about the necessity of domestic labor undertaken for love in the home. While it is clear that caring for others is essential for the reproduction of life and the capitalist system, the rise of neoliberalism, and its insertion into all aspects of human interaction, raises questions about continuing significance of affective social relations of exchange beyond the cash nexus.

At the heart of my argument is a claim about the significance of a more complete understanding of the changing nature of waged work; of recognizing continuities in women's caring labor, despite its shift from the home to the market (and back again); and of recognizing its transference from a labor of love to the cash nexus in which many of the intimate tasks of bodily and emotional care for others are no longer undertaken for love and/or on the basis of a free reciprocal exchange but are increasingly available for purchase. In this transfer, the labors of care are still, in the main, feminized, associated with love and empathy, even self-sacrifice. The labors are undertaken by women and are correspondingly low paid, reflecting the "natural" attributes of femininity, rather than acquired skills though training. This argument is not new, nor is the recognition that as women leave home for work, they are recruited into feminized employment sectors. While growing numbers of women enter the social relations of employment, the tasks that they undertake paradoxically remain the same, and as they are defined as women's work, they are poorly paid. However, the rapid rise in commodified body work (Wolkowitz 2006; McDowell 2009), in which a close and intimate connection is a key feature of the relationship between workers and consumers, is a key feature of late modernity and is crucial in establishing who is and who is not regarded as an appropriate provider of the service. This intimacy has raised new questions for labor geographers about the effect of the ways in which embodied social characteristics, including gender, class, and ethnicity but also skin color, weight, looks and accents, are used in the production of difference in the labor market and so operate through their intersection to include or exclude potential workers from particular types of employment and differential remuneration. This type of interactive work also demands a closer focus on the interactions between not only employers and potential workers but also the purchasers of services, introducing the consumer who, to date, remains a missing figure in most labor geographies (Korszynski 2009). I end with a plea for greater attention to the missing "Others" in labor geography, as well as areas of reproductive employment that tended to be neglected in the industrial or productionist emphasis that has characterized the development of labor geography as a subfield of economic geography.

## Out to Work: Women's Rising Labor Market Participation

Among the most significant changes in industrial economies in the second half of the twentieth century and into the new millennium have been the parallel rise of service sector employment and the growing participation of women in the labor market. Many women's lives have been transformed by socioeconomic shifts in the postwar decades (Walby 1997; Rowbotham 1999). Some of the changes are directly connected to labor market change, others less directly, but in combination they have enhanced women's value as waged labor. These changes include improvements in health (especially the ability to control conception) rising participation in education, increasing longevity, and technological changes that have altered both domestic and waged labor, all of which have resulted in growing opportunities for women to earn an independent income. In the United Kingdom, for example, women's labor market participation rates are now almost equal to those of men's, at around 70 percent for women and about 5 percent higher for

men, although many women's participation is on a part-time basis, especially after childbirth. However, economists Connolly and Gregory (2007) estimated that almost all the increase in participation rates in the United Kingdom between 1970 and the end of the century was accounted for by mothers entering the labor market. Over the same years, service sector employment has grown to dominate employment patterns. By the start of the new millennium, almost three in every four employees, men as well as women, worked in the service sector.

As feminist scholars have documented, as women leave the home for waged labor, they often find themselves doing the same tasks they undertook in the family (Bradley 1989; Kessler-Harris 1982, 2007; Gottfried 2013). They do, for example, housework for businesses and offices; clean hotel rooms; act as office maids or wives for businessmen; care for children, the sick and old people in community centers, care homes, schools and hospitals; as cashiers, and saleswomen. In industrial sectors, increasingly located in the Global South, women often find themselves doing forms of needlework, sewing, or cooking in sectors such as textiles, food processing, and electronics. In the professions, despite women's increasing numerical dominance of university courses, such as law and medicine, women are often concentrated in female-dominated specialties, such as family law or paediatrics.

Despite the rise of women's participation and the particularly rapid increase in lower-paid service sector employment (Bryson, Daniels, and Warf 2004; Bryson and Daniels 2007; Castells 2000; Doogan 2009; Green 2005), often casualized or contract labor in which warm bodies or what Castells (2000) termed generic workers, were recruited, sometimes as temporary or agency workers for a range of tasks (Castells 2001; Theodore and Peck 2002; Coe, Johns, and Ward, 2011; Coe, Jones, and Ward, 2012; McDowell, Batnitzky, and Dyer 2008), an older idea of "real work" remained influential. This concept took as an ideal the older pattern of men's work, whether based on brawn or brain, work that was undertaken over a lifetime; often for the same employer; and on a regular, typically 9 to 5 basis. This ideal continues to dominate not only the empirical case studies, but also the theoretical explanations that have been influential in a great deal of recent scholarship that has identified deviations from this pattern. Consequently arguments about an evident, even epochal, change in the nature of work have identified, for example, the rise of portfolio jobs, professionals moving frequently between task-based employment (Carnoy 2000), and the rise of more insecure or casual work among professionals, as well as the less-skilled and less well qualified (Standing 2011), neglecting historical evidence about insecure work for many working class-men in the pre-Fordist era as well as the typical pattern of employment for many women. Challenges from feminist scholars to include women, women's work, the household, as well as the firm and the region, as a location for waged labor, including empirical analyses of caring, as well as high finance in evaluations of the rise of a knowledge-based economy, have not yet been sufficiently integrated into mainstream geographic analysis, despite some notable exceptions (England 1996; Cox 2006; Pratt 2004, 2012). Social class remains the key dimension of analysis for many labor geographers (Herod 2001; Castree et al. 2004), and so the recommendations from authorities, such as the historian Sassoon (2010, 8), that socialists (and labor geographers) must abandon "the idea that a single class—the traditional male factory-based proletariat—was somehow endowed by history with the task of embodying the hope and aspiration of the whole of humanity" or, from the cultural critic Wilson (1992, 6), that we must recognize that "the working class has changed its gender and moved South" have perhaps not yet been taken seriously enough. Large-scale claims about, for example, the end of work (Rifkin 1995) or the end of the working class

(Gorz 1982) deserve reevaluation in the light of careful explorations by labor geographers illustrating new gender and spatial divisions of labor. Nevertheless, I suggest that it has been claims about epochal change or large-scale economic transformation that have had a key influence on many areas of geographic scholarship in recent decades.

The concept of transformation is, of course, a long-standing one. Identifying and elucidating change is a more exciting venture than insisting on continuity and, as Marx reminds us, capitalist economies are characterized by periodic crisis. If neoliberal policy makers had forgotten this, the crisis of 2007–8 provided a salutary reminder. The types of claims that are based on the notion of an epochal shift that have influenced geographic scholarship include influential work about the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism (Amin 1994), from an “old” to a “new” economy (Carnoy 2000), from a heavy to a weightless economy, about the social consequences of a new capitalism (Sennett 2006) in which the new spirit (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005) included greater uncertainty, in a shift from a time of certainty to one of insecurity (Sennett 2006; Beck 2000). There has also been the widespread identification, by policy makers as well as academic theorists, of the rise of a *new* knowledge economy, now sadly tarnished by the banking crisis. More recently, claims about a *new age of austerity* perhaps have greater empirical purchase (Krugman 2013). However, as du Gay (2003) argued a decade ago, assuming a logic of transformation from one era to another sets the terms of debate *in advance* of a careful assessment of the empirical evidence, a critique that the economist Doogan (2009) has leveled at contemporary theorists of economic, labor market, and employment change. Doogan has shown how including longitudinal analysis of women’s labor market participation counters claims about rising insecurity or shorter job tenure. In the United Kingdom, women’s participation patterns, at least in the first decade of the new millennium, revealed longer periods of attachment to employers, often in the forms of public sector employment, that are crucial in the reproduction of the labor force, including nursing and teaching, as well as clerical and administrative tasks.

The dominant narrative in economic theorizing that relies on the underlying mechanism of a transformation, before the more recent enthusiasm for a rhetorical celebration of the new knowledge economy, typically was one of loss and nostalgia for a world in which working men produced “real” products (Sennett 1998). More recently, a celebratory narrative from the Italian Operismo school has been influential. Here, a movement beyond the defined workplaces has been identified, as employment moves from factories and workshops, beyond the boundaries of the workplace into the amorphous crowd (Hardt and Negri 2000). This argument is especially influential in research on the new *creative class* (Asheim and Hansen 2009; Florida 2004; Markusen 2006; Peck 2005; Pratt 2008), although here, too, feminist theorists have documented the reemergence of a male-dominated division of labor (Gill 2002, 2011). At the same time as some employment was moving beyond the workplace into more amorphous spaces, however, a proportion of caring labor was moving in the opposite direction into formal workplaces, such as care homes and hospitals, as well as into gyms, counselors’ offices, and so on. Other types of caring labor moved into thousands of individual homes, transforming the labors of love into a cash nexus, and introducing class divisions into the home (McDowell 2008) as new forms of commodified domestic care expanded. Indeed as economist Green (2005) noted, a new servant class, mainly but not solely female, became evident in twenty-first-century Britain.

What these theories of epochal change tended to ignore was this new servant class and other forms and locations of commodified reproductive work: the sorts of jobs that now employ millions of working class women, as well as growing numbers of migrant

Table 1

*Employment In Low-Status Interactive Servicing Work in Great Britain, 000s*

	Interactive employment						% female in 2001
	1951		1981		2001		
	m	f	m	f	m	f	
All employees	15,649	6,961	14,576	9,973	13,000	12,500	49
Sales	532	648	228	834	467	1,360	74
Personal services	211	621	186	813	306	1,549	84
Cleaning and related	68	413	156	544	186	462	71
Bar work and catering	59	329	77	490	181	441	71
Elementary security	50	1	110	24	149	32	17

Source: National census, various dates.

6

Table 2

*Body Work in Great Britain, 2005, 000s*

	Number	% of all body workers	% female
All employees	25,171	—	43.5
All body workers	2,933	—	72.3
Health service professionals	224	7.6	37.8
Health associate professionals (nurses etc.)	613	20.9	82.6
Health care and related personal service (care assistants etc.)	898	30.6	86.1
Child care	331	11.3	97.1
Therapists	140	4.8	84.9
Sports and fitness jobs	86	2.9	51.5
Hair and beauty	221	7.6	86.8
Other personal service (undertakers etc.)	16	0.6	36.6
Protective service officers and workers (police, prison, security etc.)	404	13.7	17.8

Source: Calculated by Rachel Cohen (2008) from the Labour Force Survey to include occupations that involved direct contact with the bodies of others. Note here that men dominate security but also professional body work (not included in Table 1) and dealing with dead bodies.

workers, in low-status work in the waged economy. Since the 1970s, there has been a significant increase in feminized forms of employment at the bottom end of the labor market, often replacing the types of work individual women had long undertaken in their own homes (see Tables 1 and 2). As middle-class women began to earn reasonable salaries, they were able to purchase the labors of working-class women to replace their own domestic labor. Newly commoditized domestic labor (cleaners, nannies, child minders), new forms of leisure services (therapy of various kinds, sexual services, as well as different forms of sport), and opportunities to eat outside the home all grew remarkably between the end of Fordism and the start of the recession in 2007, providing new forms of employment for the growing numbers of women looking for work as well as recutting the connections between class and gender as middle-class women's lives and incomes increasingly differentiated them from other women (McDowell 2008).

What was also ignored by those theorists regretting the declining significance of employment in the construction of identity and daily meaning was not only the fact that many more women were entering the social relations of employment, but that they found

satisfaction there. As Hochschild (2003) noted, work became home and home became work for many, especially well-educated, British and North American women at the end of the last millennium. Thus, arguments by the influential social theorist Sennett about the declining significance of waged work, about the corrosion of character (Sennett 1998), and a conservative withdrawal into neighborhood identification and politics in the new capitalism (Sennett 2006) had less and less purchase on many women's sense of self and ambitions. Further, in both the United States and the United Kingdom, as the workfare state replaced the welfare state (Peck 2001), an obligation to seek employment became a requirement of full citizenship rights. Just as many theorists were regretting the decline of employment and its significance in the social construction of identity, millions more women were joining the labor force and neoliberal states were insisting on labor market participation for all the able bodied, despite their caring responsibilities. Employment became a marker of decency—the hard working family (in which both men and women are workers) is now a key figure in policy documents in the United Kingdom, replacing the working class at least as a rhetorical term.

It is not only these theorists who identified an epochal change who are open to empirical challenge. Earlier versions of feminist theory insisting on the necessity of domestic labor for capitalism to function may also be challenged by contemporary shifts in labor market participation. The necessity of domestic labor for capitalist reproduction depends on an overly optimistic view of a capitalist economy, where the reproduction of working families was supported through the mechanism of a family wage for the male labor aristocracy sufficient to support a man and his wife, who worked for love in the home, to ensure the daily and generational reproduction of the system. The notion of the family wage has vanished, as incomes at the lower end of the spectrum decline and the working poor unable to earn sufficient money for a decent standard of living are increasing in numbers in twenty-first-century labor forces. Neither capital nor individual men seem to need domestic labor anymore. Capital has lost interest in reproduction in situ and moves across the globe in search of ever lower-paid workers and individual men, as Ehrenreich (1984) observed some time ago, have shown “an unexpected ability to thrive on fast food and unironed shirts.” In the last 25 years, the ability to purchase replacements for domestic love and service have expanded exponentially, as the 24/7 economy sweeps across major cities and into smaller towns of the Western world.

This identification of a paradoxical combination of change and continuity in women's working lives (using the term working in the broadest sense) raises questions about the spatial implications of these changes, paying attention to the different geographies and social relations of service sector labor in general and to bottom-end servicing labor in particular. As I have already noted, in service-dominated economies, older patterns of gender difference are reproduced—women are doing the same old jobs as they have always done (Adkins 2005). Even so, women's labor market entry, albeit in feminized sectors, is producing new geographies at different scales from the international to the local. Millions of women migrate from the south to the north to care for the children and elderly relatives of wage earners (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003; Pratt 2012), as within the countries of the south, other women move from rural areas into cities and export processing zones and manufacturing employment (Gottfried 2013); in the west, in the United States and the United Kingdom for example, older regional patterns of geographic distinctiveness based on manufacturing specializations have disappeared, and in some local labor markets in the United Kingdom, in an unprecedented change, women workers have begun to outnumber male workers, many of them engaged in interactive body work.

## The Characteristics of Interactive Service Employment: Why the Body Matters

In this section, I briefly lay out the characteristics of interactive employment and body work, setting the scene for the empirical illustration of how the intersection of class, gender, ethnicity, and nationality combine to construct a hierarchy of difference in the labor market in which caring labors are not only poorly rewarded but are increasingly associated with a division of labor in which women migrants are the least eligible. Unlike Castells (2000) who argued that service employees at the bottom end of the labor market were interchangeable, the combination of the characteristics of the work and the attitudes and stereotypical assumptions of both employers and consumers/clients, results in what Roediger and Esch (2012) recently termed the production of difference. Potential employees are carefully distinguished from one another, not only by potential employers but also by clients or customers, on the basis of their embodied and social attributes. Drawing on recent arguments about embodiment by feminist and labor market theorists helps in the construction of a more complete understanding of the growing importance of embodiment in service-dominated economies.

8

The particular characteristics of servicing work compared with manufacturing employment are a crucial part of explanations of labor market inequality, the gender division of labor and the production of difference. A great deal of service employment, especially but not solely at the bottom end of the labor market, depends on copresence. Typically, it is an interactive relationship (Leidner 1993) in which both seller and consumer is present. The service is used up in the exchange, and so it has to be constantly reproduced and resold. For this reason customers have to be seduced into desiring the products on a repeat basis (Bauman 1998), and so, in these forms of exchange, the embodied attributes of the provider affect both the propensity to consume and the nature of the interaction. Service providers sell part of themselves as part of the service through their embodied and emotional attributes—the smile, the caring gesture (Mills 1953; Hochschild 1983). These attributes are neither neutral nor disembodied but are part of the performance of identity by raced, classed, and gendered bodies, performance, often of civility or deference, which must conform to managers' and customers' expectations of appropriate service: a notion captured in the concept of interpellation (see Burawoy 1979; McDowell, Batnitzky, and Dyer 2007; Williams 2006). These performances draw on cultural repertoires but are not voluntaristic. They are produced within the regulatory frameworks that construct, discipline, and regulate gendered (Butler, 1990, 1993), raced (Collins 2000), and classed (Skeggs 2004) selfhood as a normative fiction. For migrant workers, the focus here, these fictional identities are often fluid or contradictory, located as they are between the institutional structures and regulatory norms both here and there. New migrants may find it difficult to read the rules of a new society, and so it is hard for them to construct acceptable versions of personhood (Bauder 2006). Indeed in the new host society, migrants typically are positioned as unacceptable, as the, sometimes threatening, Other, constructed in opposition to normalized and hegemonic versions of identity, which are maintained through the surveillance of hegemonic identities and the shaming of others.

As legal scholar Collins (2000) argued, cultural patterns of oppression are not only based on heterosexist assumptions and class inequalities but on an interrelated set of characteristics, including race, gender, class, and ethnicity, which are bound together and influenced by the intersecting systems of differentiation in any society (McCall 2005). In the United Kingdom and the United States, a black/white binary has long been significant in distinguishing the Other (Fryer 1984; Gilroy 1987, 1993; Ong 1999), in which

whiteness signifies all that is pure and good (Bonnett 2000; Dyer 1998; Frankenberg 1997) However, like gender, whiteness is also fluid and performative. As Roediger (2005) has demonstrated, Irish and later Southern European migrants into the United States in the nineteenth century had to *become* white. The entry of white East European migrants to the United Kingdom in the 1940s proved less challenging to notions of Britishness than the almost contemporaneous entry of women from the Caribbean (McDowell 2005), although, as I argue below, in the case study, white Irish migrants were deemed less desirable than white women from the Baltic states. Migrants from the Caribbean found, despite the significance of the different cultures of different islands as well as the importance of a pigmentocracy in which a lighter skin was more highly valued (Freeman 2000), that when they came to the United Kingdom, the indigenous population regarded them all as lack (Hall 1990). The comparison is a clear demonstration of the wages of whiteness (Roediger 1999) that accrued to the Baltic and Irish women and that positioned Caribbean women as the Other. There are obvious similarities between this era and the 2000s as whiteness again differentiates in-migrants within the European Union as its expansion in 2004 and 2007 reproduced the associations between skin color and labor market eligibility in the reproduction of a hierarchy of eligibility.

## The Case Study: War, Refuge, Empire, and Colonialism—The Production of Difference

I turn now an exploration of migration into the United Kingdom in the immediate post–World War II years. This was the time when debates about skin color and decisions about the control of in-migration became a crucial part of postwar reconstruction policies as well as setting the terms of the debate about citizenship and belonging to Britain in ways that continue to echo through arguments about immigration and employment today (Amin 2012). Although these years predate the wholesale decline of manufacturing employment in the United Kingdom, they mark the early years of women’s rising participation in service employment and my example—nursing—is a key part of caring labor.

The immediate postwar years were perhaps those when the United Kingdom was the most open to potential migrants when a spirit of equality informed the 1948 Immigration Act, and the humanitarian response to the crises of displacement during and after the war in Europe meant that several countries were prepared to offer asylum to homeless and stateless people. However, this humanitarianism was modified by a strong element of economic necessity, as workers were needed to aid the postwar reconstruction effort and to replace white British women who, in large numbers, left the workplace as the war ended. In 1945, as the British government began to consider migrant women as a potential labor force, there were three main sources of potential workers, relatively easily available to the British state and to prospective employers. The attitude toward the acceptability of women of different origins by the government, employers, and patients for different types of employment provides a clear illustration of the intersection of nationality, gender, and skin color in the production of difference.

The first group of potential workers consisted of refugees and displaced people who were homeless and often stateless as a consequence of the upheavals in Europe between 1939 and 1945. There were large numbers of people in displaced persons camps in Germany who were anxious not to return to homelands that had been transferred into Soviet hands (Tannahill 1958). These camp inmates, many from the former independent Baltic States, had few, if any, connections with Britain and no rights of citizenship. Although they were white Europeans, they were aliens by virtue not only of their legal

Table 3

*Entrants to the United Kingdom under the Baltic Cygnet and Westwood Ho! Schemes, 1946–49*

Nationality	Men	Women
Ukrainian	16,210	4,720
Polish	9,351	4,667
Latvian	9,706	2,126
Yugoslav	9,220	972
Estonian	2,891	1,223
Lithuanian	4,763	969
Hungarian	2,152	322
Czechoslovak	1,144	192
Romanian	652	148
Bulgarian	86	—

Source: adapted from Tannahill (1958, 139, tbl. 1)

10 status but their language, religion, and cultural background. As I noted above, they were recruited by the British state as European Volunteer Workers (EVWs)—a term that replaced displaced persons, which was regarded as pejorative by British officials. The switch in terminology had the effect of transforming camp residents' own sense of their identity as political refugees into the official status of economic migrants. This decision was not without precedent. During the 1930s, for example, permits under the Aliens Order, the mechanism controlling immigration, were given on a reasonably generous basis, for female domestic helpers from Austria and Germany. Young Jewish women who were essentially political refugees entered Britain through this mechanism. Between 1946 and 1950, 17,500 young women were recruited to work in Britain (see Table 3), initially as domestic workers in hospitals and in the textile industry, although a sizeable proportion of the former group qualified as nurses after fulfilling their required period as an EVW (typically three years).

The second group of prospective workers to contribute to Britain's postwar reconstruction was from a more traditional source—Ireland—and in total numbers far outweighed the movement into Britain of displaced persons/EVWs. Although there had been a long-established tradition of migration across the Irish Sea in the pre-World War II period, at the end of the war, Irish citizens were particularly encouraged to migrate to Britain and, despite being aliens, were given all the privileges of citizenship.<sup>1</sup> In each of the years between 1946 and 1962, approximately 50,000 to 60,000 Irish men and women entered Britain for the first time and began to search for work (Kearney 1990). The third source of prospective workers lay in the Commonwealth dominions. As the territories of what became commonly designated the Old Commonwealth (Australia, New Zealand, and Canada) were recruiters rather than sources of white British workers, attention turned to the colonial citizens of color in the *New Commonwealth* countries, especially, in the early postwar years, residents in the Caribbean, as a potential source of new employees. The migration of colonial citizens began slowly in the immediate postwar period. Between 1948 and 1952, for example, between 1,000 and 2,000 people entered Britain each year. This was followed by a steady and rapid rise until 1957, when 42,000 migrants from the New Commonwealth, mainly from the Caribbean entered (Table 4). The

<sup>1</sup> In a move without precedent, under the 1948 British Nationality Act, Irish citizens were to be regarded as neither British subjects nor aliens, but rather as Irish citizens with all the legal rights of British subjecthood.

Table 4

*The Caribbean-Born Population in Great Britain, 1951–71*

Year	Total
1951	17,218
1961	173,659
1966	330,780
1971	304,070

By the 1960s just under half of Caribbean-born migrants were women, after male domination in the previous decade. Source: the National Census of Population, various dates.

numbers declined by almost a half in the two succeeding years, but by 1960, the numbers had increased again to 58,000, and then in 1961, the numbers more than doubled in anticipation of the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act that then restricted opportunities for entry (Fryer 1984; Phillips and Phillips 1998). Although this latter group of migrants consisted of British citizens, they were to find themselves regarded by the British population as foreign, as other, as colored and so as less eligible Britons (Gilroy 1987). Indeed in the official papers discussing Caribbean migration, potential recruits were labeled colored colonial labor, and from 1962 onward people from the Caribbean increasingly were restrained by the state from exercising their right to independent migration and residence.

While all three groups were valued as economic migrants because of their potential contributions to the British economy, there were clear differences in how they were recruited. The former and the latter groups—the EVWs and New Commonwealth migrants—were attracted to Britain through recruitment drives, while the Irish migrants moved on an individual and independent basis. The first group—the EVWs—were aliens and yet were regarded by the British state as fellow Europeans and as suitable candidates for assimilation. The latter group of potential workers—the Caribbean migrants—were able to enter the United Kingdom with full legal rights as British subjects, and yet they found themselves out of place in Britain and subjected to a racialized discourse of difference, as well as to racial discrimination in the job and housing market (Dorling 2011), that continues to this day. Irish in-migrants fell into an intermediate category. They were neither subjects nor aliens, neither British nor self-evidently foreign, white but bearing all the connotations that being Irish carries in Britain (Curtis 1984; Mac An Ghaill 2000; Walter 2001). However, the entry of Irish migrants, as well as the continental Europeans, was regarded as less contentious than that of Caribbean migrants both by government officials responsible for immigration policy and by the United Kingdom public at large because “they passed an unwritten test of racial acceptability” (Paul 1997, xiii). Even so, as the Irish found, often to their cost, and Baltic migrants drew on as a source of strength and solidarity, their common whiteness and shared European heritage did not preclude their construction as different from the native population and the Othering of their perceived or stereotypical ethnic characteristics. Furthermore, for Irish and continental European women, their construction first and foremost as workers excluded them from the then-prevalent discourse of acceptable femininity that was a key part of the British state’s program of postwar reconstruction with an explicit role for white British women (Lewis 1992).

The positioning and inscription of migrants by the receiving society—both as members of the working class and as separate from it through their construction as different—was achieved by the intersection of a wide range of official and unofficial

practices, discourses, and behaviors; through popular culture and the media; through political practices; and in economic and academic theories. These discourses combined to position migrants as deserving or undeserving, as workers or as refugees, as beneficial to the postwar reconstruction or as interlopers undercutting British wages, as victims of Soviet aggression or as fascist sympathizers, as citizens entering the mother country or as unwanted foreigners, depending on the context in which they were being discussed. In-migrants themselves have to construct new versions of personhood and identity in often difficult circumstances as they have no option but to find ways to adapt to their lives and to attribute value and meaning to the everyday practices and communal institutions within which they find themselves. Although women who came to Britain in the mid to late 1940s from the (former) Baltic states were accepted as migrant workers, in their own view they were refugees and asylum seekers, coming not willingly but reluctantly and with little idea that they would stay for more than a few years before their homelands once again were liberated. This view, as well as their class background, ethnicity, and color, was what distinguished the EVWs from the Caribbean migrants who followed them and from the Irish migrants who came at the same time in these immediate postwar years. Irish migrants had long-established relationships and networks in the United Kingdom and came as willing workers, albeit driven by economic necessity, and were also able both because of geographic proximity and different political circumstances, to return home for visits. EVWs were not able to go home, either for a visit or permanently.

### Baltic Women: Clean, White, and Suitable

For women migrants from all three areas, caring labor in British hospitals was an important source of employment. All three groups were to experience discrimination but also found themselves ranked in a hierarchy of acceptability in which women from the Baltic were at the top, women from the Caribbean at the bottom, and Irish women in an intermediate position. In total, just over 3,700 young EVW women were recruited to work in British hospitals between the end of the war and the end of the decade. Health, cleanliness, virtue, and status were key parts of the selection process. A scheme rather fancifully termed the “Baltic Cygnet” scheme was the first wave of recruitment. Young women from the Baltic States, often from middle-class family backgrounds, were the preferred recruits of the British officials, not only for their health and single status but because they were generally regarded to be superior to women refugees from other nations who were often from less-privileged rural backgrounds. In an internal minute in Ministry of Labour papers, in November 1945, for example, it was noted that potential Polish recruits were mainly of “the peasant woman type” who might fail to meet the high standards of cleanliness needed in British hospitals (Kay and Miles 1992, 48). After a preliminary visit to a number of camps in Germany, it was suggested in 1946 in the *Draft Report on the Recruitment of Baltic Displaced Persons* that “an exceedingly good type of woman is available for hospital domestic work in this country.” The report went on to acknowledge the superior appearance, knowledge of English and general educational standards among young Baltic women, and argued that they would rapidly be assimilated and would constitute “a good and desirable element in our population” (quoted in Kay and Miles 1992, 49–50).

The belief, held by Ministry of Labour officials, in the superiority of Baltic women was also shared by many of the Cygnets themselves, as the interviewees recalled when looking back at their early years in Great Britain. Several of the EVW women sent to jobs in hospitals mentioned their superiority to their codomestic workers, both socially and as employees. They were dismissive of the standards of cleanliness and capacity for work not only of other Eastern European women and women migrants from Ireland (who were

also a significant minority among hospital domestic staff at that time) but also of local working-class women. Class and ethnic differences were significant axes of discrimination. Agnese, one of the women who I interviewed, argued, for example, that it was the class differences, especially as reflected in educational standards, between Latvian EVWs and the local young women who were also employed as domestic staff in Yorkshire hospitals that were the main barrier to social contacts and not the fact that she was a foreign stranger. In her first job, she noted,

There were three Latvians and I think there were three Estonian women and of course the English, they were, they lived there as well. But some were, you know, simple-minded. They were only for domestic work and all that you know and it was a bit, you couldn't hold conversations with many of them. We had nothing in common. I mean I am not a snob but they really knew nothing.

A second interviewee, Eva, confirmed Agnese's belief. "The matron, the sisters, they all told us that we are not really the lower class people. I am sorry to say that, but we couldn't fit in so we kept to ourselves mostly."

These stereotypes were reinforced by the job hierarchy in hospitals. Jobs were carefully graded by status, indicating who was regarded as appropriate to carry out the tasks involved. Working as ward orderlies, one up from the domestics, was what distinguished the EVWs from women doing the rougher work. The potential for hard work, by the young Latvian women who had been identified by the initial recruiters, soon made itself evident among the women who started as hospital domestics. Resigned to menial work, they determined to do it well. "Work is work and whatever we had to do, we done it with greatest pleasures as long as everyone was pleased with our work" (Ida). Matrons, sisters, and other nurses found the Latvian EVWs to be willing workers, and several of them were given additional responsibilities, a form of preferential treatment that was not always welcomed by their English and Irish domestic co-workers. As Eva recalled, "There was some jealousy in the hospital. We were good workers and some of the English girls were jealous. They thought the overseer was giving me preferential treatment."

This belief in the superiority of Baltic women was widely endorsed by hospital matrons who, according to the popular press of the time, found their new domestics to be "first class workers," "keen and enthusiastic" (*Evening Standard* October 5, 1946, quoted in Kay and Miles 1992, 51). A more material recognition of these women's qualities and standards of education lay in encouragement to train as nurses once the agreement of the National Advisory Council on Nurses and Midwives had been secured. Even then, however, these young women had to demonstrate that they were deserving. Here Milda describes the way in which her social acceptability was established before she was deemed an acceptable recruit into the nurse training program.

I applied for nursing and the matron asked me to go and live with her for a few months before she would accept me for training. I think now she wanted to check my social graces, see if I was a suitable type of girl!

### Caribbean Recruits: Less Eligible than Other Women

British hospitals had relied on the recruitment of foreign-born women as nurses before the establishment of the National Health Service (NHS), and Ireland was a traditional source of labor supply. In the postwar period, however, the British government began to look elsewhere. As the numbers of former camp residents declined, the Caribbean became a potential pool of labor, both for the newly established NHS as well as other

sectors. Between 1951 and 1961, the number of people living in the United Kingdom who had been born in the Caribbean increased from just over 17,000 to almost 174,000 (men and women). The government, however, was less welcoming to these migrants than to the EVWs. Although thousands of men and women had been recruited into the war effort, not only as members of the armed services but also as workers in munitions and other factories, they had been regarded as inferior to white workers and were expected to return to the Caribbean at the end of the war. The potential establishment of a permanent colored (the dominant term then) population in the United Kingdom was seen as problematic. The attitudes about the lesser eligibility of Caribbean migrants, despite their Commonwealth origins, which had marked black workers as inferior during the war, continued to permeate the discursive construction of Caribbean migrants throughout the postwar decades, especially in the early years. The 1953 *Report of the Working Party on Coloured People Seeking Employment in the United Kingdom* alleged that African Caribbean in-migrants found work difficult to obtain because of their “low output . . . high rate of turnover . . . irresponsibility, quarrelsomeness and lack of discipline.” (quoted in Paul 1997: 140) In the officials’ eyes, Caribbean workers were constructed as less suitable workers, than their white peers As Paul (1997: 143) also noted, “ ‘Coloured’ women were described in official documents as ‘slow mentally.’ ” However, this did not preclude their recruitment as nurses, although they were directed into a lower-status training program (as State Enrolled nurses [SEN]) than other nurses, a two- rather than three-year program (as State Registered nurses [SRN]), which then restricted promotion prospects for the rest of their careers.

Throughout the 1950s, race and ethnicity were key factors in initial restrictions in training, leading to a permanent stratification in the nursing labor force in which nurses of color were, mainly, at the bottom. Further, in everyday practices on the wards, foreign-born nurses from the Caribbean were subjected to stereotypical and normative assumptions about their attributes and skills from colleagues, managers, and patients, which further affected their opportunities to progress within the NHS. Here is Brie, who came to Britain from Trinidad to take up a training place in a hospital in the north of England in the early 1950, explaining the discrimination she found existed in the recruitment process.

I went to high school and did my, it wasn’t GCSEs [General Certificate of Secondary Education] in those days, it was GCEs [General Certificate of Education], wasn’t it?<sup>2</sup> I think it was, yeah. . . . I just wanted to get out. And they were asking for nurses to come to England and I applied. And it must have been through an agency and I just applied and went for an interview and did all the bits that they’re supposed to, you’re supposed to do and was successful.

She explained that she then had to organize her own passage:

I think I had to do everything. I had to get my passport. I remember, the only thing I really can remember, is going down to the police station to get my fingerprints and also I had to go to the doctor’s to make sure that I wasn’t pregnant when I left. I had to find money for the fare. To pay my fare, I think my mum had to get a . . . , because I came by ship and that was two weeks. I think my mum had to ask my uncle for the money. . . . When I arrived (at a small town near Manchester), I was absolutely terrified, I did not want to stay. I always said if I had the money, I would have gone, did a right about-turn.

---

<sup>2</sup> British school leaving certificate is taken at age 16.

She found to her surprise, as she had a good educational background, that she was directed into the less prestigious training route.

When we left Trinidad, we were, we thought we were coming to the student training and then to discover we were doing pupil training and that was, that was annoying, because student was three years, the pupil was two years, but I don't think they told us that at the time. We thought we were doing the SRN, and when we came we were doing the SEN. So that was a little bit of a con trick.

Her experience was not atypical. Like Brie, Georgina, who arrived in London in 1957, aged 19, also presumed that she had been accepted for SRN training.

In those days you were told that you were coming to do your SRN but actually they were really to do enrolled nursing, so we weren't really given the opportunity to do what we came to do and we worked very hard in those days, it was very hard work, missing home and everything else.

She was placed in the SEN program, despite her hopes and misgivings, but found she was unable to challenge this placement. She believed that this restriction was achieved through subterfuge and management dishonesty.

They started us in the professional stream doing nursing and then when we take our exams, even though we passed or failed, it will say that we have failed, so we have got to do our enrolled nursing. Even if you give your 100 percent and you did very well.

She believed it was too difficult to challenge a failed result, even if it was unjustified:

You were very frightened because how many thousands miles away from home so you have to accept what is put in front of you, but you were very disappointed because you were doing two years wasted instead of doing three years with everything.

Georgina noted this tracking into the SEN program was common among all the Caribbean young women who came to train in London: "We all as Caribbean people, black people, I would say, had to go on the enrolled nurse before we go onto our SRN." And she attributed this lack of resistance to their allocation to the shorter training course to cultural submissiveness.

In those days you were very submissive, you were brought up in those days, in the colonial days and I think every one of us, whether you were black or white, you were brought up to respect your elders and to do as you were told, you were so happy to get something to study, all of us, whether you were white or black, that you listened to everything that was done or everything you were told to do, you'd just get on and you did it, you never rebel.

Indeed, she had hoped to extend her training after she returned to nursing from a maternity break and become an SRN, but she recalled the reaction of the Sister when she asked about this possibility.

I started talking to a Sister about starting my SRN and she really put me down and said what did I want to do that for. I will never, ever forget it. It was really hurtful. What did I want to do that for? I'm good as I am, and all this nonsense. And of course when you've got, at that time of your life, when you've got children to take on and somebody says things like that to you, it does knock you back, so I never just started that again.

She remained an SEN right through her working life. “As an SEN, I don’t know what promotion is.”

Nurses from the Caribbean also had to deal with discrimination from other nurses, doctors, and patients. As I stated earlier, interactive work differs from other jobs because of the copresence of the service providers and consumers. Until recently, as Korsczynski (2009) has suggested, the customer/client/patient has been a mysterious absence in studies of service work, in part because of the difficulties of interviewing customers in what are often fleeting encounters. Patients in a hospital are a more captive set of respondents, although there are complicated ethical issues involved in interviewing them, but in a study such as this one—based on the 1950s—reliance on nurses’ recollections of the attitudes and behaviors is all that is available as evidence. Because nursing involves characteristics of empathy, self-sacrifice, and devotion to duty as a central element of the ideology of care (Folbre and Nelson 2000), it is particularly difficult to probe negative experiences among nurses. However, through careful conversations, the existence of, and reasons for, discriminatory behavior on the part of both patients and by colleagues in NHS hospitals began to emerge.

16 Georgina suggested that the division of labor was always arranged to disadvantage minority nurses:

Relative to the other white nurses, they weren’t fair in the way they divided the work, that’s why it was harder, you were the ones that were always given the jobs that weren’t considered to be as nice, like stuck in the sluice room, like tidy the sluice room and all that kind of thing.

And we always had to make the tea for the doctors, I used to hide when it was time, that was something I really resented. I did not like making the tea for anybody.

Brie explained that patients also often treated black nurses without respect but that she tried to disregard their behavior: “They can be nasty, call you names and stuff like that, but, as I say, you’ve just got to let it go.”

Georgina also recalled racist treatment:

When I first started coming in the country and was nursing, the older patient was not used to black people so they were very nasty, they will take their poo (faeces) and throw at you or call you black and whatever and things like that, but you look beyond that because you know what you want out of your life eventually.

Skin color also maps onto authority, or to patients’ belief about professional expertise as Jasmine, also from Jamaica explained: “Like some patients, because you’re black, they don’t think you are as qualified or have the same experience, so when you go to do something they doubt you.”

Less unacceptable was discrimination by doctors. Brie explained that in her opinion

To this present day, I find the doctors have no respect, as a black nurse. Absolutely none. They would bypass you and maybe talk to somebody else who’s more junior to you than actually speak to you. I just had to learn to live with it.

Both individual nurses and the management in the 1950s did not take positive actions to end discriminatory talk and behavior, instead seeming to accept that discrimination was so commonplace, it was just part of the job for nurses of color. Institutional or formal channels of complaint were seldom available in the 1950s, but informal strategies of support and, on occasion, resistance to discriminatory acts developed among nurses of

color. As Scott (1985) has argued, among oppressed minorities, a range of strategies of everyday resistance or what he termed the weapons of the weak are observable. Research in a range of different service sector workplaces (see, e.g., Fleming and Spicer 2002) has documented the importance of these strategies, which include back chat and bitching (Sotirin 2000), going slow, and taking breaks. Among the nurses from the Caribbean, a range of covert and overt strategies or forms of resistance, such as laughing, joking, and gossiping, helped them to survive. Unable, in most cases, to challenge their restriction to SEN training and consequently to achieve recognition and promotion, these women took pleasure and pride in doing their work well and developed networks of mutual support. This ethic of a proper professionalism was perhaps the reason for the surprising lack of resentment among the interviewees. Instead, there was a sort of resigned acceptance. Nevertheless, Jasmine described how, throughout her career, she felt that she had to be “smarter and quicker than the white nurses” as “they would be given a higher post over you, no matter what, but you had to be quicker.”

### Irish Nurses: “Fools, Flirts, and the Irish,” but White

While Caribbean nurses experienced forms of overt racism from co-workers, as well as their patients, in the 1950s, nurses from Eire were not immune to similar mechanisms that channeled them into inferior positions in the occupational hierarchy and everyday practices that drew on stereotypical discursive constructions of Irish women’s inferiority. Irish women, of course, had a different history of attachment and antipathy to Britain, a longer history of migration, and white skins, and they were able, because of the relatively short distances between Ireland and Britain, to keep in touch with their families in ways that were not possible for Caribbean migrants. These were the days before cheap flights and phone calls. Walter (2001), in her study of the position of Irish migrants in Britain, noted that the tendency in studies of racialization to rely on a black/white dichotomy means the ways in which the Irish are racialized in Britain are often ignored. She captures their ambivalent position in the term *outsiders inside* in which white skins and English-speaking constructs Irish migrants as the same as the white British, whereas the history of English colonization, and religious differences are the basis of a racist Othering that builds on stereotypical characteristics from a fey romanticism, and excessive nationalism, to a fondness for alcohol (Hickman 1995) to justify an argument about racial inferiority. These stereotypes are also gendered in which the dichotomous construction of women as the mother and the whore, distinguish Irish women as at the same time the mother of the nation and of the family, and as sexually lax and/or overly fecund (Johnson 1995). In a reverse stereotype, young, single Irish women, traveling alone to England after the war, were often seen as in moral danger from the vice and temptations that supposedly were common in British cities, especially London. Ryan (2007) has documented the ways in which Irish newspapers in the interwar years represented England as a whole as one big, bad foreign city. In the 1950s, little had changed as families warned their daughters of what might face them in Britain.

Aileen, a young Irish woman who moved to Southampton to train as a nurse in 1951 was more fortunate than Brie, Georgina, Jasmine, and other Caribbean nurses as she understood the difference between the two training pathways and insisted on training as an SRN. Other young women were not so fortunate and were channeled into the SEN pathway.

Anna who migrated to London from Eire with her sister in the 1950s explains:

What happened was we went along to the interview and because we didn’t have the education qualifications that they wanted, you had to do an entrance test and after the entrance test was

over, they suggested enrolled nurse training. . . . we both did our SEN training together then with other people . . . There was actually a very large Irish community and religious community as well at the hospital that we trained at, so really it was basically like being home from home.

Although Aileen took the SRN route, nevertheless she found herself negatively stereotyped as a member of what she herself referred to as “the feckless Irish.” On her first day, she asked to move into the nurses’ home a day before her peers, which was met by this response from the matron: “You Irish are always coming along wanting somebody to put a roof over their heads—the last Irish person I had was a man and he got drunk and he was arrested.” And I said, “well, I don’t get drunk, matron, beyond the odd glass of sherry, so that is unlikely to be an issue.”

18 She also found the nursing staff relied on stereotypical attributes to position Irish nurses as inferior. As Aileen remarked, “the senior staff, they would be quite . . . and they used to say, “the fools, the flirts, the failures and the Irish!” But it never did us any harm, we didn’t feel insulted, not really.” The “not really” seems to indicate a permanent feeling of hurt. Like the Caribbean nurses, women from Eire also found themselves doing the heavy and dirty work: “We did the cleaning, . . . we kept everything clean as we went along, we cleaned bedpans and toilets and everything; We had to serve meals and keep patients comfortable with a blanket bath, all the kind of things . . . we did loads of lifting, absolutely lifting and moving, we tried to do it as well as we could.”

Interestingly, in a final reflection, Anna referred to the hierarchy in nursing based on skin color and nationality. Although she claimed that, “I never thought just because I was Irish, I was treated any differently at work,” she then suggested that perhaps she was seen as different but that the basis of comparison was between Irish and Caribbean nurses.

I think sometimes because I was white, people expected that you were doing something different things. I remember when I was doing the obstetrics course and it was in East London, it was for enrolled nurses and it was usually West Indian or African nurses that did it and I remember being mistaken for a midwife, “why would you think I was a midwife?” and they said “usually all the Irish girls do their midwifery” and I said “no, I’m not doing midwifery.” It was only years afterwards I was thinking I wonder if it was because I am white. I didn’t really think of it at the time.

## Conclusions

My aim here has been to make a case for a labor geography that is more attentive to the ways in which embodied social attributes and stereotypical assumptions about their significance—the ways in which superiority and inferiority, rationality, or caring, for example—map onto the labor market in the production of a hierarchy of jobs, the status, and the income that they confer, and the suitability of different sectors of the population to fill these positions. It is important, as Gilroy (1993, 2010) has noted, to understand the construction of labor forces and their connections to diaspora populations within a theoretical framework that connects their formation and subjectivities to the movements of capital, labor, and commodity flows that link the global economy to the local but that also address the performativity of identity. The significance of the embodied performance of class, ethnicity, and gender is crucial in service economies. I suggest that a labor geography that is attentive to the consciousness and identity of workers, to their everyday embodied experiences, and to the connections between home, family, and community, and the sites and locations of caring labor, as well as the larger-scale movements of capital and labor, will produce deeper explanations of both contemporary and historical patterns of economic change. Working at the small-scale, collecting

narratives, listening to workers, and observing social interactions in the workplace will provide rich detail to support arguments about, *inter alia*, new gender regimes, new welfare regimes, or even new forms of capitalism, if these are identifiable.

Feminist historians and geographers have long argued for the significance of women's domestic labors in capitalist economies—the work in the home that was too often left invisible and yet, as feminist scholars have argued, has shaped the processes of capitalist accumulation and distribution. Many of these labors, as I have argued here, have now moved out of the home, into the market and the cash nexus, although many also remain in the home, in what was once termed by Rice (1939) “the small dark workshop” of the home, ignored by theorists and politicians alike. Women of color, women migrants, working-class white women all labor in these dark workshops, now more commonly for wages and in the homes of others, mainly middle-class, women, rather than, or as well as, in their own homes. This servant class, significant in the earlier centuries of industrialization, was assumed by many economic historians to have vanished in the twentieth century but it is now clear that it has reemerged. As the economist Green noted, there has been “a return to servant occupations there to pack bags, clean floors, secure property—a renaissance that mocks earlier expectations that the servant class had disappeared in the first part of the twentieth century” (2005, 6). What is significant for labor geographers is the changing spatial patterns and connections as this renaissance produces new geographies. For many women who are providing commodified domestic care, the spatial connections between their own homes and the institutions, firms, hospitals, care homes, and the individual homes of others in which they are employed increasingly are distanced. Migrant women, who move across international boundaries, now leave their own homes behind and as distant strangers perform intimate caring and body work for and on their employees, clients, or patients—what the feminist poet Rich (1985, 212) nicely termed “the geography closest in,” as well as the low paid and theoretically neglected, “dirty work” associated with caring for the bodies of others. New relations and new geographies of dependence, exploitation, belonging, and citizenship are emerging, in which embodied social identities, performativity, and the intersections of stereotypical assumptions by employers, workers, and consumers are a critical element of understanding labor market change and patterns of labor market segregation in different parts of the market and in different locations, at a variety of spatial scales. The new connections between class, gender, and ethnicity in Europe as a consequence of the expansion of the European Union to 28 members, for example, demands attention as the connections between population flows, the regulation of migration, public sector austerity programs, hardening public attitudes toward migrants, and differential economic growth are leading to new divisions of labor at different spatial scales across Europe. In the United Kingdom, for example, the multiple construction of whiteness is taking on a new significance as white migrants from the European Union, in a society in which racism and Islamophobia is dispiritingly evident, replace earlier postcolonial migrants of color as the preferred low-wage employees in many sectors.

Taking seriously the intersection of class, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and skin color also challenges traditional notions of class and of class struggle, and may lead to a richer understanding of inequity as well as the basis for building stronger alliances across social divisions. New technologies, for example, are reshaping older notions of class loyalty and as Kessler-Harris (2007, 11) has argued “our most pressing issues—escalating migration across national borders, shifting labor market structures, competing interests of family and wage work, and sustaining civil liberties and protecting human rights—are far more susceptible to gender than to class analysis.” What is clear is that the large-scale entry of women into the labor market, the reconfiguration of the connections between

class and gender, and the paradox of change and continuity demand new theories of labor market transformation and new policy instruments. Further exploration of the extent to which new forms of neoliberal capitalism still needs, or makes space for, unpaid labor, undertaken in the social relations of affection and mutual obligation, is essential. Here feminist philosopher Fraser (2009, 2013) has initiated an important debate about the extent to which capitalism can be “commodified all the way down” as it were, a debate to which labor geographers might be well placed to contribute. Reading across debates and across disciplines will, however, be essential. In a powerful argument for cross-disciplinary work, Ward (2007) suggested that labor theorists working in economics, sociology, industrial relations, and geography had a good deal to learn from each other. I hope I have shown here that placing feminist theory in the mix is also important.

20 My focus here has been on women’s participation in caring labor, showing how differences between women have produced a hierarchy in which typically women of color, especially new migrants, are less eligible than white and *native* women for certain types of employment (and the arguments stems beyond the caring labors discussed here). Gender and ethnicity are not only organizational categories, but they are also normative devices in a relational process that influences ideas about what is and what is not acceptable behavior, as well as appropriate types of employment, and so they are mechanisms that regulate the goals and aspirations of women. Similar connections between gender, ethnicity, class, and appropriate employment also affect men’s attitudes and ideas about acceptable work, and so they influence the production of difference and lifetime opportunities for men as well. In the seven decades since the end of the war, the transformation of the labor market has had a radical effect on the lives of men, not only cutting labor market participation rates in the United Kingdom from over 90 percent of the working age male population to about 75 percent, but also opening up new class divisions in which working-class men and women have more in common in terms of incomes, precarity, and job segregation than they did seventy years ago. Highly educated women with professional qualifications, on the other hand, have a career trajectory more similar to that of many men, although in the United Kingdom, and elsewhere, a gender income gap remains evident. Here the paradox of change and continuity is restructuring the intersection of class and gender relations in ways that alter older patterns of labor market segregation and inequality. Close attention to arguments about intersectionality will enhance debates about labor market change and new geographies of employment.

## References

- Adkins, L. 2005. The new economy: Property or personhood. *Theory, Culture and Society* 22:111–30.
- Amin, A., ed. 1994. *Post-Fordism: A reader*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Amin, A. 2012. *Land of strangers*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Asheim, B., and Hansen, H. 2009. Knowledge bases, talents and contexts: On the usefulness of the creative class approach in Sweden. *Economic Geography* 85:425–42.
- Bradley, H. 1989. *Men’s work, women’s work*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bauder, H. 2006. *Labour movement: How migration regulates labour markets*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bauman, Z. 1998. *Work, consumerism and the new poor*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.
- Beck, U. 2000. *The brave new world of work*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Boltanski, L., and Chiapello, E. 2005. *The new spirit of capitalism*. London: Verso.
- Bonnett, A. 2000. *White identities: Historical and international perspectives*. London: Prentice-Hall.

- Bryson, J., and Daniels, D. 2007. *The handbook of service industries*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.
- Bryson, J., Daniels, P., and Warf, B. 2004. *Service worlds: People, organisations, technologies*. London: Routledge.
- Burawoy, M. 1979. *Manufacturing consent*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Butler, J. 1990. *Gender trouble*. London: Routledge.
- . 1993. *Bodies that matter*. London: Routledge.
- Carnoy, M. 2000. *Sustaining the new economy: Work, family and community in the information age*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Castells, M. 2000. Materials for an exploratory theory of the network society. *British Journal of Sociology* 51:5–22.
- Castree, N., Coe, N., Ward, K., and Samers, M. 2004. *Spaces of work: Global capitalism and geographies of labour*. London: Sage.
- Coe, N., Johns, J., and Ward, K. 2011. Variegated global expansion: Internationalisation strategies in the global staffing industry. *Geoforum* 42:61–70.
- Coe, N., Jones, K., and Ward, K. 2012. The business of temporary staffing: A developing research agenda. *Geography Compass* 4:1055–68.
- Cohen, R. 2008. *Body work, employment relations and the labour process*. An unpublished paper, University of Warwick, on file with author.
- Collins, P. H. 2000. *Black feminist thought*. New York: Routledge.
- Connolly, S., and Gregory, M. 2007. Women and work since 1970. In *Work and pay in 20th century Britain*, ed. N. Crafts, I. Gazeley, and A. Newells, 142–77. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cox, R. 2006. *The Servant Problem: Domestic employment in a global economy*. London: Tauris.
- Curtis, L. 1984. *Nothing but the same old story: The roots of anti-Irish racism*. London: Information on Ireland.
- Doogan, K. 2009. *New capitalism? The transformation of work*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Dorling, D. 2011. *Injustice: Why social inequality persists*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- du Gay, P. 2003. The tyranny of the epochal: Change, epochalism and organisational reform. *Organisation* 10:633–84.
- Dyer, R. 1998. *White*. London: Routledge.
- Ehrenreich, B. 1984. Life without father: Reconsidering socialist feminist theory. *Socialist Review* 73:48–57.
- Ehrenreich, B. and Hochschild, A. (eds) 2003. *Global Woman: Nannies, maids and sex workers in the new economy*. London: Granta.
- England, K., ed. 1996. *Who will mind the baby? Geographies of childcare and working mothers*. London: Routledge.
- Fleming, P., and Spicer, A. 2002. Workers' playtime? Unravelling the paradox of covert resistance in organisations. In *Management and organisation paradoxes*, ed. S. Clegg, 65–85. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Florida, R. 2004. *The rise of the creative class and how it is transforming work, leisure, community and everyday life*. New York: Basic Books.
- Folbre, N., and Nelson, J. 2000. For love or money—or both? *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 14:123–40.
- Frankenberg, R., ed. 1997. *Displacing whiteness: Essays in social and cultural criticism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Fraser, N. 2009. Feminism, capitalism and the cunning of history. *New Left Review* 56:97–117.
- . 2013. Between marketization and social protection: Resolving the feminist ambivalence. In *Fortunes of Feminism*, ed. N. Fraser, 227–41. London: Verso.
- Freeman, B. 2000. *High tech and high heels in the global economy*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Fryer, J. 1984. *Staying power*. London: Pluto.
- Gill, R. 2002. Cool, creative and egalitarian? Exploring gender in project-based new media work in Europe. *Information, Communication and Society* 5:70–89.
- . 2011. Sexism reloaded, or it's time to get angry again. *Feminist Media Studies* 11:61–71.

- 22 Gilroy, P. 1987. *There ain't no black in the Union Jack*. London: Routledge.
- . 1993. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and double consciousness*. London: Verso.
- . 2010. Planetarity and cosmopolitics. *British Journal of Sociology* 61:620–26.
- Goetz, A. 1982. *Farewell to the working class*. London: Pluto.
- Gottfried, H. 2013. *Gender, work and economy: Unpacking the global economy*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Green, F. 2005. *Demanding work: The paradox of job quality in the affluent economy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Hall, S. 1990. Cultural identity and diaspora. In *Identity, community, culture, difference*, 392–402., ed. J. Rutherford. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Hardt, M., and Negri, A. 2000. *Empire*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- Herod, A. 2001. *Labor geographies*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Hickman, M. 1995. *Religion, class and identity*. London: Avebury.
- Hochschild, A. 1983. *The managed heart: The commercialisation of human feeling*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 2003. *The commercialisation of intimate life: Notes from home and work*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Johnson, N. 1995. Cast in stone: Monuments, geography and nationalism. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 13:51–65.
- Kay, D., and Miles, R. 1992. *Refugees or migrant workers? European volunteer workers in Britain, 1946–51*. London: Routledge.
- Kearney, R, ed. 1990. *Migrations: The Irish at home and abroad*. Dublin: Wolfhound Press.
- Kessler-Harris, A. 1982. *Out to work: A history of wage-earning women in the United States*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kessler-Harris, A. 2007. *Gendering labour history*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Korsczynski, M. 2009. The mystery customer: Continuing absences in the sociology of service work. *Sociology* 43:952–67.
- Krugman, P. 2013. Unprecedented austerity, op ed feature “the conscience of a liberal.” *New York Times*, December 12.
- Leidner, R. 1993. *Fast food, fast talk*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lewis, J. 1992. *Women in Britain since 1945*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Mac an Ghaill, M. 2000. The Irish in Britain: The invisibility of ethnicity and anti-Irish racism. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 26:137–47.
- Markusen, A. 2006. Urban development and the politics of a creative class: Evidence from a study of artists. *Environment and Planning A* 38:1921–40.
- McCall, L. 2005. The complexity of intersectionality. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30:1771–802.
- McDowell, L. 2005. *Hard labour*. London: UCL Press.
- . 2008. The new economy, class condescension and caring labour: Changing formations of class and gender. *Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* 16:150–65.
- . 2009. *Working bodies: Interactive service employment and workplace identities*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- . 2013. *Working lives: Gender, migration and employment in Britain, 1945–2007*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- McDowell, L., Batnitzky, A., and Dyer, S. 2007. Division, segmentation and interpellation: The embodied labours of migrant workers in a Greater London hotel. *Economic Geography* 83:1–25.
- . 2008. Internationalisation and the spaces of temporary labour: The global assembly of a local workforce. *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 46:750–70.
- Mills, C. W. 1953. *White collar work: The American middle classes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ong, A. 1999. *Flexible citizenship: The cultural logics of transnationality*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Paul, K. 1997. *Whitewashing Britain: Race and citizenship in the postwar era*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

- Peck, J. 2001. *Workfare states*. New York: Guilford Press.
- . 2005. Struggling with the creative class. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 29:740–70.
- Phillips, M., and Phillips, T. 1998. *Windrush: The irresistible rise of multi-ethnic Britain*. London: HarperCollins.
- Pratt, A. 2008. Creative cities: The cultural industries and the creative class. *Geografisks Annaler Series B* 90:107–17.
- Pratt, G. 2004. *Working feminism*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- . 2012. *Families apart: Migrant mothers and the conflicts of labor and love*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Rich, A. 1985. Notes towards the politics of location. In *Women, feminist identity and society in the 1980s*, ed. M. Diaz-Diocaretz and I. Zavala, 1–12. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Rifkin, J. 1995. *The end of work*. New York: Tarcher.
- Roediger, D. 1999. *The wages of whiteness: Race and the making of the American working class*. London: Verso.
- . 2005. *Working towards whiteness: How America's immigrants became white*. New York: Basic Books.
- Roediger, D., and Esch, E. 2012. *The production of difference: Race and the management of labor in U.S. history*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rowbotham, S. 1999. *A century of women: The history of women in Britain and the UAS in the twentieth century*. London: Penguin.
- Ryan, L. 2007. Who do you think you are? Irish nurses encountering ethnicity and constructing identity in Britain. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30:416–38.
- Sassoon, D. 2010. *One hundred years of socialism: The west European left in the twentieth century*. London: I B Taurus.
- Scott, J. 1985. *Weapons of the weak: Everyday strategies of peasant resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Sennett, R. 1998. *The corrosion of character: The personal consequences of work in the new capitalism*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- . 2006. *The culture of the new capitalism*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Skeggs, B. 2004. *Class, self, culture*. London: Routledge.
- Sotirin, P. 2000. “All they do is bitch, bitch, bitch”: Political and interactional features of women’s office talk. *Women’s Studies in Communication* 23:19–25.
- Spring Rice, M. 1939. *Working class wives: Their health and conditions*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.
- Standing, G. 2011. *The precariat: The new dangerous class*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Tannahill, J. 1958. *European volunteer workers in Britain*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.
- Theodore, N., and Peck, J. 2002. The temporary staffing industry: Growth imperatives and the limits to contingency. *Economic Geography* 78:462–93.
- Walby, S. 1997. *Gender transformations*. London: Routledge.
- Walter, B. 2001. *Outsiders inside: Whiteness, place and Irish women*. London: Routledge.
- Ward, K. 2007. Thinking geographically about work, employment and society. *Work, Employment and Society* 21:265–76.
- Williams, C. 2006. *Inside toyland: Working, shopping and social inequality*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Wolkowitz, C. 2006. *Bodies at work*. London: Sage.
- Wilson, E. 1992. *The Sphinx in the city*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Wright, M. 2007. *Disposable women: And other myths of global capitalism*. London: Routledge.