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A Long Day's Work: The Trucking Industry and the Drivers Who Keep It Moving

By

Eric Balcom

Dissertation

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

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in the

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of the

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2023

**Abstract: A Long Day's Work: The Trucking Industry and the Drivers Who Keep It Moving**

This dissertation explores the trucking industry and the experiences of truck drivers. Specifically, it investigates the current discourse surrounding the truck driver shortage and the reasons why drivers continue to work long hours and endure challenging working conditions. Drawing on both quantitative and qualitative research methods, the study analyzes industry data, conducts surveys and interviews with drivers, and examines existing literature and policy documents.

The research findings suggest that the truck driver shortage is not solely due to a lack of qualified drivers, but rather is a result of various systemic issues within the industry, such as low pay, long working hours, and poor working conditions. Furthermore, the study reveals that truck drivers continue to work under such conditions due to financial necessity and a lack of alternative job opportunities.

Overall, this dissertation provides a comprehensive analysis of the trucking industry and the experiences of its workers. It sheds light on the underlying factors contributing to the truck driver shortage and the reasons why drivers work as hard as they do. The study also offers insights into potential solutions for addressing these issues, including policy reforms and improved working conditions. The findings contribute to the broader literature on labor and employment in the transportation sector and have practical implications for policymakers, industry leaders, and workers alike.

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*“I don't like work--no man does--but I like what is in the work--the chance to find yourself. Your own reality--for yourself not for others--what no other man can ever know. They can only see the mere show, and never can tell what it really means.” Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness*

## **History and Positionality**

I began working at the age of fourteen as bicycle mechanic in one of my local bike shops. My coworkers were largely college-aged guys attending the local university. I worked this job for a couple of years with varying degrees of commitment as one might expect of a teenager. Eventually, I was laid off, probably due to poor performance, which would seem likely. One of my next jobs was working for a local farm doing planting and trimming and other manual tasks related to farm production. This job was full-time, and I was seventeen or so and had more or less dropped out of high school. Eventually my interest in this work fizzled, but simultaneously entered a more self-destructive phase that would last until about twenty-years old. The process of re-grounding myself was a long one and was marked as a transition from one job to the next. First, as a sheet metal fabricator, then a welder, then a truck driver, then finally the oilfield. I remember these transitions shaping me into a worker gradually and each job marking my identity more thoroughly. I suppose this identity formation really began when I worked as welder. My paternal grandfather was a career welder, first in the navy, and then having his own business. I remember him teaching me welding and metal working when I visited him beginning very early in childhood. Additionally, several of my uncles on my father's side were structural iron workers and union members. So, as a welder I began to feel a kinship both with my family members whom I was not very close with, and with a larger body of workers whom I knew to be made of the *stuff* which I idealized. This *stuff* I will return to later. My life was still a little shaky when I

was a welder and though I went so far as to meet with the president of the local iron workers union, I did not feel like I could commit to this life in the way that would not sully the names of my male family members who were well known in the industry. As a result, and seeking greater remuneration, I ended up going to truck driving school.

I was privileged enough to have my parents pay for it. I come from means and no doubt, however far this path was from what my parents wanted for me, it appeared stable and well-paying enough to make it a sound investment. To add to this, my wife at the time was pregnant with our son, so the prospect of stable and well-paying employment was not only desired but necessary. After I graduated the four-week long course and received my license I began work immediately hauling feed for cattle from Northern California to various places in the state as well as over in Nevada. My return load was most commonly an aggregate material that was delivered to the city next to the one in which I lived. The hours were quite long on the road beginning most often at four or five in the morning and returning home by seven or eight at night. This was five to six days a week, and eventually I began to tire of this schedule. To earn better money meant working longer and more often, and this was a game I was not ready to play at this time at least in this line of work. I suppose also that even though I thoroughly enjoy solitude when exploring the outdoors and traveling, the lonesome work as a truck driver was lacking for me. Following this I continued to drive a truck but for an equipment rental company. The pay was hourly and the hours regular. When I wasn't driving, I worked in the rental yard doing various tasks, which kept my interests up and prevented boredom. Additionally, I had great coworkers and our main focus was finding ways to not work while always appearing to be busy. The end of this period of employment marks the beginning of the most formative period of my life. In March of 2006 I was hired to work for Halliburton Energy Services. There was a yard

in the town just to the north of where I lived, and I was hired ostensibly to drive a truck, but there ended up being much more to this job than I could have imagined and looking back I am still discovering what it did to me.

In 2006, I was twenty-three years old and the extent of my formal education had culminated in getting a high school diploma from our local adult school. I was not uneducated, however, and my issues at school were never based on an ability to do the work. I was resistant to the institution itself and the espoused ideology that one must get an education to be successful. I was intent to disprove this by any means and through any personal struggle it required. In that I was very successful. My parents have a PhD and an EdD, respectively, and had made their careers in various educational systems. The reader may get a sense of where my rebelliousness was inculcated. Nevertheless, I had always read books on all types of subjects and sought out difficult material by which to gain an understanding of things outside my lived world. I had, however, suppressed my intellectual side for years because I felt that it stood at odds with how I actually lived and with whom I worked and socialized. I will jump ahead and say that the oilfield drew out the parts of me which had been incubated my entire life but hitherto I had repressed. Getting back to the story, as soon as I arrived in the oilfield, I knew I was home. This is a grand statement to make and I do not make it unreflexively, as hindsight driven nostalgia. Immediately, I knew that this place, this environment, validated my belief that one could find success in its many forms without having played by the rules of society. I was initiated the same way that everyone is in all work: observation and doing. What makes the oilfield different perhaps from other work is not the pace, the difficulty, the hours, the weather, et cetera, but that all those elements are present on every job. Moreover, the ethic which propelled us forward is grounded in masculinity, accumulation, and competition.

Obviously, many vocational occupations have these elements, and this is not the place to say one is harder, or more masculine, or anything else. The point is that those elements together, in the places where I worked, were greater than the sums of their parts, and that paired with my biography and history shaped me in very permanent ways - negatively and positively. Regardless of how one feels about the oil and gas industry itself, and I do have many negative feelings about it, it is of paramount importance to remember that it is made up of workers. These workers, whose life stories in many cases are much more dramatic and terrible than my own, have found a space in which they have made their lives anew. They derive a meaning from their work through the difficulty, the camaraderie, the pride, and the economic which we cannot dismiss, which this dissertation will address.

This project is a way for me to understand what factors motivate workers and how the work is carried out in an environment that I suspect has many of the same elements of what shaped me into who I am. I would note here that I say this extremely cautiously. I am the archetype of the industrial worker. White and male. This ideal, which has historically been projected, privileges me with wages, access, education, and freedoms. My understanding of meaningful work absolutely differs from those at the different intersections of race, gender, nationality, ability and more. In no way am I suggesting that the meaning I got from the work I did should be accepted by all or anyone, actually, only that I believe in people having the experience of meaningful work and I seek to find the ways this is possible. Manual labor is a register in which I operate and thereby suggest that it is possible to connect with others who also operate in this register. Nevertheless, it is highly likely that the ocean of other differences between us may nullify this shared understanding. Supposing, however, that this understanding can be reached I hope to show, as other authors have done, that work, even alienating and

exploitative work, has a subjectivity to it that workers are making into their own. It is also important to remember, and this I hope to show, that the choices people have to support themselves even in the most industrialized nations are increasingly limited. Opinions are held and policy is made which directly effects the lives on the margins often with the best of intentions but with often deleterious effects.

I hope to elucidate and speak to the ways people make meaning out of work, how and why that is important to them, and what steps and measures can be taken to ensure that this meaning in work remains. All this while simultaneously interrogating the ways we can all work together to improve the conditions which are necessary to their reproduction of the overlapping layers of political, economic, and social life.

## Chapter 1 - Introduction

The trucking industry has claimed for decades that it cannot find enough workers. This narrative of a “truck driver shortage” has lured millions of workers to the industry, garnered hundreds of millions of dollars in public subsidies for training and justified all manner of policy changes. This dissertation uses a range of data to critically examine the claim of labor shortage in the trucking industry. Focusing on agricultural truck drivers in California, it uses ethnographic fieldwork, interviews and surveys with drivers, available government data on the labor market, and historical context to explain how the labor market for truckers works. The work of truck drivers is difficult and the markets for their services are competitive. The industry’s employers have adapted to this situation by shifting much of the risk and cost of the volatility of trucking markets onto workers through unpaid work, long hours spent away from home and subcontracting arrangements. As demands on drivers have increased, their wages have stagnated or declined. In light of these facts, the shortage of workers is better understood as a shortage of good jobs and the understandable response of workers is to exit these jobs and often the industry entirely. Yet, despite the tremendous churn of workers and the decline in their fortunes, many truck drivers remain committed to the job and find meaning their work. Deconstructing the narrative of the truck driver shortage exposes the key processes of contemporary labor markets and reveals the ability of employers to structure the terms of work and dominate public narratives of that work and labor markets, continually reproducing their economic power.

For the past few decades, the trucking industry has been issuing a "the sky is falling" narrative regarding the supposed lack of drivers. This story has been prominently featured in the annual report of the American Trucking Associations (ATA) for several years, where it has been labeled as a "crisis." The report typically includes statistics that suggest a severe shortage of

drivers, such as high turnover rates and an aging workforce. The industry has also stated that the shortage will get worse as the demand for freight transportation continues to increase.

The press has picked up on this narrative and has helped to perpetuate it. News stories and opinion pieces about the supposed driver shortage have appeared in many major media outlets, often citing statistics provided by the ATA or other industry groups. Some of these stories have suggested that the shortage is so severe that it could lead to a disruption of the entire economy, with freight not being moved and shelves in stores going empty. However, some critics have argued that the industry is exaggerating the problem in order to justify lower wages and longer hours for drivers. They point out that there is little evidence to suggest that there is a nationwide driver shortage, and that the industry could improve working conditions and pay in order to attract more workers if it really wanted to.

The trucking industry has presented various reasons for the perceived shortage of truck drivers. One argument is that there has been a demographic shift in the workforce, with the retirement of older drivers and a lack of younger drivers to replace them. Another factor is the increasing regulations and requirements for drivers, such as drug testing, electronic logging devices, and safety regulations, which have raised the entry requirements for the profession. Furthermore, there has been a push to improve the working conditions for drivers, which has increased the cost of hiring and retaining drivers for companies. Additionally, the industry has argued that the perception of trucking as an unattractive and low-paying profession has made it difficult to attract new drivers.

The claim of a truck driver shortage in the US has been a recurring theme for the past few decades, with the industry often citing this as a reason for various issues within the sector. However, recent evidence suggests that the problem may actually lie more in recruitment and

retention of workers rather than an actual shortage. The issue can be traced back to the deregulation of the trucking industry in the late 1970s, which removed many regulatory controls, including price and entry controls that had limited competition and ensured a certain level of job security for truckers. This resulted in a highly competitive market, where companies were forced to cut costs to stay afloat, often leading to a significant decrease in wages, benefits, and working conditions for truckers.

According to Jamie Peck (Peck 1996; Tickell and Peck 1992), the deregulation of the trucking industry was part of the broader neoliberal shift towards deregulation and marketization. In the context of labor and work, marketization refers to the process of turning labor and work into commodities that can be bought and sold in the marketplace. It involves the application of market principles and practices to the organization and regulation of work, such as the introduction of market competition, the measurement of work through performance metrics, and the use of market-based incentives to motivate workers. The competitive pressures unleashed by deregulation resulted in a significant reduction in the "social wage" of non-wage benefits, services, and supports for truckers. This left many truckers without access to essential benefits such as health insurance and retirement plans, leading to a highly precarious and unstable job market. The degradation of working conditions and wages, combined with the loss of non-wage benefits, contributed to the decline in the attractiveness of trucking as a career choice for many workers. Despite the efforts of the industry to blame the driver shortage on demographic shifts, regulations, and drug testing, it appears that the problem may be rooted in the industry's history of low wages and poor working conditions resulting from deregulation.

The push for deregulation was fueled by a number of factors, including concerns about the high cost of regulation, the desire for greater efficiency in the industry, and the belief that



market forces would drive down prices and benefit consumers. The deregulation of the trucking industry, which took place in the United States in the late 1970s and early 1980s, was a significant policy shift that had profound effects on the industry and its workers. The push for deregulation was fueled by a number of factors, including concerns about the high cost of regulation, the desire for greater efficiency in the industry, and the belief that market forces would drive down prices and benefit consumers.

One of the key arguments in favor of deregulation was that it would lead to increased competition, which in turn would drive down prices and improve efficiency. Proponents of deregulation believed that removing government-imposed barriers, such as entry controls and rate regulations, would allow more companies to enter the market and compete for business. This, they argued, would result in lower costs for consumers and greater choice in terms of service providers.

The Motor Carrier Act of 1980, which brought about significant deregulation in the trucking industry, abolished entry controls and allowed carriers to set their own rates. This meant that trucking companies were no longer subject to government-imposed rate regulations, and they had more flexibility in determining their pricing strategies. The removal of entry controls also led to an influx of new carriers into the industry, as companies were no longer required to obtain government approval before starting operations.

While deregulation was intended to promote competition and benefit consumers, its effects on the trucking industry and its workers were complex and far-reaching. On the one hand, deregulation led to increased competition and lower prices, which benefited consumers. However, it also resulted in significant changes in the industry's structure and working

conditions. As more carriers entered the market, competition became intense, and companies had to find ways to cut costs in order to stay competitive.

One of the ways in which companies reduced costs was by cutting wages and benefits for truck drivers. Prior to deregulation, many drivers were unionized and had access to higher wages and better working conditions. However, with increased competition and the removal of rate regulations, carriers sought to lower labor costs to maintain profitability. This led to a decline in wages and job security for many truck drivers, as companies could now hire drivers at lower rates or classify them as independent contractors to avoid providing benefits.

Furthermore, the deregulation of the industry also led to a rise in the prevalence of long-haul trucking and the use of owner-operators. Companies found it more cost-effective to rely on independent drivers rather than employing their own workforce. This shift had implications for the working conditions and job stability of drivers, as many owner-operators faced challenges such as irregular income, high operating costs, and limited access to benefits.

The effects of deregulation on the trucking industry highlight the complex relationship between market forces, government policies, and worker well-being. While deregulation was intended to increase efficiency and benefit consumers, it had significant consequences for the job quality and stability of truck drivers. The push for lower prices and increased competition resulted in a race to the bottom in terms of wages and working conditions. This underscores the importance of considering the social and labor market impacts of deregulation, as well as the need for policies that protect workers and ensure fair and sustainable working conditions in a deregulated environment. Additionally, there was a strong lobbying effort by the trucking industry and its allies to dismantle the regulatory framework that had been in place since the 1930s. This effort was successful, and in 1980, President Carter signed into law the Motor

Carrier Act, which deregulated the trucking industry and removed many of the regulatory barriers that had previously existed. This led to a proliferation of new trucking companies, increased competition, and a downward pressure on wages and working conditions. Adding speed and legitimacy to this process was the already in motion deunionization in the United States.

Deunionization in the United States can be traced back to a number of legal and economic factors. One key legal precedent was the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947, which placed significant restrictions on the ability of unions to organize and engage in collective bargaining. The Act allowed states to pass "right-to-work" laws, which prohibited unions from requiring workers to join or pay dues as a condition of employment. This had a significant impact on the power of unions, as it undermined their ability to collect funds and forced them to represent workers who were not paying members.

Another factor that contributed to deunionization was the rise of globalization and the decline of US manufacturing. As more and more manufacturing jobs moved overseas, unions lost a significant portion of their membership base. This was compounded by the shift towards a service-based economy, which was less unionized than the manufacturing sector. Additionally, the decline of the welfare state and the rise of neoliberalism led to a shift in public attitudes towards unions, with many people viewing them as outdated and unnecessary.

The results of deunionization have been significant for workers. Without the collective bargaining power of unions, many workers have seen their wages stagnate or decline, while benefits and job security have also been eroded. This has led to a rise in precarious work and a growing sense of insecurity among workers. Additionally, deunionization has contributed to the widening income gap between the rich and poor, as workers have less power to negotiate for

better wages and working conditions. This has had a devastating impact on truckers who without these protections have ended up working in “sweatshops on wheels”.

Michael Belzer and Steve Viscelli have contributed significantly to the discourse on the trucking industry and the changes in job quality experienced by truck drivers. Belzer (Belzer 2000) argues that the decline of job quality in the trucking industry is directly linked to the broader neoliberal trend of deregulation and marketization that has taken place in the US economy over the past few decades. The increased competition in the industry led to a pressure on trucking companies to cut costs and reduce wages and benefits for their workers, leading to job insecurity and lower pay for many drivers. Furthermore, Viscelli (Viscelli 2016) notes that the widespread use of independent contracting has allowed trucking companies to avoid providing benefits and job protections to their workers, thereby eroding job quality.

Similarly, Belzer argues that market pressures have contributed to the decline of job quality in the trucking industry. He highlights the ways in which trucking companies have used a range of strategies to cut costs and increase profits, such as misclassifying workers as independent contractors, reducing wages and benefits, and increasing workload. Belzer notes that this trend towards precarious work has had significant impacts on the lives of truck drivers, who are often forced to work long hours for low pay, with few benefits or opportunities for career advancement.

Belzer and Viscelli both contend that the decline of job quality in the trucking industry has had significant impacts on workers, leading to lower wages, fewer benefits, and job insecurity. They highlight the difficulties faced by truck drivers in building long-term careers and earning a stable income. The high turnover rate in the industry, a consequence of lower wages, fewer benefits, and the opportunity for advancement, has made it difficult for drivers to advocate

for better working conditions or to organize for collective action, as many are fearful of losing their jobs or being replaced by cheaper labor. The decline of job quality has also led to a lack of investment in worker training and development, further undermining the long-term prospects of workers in the industry. Ultimately, Belzer and Viscelli's work highlights the importance of understanding the broader economic and social factors that have contributed to the decline of job quality in the trucking industry and the need for concerted efforts to address these issues.

The evidence presented by scholars of work suggests that the trucking industry is characterized by declining job quality and increasing precarity, contrary to the industry's claims of a driver shortage. This is important because it challenges the dominant narrative of the industry and highlights the ways in which the interests of workers and corporations can diverge. From a class theory perspective, this suggests that the interests of capital and labor are inherently in conflict, and that labor is often at a disadvantage in this struggle due to the power dynamics of the market.

The situation in the trucking industry is indicative of broader trends in capitalist labor markets and work. Precarious work and declining job quality are not unique to the trucking industry, but are instead part of a broader transformation of the labor market that has taken place over the past few decades. This transformation has been characterized by the erosion of worker protections and the rise of precarious employment relationships, driven by the pressures of globalization, technological change, and neoliberal policy. From a class theory perspective, this transformation reflects the shifting balance of power between capital and labor, and the ways in which market pressures can undermine the ability of workers to assert their rights and advocate for their interests.

Given this, I set out to research the trucking industry to highlight the importance of understanding the complexities of capitalist labor markets and work, and the ways in which power dynamics can shape the experiences of workers. I looked at the agricultural trucking segment in California to shed light on the experiences of marginalized and precariously employed workers and do research that challenges dominant narratives. By engaging with these issues, I can contribute to a broader understanding of the social and economic structures that shape our lives.

Agricultural trucking in California begins with truckers who haul raw, unfinished crops from the fields in which they are harvested to packinghouses, coolers, and processing facilities. These jobs are typically seasonal, though California's growing season runs throughout the year. The jobs are local and the drivers work long days in two shifts. Once the goods are cleaned, packed, or canned they are then shipped across the country by another set of drivers. These drivers are the ones we commonly think of when we think of truckers. They drive across country, delivery goods; their lives are basically spent in the truck. A further discussion on all the features of these jobs will come later.

The trucking industry has recently been thrust into the public spotlight due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting supply chain crisis. As imports slowed down and people stayed home, the trucking industry saw significant layoffs, only to be followed by a surge in demand for food and other goods, causing rates to skyrocket. This led to public outcry and policy debates, including the Biden trucking action plan and the controversial AB5 law in California.

The pandemic exposed the fragility of the global supply chain and the vital role that truckers play in ensuring the flow of goods and services. It also brought attention to the longstanding issues facing the trucking industry, including the lack of job security, low pay, and

poor working conditions. The supposed driver shortage was seen by some as a result of these issues, rather than a simple lack of workers.

The debates and policies surrounding the trucking industry are indicative of larger issues within the US labor market and economy as a whole. The pandemic has exposed and exacerbated inequalities and precarity within the workforce, with essential workers such as truckers being disproportionately affected. The discussions around the trucking industry highlight the need for systemic change and greater protections for workers in industries that are critical to the functioning of society.

This dissertation will provide a comprehensive understanding of the trucking industry and the broader labor market dynamics that have shaped it. I will discuss the impacts of deregulation, marketization, and the decline of job quality on trucking industry workers, and I will also provide insights into the ways in which class theory and labor market theory can help us understand the complex issues facing workers in the modern era.

Additionally, this dissertation will provide a critical analysis of the ways in which the trucking industry and its stakeholders have framed the issue of the so-called driver shortage. Through a detailed examination of the empirical evidence and the experiences of trucking industry workers, this study will challenge the dominant narratives that have been put forth by the industry and provide a more nuanced understanding of the challenges facing truck drivers today. This dissertation will provide a deeper appreciation for the complexity of the trucking industry and the broader issues facing workers in the global economy.

## Background

In our current political-economy, control and consent are crucial to maintaining the existing power relations between employers and employees. These power relations are often established and maintained through hegemony, which is the process by which dominant groups in society generate consent and shape the beliefs, values, and behaviors of subordinate groups. In the workplace, employers use various managerial mechanisms to assert control and generate consent among workers. However, it is not just these mechanisms that are responsible for control and consent, but also the workers' relationships to their work and to each other. Workers' consent is generated by the way work is organized, the norms and values that are embedded in the work, and the way in which workers are socialized into these norms and values (Burawoy 1979).

As I conducted my research on trucking, I observed these mechanisms at work. Recruitment is one of the structural elements in manufacturing consent (Halpin and Smith 2019). Trucking companies depend on a large pool of workers who are willing to work long hours for low pay and few benefits. This creates a cycle of high turnover, which allows employers to keep wages low and working conditions poor. This makes it difficult for workers to organize and resist, as they are not covered by most labor laws that protect employees' rights to organize and collectively bargain. However, even though workers may consent to the dominant power relations, they may also resist in various ways.

In my interviews with truckers, I found that many of them felt a sense of agency in their work by finding ways to resist the control mechanisms and assert their autonomy. For example, some truckers talked about how they would use their time spent waiting to engage in activities that helped them maintain a sense of independence and personal control. This might include



reading, watching movies, or listening to music. By doing this, they were able to take back some control over their time and their workday.

Another way that truckers resisted control was by skirting safety protocols or taking shortcuts in order to save time or get ahead. For example, some truckers talked about how they would drive longer than legally allowed in order to reach their destination faster, even though they knew it was against the rules. They felt that they needed to do this in order to keep up with the demands of their job and make a living wage. By doing so, they were able to maintain some autonomy and control over their work.

However, despite these forms of resistance, the broader hegemonic forces in society that privilege capital over labor still shape control and consent in the trucking industry. Workers are often at the mercy of their employers, who can set their wages, working conditions, and hours. While truckers may resist these power relations in various ways, the structural elements of the industry make it difficult for them to achieve meaningful change without significant government intervention and regulation. This highlights the importance of examining the tenacious categories (Bourdieu 2005; Kalleberg 2009; Standing 2011) that exist in the trucking industry, which shape the power dynamics between workers and employers and influence the ways in which workers can resist or challenge the existing system.

Bourdieu, Kalleberg, and Standing have identified tenacious categories in the study of labor and work. Bourdieu argues that these categories are shaped by habitus, a set of dispositions that are acquired through socialization and shape how people perceive, experience, and respond to the world around them. Kalleberg identifies categories such as standard employment, nonstandard employment, and self-employment, which are defined by different levels of job security, benefits, and wages. Standing focuses on the emerging category of the precariat, which

is characterized by a lack of job security, low wages, and limited access to benefits. These categories are useful for understanding how different types of work and workers are structured within the labor market and how they are perceived and experienced by individuals. I will analyze both the extensive and intensive phase of recruitment within the constraints of already acquired data and with the addition of a worker survey. Edwards, Doeringer, and Piore (Doeringer and Piore 1975; Gordon, Edwards, and Reich 1982) discuss the concept of intensive and extensive recruitment. They argue that during intensive recruitment, firms focus on hiring workers who are already trained and skilled in specific tasks, whereas during extensive recruitment, firms hire workers who are unskilled or have only general skills and then train them on the job. The authors suggest that the use of intensive recruitment is more prevalent in firms that have established internal labor markets, where workers are promoted from within and where there is a premium placed on specific skills and knowledge. In contrast, firms that rely on extensive recruitment tend to have more fluid labor markets and are more likely to hire workers on a temporary or contract basis. The authors highlight the importance of understanding the different recruitment strategies used by firms in order to better understand the dynamics of the labor market. I will show that referrals play an outsized role in recruitment in this sector. These tenacious categories and recruitment are tied to labor geographies in that ideal-type workers must come from 'some place' if they are not ready made in the immediate spatial milieu of production.

Many aspects, however, of the new economy do ensure that such workers exist everywhere at once but the degree to which they identify in such ways remains to be analyzed. In this vein other aspects of economic geography play an important role in capital's ability to recruit and control workers in this sector (Harvey 2003; Smith 2008). It is generally true, as

scholars and the Contingent Work Survey, a US government sponsored survey that collects data on workers in alternative work arrangements, have shown that most contingent workers do want permanent work, a commodity in its own right at this historical moment. Other firms' ability to provide such permanence will have an upper hand over firms that can offer workers only seasonal work. That seasonal firms have such low entry barriers will continue to allow them to draw up workers from secondary labor. How and when workers move out of their jobs may be a product of how they've been disciplined to the expectations of the job as well as unrealistic expectations about mobility in other sectors of the trucking industry.

## Structure

This dissertation's chapters proceed in the following way. My methods chapter outlines the places and spaces in which I undertook the research for this dissertation. It occurred in two phases which are analytically distinct: one my autoethnographic experience as a trucker, and the other through surveys and interviews with other truckers about their jobs. Chapter III is my literature review where I explore the labor market for truck drivers and its various themes, including labor geography, modes of production, labor markets, precarious labor, labor power and commodification, labor control, and Burawoy's "The Game". In chapter four I delve into Burawoy's concept of "the game of making out". I analyze the trucking industry by examining the ways in which workers in the industry must adapt to the demands of the game and the social relations that underpin it. I argue that the game of making out in the trucking industry is characterized by a lack of control and consent among workers, who are subject to the power dynamics of management and the economic imperatives of the industry. By understanding the game of making out in the trucking industry, I am able to shed light on the experiences of truck drivers and the challenges they face in their work. In chapter five I analyze the trucking industry,

using the concept of turnover to understand the ways in which employers maintain control over workers by relying on a transient labor pool willing to work long hours for low pay and few benefits. This cycle of high turnover keeps wages low and working conditions poor, preventing workers from achieving upward mobility or bargaining power. Additionally, I draw on Erik Olin Wright's concept of a class compromise to explain the difficulty of achieving a compromise between truckers and employers in the United States, given the industry's reliance on spatially divided economic areas for its labor pool, which are often in economic straits. The conclusion seeks to make sense of everything I learned and suggest what may lie ahead for truckers. Finally, the general findings illustrate my findings from the driver surveys and interviews which serve to reinforce the arguments that I've made throughout.

## **Chapter 2 - Methods**

### **Introduction**

Methodologically, studying trucking is difficult. The nature of the job is atomizing, and drivers are spread across the country with very few places in which to engage them as participants. Research on this segment of the labor force has been successful using surveys and interviews at key locations where drivers must stop to drop or load, and through data collected through the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The data for this dissertation was acquired in different ways and at different times. As such, it is separated into two phases.

### **Literature Review**

During this the first phase of research, I became one of the workers I wish to be immersed with so that I could better, “describe their lifestyles, worldviews, and living conditions” (Shah 2017:8). This is what Fine and Hancock call ‘embodied ethnography’, which “demands a new mode of theorizing the body as a tool of inquiry central to what field labor entails. This approach requires one to be a practitioner of an art, craft, or occupation as well as being an ethnographer, unwilling or unable to separate the two” (Fine and Hancock 2017:5). Atkinson and Hammersley suggest that ethnography helps us explore the nature of a social phenomenon; explicit interpretation of the meanings and functions of human actions, the product of which mainly takes the form of verbal descriptions and explanations (Atkinson and Hammersley 1998). By doing participant observation, “I am immersing myself in the social context that I want to study, living like and with the people who are the object of the study, sharing in their daily lives, asking them questions, discovering their hopes and pains, their

worldviews and motivations, in order to develop that ‘vision from within’ that is the prerequisite of comprehension” (Corbetta 2011:3).

Participant observation is egalitarian, the observer and observed are inhabitants of a shared social and cultural world, their cultures are different but equal, they share their humanity. The paradox lies in the presentation and representation of one’s informants, and this is an issue I will address further below (Corbetta 2011:11). Gold expands on a typology of the four types of participant observer roles which exist, participant-as-observer, complete participant, observer-as-participant, and complete observer (Gold 1958). While these should not be considered as mutually exclusive, Atkinson and Hammersley (1998) provide a few insights for how to understand their discreteness or overlap such as what sorts of activities are and are not engaged in by the researcher, how the researcher locates within the group, and how completely the researcher adopts the orientation of insider/outsider. I was a complete-participant. The main difference between complete-participant and participant-as observer is that the latter acknowledges the research relationship between myself and my informants while the former precludes any knowledge of who the researcher is – the researcher in that role is always pretending to be someone they are not. Participant-as-observer research entails both watching and asking questions. Most importantly it seeks to know why people do what they are doing when they are doing it.

Methodologically, as Ouellet points out and was demonstrated in the Hawthorne experiments, participants who are being observed are likely to change their behavior to what they believe the researcher wants to see, and could, in effect, invalidate the research (Ouellet 1994). My experience constitutes the primary source of data, and this provides a basis for comparison with the experiences of others. Ethically, covert research can present its own issues, mainly that,

“it infringes on the moral rights of research subjects” (Spicker 2011:121). This should not be conflated, however with deception where the purpose of the research is misrepresented to the research participants. The question then becomes “whether there is a potential for harm, whether people’s rights are infringed, whether the research is intrusive and what safeguards are needed” (Spicker 2011:127).

To gain an appreciation for my participants experiences and world view researchers need to gain both experiential and practical knowledge, (Fine and Hancock 2017:5) and the results are what Shah calls a revolutionary praxis. Because participant observation is, “a form of production of knowledge through being and action...the process by which theory is dialectically produced and realized in action” (Shah 2017:48). This production of knowledge, Burawoy argues, occurs at the point of the non-discursive, “the unexplicated, unacknowledged, or tacit knowledge which underlies all social interaction” (Burawoy 1998:15). For Shah also, what the researcher gleans from their interactions in the field are those things that are, “left unsaid and demonstrated only through action.” This knowledge of action, which is practical, is in relation to that which is theoretical, and the unfolding of that relationship and those contradictions and discontinuities are the foundations of generative inquiry (Shah 2017:52). From such observation, a fertile dynamic emerges that enables the observer to discover aspects and meanings which are hidden from those who have always belonged to the studied culture (Corbetta 2011:6). This allows for the aggregation of situational knowledge into social processes, and the analysis of these social processes within an existing theoretical frame can be used to refute or deepen an existing theory (Burawoy 2014:16). The use of an existing theory is useful in pointing to what one might choose to observe such as the physical setting, social setting, formal interactions, informal interactions; and interpretations of the social actors (Corbetta 2011:15). Of course, these categories are merely

guides with interplay and tension along their respective borders. Shah gives two reasons why participant observation can be a ‘revolutionary praxis’. First, we are forced to question our assumptions about the world and especially about the world of our informants by living and being with them completely. Second, crucially, is the process of two-way exchange, the democratic sharing of each other’s lives, helping us to unfold the interconnections of history, action, and ideology. Only in this way can we think about how things have changed, remain the same, who holds power, and what can be challenged (Shah 2017:47).

Schwartz and Schwartz argue that participant observation is about processing data and that the data are influenced by the ongoing process of participant observation (Schwartz and Schwartz 1955). The data are necessarily subject to distortion effects such as anxiety and bias of the observer based on their, ‘experience, awareness, and personality. Participant-as-observer research entails both watching and asking questions. Most importantly it seeks to know why people do what they are doing when they are doing it. In the process of doing, the researcher must rely on jotting notes that sufficiently capture the actions as they unfold which includes the researcher’s interpretations as well as their informants’ explanations. Later, the researcher will expand on these jotted notes with as much detail about the event and what was said about it, as well as the researchers opinions about what happened. The participation data is representative of my experiences on the job, and how I came to consent to ‘playing the game. The research also shows why employers choose to hire workers from external, secondary labor markets and engage in flexible and precarious employment arrangements. The survey data provides a contemporary and timely addition of data representing the wages and working conditions of truckers in various segments of the agricultural trucking sector. This research is intended to add empirical observations to the under-theorized nature of seasonal employment and postulates that while



seasonal employment is invariably always going to occur and depends on a reserve army of unskilled workers, that there are employment arrangements that would benefit workers more while still meeting the needs of seasonal jobs. In addition to the seasonal data is the survey data from full-time drivers to address and rebut the claims made by the trucking industry of a trucker shortage.

This research is carried using a variety of ethnographic methods including participant observation, interviews (structured and unstructured), and surveys (in-person and online). Qualitative inquiry generally and ethnography specifically is a powerful field of study. Corbetta writes that, “Ethnographic research is a meeting of cultures; the studying culture looks at the culture under study through the naïve eyes of the foreigner who knows little or nothing about it and immerses himself in a new world without knowing its language, customs, norms and values” (Corbetta 2011:3). Ethnography is a qualitative research methodology that involves studying a particular group or culture through close observation and engagement. It is particularly well-suited for studying trucking and work because it allows researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences and perspectives of workers, as well as the broader social and cultural contexts in which they operate.

One of the primary advantages of ethnography is that it allows researchers to collect rich, detailed data about the social and cultural practices of truckers and other workers. Ethnographers can use a range of techniques, including participant observation, interviews, and surveys, to collect data from multiple sources and perspectives. This can provide a more complete and nuanced understanding of the complexities of work and labor in the trucking industry.

However, there are also some potential drawbacks to using ethnography as a research method. For one, it can be time-consuming and resource-intensive, requiring researchers to

spend a significant amount of time in the field and develop relationships with study participants. Additionally, there may be ethical concerns around conducting research with vulnerable or marginalized populations, such as truckers who may face precarious working conditions or legal issues related to their work.

Comparatively, other research methodologies, such as surveys or quantitative analysis, may be more efficient and cost-effective in collecting data. However, these methods may also be less effective in capturing the nuanced and complex realities of work and labor in the trucking industry. Additionally, surveys and quantitative analysis may not be able to capture the personal experiences and perspectives of workers in the same way that ethnography can. While there are both advantages and disadvantages to using ethnography as a research method for studying trucking and work, its ability to capture the complex social and cultural practices of workers makes it a valuable and preferred approach for researchers in this field.

In his book "The Big Rig," Steve Viscelli (2016) asks a variety of questions to his trucker participants, ranging from their experiences on the job to their opinions on the trucking industry as a whole. Some examples of the types of questions he asks include:

*How did you get into trucking, and what drew you to the industry?*

*What do you like and dislike about your job, and why?*

*How do you deal with the physical and emotional demands of long-haul trucking?*

*What are your thoughts on the changes that have taken place in the industry over the years, such as deregulation and the increasing use of independent contractors?*

*How do you feel about the working conditions in the trucking industry, and do you think they are fair?*

*What are some of the biggest challenges you face on the job, and how do you deal with them?*

*Do you feel like you have a say in the decisions that are made by your employer, and if not, why?*

*What would you like to see change in the trucking industry, and how do you think that could be accomplished?*

These types of questions allowed Viscelli to gain a deep understanding of the experiences, attitudes, and opinions of truckers and to explore the complexities of the industry from their perspective. By asking open-ended questions and allowing participants to speak freely, he was able to capture the nuances of their experiences and develop a more nuanced understanding of the trucking industry as a whole. Participant observation and interviews notwithstanding, surveying has its place in ethnographic research for its ability to collect large amounts of data with less time and financial resources. While the data is not as granular, it can also capture some of the ideas, experiences, and practices of people's working lives.

The largest trucking survey, which became the book "Sailors on the Concrete Sea", was conducted by Belman, Monaco, and Brooks (Belman, Monaco, and Brooks 2004) through the University of Michigan's trucking Industry Program. Their exhaustive survey captured the wages, working conditions, and demographic characteristics of both employee drivers and owner-operators. They deployed their survey as a fuel-line method wherein they approached truck drivers at major fuel stops along major highways used by over-the-road drivers. One government led survey conducted by National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) in 2010 collected primary data using a fuel-line survey similar to the UMTIP survey (Sieber et al. 2014). The NIOSH methodology identified and selected sections of interstate or other limited-access highways, followed by selection of individual truck stops along the selected highway sections, and finally selection of drivers for interview at the selected truck stops. They offered a \$25 gift card and had 1670 eligible participants take part in the survey. Ongoing surveys of wages and working conditions have been studied in the truckload sector (Belman and Monaco 2001a; Belman et al. 2004) as well as drayage (Harrison et al. 2008; Jaffee and Bensman 2016; Jaffee and Rowley 2010; Monaco 2010; Monaco and Grobar 2004). Viscelli

(2016) used participant observation by driving a truck for an TL carrier and carried out in-depth interviews with at least 75 participants at large truck stops in the mid-west. Belzer (Belzer 2000, 2001) himself was a truck driver turned economist who used statistical analysis to demonstrate the devolution of wages in working conditions through empirical analysis, furthermore he has developed many instruments and has investigated many facets of the trucking industry most notably hours-of-service and safety concerns (Belzer, Rodriguez, and Sedo 2002; Rodríguez, Targa, and Belzer 2006; Saltzman and Belzer 2002).

Existing governmental surveys such as the Current Population Survey and Contingent Work Survey, while useful for capturing detailed wage data across the workforce lack the granularity and specificity to delineate between different segments of the trucking industry. This is especially important because each segment has unique attributes that have material effects on the work-lives of truckers. Nevertheless, data from governmental sources has been used to effectively observe driver retention in the truckload sector (Belzer 2001; Burks and Monaco 2019; Phares and Balthrop 2021; Rodríguez et al. 2006). Driver retention has also been surveyed using interviews and survey instruments developed in coordination with trucking firms (Beilock and Capelle 1990; Richard, LeMay, and Taylor 1995; Stephenson and Fox 1996) and through thoughtful selection of data points within the UMTIP survey instrument from the perspective of drivers (Peterson 2005). Driver retention has been studied through the lens of relationship marketing and exit voice and the role of dispatchers in driver retention (Keller 2002; Keller and Ozment 1999b, 1999a). Another approach has been to ask managers of trucking firms what their views are on the needs and wants of drivers in terms of retention, and while this shows to some extent the disconnect between management and workers it is helpful for then mediating between them (LeMay, Taylor, and Turner 1993). LeMay et al (1995) also surveyed drivers of large TL

carriers looking for answers and constructed their instrument off pilot interviews and discussions with colleagues. This is in line with the approach taken for perspectives from drivers used by Beilock and Cappel (1990) and Stephenson and Fox (1996).

## **Phase I**

In Phase I data was collected at a single site using participant observation wherein I was an employee collecting data on my own experiences as a truck driver and observing my coworkers and talking to them about how they did their job and why. Following this I interviewed my coworkers and surveyed a cannery / trucking firm utilizing Qualtrics and having the firm take the survey on their own, online. Phase I is a study of the labor process tradition and the methods are designed to collect data for this kind of analysis. My research question for Phase I was: How do I play the game as a truck driver? This question is important to expanding the sites and types of labor to an existing body of work on the subject.

## **Participants**

The sample population is truck drivers with Class A commercial driver's license who transport raw and finished agricultural commodities. We sampled drivers in California, but the drivers did not need to be from California.

There are three sampling populations which constitute three occupational levels within the seasonal agricultural trucking sector with varying skill requirements and labor processes. This is important for exploring the segmented nature of employment practices and the degree and motivation of workers to keep their jobs. Those three occupational levels were drivers, dispatchers, and operations manager.

## **Field Sites**

Tomatoes-R-Us

### **July 2020 – October 2020**

Between July and October 2020, I worked as an employee truck driver at a single, non-union firm hauling tomatoes in northern California. This firm is one of the largest and oldest in this sector.

### **November 2020**

During this month I carried out semi-structured interviews with work colleagues over the phone and in-person. I also surveyed a cannery / trucking firm in northern California.

## **Data Collection**

### *Participant Observation*

Between July and October 2020, I worked at a single, non-union firm driving a truck hauling tomatoes in northern California. This firm is one of the largest and oldest in this sector. I was one of twenty daytime employees. I chose this company for several reasons and none of them had to do with doing research. First, and the most important, was the barrier to getting hired was low; much less than other trucking jobs I had enquired at. This company simply required that a person a) had a commercial driving license and, b) a clean driving record. Second, the company's facility was a short commute (12 miles) from home and did not require that I get on any highway or freeway. This was important because it meant that once I was finished for the day, I knew I could be home relatively quickly by avoiding any traffic. Third, and this I specified in the hiring process, was that I could work the day shift, which on paper was from 6am to 6pm,

and I would not work weekends. The pandemic had resulted in my teenagers doing distance learning and my wife working at home. For a variety of family reasons, it was necessary that we were all on a similar schedule. Furthermore, given my work history, I could not bear the thought of any nighttime hours.

From the outset of my employment, the operations manager knew that I was a PhD student, and a few colleagues did also, but they never inquired about what that actually meant and just accepted that I was another person who was looking to make some fast cash during a short season. When I began this job, I was not doing research, and initially I was primarily focused on my own activities and how they were situated within the labor process. As time went on my colleague's behavior started to become an area of interest because I noticed variations, at least in what I was observing, from my own work practices. As this job was a material requirement for my own livelihood, I was concerned that announcing to my employer and co-workers that I was conducting research after many weeks on the job would not go over well and could perhaps threaten my employment.

Once I realized that I was using this job for my dissertation field work I only informed my employer and my colleagues in the last few weeks of the season. The primary source of data collection during my tenure was my observations on myself doing the job. Secondly, in spare moments, I was able to have short conversations with other drivers that sought to confirm my own experiences with the job thus far by asking them about their experience on the job. Thirdly, were my observations of my fellow drivers as they went about doing the job. The research then was carried out covertly, however, the participants were not asked to do anything for my benefit, and we were all working together to perform the job of getting tomatoes from the field to the plant. Moreover, I would additionally rationalize my decision to carry out this research covertly

because on multiple occasions I was told explicitly to ‘observe’ the other drivers doing their jobs and learn from them. As their anonymity is ensured in the writing of the dissertation their rights have been protected and no harm was done. Ouellet suggests that, “Covert research also seemed to solve a vexing methodological problem” (Ouellet 1994:) The problem he suggests is that when blue-collar workers are interviewed by a person who they may see as someone holding a prestige position such as a researcher or professor tend to give rationales for why they do the work they do that conform to commonly agreed upon extrinsic rewards such as high wages, good benefits, and the like. Status differences may lead these workers to be reluctant to share, “those aspects of the work that please and satisfy them”. Whether this is true or not in my case I cannot speak to. As alluded to, I began as a worker, then transitioned to a worker-researcher. Would this have changed the behaviors of my colleagues to know they were being observed by me? Doubtful. It would depend on whether or not they thought I was reporting on them to management. There are only a so many broad strokes that determine the work practices during this job. There are personal variations and this is what I was most interested in. When I finally did my interviews, my interviewees were told explicitly that I was a student researcher and what my intentions were behind my line of questioning.

In spite of each driver being in their own truck I had many occasions to observe others doing the job when we arrive at a field or the yard at the same time, and in the communication that occurred over the CB radio. That gave me the opportunity to compare, to some extent, the differences between how I go about doing the job and how other do theirs. Adding in some post-season interviews with several drivers gave me the opportunity to expand on questions I had that exist outside of my personal experiences and thoughts.



## **Surveys**

Post-harvest in November 2020, I surveyed one firm, using Qualtrics, in the canned tomato sector of the industry which was filled out by either human resources or operations management (I did not collect any information on who completed the survey). The object of this survey was to collect quantitative data on who the firm employs and what they offer, as employers, in terms of wages and skill development. Unfortunately, the data was corrupted and was not useable. I was hopeful that this data would be used to confirm whether this market is primary or secondary and it would be compared to driver's views on their own relative position within the labor market and what they believe their choices are.

## **Interviews**

Post-harvest in 2020, I conducted structured work-history interviews with four workers who are drivers, one dispatcher, and one operations manager in the tomato hauling sector of seasonal ag trucking. Work history information provides insight into past work experiences and historical skill development that will make sense of what led people to this occupation and what skills they have at their disposal to gain upward mobility either in this sector or another industry. In addition, the interviews elaborate on the aspirations of these workers and draw out what they see as their opportunities for upward mobility in both economic terms as well as skill development. The data collected in interviews draws out some of the characteristics of my fellow employees to exemplify why they consent to playing the game and what other job prospects they have access to, and why they do or do not choose those other jobs.

## **Other Data**

Another source of data was my own wages that I earned while driving a truck. These wages are broken down into an hourly wage to better understand whether this job meets our material needs to reproduce ourselves and at what cost to ourselves. This data will also be important for determining where workers are situated within existing labor markets based on primary or secondary labor market characteristics. Data on wages in this study's context is also demonstrative of the rationale given by workers to self-sweat. The survey data will also provide self-reported income from hundreds of truck drivers as well as other relevant material and immaterial work-life conditions that will help us better understand the direction of the industry given the actions of its workers.

To analyze segmented labor markets, I collected quantitative data from various sources. While it is important to point out that while I did drive and have driven trucks before, the labor markets that I am able to move in and out of can and do differ from others in the industry. I will analyze data from the Contingent Work Survey, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and Unemployment Insurance. Preliminary data from these sources corroborates that a large portion of truck drivers in agricultural counties in California become unemployed in the trucking industry in November, which correlates with the end of the tomato season. Consistent with that is the fact that there is a considerable increase in trucking industry employment around June and July when the season picks back up. Other data shows that unemployment insurance claims rise considerably around the period of the end of the tomato season.

While these figures only support the obvious seasonality of the job, the quantitative data will be used to help structure the collection of qualitative data by pointing in the direction of alternative employment arrangements. I am hoping to discover what labor markets absorb these

thousands of workers when the season ends, they have run out of their seasonal earnings, and their unemployment insurance is exhausted.

## **Data Analysis**

The recorded structured interview data was transcribed by a company and went through one round of coding. My autoethnographic data was in note form or recorded and also transcribed. My wage data which is a direct pull from my pay stubs went through simple calculations to determine what I was actually making per hour, for comparison purposes.

## **Phase II**

In Phase II, data was collected through in-person surveys at multiple sites and through online surveys which were disseminated at multiple sites. Phase II is a study on driver recruitment and retention so the questions that asked in the surveys are consistent with other studies on driver recruitment and retention. The study methodology and instruments are designed in consultation with agricultural shippers, trucking carriers, relevant State agencies, and survey methodologists. Literature reviews and previous surveys informed survey design. The research question for Phase II was: Is there a truck driver shortage? This question is an important question because the trucking industry has claimed repeatedly that there is a driver shortage. It is also timely because there are indeed logistics issues that everyone is experiencing and continue to scapegoat truck drivers for.

Prior to beginning the study, carriers and producers of agricultural commodities were chosen based upon specialty crop status as designated by the Farm Bill and Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. Active stakeholder engagement on the part of carriers/shippers was necessary for determining access points for drivers, types of equipment that is used, and other factors to

generate a robust survey instrument. Stakeholder identification and engagement was facilitated by CDFA. During this first stage, structured interviews will be held with the identified stakeholders. Data collection via driver and shipper surveys and in-depth interviews with drivers, shipper transportation managers and other stakeholders and field observations was planned. The proposed survey instrument was field tested and refined prior to deployment.

To make the analysis manageable, eight representative crops were chosen based upon their perishability, the competitive nature of the commodity, and the representativeness of the particular crop to all California produced commodities. Additionally, these crops were chosen per the requirements of the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) and the Farm Bill which defines specialty crops as "fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture)." From this list of specialty crops it was determined which seasons of the year that harvesting happens so that the study would run for an entire year and capture a representative sample of the labor requirements required to move these crops.

## **Participants**

The sampling population is drivers who haul the crops identified for this study. They must be either currently employed by a firm, working as a contractor, or an owner-operator operating under their own authority and driving a truck at the time of the survey to be eligible to participate. They also must be able to understand English or Spanish. There are two very broad categories of drivers which require some elaboration. One category is the 'outbound' drivers. Outbound drivers are leaving coolers, packinghouses, processing facilities and taking finished/value added agricultural products to national markets and ports. National markets can be large distribution centers and individual stores and everything in between.

The other category of drivers are the ‘inbound’. These drivers are bringing in the raw products from the fields and orchards. The discussion section will elaborate more on their similarities and differences to outbound drivers.

## **Field Sites**

The ideal field sites are processing centers for the selected California crops. Processing centers (canneries, coolers, packinghouses, etc.) are locations at which the greatest cross sections of drivers can be found. These include field drivers and reefer drivers; employees, contractors, and owner-operators. These locations are where field drivers bring the raw agricultural commodity in from the fields after being harvested. At the processing center these commodities are either unloaded from the driver’s trailers with forklift, pumped out (in the case of dairy), or the drivers unhook the trailers from their truck and a different type of truck and driver is responsible for unloading. Once unloaded the raw products go through several processes that can involve washing, canning, cooling, sorting/separating, mixing (like spring salad mix), and so on. The final product is loaded onto reefer trailers and these drivers haul them to national markets or shipping terminals for export.

The survey sites were determined based on a set of crops that were a suitable cross-section of California agriculture including carrots, leafy greens, citrus, table grapes, canning tomatoes, almonds, dairy, and berries. Through stakeholder engagement initially facilitated by CDFA, sites where the greatest amount of truck traffic would occur began to take shape. Some crops are a monopoly such as carrots and berries. As such it made sense to approach those growers directly to gain access to their coolers and packinghouses where we would have access to the drivers that haul these commodities in from the fields and the drivers who hauled them to

markets. Others like leafy greens and tomatoes, for example, are grown and shipped either in cooperatives or by independent farmers working with packinghouses and canneries. In such cases it made more sense to use the coolers/packinghouses and canneries as survey sites.

### Grimmway

For the past 10 years, California has grown 80-90% of the US carrot crop. California grows mostly carrots for the fresh market but has some processing acreage (USDA 2021). It is appropriate in this report to speak of carrots production and Grimmway as a totality.

Headquartered in Bakersfield, California Grimmway is the largest producer of carrots in the world. They grow and package virtually every type of carrot product both conventional and organic. The carrot business is a \$685million/year industry with over 60k acres under production in California (USDA).

Grimmway owns and grows most of its own acreage. They grow and farm approximately 40-50,000 acres per year. They also lease land to farmers who grow the carrots and then Grimmway does the harvesting. Grimmway does private label packing as well as custom packing for their customers like national grocery store chains. They also supply to restaurant suppliers like Cisco.

### Central Coast Cooling (CCC)

Central Coast Cooling is one of four commercial coolers in this growing region. It encompasses 28 acres and has four coolers on-site. CCC services growers of broccoli, cauliflower, all lettuce items, and everything else that is grown in this region which extends up to an hour by truck in any direction from the cooler. CCC is the beginning of the cold chain and is

responsible for receiving the field sets, bringing the ag commodities down to temperature and keeping them there all the way to the outbound trucks.

## **Surveying**

The surveying was very iterative. We began with a pilot survey that we designed drawing from our own experiences as former truckers and as academics thinking about the data we wanted to collect. What we eventually ran in the field during our first survey push was simplified from the pilot, and yet, after one day in the field we realized we had to change the language of many questions and reformat the survey. It was still too long and complicated for both the team members asking the questions and for our participants. In its first iterations it was very cumbersome and required 45 minutes to an hour to complete. However, by the second day and revisions it could be finished by a skilled researcher who was familiar with the questions, content, and meaning, in 15 minutes. We changed little pieces here and there until the July dates and the survey has remained constant henceforth with only tiny changes and a few additional, contemporary questions about AB5 and self-driving trucks.

The survey has the Spanish and English translations for each question – not separate Spanish and English surveys. This made it easier for our bilingual colleagues to ask me questions regarding the meaning of anything if there was confusion while a survey was in progress. The survey was translated by our bilingual colleagues from the WCAHS. The labor they put into perfecting the expressions, slang, and intent was tireless and beyond expectations. For that we are very grateful.

The questions in the driver's survey included, but was not limited to, the type of commodity and its destination, demographics, work history, current job, CDL, owner-operators,

recruitment, retention, and a health questionnaire for our colleagues as WCAHS. The survey focused on agricultural drivers and conducted in processing centers, coolers, packinghouses, and the ports. There was a modest financial incentive to truckers who are selected and who complete the driver survey during the June surveying period. We began with a \$25 gift card to Target and our participation rate was middling. It is important to note that for the July in-person surveying, and the September in-person and online survey we increased the incentive to \$75. However, participation rates remained fairly constant despite this increase material incentive.

The questions in the firm survey are designed to collect data on the constraints firms face in order to remain competitive in this segment. Additionally, questions are asked to glean the processes firms use to recruit and retain drivers, and finally, the company demographics to typologize firms engaged in agricultural hauling. This survey will be distributed to and then through the California Trucking Association and the Port Truckers Association. Both have a broad member base. This member base has been a voice of opposition against AB5. Nevertheless, the firm survey is designed to be innocuous in its political and social leanings.

### **Online Survey**

To survey the field drivers, we decided to direct them to an online version of the survey they fill out themselves. After about 90 in-person surveys, all of whom are outbound drivers, we realized we had to deploy the survey differently in order to reach different populations of drivers. Because the field drivers spend very minimal time dropping and hooking or being loaded and unloaded, we would never be able to secure them as participants. The fastest our in-person survey could be done was about 30 mins including consenting, collecting contact info (for those who agreed), and giving them their gift cards. As such we settled on an online version of the



survey. To be clear, we were surveying on iPad using a reusable survey link. The team would ask the questions and input the answers on the iPad in real time. Other concerns that led to the use of online surveying were lingering COVID safety issues, and the need to protect the identities of our participants.

To distribute the online survey, we decided to give drivers 3”x5” cards with the following information (one side in English the other in Spanish): a QR code (which contains the anonymous survey link for smart phone users), the actual anonymous survey URL below it (for non-smart phone users), a unique 6-digit number (generated randomly by an online tool). The background was similar to what we used for our in-person signage. Again, our sample population was anyone who was driving a truck and hauling some form of ag commodity and who could speak and read English or Spanish.

The survey that we distributed online was no different in terms of what questions were being asked. The only major differences were how the participants would input data. I changed mobile-friendly slider bars to text entry because there’s no way to know how tech-savvy our participants would be, and our team had been trained and had practiced this dozens of times. In addition to those changes the participant would have to read the consent form and click “I Agree” in order to proceed. Following the survey, they would be asked if they wanted to receive the gift card for \$75. If they chose no, then the survey would end. However, if they chose yes, they would select whether they wanted it mailed to them or emailed to them. They would be taken to a separate anonymous survey wherein they would enter their 6-digit unique number from their card, and their personal information. We realized that nothing was preventing folks from passing this survey card to their friends, but the unique 6-digit number would enable us to control how many gift cards we sent out. Their personal information would not be linked in any

way to their survey answers. In order to prevent long term storage of personal data, at the beginning of each week I would download the respondent's information in order to send their incentive and then delete their information from the cloud and my personal, password protected computer.

## **Grimmway**

*June 14<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022*

During our research at Grimmway, we set up a designated area near the driver check-in section with pop-ups, tables, chairs, snacks, and drinks. We operated from approximately 10 am to 6 pm daily, strategically targeting the peak shipping period from 1 pm to 4 pm when truck traffic was notably higher. Our recruitment methods involved approaching drivers after they checked in, taking advantage of their waiting time for a loading dock. This proved to be the best opportunity for engagement, as drivers were more available to participate in surveys before being called to pick up their bill of lading. However, extreme heat and the urgency of their tasks limited the time drivers were willing to spend with us.

To expand our reach, we also walked through the parking lot, approaching trucks and attempting to recruit drivers who may have used the online check-in system. The hot weather, noise, and obstructed visibility made this method less than ideal. Despite these challenges, we employed a monitoring system to track parked trucks, approaches made, and interviews conducted. However, due to the difficulty of managing the system and the unfavorable conditions, we eventually discontinued its use.

To incentivize participation, we offered a \$25 Target gift card. Interestingly, some drivers perceived this incentive as incongruent with their circumstances, while others willingly provided their testimony without any incentive. We managed to collect 31 complete surveys over the two

days, estimating a response rate of around 15% considering the approximately 200 trucks present during our surveying hours.

However, our data collection was limited to outbound drivers at Grimmway, as the speed and nature of inbound or field drivers' tasks made it impractical to approach, recruit, consent, and survey them. Moreover, we encountered difficulties in interviewing Punjabi-speaking drivers due to language barriers and the absence of a Punjabi-speaking team member. These drivers constituted approximately 20% of the population we were unable to interview, while Spanish and English were the dominant languages used during the surveys conducted by our bilingual team members.

### **Central Coast Cooling**

*June 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> 2022*

At Central Coast Cooling (CCC), we strategically positioned ourselves between the driver's parking area and the check-in location, specifically focusing on Cooler #4, which experienced the highest traffic. Unlike Grimmway, CCC did not have a mobile check-in option, requiring drivers to walk from the parking area to the loading docks and into the cooler to complete the check-in process. We intercepted drivers on their way to check-in and on their way back to their trucks, walking alongside them towards the cooler and attempting to recruit them. This approach allowed us to engage with drivers without disrupting their workflow or cooler operations. The pleasant weather in Salinas, California, with temperatures around 30°F cooler than other locations, contributed to higher participation rates, resulting in a response rate nearly two-thirds higher than at Grimmway.

Over the course of two days, from approximately 10 am to 5 pm, we collected 24 complete surveys at CCC. We had four surveyors on Friday and three surveyors on Saturday.

While truck traffic was similar to Grimmway, Saturday was slower, possibly influenced by it being Father's Day weekend. However, considering the estimated number of trucks during our presence, around 150, our response rate stood at approximately 16%.

*July 25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>, 2022*

July surveying at CCC went just okay. The first day attitudes toward us were cool and dismissive. In spite of us raising the dollar amount of the incentive from \$25 to \$75 truckers were quite uninterested in participating. Day two went smoother. Over the two days we got around 25 participants.

*September 12<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022*

During the fieldwork period, only two researchers were present, leading to limitations in surveying non-English speaking drivers. One researcher focused on recruiting outbound drivers for in-person surveys, while the other targeted inbound (field) drivers for an online survey. Approximately a dozen drivers were recruited and surveyed in person over the course of a couple of days.

Meanwhile, at the opposite end of CCC, efforts were made to recruit inbound field drivers for the online survey. Despite limited Spanish proficiency, the researcher presented survey participation cards and explained the study and the financial incentive. Most drivers reluctantly accepted the cards, with only a few seeming to understand the researcher's explanation. Several drivers refused, which was not unexpected given the context of the interaction.

Additionally, the researcher distributed survey cards to agricultural trucking companies, directly engaging with dispatchers or owners. In these cases, a clear articulation of the study's purpose and the expected benefits for participating was provided. Surprisingly, none of the individuals from Salinas took the survey, raising concerns about the trustworthiness of trucking carriers in supporting research. Furthermore, it appears that the dispatchers or owners of the companies did not distribute the cards to their drivers, highlighting the need for caution and questioning carriers' commitment to facilitating research.

### **Sacramento Valley**

September 14<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022

I grew up in this area and also hauled tomatoes in this region giving me a singular ability to distribute survey participation cards where and when I knew key participants to be. I went in a large counter-clockwise circle from Dixon, CA and distributed survey participation cards to the following trucking companies and placed them in the hands of either the dispatcher or management:

- Button Transportation
- Valley Farm Transport
- Tiger Lines
- Antonini Freight Express
- Morningstar Farms

In addition to those trucking companies, I also delivered survey participation cards at the following locations where they were to be handed out by the folks that operate the scale the trucks get weighed on:

- Sutter Basin Growers Co-Op
- Yolo Hulling and Shelling

And finally, I also drove around the Davis-Woodland-Dixon area and stuck survey participation cards on all the loaded tomato trailers I could find in the area and handed some out to drivers that were getting hooked up. In total over the four days of handing out cards I gave out around 350 of them and we got about 10 responses – all of whom it appears were drivers from Morningstar Farms. This leads to an obvious conclusion similar to what we saw in Salinas- - that trucking carriers are non-cooperative with research.

### **Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach**

October 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Given the poor response rate of our earlier attempt to recruit drivers for our online survey we decided on one major change which was to print the amount of the financial incentive on the survey card itself. We submitted a new proof of the card to IRB for approval, which was granted. We then ran off another 500 cards for distribution. The other addition to this survey period was to ensure there was at least one Spanish speaker. A large majority of port/drayage drivers are Spanish speakers and given our poor response rate in Salinas, which is no doubt because my Spanish is terrible and I couldn't build rapport with the drivers, we knew that bilingualism was a critical feature of success this time.

One of our bilingual researchers was able to join Steve at the ports, and over the course of the three days they distributed all of the cards. The response rate was about 18%. Fewer still opted to receive gift cards – around 10% of participants.

## **Data Analysis**

The surveying data was entered by the researchers. The survey was built in Qualtrics on UC Berkeley's servers. The survey was administered on iPads using anonymous links that were reusable. The iPads were Wi-Fi enabled and we used a mobile hotspot to connect them to the internet for real-time data entry and storage. On a few occasions we had issues with the internet and switched to paper copies. The data from the paper copies was ultimately entered into a new survey and the paper survey was destroyed. In addition to the survey, when consented to, we audio recorded the drivers' responses to the questions using a voice recorder with a memory card. The purpose of this was to capture the range of answers that went beyond the limited and prescribed responses built into the survey. We knew from previous research that this population would be engaged with the topics that directly concern them and were likely to provide thoughtful and deeper explanations of the issues. It also allowed for a record of answers that followed propping questions or follow-up questions to answers given. On some occasions, drivers who didn't have their answers audio recorded were approached for a more open-ended interview with Steve and their responses were recorded. This valuable data will be set for professional transcribing and then coded later to provide rich qualitative data to supplement the quantitative data collected through surveying.

We did not do any statistical analysis with the data beyond very simple, descriptive statistics. Along with the survey data is recordings of some of the surveys we did with participants. That data was transcribed by a service, and it was paired with that respondents' answers to look for nuance in their answers. It also provides a rich source of qualitative data and

first-hand experience. Word clouds were made surrounding the more controversial topics to look for similarities and differences.

### **Data Collection Issues**

The surveying did not go as planned due to limited site access. Dating back to fall of 2021, with the help of CDFA introductions, engagement with agricultural stakeholders began. In fact, many meetings were had with stakeholders. Driscoll's berries, Sunkist, Wonderful Citrus, Grimmway carrots, Central Coast Cooling, DFA, The Ag Council of California, Blue Diamond, DeVine Transport, Cal Milk Trucks, etc. Some of these stakeholders were initially helpful, but ultimately did not participate despite repeated attempts to connect for sites to do surveying. We had permission from Sunkist, but their co-op organization made it difficult to capture a significant number of drivers in a single location. We were going to make up for it with Wonderful Citrus who also agreed to let us come on site but due to IRB we missed our window with them. Grimmway agreed and were very hospitable down in Bakersfield. Central Coast Cooling (CCC) was an early and helpful stakeholder. We were able to meet with them and took a tour of their enormous facility. Even after their operations and logistic manager left, I was able to reach out to his replacement and was met with the exact same level of hospitably.

One other data collection issue revolved around having female identifying surveyors. Our female surveyors had more success recruiting male drivers for our study. The whole team knew it. We had issues with male drivers attempting to get the female surveyors into their trucks at Grimmway.



## Chapter Discussion

Truckers are an enigmatic bunch of folks. Some are willing to talk, some are willing to talk for money, and others don't want to regardless of incentive. There was no apparent solution to getting higher participation rates. I believe there is a high degree of cognitive dissonance in the industry which precludes a lot of drivers from having a serious conversation about their jobs.

It would behoove (male-identifying) researchers to do more in-depth ride-alongs with male drivers over the course of a week or so (and vice versa for female drivers). This type of participant observation would be revealing. I think a trained researcher that knew what to point to with their questioning would elicit strong responses from members of this group. Things like hours of service, food, sleep, waiting, and wages need a level of involvement from the researcher to determine the real-lived experiences of these processes as they happen. Survey data is necessarily circumscribed. We ask leading questions and folks must give us response that we have already predetermined. Their answers have to be made to fit within our boxes however liberally we understand them. Familiarity with the industry is critical to both asking questions in the correct ways as well as interpreting responses and knowing when and how probing questions should be asked. There is a dearth of truckers-cum-researchers.

One confounding variable with the online survey is that we are eliminating drivers who do not have access to a smart phone or a computer. I don't believe this to be a big concern. In addition, the risk of missing this cross-section of the driving populace entirely, rather than the small exclusion possible due to digital technology usage, isn't permissible. The online version of the survey will be bilingual Spanish-English but no other languages. So again, leaving out the Punjabi drivers and speakers of other languages. The Punjabi concern is not small. The data will still be reliable without their experiences, but we are doing them a disservice by excluding them.

The immigrant experience is often derided or remains in darkness despite the contributions they make here. And in some way their exclusion from this study is inexcusable.

For our July field work we were hoping to get a new site at which to survey drivers. We had heard anecdotally from a Kern County employee, while we were at Grimmway, that growers in the table grapes sector had difficulties getting drivers and their product to market. We set out to connect with those people to hopefully secure a site to survey these drivers. After circuitous dealings we ended up with the contact information for Cal Fresh Fruit. They were encouraged to help us out by the CDFA. We never received site access, where their processing sites are located, nor whether or not they had experienced the driver shortages claimed by the industry and the sector. I personally put pressure on the a stakeholder to help us with sites to do our research and the response was, “I can attest that it is the type of questions and the manner of the survey that is creating reluctance to participate. Folks are extremely uncomfortable with this process” (June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022, email correspondence). Industry stakeholders have their own lobbyists and want their own solutions to whatever they believe the issues are in the trucking industry.

## Chapter 3 – Literature Review

### Introduction

This literature review seeks to explore the labor market for truck drivers and its various themes, including labor geography, modes of production, labor markets, precarious labor, labor power and commodification, labor control, and Burawoy's "The Game" (Burawoy 1979). Through the lens of the trucking industry, it will examine the geographic distribution of work, modes of production, and control exerted by employers, while also analyzing the precarious nature of trucking work and the commodification of labor power. Additionally, it will explore how labor control operates in the industry and apply Burawoy's concept of "The Game" to provide a critical perspective on power and control in the labor market. By exploring these themes, this review aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by truck drivers in the labor market. Ultimately, the review draws on Marx's notion that while individuals choose their jobs, they do not do so under the conditions of their own choosing, and Sallaz's observation that the transformation of human capacity for work into a commodity requires persuasion, coercion, and ongoing intervention. Thus, the labor market for truck drivers deserves closer examination to better understand the choices available to workers and the conditions under which they are forced to work.

In the beginning, work was the particular manner of appropriating nature to produce useful things. Things that would keep us alive like food and shelter and building relationships. This process has three elementary features, according to Marx; The personal activity of man (i.e., the work itself), the subject of that work, and the instruments (Tucker 1978:345). How we go about producing useful things is always combined with the corresponding set of relations humans enter with each other as we transform nature into objects of our imagination. Burawoy's definition of

the labor process is described in two main components: *relational* and *practical*. Relational is the place where workers interact with each other and with management, what he calls relations in production or production relations (Burawoy 1979:15). This practical aspect is the set of activities that transform raw materials into useful objects or parts thereof with the assistance of instruments of production such as tools and machines. This is the transformation of labor power into labor. Relations of production shape the form and development of the labor process which in turn sets limits on the transformation of the mode of production. A particular mode of production defines a corresponding mode of politics. This mode of politics legitimates the exploitation of workers under the current mode of production. The production of things is not only the (re)production of social relations but also the production of an experience of those relations (Burawoy 1979).

So, what are the conflicts between workers and employers, and how do these become resolved? How do employers generate consent in the labor process? What agency do workers have in determining when and how they work? What do employers do to ensure they maintain their relative position of power over workers?

## **Labor**

### **What is Labor?**

Labor is toil. Marx writes, “Weaving, spinning, drilling, turning, building, shoveling, stone breaking are not manifestations of life. These activities only enable the worker to exist, to live. Labour is a sacrifice of the workers life. Life for the worker begins when these activities end, at the table, the bar, in bed” (Tucker 1978:205). If labor is, in fact, toil and labor also was an emergent characteristic in the development of capitalism how can we understand the mechanisms that enabled such conditions to persist and grow especially in Western countries?

Before any discussion begins it is prudent to give ourselves some definitions to maintain specificity in our arguments. Certain words have been used interchangeably and yet they are not the same and have differing historical origins. By putting these into their historical context we can avoid any confusion and conflation, the product of such conflation also has historical origins. To begin with we should discuss work versus labor, and occupations. Labour, as Standing shows, has origins with the Greeks who distinguished between reproductive labour – reproducing and extending human relationships, work done for its own sake– and, productive labour, which was done for the sake of a product, was associated with non-citizenship, and was done by slaves (Standing 2009). The distinction between the two was apparent during feudalism and concretized during the rise of capitalism. As reproductive work was correlated with service work and had no place in the direct production of commodities it was viewed as non-work, and thus it disappeared from emerging labor statistics and from its more honorable antecedent position in society (Standing 2009:5). A common understanding of work connects the ideas of exchange, effort, and wage, such as Sallaz’s definition, “as a transaction between an employer who supplies the inputs and an employee who creates value from them. Second, the content of the exchange between these two parties can be specified thus: an employee receives financial remuneration in return for her effort” (Sallaz 2013:30). The work one does as a parent or a spouse, the work one does in educating oneself, or exploring the world, sleeping, and so on is the work one does to rejuvenate oneself. While those activities can feel laborious, they come with personal and social growth and satisfaction. Sitting and thinking is regarded as unproductive work, yet it is this cognitive work that keeps humans moving forward. Most importantly this work when done for its own sake, cannot be commodified.

For these reasons, I will be using the term *labor* when referencing anything workers do for a wage; and *work*, only when those activities are self-directed and done for self-fulfillment. Occupation fits somewhere between labor and work. Standing defines occupation as, “an evolving set of related tasks based in traditions and accumulated knowledge, part of which is unique...some combination of forms of knowledge that go beyond conventional notions of skill – abstract, technical, inferential, and procedural” (Standing 2009:11). Moreover, an ideal type that serves as a barrier to commodification would, “allow individuals to develop their creative capacities...is a body for civic friendship...promotes loyalty to the occupation over loyalty to individual employers” (Standing 2009:20). Standing’s interrogation of the nature of labor versus work is to better understand where we have arrived and how we got here. He directs us to the issues presented by organizing labor under different historical modes of production and the ways these organizational types are tied to one’s political position relative to one’s fellows and to the state.

## **Labor Geography**

Marxist geography in the 1970s and 1980s highlighted the role of the conflict between labor and capital in shaping economic landscapes. Herod's emphasis on labor as an active agent in economic landscapes inspired a decade of research, which shifted the focus from "geography of labor" to "labor geography" (see (Castree 2007; Lier 2007)). Writing against 20<sup>th</sup> century Marxism which made workers out to be objects of capital manipulation, to commodities that are bought and sold, Burawoy and others have sought to challenge these ideas have attempted to return the subjectivity to the subject of work (Burawoy 1978, 1979, 1983; Castree 2007; Coe and Jordhus-Lier 2011; Herod 1997, 2001; Lier 2007; Peck 2015, 1996, 2005). It is not so simple that

jobs are created, and then they are filled by a supply of labor controlled by market forces. Instead, as Peck writes, “The supply of labor...is socially produced and regulated, as the complex outcome of cultural norms, state policies and programs, household structures, gender relations, educational socialization, racial coding and discrimination, and much more (Peck 2015:8). The salience of this point cannot be understated in trucking labor markets, for which the industry claims there is a shortage.

Four key central themes can be identified in the literature on labor geography: agency, scale, class, and the role of the state. While capital’s typically much greater geographic mobility can be a source of power, many political, social, and practical challenges often get in the way of allowing employers to move their operations anywhere they might choose. Don Mitchell, for example, has compellingly argued that labor geography research needs to be more attuned to the materiality of the world in which labor exists, rather than overly focused on labor’s activities and power to change its geographies (Mitchell 1996). Too narrow a focus on what constitutes “working-class” actors limits the possibilities and evidence of resistance. It is increasingly recognized that the working class is greatly fragmented, and workers are unevenly embedded in economic systems, political regimes, and social networks(Brogan and Tufts 2017).

In so far as it is possible to generalize, these inherently more social, more political, and more cultural treatments of employment, labor, and work do not equate labor-power (the socially shaped and institutionally regulated capacity to work) with a commodity, but instead recognize and grapple with labor’s pseudo-commodity form, as Polanyi called it (Peck 1996). They understand labor to be different because production and reproduction entail social relations, and because labor itself is a social process, performed in many ways and in many sites, some waged and some not. Some of these concerns would later coalesce around the problematic of labor

“regulation,” including the production of new workplace and employment norms, class and gender orders at work, and the social and institutional (re)organization of labor markets (see Peck 1996; Warren 2019; Wyly et al. 1997).

There is a need for robust theorizing of labor agency. The limitations of union-management relations have been highlighted, and labor geography must diversify to include a wider range of labor contexts and conditions. In recent years, research has focused on grounding theory claims about labor agency in the realities of contemporary work and employment (Castree 2007; Coe and Jordhus-Lier 2011; Strauss 2018; Theodore 2016). A recurrent theme here has been reflections on the changing position and prospects of a reorganized labor movement in the face, materially, of unrelenting systemic pressures on unions and, analytically, the challenge of situating labor’s agency (see Castree, 2007; Herod, 2010; Coe and Jordhus-Lier, 2011).

To help re-embed labor agency, four institutional contexts are prioritized: (1) the organization of capital; (2) structures of the state; (3) community politics; and (4) labor market intermediaries. These social arenas capture the actors, power relations, and institutions “fundamental to labour and its political organizations” (Coe and Jordhus-Lier 2011:221). These include the workplace structures positioning workers in hierarchies and divisions of labor in pursuit of accumulation; prevailing intralabor relationships among employees in the workplace, and social life that regulate the ability of individual workers to take certain courses of action such as striking or accepting voluntary redundancy. Unevenness is experienced across spaces and scales but also within workplaces and communities where labor is grounded and capacities to resist, rework, and resourcefully manage economic change are highly variable (Katz 2004). One critique has been an overemphasis on the activity of organized trade unions and on their successes as well. Critics note the lack of attention to workers in spatially fragmented industries



as well as contingent workers and, most significantly for my purposes, migrant workers (Brogan and Tufts 2017; Castree 2007; Lier 2007). They further suggested that labor geography ought to be more humble in its conceptualization of agency, recognizing that labor never acts autonomously but always in relation to industry (and regulatory systems), as does industry to labor (Coe and Jordhus-Lier 2011; Peck 2016). Coe and Jordhus-Lier (2011, 216) added that not all worker “agency” is collective, game-changing resistance but can “entail small acts of getting by” or individual efforts to improve materially the conditions of existence. The concept of agency and worker action should be understood in relation to various factors such as global production networks, the state, community, and labor market intermediaries. The potential for worker action is determined by the positionality of labor in these different contexts, and agency is a relational concept. Therefore, it needs to be further explored and understood in terms of multiple geographies and temporalities (Coe and Jordhus-Lier 2001:214).

Capital in motion versus capital in place is one reason why labor geographers are also interested in studying the mobility of labor and workers, including both the movement of people and goods. As such, geographers’ projects are often in motion, adapting to changing labor landscapes and practices. This focus on mobility and adaptability reflects the dynamic nature of labor and the challenges that workers face in navigating constantly shifting economic and regulatory environments. Labor geographers, as opposed to other geographers, tend to focus on the micro-scale of labor and its regulation and governance. They are interested in understanding the ways in which labor is controlled and managed, particularly in relation to contingent work, workfare, and forced labor. These issues are often explored at the local and regional level, where labor practices can have significant impacts on communities and workers (see, for example, (Peck 2005; Peck and Theodore 2012; Strauss 2020; Theodore 2016).

The focus on technology and deregulation has led to a problematic conflation between the precarity of labor associated with financialization, globalization, and informalization. This overlooks the durable employment relations that continue alongside changing modes of production. Studies like Guthman's show how labor shortages or surpluses at the state level give workers more or less agency. In times of shortages, growers can't simply raise wages but can increase workers' earning potential by developing agricultural commodities through technology. This highlights the issue with supply and demand economics and labor, which often leads to changes that have negative effects for everyone.

The issue of temporality of worker gains is important, especially for short-term workers and labor migrants. There needs to be a balance between individual and collective agency in worker action, and recognition of other subject positions beyond worker and union member identities. Agency is shaped by the intersections of class, gender, and race, and there is a growing awareness of the individual agency exercised by workers on a daily basis (Buhlungu 2011: 257). “Worker agency can be informal or formal, individual or collective, spontaneous or goal directed, sporadic or sustained, and it can operate on different scales’ (Coe 2013:273).

## **Space & Labor**

There has been a spatial restructuring of work on a global scale, as geography and space have become increasingly important dimensions of labor markets, labor relations, and work (Peck 1996). What is unclear is how the spatial relations shape and form the relational aspect of production (more here). The role in which states and geography produces labor markets in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is, as Peck writes, a concern that companies and institutions have first, with the need to bring more labor *here*, a fixed point of production, without regard to their quality. Secondly,

companies and institutions bow to market pressures that value insecurity, deunionization, and income polarization (Peck 1996:xiii). Cities, regions, and countries are valorized for their commitment to these ‘free-market’ principles and doing so implies that they will receive a return on tax revenue, which is a kind of Faustian bargain. The state legal apparatus codifies into law substandard minimum wage requirements, laws against collective bargaining (right to work), lack of parental leave, etc. New legal geographies are created that sanctify exploitative labor outside of and within existing legal-geographical borders for the purposes of free-trade. The state regulates the flow of labor through work visas and creating provisions that allow institutionally recognized certifications (like driver’s licenses) to be utilized across borders. Peck (1996), citing studies which have looked to migrant harvest labor, notes how these markets are the closest to approximating competitive labor market theory. Whereby the work temporary and transient, pay by piece work, and the labor-employer relationship lacks durability (*ibid*:9). Peck argues that a theory of labor must incorporate the ideas that both segmentation and locality matter. Local labor markets are shaped through both the general processes of segmentation and by local structures of labor reproduction and institutionalization. He writes that, “Geographies of labor are formed...where flows of capital accumulation collide with the structures of the community” (*ibid*:15). We will return to this analysis later when we look at the role labor plays in resisting and creating for itself conditions that it finds suitable for the worker’s existence.

Massey (1995) notes the importance of the labor factor, which is the tendency for capital to seek out place-bound labor forces. This is made possible by the increasing technological and functional division of labor, the results of which are landscapes of labor dominated by particular modes of production that suit transnational capital. However, we also need to understand the ways labor markets are harnessed when capital is fixed in place, as in the production of

agricultural commodities. It is incorrect to think of capital as absolutely mobile and labor as absolutely fixed (Peck 1996:15). California's central and imperial valleys, for instance, are the most productive in the United States, and here, employers and the State must use methods to attract labor. One of the attractants that are used for some workers including transnational workers are state benefits, notably the ability for undocumented persons to hold a driving license. A California driving license gives the State the ability to extract revenue from people by collecting fees for licensure, the requirement to pay for insurance, and fuel taxes. It does this while not explicitly protecting the holder of the license from deportation or guaranteeing them other benefits that come with citizenship. During the Bracero program it was a pathway to citizenship that mediated an employment regime that most closely resembled the utopian supply and demand model espoused by economists. The reductionism of capital seeking labor markets which are hospitable to short-term profit making does not apply universally. Indeed, agriculture is unique in its situatedness. Moreover, the relationship between technology and labor is mediated differently in agriculture in that it can reduce the requirements for human involvement in the production process through greater mechanization, but technology largely has not changed the location of production.

### **Modes of Production**

Marxism, in terms of class struggle in the twentieth century, became difficult to maintain with changing modes of production and the emergence of different classes of workers. The only reliable analytic which remains is the relation of the worker to the ownership of the means of production. The rise of managers, clerks, and other professional workers, who may or may not be salaried or full-time workers, makes the simplicity of earlier class analyses untenable. The

research on the transformations is vast. Early scholarship focused on the deskilling of work, and is exemplified by Harry Braverman, in *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (1974). Scholars have also noted the controversy around deskilling (Attewell 1987), rise in flexibility (Vallas and Beck 1996), the increase in managerial control (Goldstein 2012), and the shift of balance of power from labor to management (Osterman 1999).

Braverman looks closely at the changing capitalist mode of production over the past 100 years. He argues that Taylorism has resulted in the deskilling of workers in all categories from manual labor to managerial classes. Braverman's personal view, in the Marxist fashion, is not hostile to science and technology, but only to the ways they are used as weapons that create, perpetuate and deepen the divide between the classes (Braverman 1974:6). Frederick Taylor's 'Scientific Management' sought to fragment the labor process into calculable processes in order to achieve maximum efficiency of time. The structure and mechanism for this fragmentation was built on the notion that to save time in the production process there should be two types of workers: planners and doers. Under Taylorism, conception and execution should be separate processes. Undoubtedly building on Adam Smith's observations regarding the making of pins which he discusses in the first chapter in *The Wealth of Nations* (Smith 1977). The emergence of planners and doers precipitated the further fragmentation of many forms of labor. Planners, or managers, have assumed a dominant role in the production process and yet they remain subordinate to the owners of capital while retaining the benefits they have acquired through their membership in the dominant culture and further guaranteed by the state which through statute maintains a barrier to upward mobility by those who are outside the dominant culture.

Following in Taylor's footsteps, Gilbreth introduced the analysis of time and motion into the study of the labor process in general as opposed to the stopwatch and slide rule that

characterized Taylor's work. The dizzying array of calculations which goes into such analysis has the resulting effect of 'viewing human beings in machine terms' (Braverman:179). This use of science at the behest of capital demonstrates the lengths management will go to in which to commodify labor to the extreme and create labor power, that which they buy, and workers sell, to predictable quantities to which they can assign ever lower wages and replace as easily as the parts on a machine. Time and motion can also be understood with a geographic analysis because of the way a worker occupies a specific place to do their work. How that space is constructed by employers in order to control the labor process, and by employees deploying agency to counter those forces is a common theme in studies of the labor process.

Early sociology had accepted the inevitability of the labor process and seeing its role as addressing how to make the worker adapted to the processes rather than adapt the processes to the needs of the worker (Braverman 1974:29). This will come up later when discussing the game. However, the game also demonstrates agency on the part of workers and not total domination by management, yet the range of autonomy by those workers is still very circumscribed. Braverman writes that the style of management has changed towards worker participation where the worker experiences, "the illusion of making decisions by choosing among fixed and limited alternatives designed by a management which deliberately leaves insignificant matters open to choice" (*ibid*:39). "The task of management," Burawoy notes, "has been to reduce or eliminate the uncertainty in the expenditure of labor while at the same time ensuring the production of profit" (Burawoy 1978:254). Braverman, however, neglects to see worker resistance in his analysis, and how this itself is a force which causes changes to which managers must respond in the capitalistic production process (Friedman 1977). What makes Braverman's study so important is the way he keeps to the Marxist technique and is concerned

not with the division of labor in society but within the enterprise, not where the labor is distributed among industries but the breakdown of jobs and processes, not with the division of labor in general but with the division in the capitalist mode of production. By doing so, he like Marx, acknowledges the historical processes that have unfolded and continues to do so. He concerns himself with the change, the motion, of the capitalist mode of production.

Conception and execution cannot be separated while a human being is involved in the process of production. This is the weakness inherent in Taylorism and Braverman's analysis of the transformation of the labor process in the capitalist mode of production. Humans are not machines, and no matter how much deskilling management creates through the transformation of the process of production, workers still must engage in that form of labor deemed unproductive – thinking. Nevertheless, as Vicki Smith points out (Smith 1994), *Labor and Monopoly Capital* has generated areas of inquiry including, workers interests, participation and resistance; gendered outcomes and causes of labor process transformations; and changes in skill levels and control strategies which are just as fruitful today as ever (Smith 1994:404).

## **Labor Markets**

How do workers navigate the multiplicity of labor markets? Labor thus far has been discussed as a monolith and this abstraction requires parsing out. Class in the twenty-first century is too reductive and fails to capture the nuance of how labor functions across space and time. Evaluating labor markets is a more precise way to assess labor's relationship to the means of production within a given industry. Neoclassical labor market theory holds that wages and employment are tied to supply and demand. Wages are the product of economies of production and will fluctuate. Employment is shown to be related to individual worker's ability to invest in

their own human capital, and by doing so will make them more attractive to employers and increase their ability to earn high wages. What neoclassical economics fails to theorize is the persistence of poverty and the presence of race and sex discrimination in the labor market (Hirsch 1980). For example, how can it be that two people of equal amounts of human capital, one white and the other black, can have such different levels of wages, unemployment, and occupational status?

Contemporary sociologists have produced a significant amount of literature on labor market theory, which seeks to explain how labor markets function and how workers and employers interact within them (Bourdieu 2005; Doeringer and Piore 1975; Ekers and Loftus 2020; Kalleberg 2009; Standing 2009, 2011; Wright 2000a). A key focus of this literature is the idea of segmentation, which refers to the division of labor markets into distinct segments based on different types of work, skills, and wages. The concept of segmentation is highly relevant to the trucking industry as it is a stratified industry with distinct segments of drivers, each with their own working conditions, pay scales, and levels of autonomy. Long-haul truckers, for example, have a different experience compared to local delivery drivers, and owner-operators face different challenges compared to company drivers. This division of labor and different working conditions can be attributed to broader factors such as globalization, technological advancements in logistics, and the increasing use of independent contractors.

In the context of the trucking industry, labor market theory and segmentation can help explain some of the key features of the industry and the experiences of those who work in it. One important factor is the segmentation of the industry into different segments based on types of work and compensation. For example, short-haul (less-than-truckload) trucking is often seen as a more desirable and higher-paying segment of the industry, while long haul driving is often



characterized by lower wages and less desirable working conditions. Another key aspect of labor market theory that applies to the trucking industry is the concept of secondary labor markets, which are characterized by low wages, limited benefits, and high turnover rates. These markets are often found in industries that rely heavily on low-skilled and low-wage workers, such as the trucking industry. The high turnover rates in these markets are often seen as a result of the limited opportunities for upward mobility and the lack of investment in worker training and development. On the other side are primary labor markets which typically have stable, well-paid jobs with good benefits.

Finally, labor market theory can help explain the ways in which workers and employers interact within the trucking industry. One important concept in this regard is the idea of employer monopsony power, which refers to the ability of employers to set wages and working conditions due to their dominance in the labor market. This power can lead to lower wages and poorer working conditions, as workers have limited bargaining power in such markets. In the trucking industry, employer monopsony power is often seen as a significant factor contributing to the low wages and poor working conditions experienced by many drivers. Labor market theory provides a useful framework for understanding the dynamics of the trucking industry and the experiences of those who work in it. By examining the ways in which labor markets are segmented, the role of secondary labor markets, and the interactions between workers and employers, we gain a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges facing the industry and the potential solutions to these challenges.

The dynamics of labor markets are crucial to understanding the organization and experiences of workers in various industries. Within this framework, it is essential to recognize the existence of primary and secondary labor markets. Primary labor markets offer stable, well-

compensated positions with opportunities for career growth and benefits, while secondary labor markets consist of jobs that are characterized by lower wages, limited job security, and fewer benefits. One industry that falls within the realm of secondary labor markets is truck driving. Truck driving, with its unique set of challenges and characteristics, serves as an intriguing case study in the realm of secondary labor markets, shedding light on the experiences of workers in this demanding and often precarious occupation.

Dual market theory is a result of attempting to understand the gaps in the debate between structuralist and Keynesian labor market theory (Doeringer and Piore 1975). Doeringer and Piore complicated the idea held by both the structuralists and the Keynesians that unemployment is involuntary. They argue that unemployment can also be temporary and voluntary. It is not simply that there are not enough jobs now but if the nation expands its economy that those left out will be able to step in, or that workers and jobs are mismatched due technological displacement, shifting production patterns, and foreign competition (*ibid:67*). They contend that, “many jobs are unattractive because of low pay or other undesirable characteristics thus individuals choose an in-and-out pattern combined with unemployment compensation, rather than stick to such jobs as steady work” (*ibid:68*). Dual labor market theory contends that there are two sectors: primary and secondary. Primary sector employment is characterized by well-paying, steady, and preferred jobs in society. Secondary employment is characterized by the contrary. Workers in this sector see their jobs as dead-end, often self-terminate and shuttle from one low paying job to another. Dual labor market theory argues against the ‘human capital’ model of employment promoted by economists. Specifically, the human capital model postulates that training, experience, and education are investments workers make in themselves in order to be eligible for primary labor markets. Doeringer and Piore argue, “that the problem of unemployment is rooted

less in individual behavior than in the character of institutions and the social patterns that derive from them” (Doeringer and Piore 1975:72). As such, primary sector job eligibility is a barrier to women and folks of color. Dual labor market theory must be defined in terms of the characteristics of the job and not on the characteristics of the individual which further reproduces inequality. Most importantly Hirsch contends, if firms are acting as solely profit maximizing entities in competitive markets the degree of racism (and presumably all forms of discrimination) exhibited in labor markets cannot be explained as marginalized workers would be cheaper to employ thus returning a higher rate of profit (Hirsch 1980).

“Competitive production no longer exists in many industries” due to the growth in the size of firms and their control of various industries (Hirsch 1980:135). This has resulted in a dual economy dominated by a few firms with a high degree of economic control and dominated in sheer numbers by firms in competition with each other for economic subsistence in the secondary economy. With this in mind one can understand that dualism in labor markets has followed suit. Firms that can affect the price for their goods or services through control of inputs and organization can be called monopoly firms. Monopoly firms, due to their size, require a high degree of organization, and thus a high degree of coordination through the stratification of their labor force which produces internal labor markets (*ibid*:136). Whereas those who cannot are termed competitive firms. Each industry can be characterized by how many and what type of firms operate within it, and those industries characterized by many smaller competitive firms are said to be unconcentrated while the opposite is concentrated and represented by a few monopoly firms.

Hudson points out in his study on new labor market segmentation, “The identification of intermediary jobs demonstrates that the labor market can be further differentiated beyond the

primary–secondary dichotomy.” He operationalizes secondary job characteristics as, “poverty level earnings, the absence of employer provided health insurance, the absence of an employer provided retirement or pension plan, and employment in a job that is limited or uncertain in its duration (contingent work)” (Hudson 2007:294). When a job does not contain all four variables but only one or some it falls into the intermediary job category. Additionally, he shows that contrary to earlier theorists, many workers do move from secondary jobs into intermediary jobs around the age of thirty although the rates and age of transition are less for women and folks of color. What is unclear irrespective of these categories is the rates of transition for particular jobs or workers with certain skills.

### **Precarious, Contingent, & Seasonal Labor**

*“However one defines it, the precariat is far from being homogeneous. Most who find themselves in temporary jobs are close to being in the precariat because they have tenuous relations of production, low incomes compared with others doing similar work and low opportunity in occupational terms”* (Standing 2011:14–15).

Precarious work also means employment that is uncertain, unpredictable, and risky from the point of view of the worker (Kalleberg 2009). Contingent workers are those who do not have an implicit or explicit contract for ongoing employment (Statistics 2018) and although contingent can mean precarious and vice versa, it is not always the case. For the purposes of our discussion, we will say that seasonal work is both contingent and precarious having met the definitions of both. However, the subjectivity of the worker needs to also be addressed because not all workers feel similarly about the kind and degree of precarity in their job which they experience. If one makes a living, for example, of moving from seasonal job to seasonal job and they prefer this

type of independence we must consider the worker as an agent who has weighed the costs and benefits and has made their choice accordingly. There are also workers who engage in this same type of movement who wish to leave these secondary labor markets but are trapped in a cycle of dead-end jobs that have no opportunities for primary labor market skill development. No doubt this leads to distress, obvious in a variety of forms, and it reminds us daily of such precarity (Kalleberg 2009). And finally, though this analysis is simplified, there are workers in ‘typical’ working arrangements who decide that the quasi-domination by their employer is worth the cost because of the benefits that come with higher wages, enterprise benefits, and skill development.

The concept of precarity involves both labor and life, with some lives being more precarious than others due to societal and economic organization. Labor geographers find value in approaches that consider both paid and unpaid labor and extend beyond traditional definitions of precarious employment. The spatial and social aspects of precarious work go beyond migrant labor and high-tech or creative sector employment (Strauss 2018). Work on precarious employment, again broadly characterized, is more interested in examining, describing and analyzing labor relations and regimes that create insecurity for workers, usually those in some form of paid employment (Kalleberg, 2011; Strauss 2018). The concept of precarity is used to understand how economic restructuring and labor market changes affect workers and create insecurity and vulnerability due to political-economic structures and relations (Strauss 2018).

Contingent workers are more likely than noncontingent workers to be employed in the agriculture and construction industries (Statistics 2018). These contingent workers are persons who do not expect their jobs to last or who report that their jobs are temporary. In terms of benefits, Contingent wage and salary workers are half as likely to be covered by employer-provided health insurance as noncontingent workers. Contingent and precarious work does not

just mean that one is at risk of losing their job or is subject to just-in-time scheduling that can leave them without daily wages at a moment's notice (Halpin 2015). A temporary job may be a stepping stone to the beginning of a career, but for many it may be a stepping stone down into a lower income status. For instance, Autor and Houseman (2005) note that taking a temporary job after a spell of unemployment can result in lower earnings for years ahead. Standing (2011) also suggests that once a person enters a lower rung job, the probability of upward social mobility or of gaining a 'decent' income is permanently reduced (15).

What can precarious and contingent work tell us about seasonal employment? In agriculture it cannot tell us very much. Nature does not lend itself to capitalist production processes and therefore much of the agricultural sector regardless of technological improvements and labor-saving devices finds itself requiring a different organization of labor. Macro level economic changes inducing precarity has affected many jobs sectors but whether a farmer is receiving a larger or smaller subsidy, or whether an employer of truck drivers enters a different tax bracket due to a shifting political regime still does not preclude the necessity of a large, unattached labor force that responds to the seasonal demands and natural results of agricultural production.

Unlike factory production, farm labor processes do not so much transform nature as encourage, manage, and eventually harvest it. "The organic (read: biological) character of production plays an especially significant role in shaping the temporality and spatiality of labor application" (Guthman 2017:31). Workers need to be present at specific times during the life cycle of crops or animals for harvesting or slaughter, and this can be a challenge for recruitment and retention because labor may be idle during periods of growth. For Mann, these qualities are obstacles for capitalist agriculture and explain the persistence of family farmers. For others, they

are not so much obstacles as targets of strategies to manage nature's unruliness. These strategies may be technological (e.g., plant breeding that smooths out and extends the length of the harvesting season), or they may be social (e.g., employing highly marginalized populations who have little choice but to work wherever and whenever work is available). Growers have also capitalized on workers' social networks to ensure care and commitment. Core workers recruit family members and others from their region of origin, even those living in California, which in effect becomes a "self-recruiting" workforce (Guthman 2017). Ag production is fixed in place (generally) and in this way capital cannot engage in the same types of spatial fixes that other more mobile capital can achieve. Workers must go to the point of production, and they are both recruited by various means but also in the new economy capital does not have to work so hard to exploit beneficial production regimes. Workers are caught between a this-or-that precarity and given that so many workers in this industry migrate from rural areas to both rural and urban areas this is demonstrative of the general lack of jobs that rural workers have access to but also the durability and place-basedness of specific ag commodities. Canneries/processing facilities are not likely to move if the firms that hire drivers experience no labor shortages due to geographic constraints and if nature proves to be too unruly to be dependable it is more likely that a cannery will shut down rather than move location. Even larger fuel costs can be externalized to lower wages or higher final prices.

One indicator of the growth of precarious work cited by some authors is the shifting of risk from employers to employees (Breen 1997; Hacker 2006). Risk-shifting from employers to employees is illustrated by the increase in defined contribution pension and health insurance plans (in which employees pay more of the premium and absorb more of the risk than do employers) and the decline in defined benefit plans (in which the employer absorbs more of the

risk than the employee by guaranteeing a certain level of benefits) (Mishel, Bernstein, and Schmitt 2007). Shifting of risk as an indicator of precarious work does apply to seasonal trucking because those benefits were never offered in the first place, but also wages are determined by the productivity of the harvest. The per ton rate is determined in advance by the California Tomato Growers Association (Anon 2020). The unpredictability of natural production leads to uncertain worker outcomes.

Kalleberg offers a policy prescription for precarious work that includes helping people deal with the uncertainty and unpredictability of their work— and their resulting confusion and increasingly chaotic and insecure lives—while still preserving some of the flexibility that employers need to compete in a global marketplace. Policies should also seek to create and stimulate the growth of non-precarious jobs whenever possible (Kalleberg 2009:16). And this is a promising suggestion. What this looks like for seasonal trucking remains an open question. One could argue, however, that employers could be induced to reduce the amount of risk shifted to employees and that the state could more effectively collaborate in those sectors which have come to be seen as precarious in order to better optimize outcomes for workers. Kalleberg goes on to say that “employers are reluctant to provide training to workers given the fragility of the employment relationship and the fear of losing their investments. The government should thus follow the lead of many European countries and bear more of the cost burden of education and retraining” (*ibid* 17).

### **Labor Power and Commodification**

The commodification of labor power, which is the owner of the capacity to labor selling it to a buyer of labor power has changed with the advance of capitalism. There are two features



of commodification of labor power that need to be noted. One, all labor power when sold for a wage is commodified. Two, commodification is by degrees. Labor power is commodified but not every seller of it is commodified to the same degree, and full commodification is only possible under slavery. A day laborer and a salaried executive are commodified, but obviously they do not experience the same level of commodification (Standing 2009:9). However, Standing's assertion that labour is a commodity because, "labour *only* take place because it is sold on the market" (*ibid*:4) runs contrary to Polanyi's belief that labour is a fictitious commodity. For Polanyi, labor is simply human activity, and was not produced to be sold on the market. This debate appears to be a matter of historicism. Polanyi's argument maintains that societies with markets do not commodify labor, and yet, we find ourselves in markets with a society which does in fact commodify labor.

Embeddedness is a way to think about the ways that labor is commodified in society at specific moments in time. Embeddedness and double-movement are introduced to us by Karl Polanyi in *The Great Transformation* (Polanyi 2001). The concept of embeddedness comes as a reaction to both the conception of an economic sphere separate from society and the ongoing attempts to impose that stark vision upon the world beginning in the nineteenth century through the present day. Embeddedness is the assertion that social systems and economic systems are one and the same, they are collapsed into each other, that they are a singularity. Economic embeddedness is a transhistorical and transcultural reality. However, while the economy and society have always been embedded and will presumably always be so, there have been and continue to be strong moves by liberal-market theoreticians to separate those elements into two separate spheres of human activity. This has resulted, as Polanyi argues, in counter-movements by society to resist the disembedding of the economy from society which would, "annihilate the

human and natural substance of society” (Polanyi 3). The dialectic in this reasoning is this: the market economy negates humanity and nature resulting in humanity and nature negating the market economy. Capital, in its pursuit of profit and in accordance with the ‘laws’ of the self-regulating market, necessarily degrades humans and nature to a breaking point that is historically contingent through the commodification of that which cannot be made into one. Polanyi calls these, fictitious commodities: land, labor, and money. There is a problematic that reveals itself in the discussion of embeddedness and double-movement, which requires unfolding. When we speak of the market we speak of our market, and this is because it is not external to our society. When we speak of the market doing a thing, our society is doing that thing, and this point is made well by Fred Block, to whom we will return later.

Nevertheless, Standing’s book, *Work After Globalization* (Standing 2009), addresses the process of commodification of labor that do have historical precedents. There have been periods of disembedding and reembedding, or commodifying and decommodifying, and this has been a response to the historical development of capitalism. One of the key themes of his book is the way labor became tied to citizenship, the concept of industrial citizenship, and the role that various labor organizations played in the commodification of labor power throughout different periods. In his analysis of embeddedness, he cites three main periods.

The first period was a disembedding process and is tied to Marx’s period of primitive accumulation. This is the period, “in which financial and industrial capital broke down old systems of regulation, social production and distribution, as a strategy to create national markets, including a national labour market” (Standing 2009:3). The second comes after World War I, and this is the embedded period. It was characterized by high union enrollment, enterprise and state benefits, and a social contract. Keynesian macroeconomic policies, and the development of the

welfare state, followed after World War II. The failures of this period were tying these benefits to the labor force engaged in the production of commodities while disregarding those who did not. This resulted in a racialized and gendered disparity in benefit allocation due to the high numbers of women and immigrants who provided service work, and he argues that this population was larger than the labor force producing commodities.

The third period, which we are in now, is the disembedded phase. In the 1970s, the ascendancy of neoliberalism began to displace and erode the progress that had been made in the embedded phase. Deregulation, privatization, financialization, and information technology were the result of economic and oil crises, newly industrialized nations trying to keep pace, and 'free-market' ideology promoting competition as the only metric for success. States rolled back regulatory frameworks that had propped up industrial citizenship and now regulate in favor of despotic competition. Embeddedness, or the idea that we are a society with markets versus a market with society, is helpful when thinking about who or what is actually in charge.

## **Labor Control**

When thinking about work, there are four major structural concepts of work that are outlined by Kalleberg in his discussion of stratification and inequality: Organization, industry, class, occupation (Kalleberg 1983:254). An individual worker is intersected by these forces, and it remains the focus of research to determine which is producing the greatest effect and how. My research focuses on occupation.

How workers are controlled has been studied in depth by sociologists resulting in a breadth of literature that looks at the various strategies firms have taken with their employees in order to be profitable (Abbott 1993; Baron 1984; Fine 1984; Friedman 1977; Goldman and Van

Houten 1977; Scott 2004; Stainback, Tomaskovic-Devey, and Skaggs 2010). Why worker control is rendered problematic is because, “unlike the other commodities involved in production, labor power is always embodied in people, who have their own interests and needs and who retain their power to resist being treated like a commodity” (Edwards 1979:12).

Early forms of worker control are exemplified by scientific management, a form of direct control over the labor process, which took hold of the forces of production in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Frederick Taylor believed the United States’ success as a nation was being encumbered by inefficiency, that the solution for this inefficiency was ‘systematic management’, and that these principles could be applied to ‘all kinds of human activities’ (Taylor 1919). As such, the goal was to produce the greatest *national* efficiency, as Taylor writes in *Scientific Management* (1919). Frederick Taylor was undoubtedly inspired by Smith who wrote, “This great increase of the quantity of work which, in consequence of the division of labour, the same number of people are capable of performing, is owing to three different circumstances; first, to the increase of dexterity in every particular workman; secondly, to the saving of the time which is commonly lost in passing from one species of work to another; and lastly, to the invention of a great number of machines which facilitate and abridge labour, and enable one man to do the work of many” (Smith 1977:21). Though Taylor seems to take Smith’s logic a bit further by suggesting that many men do the work of one by applying dexterity, passing work, and the use of machinery to increasingly fragment the labor process. Further, by applying the principles of scientific management to ‘doers’ preempted the necessity for the creation of ‘planners’, or what has come to be known as managers. Managers are in a position of needing to compel workers to complete the tasks to which they have been assigned, and unsurprisingly they have encountered significant

resistance. The resistance to changing modes of production has resulted in the development of techniques to bring workers to heel.

In addition to direct control over the labor process, hegemonic control, in which consent between employer and workers is generated to produce commodities has been developed (Burawoy 1983). Hegemonic control in the labor process involves dominant actors using their power to shape workers' attitudes and behaviors. This can occur through the division of labor, which can reinforce existing power relations, and through managing worker dissent and resistance. Temporary and contract workers can also be used to maintain control. Michael Burawoy's concept of "the game" suggests that workers' beliefs and attitudes about work can either reinforce or challenge power relations. Overall, understanding hegemonic control in the labor process is crucial for promoting workers' rights and creating more equitable and just working conditions. Firms have utilized the techniques of dispositional, situational, and reciprocal control over their workers (Sallaz 2013). Dispositional ideas are derived from Bourdieu's concept of habitus, the durable baseline constitution of an individual stemming from language, observation, imitation, and education (*ibid*:122). Dispositional theory assumes a pre-formed individual that only requires minor tweaks from management to embody the characteristics required of an acquiescent worker regardless of the mode of production. Taylor thought somewhat contra to this position however and believed that great men were not only born right, but also trained right, referring of course to the principles of scientific management (Taylor 1919). However, dispositional theory may not be applicable to all workers in all industries, or at all. It is a dubious proposition that the durability of a person's disposition will remain intact when production processes create conditions that threaten the reproductive capacity of a worker.

## **Exploitation and Worker Agency**

The study of labor has taken several directions to better understand the experience of workers during each stage of capitalist development in relation to the means of production, to management, and to each other. Orthodox Marxism, economic geography, and early 'work and occupations' sociology have historically suggested that workers are people to whom things are done, that they are manipulated, and have less agency than a more thorough analysis would show (Abbott 1993; Herod 1997, 2001). Giving capital primacy in any analysis fails to recognize the ways in which individuals and groups of workers resist capital and exploitation by using the main weapon they have available to them, which is considerable, control of the means of production. Everyday resistance is affected all the time by workers and Taylor described these various forms of resistance 'soldiering' and Scott calls them 'weapons of the weak' (Scott 1985; Taylor 1919).

Consensus theory, on the other hand, suggests that lack of communication between workers and management is itself the cause of any irrational or exploitative relations between the two groups and that, in fact, their interests are actually aligned. That is, the antagonism between worker and employer only exists due to poor communication and not the asymmetry of power between the owners of capital and the sellers of labor power. History shows that if the workers produce commodities, both groups do *not* win by virtue of the sale of those commodities in the market and the subsequent profits. However, with the expansion of capital, which has, as Marx showed, improve the material conditions of workers, the antagonism between workers and capitalists remains intact, and the profits and wages remain in inverse proportion (Tucker

1978:211). Profits and wages have in fact become ‘decoupled’ in the last 50 years and increases in productivity have not garnered an increase in worker remuneration (Sallaz 2013).

One of the more controversial propositions about why coercive and difficult labor persists has a historical antecedent that began with the Reformation. Max Weber (Weber 2002) theorized in 1905 with *The Protestant Ethic and the “Spirit” of Capitalism* that the rise of capitalism was predicated on the idea that, “religious forces, not simply economic ones, paved the way for the mentality characteristic of modern, Western capitalism” (Weber 2002:ix). Protestantism freed the acquisition of wealth from traditionalist ethic (*ibid*:115). The traditionalist ethic, or traditionalism, regarded labor as a thing which was done to meet one’s material needs. “A person does not ‘by nature’ more and more money., but simply to live-to live in the manner in which he is accustomed to live, and to earn as much money as is necessary for this, Weber writes (*ibid*:16). He argued that this freeing was the result of an innerworldly ascetism, that a *calling* to one’s work was equivalent to the devotion they felt to God. The material demonstration of this devotion was the accumulation of wealth and capital (*ibid*:29). Protestant ascetism regarded the accumulation of wealth for purposes of leisure and conspicuous consumption to be a sin. It was not the accumulation of wealth for wealth’s sake that drove them, but the accumulation of wealth demonstrated their piety through their labor. “According to God’s unambiguously revealed will, it is *only* action, not idleness and indulgence, which serves to increase his glory” (emphasis in the original:106). The pairing of acquisition of wealth and the reprehensible act of consumption paved the way for the capitalist economic system (*ibid*:117). However, Protestants of that period would abhor the modern form of capitalist accumulation, and yet there were groups of people during the ascendancy of capitalism who made the accumulation of capital for capital’s sake their priority.

Weber's idealism which is in opposition to material conditions and struggle is the main thrust of Marx's argument in the development of capitalism (Tucker 1978:345) and is the central debate between the Weberian idealism school of thought and the Marxist materialist school of thought. Weber's analysis disregards capitalism's antecedents such as primitive accumulation and exploitation by feudal classes against serfs. He proposes that, "A young man from one of the putter-out families from the town moved to the country, carefully selected the weavers he needs, tightened up control over them and made them more dependent, thus turning peasants into workers" (Weber 2002:21). While we cannot completely disregard various cultural mechanisms that structured the thought processes it must also be pointed out that mercantile capitalism was and had been in full swing for some time in the Mediterranean as Braudel (Braudel 1992) points out. These proto-capitalists were of largely Catholic faith, so it is dubious to suggest the strength of a Protestant ethic in the overall genesis of capitalism.

Marx, in *Capital Volume I*, argues that the mechanism that created workers out of peasants was the process of primitive accumulation through the enclosure of land and the subsequent eviction of former serfs from the land they had long inhabited. Freed from serfdom meant they were also free to sell their labor power, but this 'freedom' belies their actual unfreedom. With the enclosure peasants no longer had access to lands on which they could produce the means of their own subsistence. Whereas before the enclosures, the peasants exchanged a portion of their labor power to produce for a feudal lord in return for land on which they could produce for themselves. After the enclosures, they were forced off the land and into the market to sell their labor power for a wage without which they would starve without a roof over their heads. Marx writes that the historical motor of change in the world is the struggle between the classes – between the *haves* and the *have-nots*. The *haves* are those that control the



means of production, own private property, set wages, and the determine the duration of the working day. The *have-nots* only own themselves, but even this they must sell in order to reproduce themselves (Marx 1978).

Profit in the capitalist mode of production, argues Marx (Marx 1978), comes from surplus value, which is the value extracted in the production of a commodity that exceeds what is necessary for the worker to reproduce themselves and the fixed costs of production. This surplus value is profit for the capitalist. Going back to the traditionalist ethic that Weber described to us we see that humans prior to the capitalist mode of production produced only what was necessary to reproduce themselves, or to subsist. This is exemplified by the example that increased wages under capitalism under specific modes of production do not lead to greater quantities of production. Rather the peasant, or whomever, is able to calculate how much they need in wages in order to subsist and do not attempt to accumulate more if what is required is more labor. Subsequently as production decreased, capitalist reduced wages which required peasants to work more to meet the production quota. All value created after the cost of production, which includes wages, is profit. The struggle for the length of the working day figures into surplus value.

## **Recruitment**

Before a worker's labor power can be realized and used to transform things into more things that worker must be captured, or recruited (V. Smith 2006:394). Recruiting does not guarantee anything for the employer, however. It is a risk, and a good deal of research has gone into management strategies revolving around hiring practices so as to find the 'right types' of people, or the ones with the highest chances of usable work capacity. The types of traits that make someone the right type have everything to do with the labor process they will soon become

enmeshed in. For some firms it isn't so much a person's technical know-how, even if the job is technical, but how well they will fit in with the team, for example. In trucking there are some key traits that we will presume to put forth and they are often true of many workers who repeatedly work in secondary labor markets. They often do not have greater than a high school degree, they live in or are from an economically depressed area with little other job prospects, they may have criminal records, they have many or zero responsibilities to dependent family members, they are historically marginalized people and inasmuch easier to exploit, and others having all, some, or none of these traits simply want the "American Dream" in whatever form it appears to them.

Regarding recruitment, firms engage would-be drivers with promises of high pay, time spent at home, safety bonuses, sign-on bonuses, paid training, etc. This is evidence of what firms believe drivers want and they are not far from the mark; however, LeMay et al (1993) suggest that managers believe pay and time at home to be more important to drivers than it is. To the uninitiated in the trucking industry, entry can seem rather opaque, and specific job knowledge is unknown. Recruiters paint a rosy picture of the industry to make it appear that the outcome of undertaking a trucking job will land the driver into a stable, middle-class income either as an employee or an owner-operator. Although they, "appear less middle-class when hours of work, rates of pay, benefits, and working conditions are considered" and moreover, a driver earns their middle-class income by working 1.5 full time jobs (Belman and Monaco 2001b:505). Existing drivers are also motivated by these promises and given the amount of 'churn' between companies it is suggestive that these promises are largely illusory.

## Working Conditions

Working conditions are multifaceted. Trucking is characterized by the long hours (compared to other blue-collar occupations), long periods away from home, low-quality food options, and public showers (Belzer, 2006; Viscelli, 2016). While the job does engender a high degree of independence and drivers typically do not interact with management and colleagues in the same way that many other blue-collar jobs do, they perceive recognition for performance, management's attitude toward them as well as management's personal involvement in their lives as contributing to working conditions (LeMay et al, 1993; Belzer, 2001). Human resource programs and the character of the firm has a direct effect on retention (LeMay et al, 1993). One could theorize *a priori* that employees who feel heard, seen, and understood by their employers would be less likely to leave even if an employer could not redress all employee complaints. The managerial theory that this issue is analyzed through is that of customer relations and that employees ought to be considered as 'internal customers.' Driver compensation, however, remains a priority though all aspects of working conditions must be addressed to improve driver retention. What remains unclear is the degree to which even a sensitive and communicative dispatcher can address the concerns of drivers. Past research (Richard et al. 1995) has shown that 'churn', wherein drivers leave firms for another with similar pay and benefits, is suggestive that the dispatcher hypothesis may be substantiated by showing that non-material aspects of the carrier-driver relationship can be improved. Key themes that emerge with qualitative analysis are personal treatment, trust, satisfaction with influence, and economic conditions/relations with employers (Belzer 2001; Jaffee and Rowley 2010). Some of these themes are particular to drayage, however, not all are unique. The studies of the ports have primarily focused on working conditions and wages, not recruitment or retention.

## **The Division of Labor**

The division of labor in society is inevitable. We are all predisposed to different abilities that are assigned to us by nature, and from these ‘gifts of nature’ we can loosely imagine how the beginnings of our species divided labor to transform nature into useful things. However, the modes of production have changed substantively in the following millennia, and the rise of capitalism, which was not inevitable, has given rise to a division of labor that is predicated on the production of commodities not on the reproduction of communities. Adam Smith famously wrote, “This division of labour, from which so many advantages are derived, is not originally the effect of any human wisdom, which foresees and intends that general opulence to which it gives occasion. It is the necessary, though very slow and gradual consequence of a certain propensity in human nature which has in view no such extensive utility; the propensity to truck, barter, and exchange one thing for another” (Smith 1977:29). This view has come under general attack, mostly poignantly by Polanyi when he wrote, “Division of labour, a phenomenon as old as society, springs from the differences inherent in the facts of sex, geography, and individual endowment, and the alleged propensity of man to barter, truck, and exchange is almost entirely apocryphal” (Polanyi 2001:46).

Smith’s misreading of the role of markets in human history primed generations of economists to theorize a rational, economic motive for human industriousness. The idea that *opulence*, whether symbolized or commodified, has a price on the market is a fallacy. In a market society time becomes commodified, and in order to extract value from it, labor is divided in ways that maximize its use of time. Reproductive work ‘wastes’ time and becomes valueless in a market society. The debate over the benefits and costs of the capitalist mode of production,

that is, the gains in production that Smith gushed over and the alienation that Marx wrote against are no less important today. Additionally, there are other questions about the division of labor that regard its ability to bind society together or rend it asunder. There is also the question of how systems of control that are required by this new mode of production effect the individual. Emile Durkheim in, *The Division of Labour in Society*, sought to answer these fundamental questions regarding the new modes of production (Durkheim 1893:7).

The division of classes figure prominently in Willis' work, *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs* (Willis 1977). Willis' two-year ethnography of working-class kids and their parents suggests that the education system in Britain produces certain types of workers by its position in society. Working class kids see mental labor, school, as a system that requires one to obey and conform. This results in an oppositional identity on the part of the kids and a reversal of the dominant values by lower socioeconomic classes. Kids desire to be free from the education system, and this resistance to the perceived authority in the education system is sought in manual, masculine work. Willis posits ongoing dichotomies between mental/manual work, men/women, and race. Capitalism is linked to patriarchy and meritocracy and these values are determined through physical labor. To these kids, the manual work that their fathers do is perceived as having greater degrees of autonomy. They see and hear their fathers discuss what it takes to be of value in life and in work, self-direction and hard work, which is then transformed into prestige among their fellows. These immediate and tangible social benefits come to outweigh the ephemera of academic success and the imposed hierarchies that accompany it.

## **Trucking**

### **Truckers**

The job of trucking requires many skills, although they can be acquired easily, yet to some extent a de-skilling of the industry has been underway for some time. The only codified skill is the possession of a commercial driving license that is federally mandated and acquired through various means, but most commonly a truck driving school, and depending not least upon financial resources, but also time and geographic availability.

The job of a truck driver is tough, both physically and emotionally, and requires a high level of focus and attention. This demanding nature is largely a result of the declining job quality in the trucking industry, which has been brought about by deregulation and increasing automation. Many drivers now work as independent contractors or through temporary agencies, with limited job security and benefits. As new technologies are developed that could potentially eliminate the need for human drivers, the future of trucking is uncertain. It is important to understand the challenges faced by truck drivers and the impact of these larger economic forces on the industry, as it has significant implications for the future of work and labor in the United States.

The agricultural trucking industry can be characterized as competitive and unconcentrated (Hirsch 1980). For example, there is no company large enough that it can lower its own production costs to force a competitor out of business, or alternatively that has enough capital to absorb a competitor. One reason they cannot lower their costs has to do with the way prices are set, per ton, for haulage by a co-op of tomato growers and canneries. The margins within the industry are already small due to high overhead costs and economies of scale are

difficult to produce. In this way the seasonal agricultural trucking industry labor market can be explained largely through the neoclassical model.

Individuals who are self-possessed invest in their skill development which is acquiring a commercial driving license. The markets which produce drivers via training are varied in both time and cost, and savvy individuals will shop around to the best of their ability for the training school that falls within their economic parameters. Once they are licensed, seasonal ag trucking firms recruit new drivers and polish their skills prior to the beginning of the season through mentoring. The internal labor markets within each firm are negligible and opportunities are scarce for upward mobility. A person who starts their career at one of these firms can really only hope to rise to dispatcher or rarely an operations manager. In this way, these small competitive firms resemble monopoly firms who operate a dual labor market in which the ladder from the corporate level does not extend down to entry level. We see then that not all industries can be so easily classified in this binary. Hirsch suggest that characteristics which make up competitive industries are:

- 1. Both the physical capital to labor ratio and the output per worker are low.*
- 2. Production is small scale and labor intensive.*
- 3. Markets are local or possibly regional in scope and tend to have irregular or seasonal patterns.*
- 4. Many competitive firms are in unconcentrated industries with large numbers of other small firms. If the firm is in a concentrated industry, it often functions as a satellite, either supplying materials to or serving as an outlet for a monopoly firm (Hirsch 1980:136).*

Seasonal trucking fits points 3 & 4. The markets are regional to the growing region and trucking ag commodities is nested within the larger agricultural industrial complex and supplies the raw materials to canneries.

While monopoly firms are characterized by:

- 1. The physical capital to labor ratio and the productive output per worker are high.*
- 2. Production is large scale and growth in production depends on physical capital investment and technological progress.*
- 3. Markets are national or international in scope and demand for the firm's product is stable.*
- 4. Most monopoly firms are in concentrated industries; there are few in unconcentrated industries.*

Here we see that ag trucking fits point 1 & 2. The capital investment is very high, and each worker produces (by transporting) very high amounts of goods. Production (transport) is large scale during the season and requires large investments to keep all the equipment running at a pace that can keep up with canning and by utilizing new technologies that also keep drivers driving, although there are finite limits to technology in this way. So, while there is certainly a dual labor market it is difficult to say what relationship it has to the dual economy. Again, seasonal ag trucking contains a mixture of characteristics encompassing both competitive and monopoly firms, which Hudson confirms when he writes, "labor market dualism is not absolute; there are many jobs that combine primary and secondary characteristics" (Hudson 2007:292). Secondary market jobs are created within this industry as the season ramps up and are dissolved a few months later; there are little opportunities for advancement; skill levels are low; and employees are directly managed by a dispatcher. Yet, primary labor market jobs are also found here which are permanent positions that are not affected by seasonal markets including



opportunities to advance; relatively high wages; formally training workers within the firm; job tasks and responsibilities are narrowly defined (Hirsch 1980:139). A full empirical study of this industry will reveal its similarities and differences with other industries which may or may not support the dual labor market theory.

Deregulation in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and concurrent with the diminishing power of the Teamsters, resulted in a changed trucking industry. More competition between carriers that was previously impossible due to Teamster power drove down shipping prices and with it, wages. Many smaller carriers also went out of business when they were unable to compete. The larger carriers, in order to remain competitive, passed their cost cutting measures on to drivers reducing the historically high wages to record lows. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century the model of subcontracting, whereby drivers lease a truck and are locked into a contract with a carrier, burden drivers with crushing debt and unreliable earnings. Many carriers are getting away from the employer-employee relationship in order to externalize their costs.

The canon of truck driving is exemplified by three texts. Ouellet's *Pedal to the Metal*, Belzer's *Sweatshops on Wheels*, and Viscelli's *The Big Rig*. All three texts have the benefit of being written by people who had driven trucks. Both Ouellet and Viscelli studied trucking for their dissertation research, and Belzer had driven a truck prior to his academic career (Belzer 2000; Ouellet 1994; Viscelli 2016). Other authors have focused more generally on the trucking industry and the regulation of driving hours and how a reduction in working hours combined with stabilization of working schedules can actually increase economic efficiency within these labor markets (Saltzman and Belzer 2002), the effect of deregulation and downward pressure on wages (Peoples 1998), the political factors and populist discourse resulting in deregulation (Hamilton 2006, 2008, 2009), and how deregulation affected favorable rates given to customers

under regulation (Levinson 2009). Missing from these texts are the ways in which drivers respond to changes made at the state level and the employer. Structures and institutions create the conditions under which workers labor, but workers do not do so passively and are always seeking to obtain or maintain some control over the labor process.

Ouellet specifically deals with the affective motivations and rewards that truck drivers glean from their jobs. It is largely autoethnographic and uses informal conversations and covert ethnography to extract the reasons driver's give to explain their high levels of work, which he demonstrates cannot be explained in terms of coercive, paternalistic, monetary rewards, or the labor process (5). He also questions how drivers explain their high levels of effort to themselves and the world and argues that it is to protect their self-worth and their sense of honor. It is in a good question, and one that Sallaz has also considered. But we do not just do it to protect our self-worth, and if we do, there is more to it than that. "To transform the basic human capacity to engage in meaningful work into a commodity requires persuasion, coercion, and ongoing intervention" (Sallaz 2013:15). Ouellet's own positionality growing up working class constituted him to be able to comport himself at his job similarly to his colleagues even though he is simultaneously pursuing an advanced educational degree. It is a qualitative example and a good demonstration of the culture of self-sweating which Belzer dives deeply into by looking at the structural mechanisms that require it.

*Sweatshops on Wheels* specifically looks at the deregulation of the trucking industry and its effects on truck drivers. He proposes that the simplistic economic questions revolving around lower prices and improving services are not the entire story and requires a deeper analysis. No longer required to pay high wages, employers externalize the costs of keeping customer prices low by requiring drivers to put in longer days, drive further, and get paid less for doing so. He

uses his own experience as an over-the-road truck driver to make judgements about how the transformation of the industry has affected all those involved and, “to explore its ramifications and determine whether we need other policies to balance efficiency with equity” (5). Belzer shows how the deregulation of the trucking industry eroded the quality of life that truck drivers had established under unionization and the reduction in wages and increases in hours resulting from deregulation requires drivers to self-sweat just to keep their heads above water.

Viscelli’s contemporary research explores the themes of deregulation and self-sweating in his book, *The Big Rig*, where he shows qualitatively how the piece rate system, in this case, being paid by the mile and not the hour, pushes drivers to spend more days on the job and drive more miles to earn what amounts to poverty wages. Viscelli takes it a step further to show how the economic model in the deregulated trucking industry of externalizing costs has shaped a new landscape of independent contractor truck drivers who, chasing the entrepreneurial dream of being one’s own boss, have committed themselves to truck leasing agreements paired with shipping contracts that ultimately leave drivers with less money, often below poverty level wages, than those who remain employees of carriers. His contemporary findings include how many people who are desperate for a job enter the industry based on the promises of substantial earnings which are in fact myths promulgated by carriers and truck manufacturers. This bears resemblance to the Great Depression when, “Men who normally would never have considered this type of work now eagerly sought whatever was available...To sell equipment, manufacturers of trucks and related products drastically reduced prices and liberalized credit” (Garnel 1972:17). Viscelli (2016) points out these arrangements are, “a form of debt peonage” (148). Combinations of inflated truck prices, poor financing, balloon payments, and complicated clauses in lease agreements, and intimidation techniques ensure that drivers who are inexperienced will be

trapped in contracts they cannot leave and cannot pay back. Similarly, Garnel (1972) writes about trucking during the depression, “Thousands of persons who entered the industry went broke because they lacked training and because they failed to set aside part of their earnings for depreciation. The resulting high business morality poured a steady flow of truck still lower-cost used equipment onto the market, which only induced thousands of others to try their luck. Sales representatives of truck manufacturers used truck dealers and shippers applied maximum pressure with minimum ethics to convince unwary prospects that fortunes were to be made by ambitious truckers” (Garnel 1972:17).

As thorough as these texts are, all of them focus on drivers who are, at least on paper, in long-term employment. Drivers in these examples may change employers seeking better wages or more home time, or some other benefit, but they all labor year-round as truck drivers whether long-haul trucking or intercity trucking. I would argue that long-haul, intercity truck drivers, and SATD all have in common is a daily calculus and effort toward earning as much money as possible. In the case of non-SATD drivers, they make this calculus because the next day may bring deadheading (unloaded, unpaid driving) or waiting, unpaid, for a load at a terminal. For SATD they do this because they only have four months in which to accumulate as much money as possible because they do not know what those other eight months will bring. Ostensibly, they will continue to labor as truck drivers in another sector and is a question this research seeks to answer.

### **Agricultural Trucking**

Most trucking industry jobs exist in secondary labor markets and SATD are relegated to a similar fate. SATD are keen to develop their behind-the-wheel skills during an agricultural

season or two, and then apply to a larger carrier for more steady employment. However, this upward mobility does not reap the rewards that it claims and SATD are unlikely to gain much if anything from such a move.

Research on the people who perform SATD and its position within the larger trucking industry is not readily available. Much research has been done, of course, on seasonal agricultural labor, and much has also been done on truck driving. Theoretical research has also been done on labor market theory and the job characteristics that align with segmented labor markets. Trucking and agricultural labor intersect with each other only since they have the characteristics of secondary labor markets which also happens to exemplify SATD. Research has also been done on the motivation of workers to put forth such a high effort at their jobs and the rationale for doing so. However, no research has put all these elements together to explain why: 1) Semi-skilled workers stay in an industry which only operates for several months a year and, 2) How do they stay in this industry, 3) How workers reproduce themselves during the remaining part of the year. This job is precarious if we think of it and compare it to contemporary jobs that are distinguishable as precarious such as workers in the gig economy. Precarious work means employment that is uncertain, unpredictable, and risky from the point of view of the worker (Kalleberg 2009). The lived lives of workers in SATD are how we must determine if this labor market is precarious, not only by job characteristics as is suggested when analyzing segmented labor markets.

The majority of research on agricultural trucking focuses on the effects of regulation or deregulation (Beilock and Freeman 1984, 1991; Belzer 2000; Farmer 1964; Frey et al. 1985; Hamilton 2006, 2008, 2009; Lamkin 1973; Levinson 2009; Saltzman and Belzer 2002). Within these questions, as it pertains to agricultural trucking, is that sector's exemption under The

Federal Motor Carrier Act of 1935. One point of view is that the exemption should remain in place (Farmer 1964; Miklius and DeLoach 1965). They argue that because the Act was created to protect carriers, not shippers, that the effects of regulation would place an undue economic burden on farmers who are shippers of commodities. Driving shipping rates up by reducing competition in the trucking industry, rate setting, route setting, limited entry and exit, would have the effect of driving up shipping prices and thus the cost to farmers. In effect Miklius and DeLoach argue that competition has not had deleterious effects on this sector of the industry. Miklius and DeLoach (1965) spuriously claim that because, “The exempt carriers rely exclusively on transportation of exempt commodities for their revenues. A decline in the number of exempt carriers should be observed if they were not covering their total costs.” Agricultural hauling rates do vary depending on supply and demand conditions in agricultural areas. Typical variations range from 10 to 20 percent from highs to lows, with most variations probably occurring at the beginning and end of a harvest season (Farmer 1964). What these authors fail to mention in their studies on regulation is the ways in which companies seek to cover their losses by reducing wages, working hours, and benefits.

### **Trucking and the Labor Process**

In trucking, as on the shop floor, the way the labor process is organized produces certain types of drivers. Depending on the types of drivers so produced will inform the types of games they play and lead them to develop habits and understandings of how the job should be done (Viscelli 2016:98). We can then ask, do certain types of low-skill industries perpetuate ideal types of workers and in a way lock them into a cycle of low-wage and precarious employment?

The game is very important to seasonal truck driving because of how much effort is expected of drivers. One important difference to mention is that, while managers of trucking

companies have sought to fragment the industry into conception and execution through technology and diversified labor, the actual driving of a truck cannot be fragmented. Execution requires conception while in the driver's seat. That driving cannot be fragmented creates antagonism between workers and management, the latter always attempting to exert greater control. In a bizarre way, trucking flips the Taylor model of managers-as-planners and workers-as-doers. Management in trucking, in order to control cost, attempts to exert control over the execution of work, that is, how the truck is operated. Requiring the driver adopt the role of planner. Planning under these circumstances creates antagonism due to the constraints on the driver to be able to conceive of the most appropriate way for themselves to execute the job, and also requires them to absorb the externalities present in the accumulation process.

### **Trucking and Segmented Labor Markets**

Flexibility and precarity have come to define many jobs across all sectors of the workforce in the last several decades. Segmented, or dual labor market theory perhaps gives us the best understanding of why workers seem to stay put with little to no upward mobility in terms of earnings, skill development, or stable jobs. Uneven development and economic geography are less germane theoretically due to the fact that agricultural production is place-bound and has remained so despite changes in technology, out-sourcing, and other changes in production processes. While some agricultural production has moved south across the border, California still remains the producer for a substantial number of crops that we eat here in the United States and that are exported around the world; canning tomatoes included.

Many SATD stay in the United States post-season, which suggests that there are other permeable labor markets which are also secondary that they move in and out of during the year.

The labor markets workers move into are secondary labor markets because there is little reason to believe that if the jobs into which they moved had the characteristics of primary labor markets they would return to seasonal work. Additionally, because a floating and available labor force is necessary in order for agricultural production to continue it suggests that the State will continue to support the conditions of a workforce with few skills that are competitive in primary markets.

Primary and secondary labor markets within the trucking industry do exist yet are historically contingent and reflect technological changes in the transportation industry as well as political upheaval resulting in deregulation, or reregulation depending on one's political understanding. Prior to the 1970s much of trucking fell under the auspices of organized labor specifically the Teamsters union. Their power and control created high wages, stable long-term employment, enterprise benefits, and their political organizing also ensured good state benefits. These jobs represented what dual market theorists would consider primary labor markets. While skill development was nil and there was little upward mobility, the other job characteristics are consistent with primary markets. Trucking jobs that were not organized typically had less of those characteristics; however, in order to attract workers, employers had to compete with high wages in closed shops resulting in higher-than-average wages for semi-skilled unorganized workers. Nevertheless, these would have been considered secondary labor markets. Entry from the secondary market to the primary market was attainable through some skill development but also through social networking reflecting the socially embedded nature of labor markets. The highest paid drivers were those who drove less-than-truckload freight which is typically short-haul or local trucking. Truckload, or long-haul drivers were also well paid, but less so. The degree to which SATD wages were affected by Teamster organizing remains to be researched.



## **Wages and Earnings**

Numerous studies have indicated pay is central issue in the recruitment and retention of truck drivers. The historical trend over the last 40 years has sharply declining and then stagnant wages following the deregulation and deunionization of the industry in 1980. Research also suggests a number of other important factors in attracting or retaining drivers such as time at home (Keller 2002), good relationships with dispatch/management (Keller and Ozment 1999a, 1999b), quality equipment (Keller 2002; Phares and Balthrop 2021), health insurance and pensions, and bonuses (LeMay and Stephen Taylor 1988; LeMay et al. 1993; Peterson 2005). Lack of benefits such as health insurance have been shown to be a variable leading to truck driver dissatisfaction (Griffin, Rodriguez, and Lantz 2001). However, LeMay et al (1993) found no relationship between benefits and turnover. One possible explanation that driver turnover is so fast that drivers never qualify for benefits. Another possible explanation is that if drivers have benefits from a spouse or state and federal programs, then employer-sponsored health insurance may not be significantly correlated to turnover. Trucking pay must also stay apace of other competing industries for would-be drivers to self-select into trucking. The main competing industries and occupations outside of trucking have been shown to be construction and unemployment (Phares & Balthrop 2021). But trucking driving's main competitor is other jobs in the transportation and warehousing industry (Burks & Monaco 2019).

Wages for SATD are relatively high compared to long-haul trucking, and are comparable with short-haul, or local intracity, trucking, but only if you look at the wages earned during the four-month period during which people work. High wages are cited as a rationale for doing this work, but for those who do not have a job after the season there is a period during which they need to balance financial and other priorities. "These reasoning processes have been conditioned

by history, class, race, gender, ability, and citizenship, and the privileges and disadvantages that accompany these statuses,” and include, “identify employment goals and opportunities, determine what skills or education were required for achieving those goals, decode recruitment and hiring processes, estimate whether they could access specific jobs, survive periods of unemployment, and plan for the future” (Halpin and Smith 2017).

Many workers collect state unemployment insurance; however, this resource is finite and does not extend for the duration of their term of unemployment. SATD are not generally entitled to enterprise benefits such as employer-sponsored health care or retirement. Preliminary research suggests that some percentages of this labor market are, in fact, migrants who return to Mexico after the season and live on their earnings until the next year. While this is certainly an agreeable option for those for whom it is available, the question remains regarding what other people do.

The most thoroughly studied segments of the trucking industry for wages and opportunity costs (Beilock and Capelle 1990), wages and waiting time (Monaco 2010; Monaco and Grobar 2004; Belman, Monaco, and Brooks 2004), wages and the labor market (Burks and Monaco 2019), wages and deregulation (Belzer 2000), wages and independent contractors (Viscelli 2016), wages and safety (Rodríguez, Targa, and Belzer 2006b), wages and automation (Viscelli 2018, 2020), and wages and turnover (Keller 2002; Keller and Ozment 1999a, 1999b; LeMay et al. 1993; Min and Lambert 2002; Phares and Balthrop 2021; Richard et al. 1995; Stephenson and Fox 1996). These authors have analyzed wages and turnover in over-the-road or truckload freight (TL), and drayage for both owner-operators and employee drivers. In the truckload (TL) sector Belzer’s *Sweatshop on Wheels*, Viscelli’s *The Big Rig*, and Belman et al. *Sailors of the Concrete Sea* describe the changes in the trucking industry since deregulation marked by the passing of the Motor Carrier Act of 1980 and the effect both on driver’s wages and working conditions

resulting in precarious work, which is defined as, “employment that is uncertain, unpredictable, and risky from the point of view of the worker” (Kalleberg 2009). Port drayage has been studied extensively with a primary focus on wages and working conditions as well. Industry-wide, poor working conditions and poor compensation has led to high turnover and resulting claims of a driver shortage that has spurred research into its causes.

Earnings rather than wages are a more apt description in the TL and drayage segments of the trucking industry as driver pay is either piece rate (per mile) or per turn in drayage (pick-up delivery of containers) and overall earnings are complicated by the fact that not all time at work is paid time. In fact, it has been shown that when one accounts for driver’s hours at work divided by wages, drivers often earn much less than a living wage (Viscelli, 2016; Belzer, 2006, Belman et al, 2004). In the trucking industry one of the primary constraints placed on drivers by carriers that inhibit their earning potential is unpaid time at work whether at ports, other drop off-pick up facilities (Jaffee and Rowley 2010; Monaco and Grobar 2004; Viscelli 2016), and traffic congestion in and around major cities. While studies do show that both wages and employment in trucking have been increasing, they have not kept pace with other similar employment opportunities. Other studies, however, have shown that the opposite is true and that relative wages are increasing compared to other occupations with similar human capital and job-skill requirements (Burks & Monaco, 2019). In addition, to employer strategies of externalizing the competitive costs of logistics onto drivers are longstanding policy at the federal level. Truckers are exempt from the overtime provision in the Fair Labor Standards Act (Belman and Monaco 2001). This essentially creates no bottom, no safety net, for truckers that would protect them from competitive pressure and induces them to ‘self-sweat’ to make a living (Belzer, 2006).

The earnings problem is especially acute for owner-operators who must subtract from their earnings the cost of maintaining and paying for their truck. These costs can be highly variable between owner-operators and over time and space depending on fuel surcharges, maintenance, the loan amount taken out for their truck, and insurance (Monaco & Grobar, 2004; Belzer, 2006 Viscelli, 2016). Many drivers can only become owner-operators by purchasing older model vehicles that are more expensive to fuel and maintain Alternatively, they enter into a lease agreement with high monthly payments and a balloon payment at the end, neither of which they can afford due to low net earnings. It is not atypical for an owner-operator to spend 1/3 of their earnings on truck related expenses which ultimately results in their net earnings being substantially less (>\$10k) than employee drivers (Monaco 2010). It is not uncommon that drivers net pay is zero dollars after subtracting expenses (Viscelli 2016).

### **Worker Misclassification**

The relationship between employers and employees in the “standard model” or the typical career paradigm, very generally, means that the employer controls and directs the work of its employees. Though outdated and probably less common than we’d like to believe this model is typified by a person working for a single firm during their lifetime, move up utilizing internal labor markets, and then retire with a pension (Kalleberg 1983). In economic terms, aside from the wage paid to employees in exchange for their labor, the employer pays social security, Medicare, unemployment tax, and worker’s compensation premiums. The employee contributes to social security and Medicare. Because they are employees, they also have wage rights for minimum wages and overtime, unemployment insurance, and organizing themselves into unions.

Another model, and the under investigation here, is the independent contractor model of employment. Independent contractors (IC) are not entitled to unemployment insurance and must pay the full amount into what's left of our federal social safety nets. ICs must also pay their own medical insurance and are not entitled to worker's compensation. ICs are people who work for themselves or their own company, bear the responsibility for obtaining clients, see that work assignments are executed, and otherwise run the business.

The debate over why employment relations have shifted in the last few decades continues: is it employer or worker driven? It is unlikely that the majority of ICs are fully committed to their path, or that they willingly chose the economic uncertainty that comes with being an IC on top of the increasing and generalized uncertainty that has been growing in the national economy. These questions at their core tend to fall into two camps. The first, and older (orthodox) version that workers are mere inputs to capital and are subject to its whims and caprice. This is best observed in the ways in which highly mobile capital finds geographic locations where its inputs cost the least whether this is raw goods, transportation, or labor power. The second, which is a labor geographies lens, is that workers exercise varying degrees of power over the conditions of the employment relations. Most commonly we see this in the formation of unions. I am not convinced of this second approach except in the small examples. Trucking and truckers epitomize capital, crises, rationalization, and risk shifting. To be sure, it is not feasible for the trucking industry to move overseas or to another north American country and continue to operate. Nevertheless, they do headquarter and recruit drivers from the places with the lowest taxes and labor costs, respectively.

The employment model in trucking used to be more 'standard' prior to 1980. After the (re-)deregulation of the industry it became hypercompetitive. The result was finding new and

ingenious ways to extract surplus value. Independent contracting rose as employers sought to lower their costs. However, these ‘independent contractors’ were not really independent, they were employees who were not receiving benefits. Broadly speaking, deregulation led to significant deterioration of working conditions in the US trucking industry. For more output, long-haul truckers now make 40% less in wages than they did in the late 1970s. A 40% reduction in unionized workers between 1980 and 1997 resulted in a significant decline in union bargaining power and contributed to wage stagnation in the sector (Viscelli 2016)

### **What is misclassification?**

Misclassification refers to the unethical practice of hiring workers without providing them with the benefits and protections they are legally entitled to. This behavior is deliberate and detrimental to workers, as it shifts risks and costs onto them while companies continue to extract surplus value. It is imperative to analyze the differences between independent contractors and the standard model, or classic paradigm. However, statements that suggest a "one-size-fits-all" criterion for workplace dynamics are inaccurate and unhelpful. As noted in the Planmatics, Inc. report, "once a dialogue begins, it becomes readily apparent" that each workplace has its unique dynamics and should be approached as such (Planmatics 2000).

### **Who are the workers that are typically misclassified?**

Workers in non-standard employment conditions are typically misclassified. Non-standard work is defined as having the absence of an employer, a distinction or separation between the firm that employs the worker and the firm for whom the person works, or the temporal instability of the job (Kalleberg 1997). The BLS defines this as ‘alternative’ as opposed to non-standard and the difference between the BLS and Kalleberg’s definition lays in the unpredictable nature of the work rather than the absence of an employer, respectively (BLS,

CWS). Further, the AFL-CIO adds another dimension, “that the worker is guaranteed less than full time employment” (AFLCIO Helene Jorgensen, Nonstandard Work Arrangements: Downscaling of Jobs, Department of Public Policy, AFL-CIO, March 1998).

“Construction, trucking, home health and hi-tech industries were frequently mentioned as examples of industries most likely to use ICs or lure workers into becoming ICs and contain high incidences of misclassification” (Planmatics 2000:iii). So, workers who are in alternative or non-standard arrangements are typically misclassified and many of these workers are ICs.

### **Why are workers misclassified?**

Behind this question is the debate of who is driving non-standard, alternative work. Is it workers or is it companies? Companies are driving these arrangements because it lowers their costs by shifting social welfare costs to workers. Done. Why would the majority of workers in these non-standard arrangements choose to not have healthcare, retirement, unemployment insurance, or worker’s compensation? Why would companies not want to pay into Medicare or social security or premiums for worker’s compensation? If we can agree, and we should, that all work is coercive and that people who choose to not sell their labor power for a wage find themselves broke and homeless then we can bury the question of who has the power to shape the employer-employee relationship. We can also agree that companies want to retain the ability to control workers but pretend that they’re not doing that. If all ICs were truly independent then there would be a marketplace for their labor power, and they could set better, higher terms. This isn’t actually the case. ICs are locked into relationships of control with their employer and are financially dependent on that employer, as such there is only the pretext of independence.

Workers are independent from the benefits conferred to employees. They are, in effect, unfree (Sen).

“The number one reason employers use ICs and/or misclassify employees is the savings in not paying workers’ compensation premiums and not being subject to workplace injury and disability-related disputes. Another reason is the avoidance of costs associated with employee lawsuits against employers alleging discrimination, sexual harassment, and implementing regulations and reporting procedures that go along with having employees.” (Planmatics 2000:iii). At the risk of oversimplifying, employers are driven by economic considerations. Employer claims of flexibility in replacing staff with ICs (instead of hiring full-time employees), accessing workers on an as-needed basis (instead of hiring and keeping specialists in-house), eliminate training requirements (burden falls to IC), keeping new hires as ICs while waiting to see if they work out, firing/laying off ‘expensive’ employees and re-hiring them as ICs without benefits. The lax or non-existent legal framework to keep this from happening to workers allows companies to poorly manage their business and shift the risk of their bad management onto workers.

It is evident that the landscape of jobs has changed dramatically in the last few decades. Rapid changes in digital technology have highlighted the ‘knowledge-based,’ “creative class” ability to work remotely needing only a computer and an internet connection. These workers are highly paid for their services because they are in high demand. They do not require a brick-and-mortar office in order to perform their job functions. If the IC model of work is to continue, we need social institutions that protect all workers. Social security, unemployment insurance, workers compensation, and health benefits should exist equally for all workers regardless of their



classification as workers or life stage. These costs should be paid by employers who are benefitting from the surplus value of labor.

### **What are the effects of misclassification?**

Due to different reporting strategies, auditing practices, claims made, and so on it is difficult to come up with an accurate number of misclassified workers. While this demonstrates that governments at all levels have not made worker protection a priority, we don't need perfect numbers to show how deleterious this is for worker protection. Assuming a conservative 1% misclassification rate and revenues for the period of 1990-1998 researchers show that the loss in revenue from underreporting UI taxes is around \$200 million annually. More importantly they show that there are 80,000 workers who are entitled to benefits but not receiving them (Planmatics 2000:69).

We need everyone paying into our albeit imperfect social safety nets. All these bills come due at some point. Formerly healthy people get sick or injured, people retire, they lose their jobs and so on. By everyone who might use these services at some point in their life paying into these systems and all subsequent generations paying into them we can all rest easier knowing that we are protected. When employers misclassify their workers, usually intentionally, we all lose out. Indubitably some of these workers will need one or all of those social services at some point and then the burden falls to all of us.

### **How are truckers misclassified?**

De(re)regulation of the trucking industry meant that government at all levels was prohibited from regulating the rates, routes, or services of any trucking company. What followed is hyper-competition for business with services going to lowest bidder. This has led, trucking

companies claim, to the inability to pay for benefits that are guaranteed to employees which is why trucking companies have driven the IC model. Activists also argue that because ICs cannot form unions, employer driven IC models are another move by capital to break the bargaining power of unions.

According to the Transportation Resource Board, in the trucking industry, a true independent contractor operates under their own authority, locates their own freight, and manages their own financial and operational affairs. They are also referred to as owner-operators and are actual small business owners. A dependent contractor, however, operates under another motor carrier's authority, hauls that motor carrier's freight, and that motor carrier manages its affairs to a significant degree (Burks and Monaco 2019). We generally refer to these drivers as lease operators, lease contractors, or just contractors. It is these drivers who are consistently and almost always intentionally misclassified.

### **S. G. Borello & Sons, Inc. v. Department of Industrial Relations (1989)**

S. G. Borello & Sons, Inc. v. Department of Industrial Relations was a landmark court case that took place in California in 1989. The plaintiffs in the case were S. G. Borello & Sons, a farming company, and a group of seasonal agricultural workers who were seeking to be classified as employees rather than independent contractors.

At the heart of the case was the question of how to determine whether a worker should be classified as an employee or an independent contractor. The California Department of Industrial Relations had established a set of guidelines for making this determination, which included factors such as the level of control that the employer had over the worker, the degree of skill required for the job, and the method of payment. However, S. G. Borello & Sons argued that

these guidelines were overly broad and did not accurately reflect the reality of their working relationship with the seasonal workers.

In its ruling, the court acknowledged that the question of worker classification was complex and required a case-by-case analysis. The court established a new test, known as the "Borello test," which considered a range of factors including the employer's control over the worker, the worker's opportunity for profit or loss, and the degree of skill required for the job. The court emphasized that no single factor was determinative, and that the analysis should be focused on the totality of the circumstances.

The Borello test has since become the standard for determining worker classification in California and has been influential in other states as well. The case is seen as a significant victory for workers' rights, as it established a more nuanced and flexible approach to determining whether workers should be classified as employees, with all the benefits and protections that come with that status, or as independent contractors, who are generally not entitled to the same level of benefits and protections.

### **The Dynamex decision of 2018**

In 2018, the California Supreme Court made a landmark decision in *Dynamex Operations West, Inc. v. Superior Court*, which fundamentally changed the legal test used to determine whether a worker is an employee or an independent contractor under California law. The case was brought by delivery drivers who had been classified as independent contractors by Dynamex, a courier and delivery service. The drivers argued that they should have been classified as employees and were entitled to the benefits and protections that come with that

classification, such as minimum wage, overtime pay, and reimbursement of work-related expenses.

The court ruled in favor of the drivers, rejecting the previous test that had been used to determine whether a worker was an employee or an independent contractor, known as the Borello test (named after a previous court decision). Instead, the court adopted a new test known as the "ABC" test, which is used in a number of other states as well. Under this test, a worker is presumed to be an employee unless the hiring company can prove all three of the following factors:

- A) The worker is free from the control and direction of the hiring entity in connection with the performance of the work, both under the contract for the performance of the work and in fact;*
- B) The worker performs work that is outside the usual course of the hiring entity's business; and*
- C) The worker is customarily engaged in an independently established trade, occupation, or business of the same nature as the work performed for the hiring entity.*

This decision has had far-reaching implications for companies that rely on independent contractors, particularly in the gig economy. Many companies have faced lawsuits and regulatory action as a result of the ruling, and some have chosen to reclassify their workers as employees to avoid legal risk. The decision has also sparked a broader debate about the future of work and the nature of employment relationships in the 21st century economy.

## **AB5**

California Assembly Bill 5 (AB5) is a law that was passed in 2019 to address worker misclassification in California. The law was specifically aimed at companies in the gig economy,

such as Uber and Lyft, who were classifying their drivers as independent contractors instead of employees. AB5 codified the ABC test, which is used to determine whether a worker is an employee or an independent contractor. Under the ABC test, a worker is presumed to be an employee unless the hiring company can demonstrate that the worker: (A) is free from the control and direction of the hiring entity; (B) performs work outside the usual course of the hiring entity's business; and (C) is customarily engaged in an independently established trade, occupation, or business. The law faced pushback from companies in the gig economy, who argued that it would harm their business models and lead to job losses for workers. However, supporters of AB5 argued that it was necessary to ensure that workers in the gig economy had access to benefits and protections that are typically afforded to employees. In August of 2022, the Supreme Court decided to not hear the case (*California Trucking Association v. Bonta*) which allowed AB5 to go into effect. This decision was a significant victory for workers and labor advocates who had long fought for greater protections for gig economy workers and other misclassified workers. While the full impact of AB5 on the labor market remains to be seen, it represents an important step towards a more just and equitable workplace for all workers.

## **Chapter Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have explored various themes related to labor, including labor geography, space and labor, modes of production, labor markets, precarious, contingent, and seasonal labor, labor power and commodification, working conditions, the division of labor, trucking, and worker misclassification.

We began by examining the concept of labor and its historical development, from a natural activity to a commodity in a capitalist society. We then looked at how labor geography plays a role in shaping economic processes and the spatial organization of production. Space and

labor were also examined, as we explored how the organization of space affects labor processes and how labor, in turn, shapes the built environment.

We then delved into the different modes of production, including the traditional, capitalist, and socialist modes, and how they have influenced labor relations. This led us to explore the dynamics of labor markets, including the different forms of labor market segmentation and how they impact workers. The chapter also examined the issue of precarious, contingent, and seasonal labor and how these types of work arrangements have become more prevalent in recent years. We looked at the ways in which labor power is commodified and how this commodification affects workers.

The concept of the "game" was introduced through the work of Burawoy, which examines how workers understand and respond to their working conditions. This idea was further explored through an analysis of working conditions and the division of labor in the trucking industry.

Finally, we explored the issue of worker misclassification and how it affects workers in the trucking industry. We looked at the ways in which employers misclassify workers as independent contractors, denying them benefits and protections that they would otherwise be entitled to as employees. Overall, this chapter has provided a comprehensive overview of key themes and issues related to labor, drawing on the work of various thinkers and scholars. By examining these themes, we gain a deeper understanding of the complex and evolving nature of work in contemporary society, as well as the challenges faced by workers in navigating these conditions.

## Chapter 4- The Game of Making Out

### Chapter Introduction

All theoretical insights on labor must begin with the fact that all jobs in which there is the selling and buying of labor power are coercive. This is the most important of Marx's analyses on the rise of the capitalist mode of production. Allocation of labor in a market society is shaped by geography and history and the state. We can hem and haw about how this is done, and we should fully investigate these mechanisms, but we should never doubt that at its very core, wage labor is done not because we want to but because we have to. Coercion as a force is a structural issue and these structures are layered. That a farm worker applies pesticides without protective equipment because of her perceived identity as a farm worker (Galt 2013) or a shop worker turns out more pieces per day to demonstrate their acumen with their equipment (Burawoy 1979) are the results of structural processes that have penetrated our core ideas of what it means to be a good worker.

Frederick Taylor was undoubtedly inspired by Smith who wrote, "This great increase of the quantity of work which, in consequence of the division of labour, the same number of people are capable of performing, is owing to three different circumstances; first, to the increase of dexterity in every particular workman; secondly, to the saving of the time which is commonly lost in passing from one species of work to another; and lastly, to the invention of a great number of machines which facilitate and abridge labour, and enable one man to do the work of many" (Smith 1977:21). Though Taylor seems to take Smith's logic a bit further by suggesting that many men do the work of one by applying dexterity, passing work, and the use of machinery to increasingly fragment the labor process. Further, by applying the principles of scientific management to 'doers' preempted the necessity for the creation of 'planners', or what has come to be known as managers. Managers are in a position of needing to compel workers to complete

the tasks to which they have been assigned, and unsurprisingly they have encountered significant resistance. The resistance to changing modes of production has resulted in the development of techniques to bring workers to heel.

Trucking operates on the piece work wage system most commonly denoted as cents-per-mile. More miles equals more cents. It isn't as simple as driving as long or far and as much as one wants to meet their material needs, however. Myriad obstacles present themselves that can turn a 'gravy' job into one where you just can't 'make out'.

The obstacles drivers face include traffic congestion which is particularly bad in major cities where pickups and deliveries begin and end; truck parking for required breaks, especially east of the Mississippi, can be next to impossible; unpaid wait times at shippers range from an hour to six or more with the average around three hours; driving empty (unpaid) miles to pick up a load, known as deadheading; scheduled and unscheduled maintenance; and paperwork all contribute to the difficulty of making out as a truck driver.

The production relations in trucking, those relations into which workers enter with each other and with management, are fundamentally different than those on the shop floor described by Burawoy in *Manufacturing Consent*. The relations of production involve transforming the capacity to work into actual work, or in trucking's case the capacity to transport into transportation is also different than Allied or Geer (15). Notwithstanding the differences both in time and place, it has been observed through qualitative surveys and participant observation that the game exists in the trucking industry as it does on the shop floor, and it is similar enough to use "the game" as a theoretical framework to analyze it.

It is our job to determine the mechanisms and conditions that need are reproduced in the social relations of trucking that continue to invigorate the extant trucking production regime. In



addition to the social relations of trucking is the practical aspect, which is the transportation of commodities by truckers over distances great and small. It is through these “analytically distinct but concretely inseparable components” the social and practical, that the labor process takes shape (15). Similarly, we need to determine the mechanisms in place used to secure surplus value in the labor process of the trucking industry. If we take as fact that driving and working hours are circumscribed by statute, and the basic but important protections for workers from arbitrary intensification of work, retaliation, and so forth more or less exist, then what is it, if not coercion, that determines expenditure of effort by the workers in these “sweatshops on wheels”? To put it another way, how do employers “organize the labor process to guarantee the production of surplus value” by “elicit[ing] a willingness to cooperate in the translation of labor power into labor” absent despotic managerial control methods (Burawoy 1979:26–27)?

Burawoy writes, “consent lies in the organization of activities as though [employers] presented the worker with real choices, however narrowly confined those choices might be” (27). This leaves force, or coercion, limited to individual acts of transgression within the prescribed choices and so coercion is reinforced, and it becomes imbricated in the production of consent. This system of surplus value extraction, the production of consent, is demonstrative through the degree to which workers see their future livelihood dependent on the continued existence and expansion of their employer, thus, they accept many if not most of the conditions that constitute profit making [insert questions and answers from survey data that are demonstrative of this]. This framework is scaffolded and informed by the postulate that one cannot both play the game and at the same time question its rules (Burawoy 1979:81).

The elements that should be taken into consideration that factor into the labor process and how workers are controlled include technology, the piece work system, and trucking culture. The

author's opinion is that driving a truck is not a trivial activity. The weight and length of a tractor-trailer combination which significantly changes acceleration, braking, and turning always factor into the driver's mental processes and are especially taxing in suboptimal weather and traffic conditions.

### **Trucking and the Labor Process**

In trucking, as on the shop floor, the way the labor process is organized produces certain types of drivers. Depending on the types of drivers so produced will inform the types of games they play and lead them to develop habits and understandings of how the job should be done (Viscelli 2016:98). This is an important detail because when a worker learns to play a certain type of game, they will perceive other ways of labor organization as burdensome or incorrect. We can then ask, do certain types of low-skill industries perpetuate ideal types of workers and in a way lock them into a cycle of low-wage and precarious employment? If a driver has been enculturated to putting in long hours and cutting corners because they have come to understand that is how they become successful at their job, then other production processes (even those which would have absolute benefits to the worker) will seem wrong.

The game is very important to truck driving because of how much effort is expected of drivers. One important difference to mention is that, while managers of trucking companies have sought to fragment the industry into conception and execution through technology and diversified labor, the actual driving of a truck cannot be fragmented. Execution requires conception while in the driver's seat. That driving cannot be fragmented creates antagonism between workers and management, the latter always attempting to exert greater control. In a bizarre way, trucking flips the Taylor model of managers-as-planners and workers-as-doers. Management in trucking, in order to control cost, attempts to exert control over the execution of

work, that is, how the truck is operated. Requiring the driver adopt the role of planner. Planning under these circumstances creates antagonism due to the constraints on the driver to be able to conceive of the most appropriate way for themselves to execute the job, and also requires them to absorb the externalities present in the accumulation process.

As way of an example, when I left the oilfield in the U.S. and went to work in Australia, I was used to long hours, eschewing safety, and cutting corners. This is how I was taught to work and that these ways of being were better for my company, the industry as a whole, and demonstrated that I was a good worker. The way production was organized in Australia was different and placed more emphasis on rules and regulations that actually protected workers but did not diminish their wages. I chafed under this mode of production and felt those things to be unnecessary and even detrimental. Viscelli writes that trucking jobs which are organized differently than the self-sweat model may be unappealing to drivers who know nothing else. That, “They have no interest in putting extra time into things like short-loads, good customer service, or working under systems...that require more coordination with other workers” (Viscelli 2016:100). It took time for me to understand that this was actually to my benefit and that I did not owe my company, the industry, or even myself the time and danger to guarantee production continued. Drivers I interviewed for whom SATD was their first job felt that they should do what was asked and in the manner that was demonstrated by both management and other drivers to ensure their success as truck drivers and members of a team. While at moments I was also caught up in this while working as an SATD, having other perspectives allowed me the chance to circumscribe my own efforts.

## **Piece Work**

Trucking operates on the piece work wage system most commonly denoted as cents-per-mile. More miles equals more cents. It isn't as simple as driving as long or far and as much as one wants to meet their material needs, however. Myriad obstacles present themselves that can turn a 'gravy' job into one where you just can't 'make out'. The obstacles to making out that drivers face include traffic congestion which is particularly bad in major cities where pickups and deliveries begin and end; truck parking for required breaks, especially east of the Mississippi, can be next to impossible; unpaid wait times at shippers range from an hour to six or more with the average around three hours; driving empty (unpaid) miles to pick up a load, known as deadheading; scheduled and unscheduled maintenance; and paperwork all contribute to the difficulty of making out as a truck driver.

Piece work may be an oversimplification of the pay structure in the trucking industry. However, it is worth examining its role. Much of the over-the-road trucking industry wages are organized as a "[cents]-per-mile" rate. For instance, on the back of a trailer one might see 53 cents per mile advertised. It's simple enough, the more miles one drives the more money one can make. Truckers often chase the highest per-mile rate they can find. Higher rates do go to those with more experience and clean driving records and these two conditions are not mutually exclusive. One thing about this wage system is that those must be 'loaded' miles. That is, the driver must be transporting a load in order to get paid, and this fact is almost universally true in the trucking industry. We will see how this wage system impacts the labor process. One morning I was able to have a brief conversation with our dispatcher when I went up to get the keys for my truck before beginning my workday. I asked them broadly how the day was organized in terms of how many loads needed to be picked up and how that was distributed among the drivers. My

understanding is that there are a specific number of loads to be picked up in total during the day shift from each and all of the fields, for math's sake we could say 100 loads for the day shift. Let's also say there are ten drivers on the day shift. Does each driver get ten loads? No. The dispatcher said they try and distribute the loads evenly, but ultimately the quantity of loads that each driver gets is determined in large part by how fast each driver can go. In actuality my dispatcher said that they try and space it out, so each driver is getting eight loads per day, to which I remarked that I tend to get nine to ten. They said that this means that I am 'taking' loads from other drivers, but that is just how it goes. I am a little dubious of how honest they were being because some of our drivers are already coming in with a load (or their second) when I arrive in the morning, and they stay after I've already fueled and washed my truck and left for the day. This is even on the days when I've gotten ten loads. I don't know whether the fact that these drivers are the 'veterans', the ones who have driven multiple seasons for the company, has anything to do with the inequity, but it I have my suspicions. This is a topic I hope to clarify during my post-season interviews.

In a way we can see how this quota system also preserves the game. It isn't possible for the entire day shift to overproduce because there are a finite number of loads that can be picked up. Not to mention that this production system is closed because the cannery requires as many tomatoes as fast as possible and the season is also finite, so there is little concern for flooding the market with excess canned tomato products. The game is preserved by pitting competition between the drivers for the most loads picked up in a day. Those who work the longest and fastest get a larger share, but equilibrium is maintained. "Making out," as Burawoy writes, "cannot be understood simply in terms of the externally derived goal of achieving greater earnings...The rewards of making out are defined in terms of factors immediately related to the

labor process – reduction of fatigue, passing time, relieving boredom, and so on – the social and psychological rewards of making out on a tough job as well as the social stigma and psychological frustrations attached to failing on a gravy job” (Burawoy 1979:85).

I agree there is more to making out than ‘achieving greater earnings’, but the degree to which it is any of the other factors and which other factors remains to be answered. Burawoy’s point, however, that workers are, “compelled to compete against one another at producing at an ever-faster rate...becomes a self-defeating spiral of labor intensification unless it is stabilized by the operators’ transforming the rules and restricting competition” can be seen in the fixed number of loads to be picked up on a given shift. The shop floor in Burawoy’s study is worked by mainly white with a few black men who are in more or less secure and long-term employment with enterprise benefits. My field work would lend a different perspective. Where many of the employees are non-white, whose first language is not English, and are generally more precariously employed because this job is seasonal. This is perhaps in line with Ouellet’s point that, “In the case of trucking work is more than a battle for more money or better pay rates...It is a place where the self is forged.” And, “a self they can live with, that places them in a satisfactory relation to their social world” (Ouellet 1994:11).

Burawoy shows how changes in associational power and bargaining between 1945 and 1975 led to changes in where and what was bargained for. Whereas in 1945 bargaining and its rewards were focused on the shop floor, by 1975 the conference room was the new space of bargaining. Instead of workers organizing for changes through worker-management conflict, workers took advantage of transfers within the plant to experience an advancement in remuneration and concomitantly individualism increased (Burawoy 1979:51). We will use

Smith's (2006) idea and term this labor mobility bargaining and we see it primarily through truck driver turnover.

The trucking industry underwent similar transformations across time and political space as Geer and Allied. In the 1960s truckers were and did organize with America's highways and cities as their shop floor. After 1980 bargaining power became virtually non-existent which resulted in job transfers as a means to increase one's pay.

### **Trucking Culture**

The academic register of approaching the labor process that myself, Viscelli, Ouellet, Burawoy, or Belzer does demonstrates the power of the game of making out. Because we have all approached our study from the perspective of exposing the game for what it is before playing it ourselves, we attempt to stay outside and above the process under study and not get sucked into it. The game has proven inescapable over and over again. I was deeply annoyed with myself for falling into the game and playing by my employer's rules. My reasons were the same as Roy, "for the hell of it," "it's a little game," and "it keeps me from getting bored" (Burawoy 1979:64). Burawoy too writes, "I have already referred to the disdain with which both Roy and I regarded making out when we first entered the shop and how, eventually we both succumbed to its dictates. Indeed, we both got hooked and became avid players" (Burawoy 1979:87). My reasons went beyond the economic rewards that went along with making out. I played because I wanted to know how good I was both as an objective measure against my previous efforts but also against my colleagues as our conversation were always focused on how many loads we'd gotten and the reasons why we weren't doing as well as we wanted. Burawoy notes also how there are the social rewards of esteem among colleagues, and physiological ones also like the feeling of

time passing more quickly as “playing the game eliminated much of the drudgery and boredom associated with industrial work” (*ibid*:89). He writes, “we earned our prestige, sense of accomplishment, and pride” and these measurements superseded the few pennies he earned from making out (*ibid*:89). Conversations in trucking are centered on the rate they’re getting and not in economic terms per se. No wage information is provided between truckers as a rule, and this is because everyone’s making out is different but the comparison is there. Whether there’s traffic and congestion, how long they wait at a shipper for picking and dropping loads, maintenance, fueling, and so on all factor into how making out as an idea is discussed.

### **Professionalism**

I have often heard the phrase ‘professional driver’. What does this mean? That we drive for our profession? Or does it confer something else? Status? Training? Salary? What is this terms relation to capital and the state? Are we a professional class? Vocation, occupation, job, work. As Standing (2009) puts it, professionalization emerged as a means of protecting middle-class occupations from the insecurities of capitalist employment by occupations setting up barriers to entry and by resisting ‘skill dilution’ and duplication by others (53). I think many truck drivers would consider themselves professionals. They have a specialized skill set through which they earn their living. The barriers to entry are not high but they do exist. For instance, to attend a truck driving school, the fee can run up to \$5000. Some employers will pay off your ‘tuition’ if you sign a contract agreeing to work for them for a year. Some trucking companies offer truck school with the same arrangement. The only other way to acquire a commercial driving license is to take the written exam at the DMV and then you have to log driving time with a person who is certified to train you. This also requires that you or they have a truck that you can use to accrue your hours. Lastly, there is the driving test administered through the DMV.



I was fortunate to have my parents pay for my tuition. Others in the school had taken out loans and others were counting on the option of working for a company that would pay off their tuition. In addition, you have to be able to pass a medical exam (although if one takes a sweeping look at truck drivers you might guess that the only actual requirement is a pulse). These barriers are not nearly so insurmountable as becoming a lawyer or a doctor, but they present a legitimate barrier to many. In fact, if someone is considering becoming a truck driver it is perhaps not too far-fetched to say that many of their options have been constrained to this career. The path to upward mobility doesn't come without its costs. Although to what extent driving a truck remains a pathway to upward mobility is a question to be answered.

### **Making Out – A Game Drivers Play**

We can understand that the driving and non-driving activities that drivers negotiate to be a series of games they play in order to achieve an amount of miles that earns them the theoretical limit imposed by law. A driver can legally drive for 11 hours per day for 6 days before they must take a required 34-hour break. For each driver there are an amount of miles this can should be. Making out then is a sequence of encounters between drivers and “the social or nonsocial objects that regulate the conditions of work” which we will briefly show as dispatchers, other drivers, lumpers, shippers, and so on. These “externally imposed relationships” constitute the rules of the game and we accept those rules as a given for living. What is not accepted, however, is the full limits of those relationships to be exerted upon us, so, “The art of making out is to manipulate those relationships with the purpose of advancing as quickly as possible from one stage to the next” (Burawoy 1979:51). Being the best, most efficient truck driver benefits the employer more because there is less fuel usage and less maintenance costs that save the employer money and the

driver does not reap those benefits. But some employers do offer incentive programs for this expressed purpose that pays drivers a nominal amount for being efficient drivers. This is true of the company I worked during my field-work, and there is an element of gamesmanship to which Burawoy refers in *Manufacturing Consent*. He writes that the worker is inserted into the labor process as an individual and not as a member of a group of class-conscious workers with a discrete relationship to the means of production. “Workers control their own machines instead of being controlled by them, and this enhances their autonomy. They put their machines into motion singlehandedly, and this creates the appearance that they can, as individuals, transform nature into useful commodities” (Burawoy 1979:81). In this mode of production, the rewards are based on individual’s efforts and not on the groups. The company I worked for pays drivers a bonus for the following: speeds below 60mph, not exceeding 1850 rpm, and no hard braking. Here, as Burawoy indicates, management has participated in the game process by setting the specific goals by which drivers can earn extra money.

The role of the state, in determining how these forces (that are within its power to control), acts to uphold or diminish stratification and inequality is predicated on its monopolism of violence that it employs (Weber 2019:146). The state has produced a legal space that is hostile to workers while maintaining an ideological apparatus that points to its benevolent purpose of developing workers for maximum prosperity. Jefferey Sallaz cites that markets for labor are also social structures, and yet market fundamentalism requires the use of coercion in order to produce commodities (Sallaz 2013:10). Market fundamentalism under a capitalistic mode of production, in spite of economists claim to the contrary, has not and cannot exist without a regulatory framework that is moderated by the state because all markets are embedded in states and societies. Market fundamentalism, as Polanyi has shown (Polanyi 2001) would destroy the fabric

of humanity, or in a Marxist language, raw unfettered capitalism would preclude society's ability to reproduce itself.

Games, a situational form of worker control, are the *par excellence* of generating consent from workers. Michael Burawoy's seminal text, *Manufacturing Consent* (1979), elucidates the complex ways in which workers come to participate in the production process. The game gives the worker the sense that they have the ability to 'get one over' on their employer by stockpiling extra pieces of work. Burawoy's work specifically looks at the piece rate system on the shop floor in which quotas, varying types of jobs, and employee competition create the conditions under which workers can earn extra money, try their hand at different types of machinery, and demonstrate their competency against their fellow workers. This game provides both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards to workers while their employer reaps the surplus value of additional production. The company has established acceptable limits to increased production that inhibit the lowering of value that results from oversupply and given employees the freedom to exploit these limits without exceeding them. Managerial control is met with resistance from employees when there is an attempt to set quotas on difficult machines or when piece rates are lowered on easy ones. Burawoy, who is aware of the type of control being applied on the shop floor, is nevertheless caught up in the game; testing himself and his abilities to make extra money and demonstrate his aptitude on the job while simultaneously increasing the ability of his employer to extract surplus value. Games like Burawoy's experience which allow for greater earnings or prestige do not engender employees to a feeling of gratitude to their employer. Their function is to capture the political consciousness of employees by placing them in a situation where they are unwilling to question the rules of the game that they have consented to playing. Games reflect an antagonism between employee and employer that wears no veil. Reciprocity between employers

and employees attempts to conceal this antagonism which is ultimately used to coerce greater effort and production.

It has been argued that humans have always engaged in the process of reciprocal exchange, and it is this process of gift giving and the expected return of the gift which binds societies together (Mauss 1990; Polanyi 2001). Reciprocity works by deferment and difference, that is, after receiving a gift a person is then obligated to repay at a later time and in a different form than the original. Reciprocity can range from the banal as with friends taking each other out to lunch, to the exploitative where a chief requires exorbitant payments under the auspices of protecting their fellows from the vagaries of weather and fertility to warfare with other peoples. As a form of labor control, reciprocity is used in its most negative form in which the ‘benevolence’ of an employer is demonstrated through higher wages that places people dependent on wages in a position of deference where they feel compelled to put forth greater effort in order to demonstrate their worth and gratitude. Employer gifts can also come in the form of “tangible goods and services”, or non-wage, bestowments. Such as the use of a company car, holiday gift baskets, and the like (Sallaz 2013:134). Another type of ‘gift’ used by employers to control and direct an employee’s output is the “permission, usually granted implicitly, to break the rules of the organization” (*ibid*:134). This theory is suggestive of a type of “bureaucratic control” (Bourdieu 2005), “responsible autonomy” (Friedman 1977), “hegemonic control” (Burawoy 1985), that suggests, “when employees are granted a freedom, however minute, from direct control, they feel indebted to act in [the firm’s] interests” (Burawoy and Lukacs 1985:134).

Recalling from my own work experiences and the data collected from my research as well as that of my advisor, Steve Viscelli, I will show how the labor process of trucking is

structure around the game of making out. The beginning of a trucker's shift has a multiple of temporalities. The first being leaving their home for the road. Since every driver is different in their preparation to spend an extended period away from home we needn't delve into this much. They must ensure, however, that their truck and trailer is up to snuff and ready to drive. If the driver is home. Nightly then his shift will begin by checking in with his dispatcher, or Buraway's "scheduling man", who will either give him his first load or will have a plan worked out for him (Ouellett). The same goes for over-the-road drivers. They will have received word from their dispatcher of where they are heading. Though this will have happened at a point in time that has nothing to do with the beginning of their shift so much as the ending and beginning of a new load. So we can understand an over-the-road driver's shift to have two points of temporality and we will also see how these conflict with each other in their pursuit of making out.

The pretrip inspection is required by law and is one of the tasks performed by the driver prior to driving. This involves walking around the vehicle, inspecting components, looking for flat tires, broken leaf springs, and other things that could lead to the vehicle being disabled en route. This doesn't take much time, but it does take more than none. Theoretically if a driver simply backed under their trailer, hooked up the brake lines, and drove away they could save themselves a few minutes for each hook up. Over a twelve-hour day this could be enough time to get another load, and more pay. Full disclosure many truckers don't go through all the steps they are supposed to before they beginning their driving shift. I mostly only checked my oil and my lights and let Jesus deal with the rest of it.

The other game that is played is the bending of laws and regulations that pertain to working hours. This game also extracts surplus value from workers. Both the state of California and the federal government have created laws that limit the number of hours a commercial truck

driver can be on duty, driving, off duty, and sleeping. In California, if the driver is hauling only property (not people) and doesn't cross state lines the rules are as follows: cannot work more than 80 hours in 8 consecutive days, cannot be on duty longer than 16 hours, cannot drive more than 12 hours (within those 16 hours on duty), after 16 hours must take 10 hours off duty, must take 34 hour off after exceeding 80 hours in 8 days. Since my particular company pays drivers by the load, that is the more loads you can get in a day the more you get paid, the question becomes how does one maximize their load count? There are a variety of possible ways to do this. One is to drive faster. However, the trucks maximum speed is limited to 60 mph, so this then would only apply to violating lower speed limits where applicable and breaking other laws that constrain the movement of the vehicle between the points of departure and arrival.

The final way is to minimize required rest and meal breaks. California law requires a 30-minute lunch break after five hours of work. Not a lot of time but enough to limit one from getting one more load for the day. My company uses electronic hours of service logging. Electronic logs can serve as a corrective on management's ability to intensify work effort and production. In the old days, and among companies without the capital, paper logbooks are still used. These require the driver to fill in, on a graph of sorts, how long they are in each 'duty' period (off, on, driving, sleeper berth). These are easily manipulated and depend on the honor system for accurate reporting of time. Electronic logs, however, are linked to satellites which track the vehicle's movement and are very precise. Since they know when you are or are not moving it is difficult to manipulate the information they are programmed to capture. Because they are difficult to manipulate even if a manager and employee were inclined to work beyond the hours of service allowed by law doing so would be captured digitally and inconsistencies could be found in an audit and both parties held accountable. Nevertheless, the system is

designed such that one does not ‘certify’ their log until they sign out of the electronic log at the end of their workday. Until it is certified the user can easily go in and make changes to their daily logs. In spite of this, I was never asked to manipulate my log and I am unaware of management explicitly asking anyone to do so for the purposes of getting more loads in a day.

Chiseling involves redistributing time from one operation to another and is formally and legally not allowed, although as I’ve explained elsewhere, I had a foreman explicitly explain how to do it. Crises of making out come into existence under two conditions. The first is the crisis of legitimation wherein there is too much or too little certainty in making out. Too little certainty is the condition under which labor mobility bargaining takes place. The other is a motivational crisis under which a driver doesn’t find any value in playing the game. Under this condition we can assume that a driver would exit the trucking labor market completely. These concepts are not mutually exclusive. If making out becomes too difficult and reproduction wages are below an individual's requirements, then they are likely to not find any value in playing a game that not only they cannot make out in but also cannot survive in.

Burawoy’s other point about playing the game is that generates consensus in the production process because playing the game implies the legitimacy of the generation of profits by the company, “one cannot both play the game and at the same time question the rules” (81). One final observation on the extraction of surplus value is the quasi-scientific management that went into our brief, pre-job training. I say ‘quasi’ because there is a definite limit to the division of labor of the job, and management was not attempting to divide each task into discrete entities performed by different people, timing them, and setting quotas for each task. What it amounted to be a very specific way to approach the job in terms of efficiency for maximizing the speed by which drivers could get loads into the yard. Of course, the language around it was professed to

be for our benefit because we could get more loads and more pay, however, since we only get a share of each load naturally our efficiency gains the company higher profits. To develop an efficient system of dropping and hooking trailers is part of the game. One thinks to oneself; how can I do this better, faster? What corners can I cut while not risking getting the job done? It is interesting to also note how and when I feel like I am being cheated by the company. My frustration doesn't solely lie with the fact that I have to work long days, or that my wages depend on speed. Instead, it's little things like the fact that there is one dispatcher for 15+ drivers, and there is too often the case that many drivers are calling in on the radio at one time to get dispatched to a new field. Having to wait several minutes before one gets their dispatch leads to the feeling that the company has generated a set of rules about speed and efficiency that they themselves are not playing by, "they did not provide the necessary conditions to play the game of making out" (Burawoy 1979:82). As mentioned above, the company initiated the conversation about how to play the game. This demonstrates, as Burawoy shows, that while games are a means by which workers endure the subordination to the labor process, "they are regulated, coercively where necessary, by management" (*ibid*:86).

## **Technology**

To what extent has the labor process of trucking been affected by technological change? Off the top of my head, in the last four decades, I can think of the saturation of automatic transmission trucks, ELDs, software developments in supply chain/logistics, cell phones/texting, GPS, and apps for securing loads. How is AI and self-driving trucks prefiguring the labor process in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

Automatic transmissions result in less driver fatigue as a result of clutching and shifting 10 to 18 transmission speeds. Moreover, and we'll come back to this, it enlarges the possible



labor pool and reduces training requirements. Automatic transmissions let a driver focus on the act of accelerating, braking, and steering.

Electronic Logging Devices, ELD's, had the potential to reshape the working day (and have to some extent). It is to be taken as fact that truckers who log their working and driving hours on paper logs falsify them. This is a well-documented and decades old practice. ELD's presumably inhibit the falsification of working and driving time in two ways. First, once a driver enters their change in duty status, that time stamp is immutable. Second, ELD's are satellite linked thus linking the time and place of a driver physically with their reported time and place in a way that can't be falsified. What this was intended to do was ensure that drivers were only driving a maximum of 11 hours per day within a total working day of 14 hours. Why this doesn't work as intended will be discussed.

Supply chain and logistic software for scheduling and dispatching is cutting edge but it doesn't communicate in two directions in the competitive truckload segment. Drivers are told where to go next and this is coordinated in a fleet based on their drivers' time and place. However, the system isn't coordinated between shipper and transportation provider resulting in long wait times at shipper locations that presumably could be avoided if shippers shouldered the cost of driver wait times, which should be understood as a failure of optimization.

Cell phones and all they bring to the table are contain optimization revolutionary power. Communication is instantaneous. Yet there are reports of poor communication between drivers and dispatchers.

GPS also should optimize logistics with real time locating of drivers to coordinate them with loads that minimize a drivers wait time as well as minimizing the shipping time. This eliminates waiting, empty miles, and so on. Again, we're not seeing this in the field.

I take the controversial position in this paper that automation in the trucking industry is more than an inevitability, it is a necessity. The industry is utterly inefficient and there is a limit to that efficiency in the human worker. Self-driving trucks should be used in every possible corner of the transportation industry in conjunction with expanded rail services. My position is that we should develop self-driving trucks as quickly as possible, put a moratorium on hiring and training truck drivers, keep all the drivers currently in the labor market riding in these self-driving trucks for the remainder of the careers for emergencies and for the system to finesse all the bugs out. Trucking is also the dumbest way to move goods. Rail is by far the most efficient and has the greatest capacity. Expanding and optimizing the US rail network would be a far better to move goods and use trucks only for last mile work from major inland ramps to distribution centers. And also, the job is not that awesome. The material and immaterial cost of playing the game is too great and we simply cannot go back to some gilded era of trucking. The aforementioned technological changes should have had the effect of optimizing a driver's working day leading to higher wages. Simultaneously, however, during the period of advancements in the available technology for truckers there has also been rising traffic congestion and a glut of additional drivers competing for loads. As a result, the gains have been nominal.

### **The Psychological Rewards of Making Out**

My first truck driving job, when I was twenty-one years old and fresh out of truck driving school, had me deliver rice bran, which is used to feed cattle, to industrial feed lots. One of the feed lots I went to was none other than Harris Ranch in California's Central Valley. They stored their rice bran in a large metal barn that was fairly dark inside. Dark enough that standing from

the outside you couldn't see in. The doorway was only a couple of feet wider on either side than the width of the truck and it was about two-thirds of the way down from one end of the barn and was on the long side of the barn. Additionally, as drivers offloaded their feed, the piles would steadily grow in length towards the entrance, so in this way you couldn't set up your truck and trailer to back into the barn the same way every time. I would always get out of the truck and look inside to see where the feed was before I set up to back in. If the barn was empty, I might set up to back in at the steepest angle to the barn that the truck and trailer could fit through, going straight back knowing that as soon as the nose of the truck cleared the door I could maneuver more freely towards the back and even move the truck sideways in a series of "pull-ups" to the far side of the barn. Nevertheless, looking back into my mirrors was total darkness and I had to rely solely on whatever information I was able to store in my mind about the space prior to backing in. However, once the piles of feed moved closer to the doorway, I had to change my approach. I would have to back in nearly perpendicular to the barn, gently turning the steering wheel back and forth as I moved further back through the doorway, but always steering a little extra to my left to edge the tail end of the trailer to the right. Once the nose cleared the door my movements would be more exaggerated in order to whip the trailer in one direction while the truck went in another.

One thing I had to learn and subsequently taught others when I was a supervisor in the oilfield is that backing a truck and trailer is not linear. It requires finessing the steering wheel back and forth constantly in order to precisely locate the truck and trailer. One doesn't just turn the wheel and hold it constant. It is difficult to describe the thinking that is involved while doing. It never seems to be a conscious understanding of the distance and direction the vehicle has moved within a given time frame. There is the preliminary concept of where I am now and where

I need to go. I use reference points on the ground and things that are around me to locate myself in space at any given moment between starting and finishing, but also there is the sense that with those landmarks there is also a summation of the countless tiny movements of my hands on the steering wheel and my feet depressing the clutch, brake, and accelerator at different moments for different amounts of time that I just seem to know are correctly coordinated.

After my initial foray into truck driving, my spatial skills were honed in the oilfield. It was here that the requirements of the job forced me to, not create more space to ‘spot’ equipment (put it where it needs to be), but to analyze the space and conceptualize what needed to be done to make the task doable. The sites that drilling rigs were located on were often what we referred to as ‘postage stamps.’ That is, they cleared just enough room to get the job done without anything extra. This was often the case in the middle of rice fields or in mountainous locations where it was costly to create a larger location. The numbers of equipment remained constant; in that we needed a certain amount to be able to do the job, but getting them onto the locations became a non-trivial requirement of the job. The task was to see where it all needed to be and then figure out the process of getting it there. One might imagine it to be something of a puzzle. Depending on the space, equipment would have to be driven in and staged in different positions to be maneuvered in different orders to make it fit. Again, it was the person’s understanding of the equipment’s limitations, given the space provided, that determined success or failure.

### **Making Out – The Game I Played**

I have also engaged in “output restriction” (Burawoy 1979:57) as a trucker, hauling tomatoes during the summer. “Chiseling” as Burawoy describes it has analog in the trucking industry as falsifying logs (*ibid*:58).

There are ways around the meal time breaks, however. The most salient example is that they don't capture vehicle movement under 5mph. So, the way to manipulate hours of service is very simple, and I will provide an example. Let us say I am getting close to needing to take my required lunch break. I will attempt to time my break for my arrival at either the tomato field or in the company yard. Here's why. When I get to the yard, for example, there is a process I have to go through before I can leave again. As I pull in, there is often a line to 'scale', that is I pull the truck and trailer onto a long platform that weighs the combined vehicle in its entirety. This is how they capture the tonnage of tomatoes coming in from the field. The vehicles 'tare' weight is known, so they simply subtract that from the gross weight to get the tonnage of tomatoes. Next, I pull straight forward about 100 yards to the 'grader'. Here a bucket of sorts is pushed down into the tomatoes, and it scoops out a sample and the sample is dropped onto conveyor belts where the tomatoes are tested for mold content and other attributes. They sample both trailers and the tomatoes that are taken out are returned to the trailers via a conveyor belt. Next, I have to follow signage that indicates where the loaded trailers are to be parked, where I will unhook the truck from them. Finally, I drive to another section of the yard where the empty trailers are parked where I have to hook up, pretrip, and get dispatched out to a new field. This whole process can take 10-30 minutes. So, to minimize actual downtime that is not part of the production process, as I pull into the yard before I scale, I will select 'off duty' on the tablet which runs the electronic log program. From then on, until 31 minutes have passed, I will drive 5 mph or slower to complete all the steps listed above. Often, by the time I have completed all the necessary steps to get ready to leave again most of my lunch break has passed, I eat my food quickly, and wait for the time to reach 31 minutes. I then select 'on duty' and I drive away. Because I am paid by the load (and my lunch break is unpaid) and to get a load includes all the processes above that are

described, it makes sense for me to minimize the amount of time I am ‘not getting paid’. This, however, also benefits my employer because I am bringing in more loads of tomatoes. Not only does this benefit them, but they were also the ones describing to me how to do it when I was hired. This is reflected in what Friedman (1977) calls responsible autonomy. While I did engage in this sort of behavior early in the season after a while, I began to run out my time to the five-hour mark and then take a full lunch break. I enjoy the time not working and while perhaps in some instance it costs me another load I do not like the feeling of playing the game. It is exactly what management wants us to do, and I am not interested in helping them when those benefits are not reciprocated.

Another aspect that I reflected on one day at work is how and when I decide to labor according to the rules and the conditions that lead me to make those decisions. Take this example. Trailers have ‘landing gear’ which are legs on either side of the trailer near the ‘apron’ or front of the trailer that are raised and lowered by a crank handle. In order to unhook from a trailer, the driver has to crank the handle that operates a gear that lowers the landing gear until the ‘feet’ are on the ground. There is a ‘high’ range and a ‘low’ range, or fast and slow, that is selected by pulling (or pushing) the shaft that the crank handle is attached to, inward toward the mechanism or outward. Then the driver releases the kingpin and can pull out from under the trailers. This process is operated in reverse when hooking up. The issue is that the trailers that my company uses are ‘used and abused’. They are quite old and are not well taken care of. Literally, out of the hundreds of trailers, not one set of landing gear operates like another. There are several designs of landing gear: some have the crank handle on the driver’s side and others on the passenger side; some have feet that are higher from the ground than others and require more cranking to get the feet up or down; some crank quickly and others slowly; some are very

difficult to crank; some are easy but then have a difficult spot and then are easy again; the list goes on. Additionally, every driver has their own method for disconnecting from a trailer, but I will explain mine and my rationale.

I crank the landing gear down until the feet are just hovering above the ground by maybe an inch. When I pull out from the trailer, I release the pressure in the air bag suspension which sets the trailer down on the ground and then I pull away from it. I do this for a couple of reasons: One, on many trailers the landing gear cannot be operated in high (fast) range when there is a heavy load on the trailers, so I prefer to 'pick up' the trailers off the ground with the truck to relieve the pressure on the mechanism in order to operate it in high range. Two, if the trailer is raised to high above the fifth wheel it is possible to 'high pin' it, which means backing under the trailer past the connecting point and it gets stuck on the other side resulting in shenanigans to rectify. Three, by not lowering the landing gear all the way to the ground I save myself some labor in cranking them all the way down, thus saving myself labor in cranking them back up.

The conditions that got me thinking about this aspect of my job and how I have learned to try and cut corners are many. When I have dropped my loaded trailers in the yard and go to pick up empties there is a long row of them, perhaps forty to choose from. How do I decide which to get? My main decision is based on how low the nose of the trailer appears to be relative to other trailers in the line. The ones that are lower I know I will be pick up off the ground and this will save me time in cranking up the landing gear. I also look for what side of the trailers the crank handle is on. If it's on the driver's side, it's closer to my door and I don't have to go as far. I look at the model of trailer. Some I have learned are consistently easier to use. I am also looking at the identification numbers because likewise I have memorized some of the numbers of trailers that are easiest to use. Picking up empty trailers in the yard is only half of the job and the multitude

of choices gives me options that provide me with some feeling of control over the pace and difficulty of the job. However, in the fields my options are constrained in a few ways.

When I arrive at the fields, I encounter a different situation. Here the trailers are brought out by a farm tractor and depending on the field they are dropped in one of two ways. Either they are brought onto the dirt access road to the field and thus are dropped one behind the other in a line in which case it is expected that I take the frontmost trailer, so in this case I have no choice which set of trailers to take. Or the farmer has turned part of the already harvested field into a staging area and the trailers are dropped side-by-side. This situation presents itself similarly as the trailers in the yard where I can assess how low the noses are and grab the one that is lowest. However, my consternation is that the ‘dollies’ (the wheeled device that the tractors use to tow the trailers around in the field) are a fixed height which is at least as high as the fifth wheel plate on my truck. In addition, the tractor drivers have an annoying habit of cranking the landing gear all the way to the ground, putting the landing gear in low range, and then cranking them up even more before they pull out from underneath them. This results in nearly every trailer I go to pick up being higher than I want it to be. The result is that when I go to back under the trailers, the apron of the trailer is inches higher than my fifth wheel plate. So, I have to back most of the way under the trailers, set the brakes, get out, and then crank the landing gear up (to lower the trailers) under load, until it is resting on the fifth wheel plate, get back in the truck, release the brakes, back all the way in and connect the trailers, get back out, crank the landing gear the rest of the way up, and complete my inspection. If the landing gear won’t crank in high range under a load, and I have to select low range, it is both difficult and glacial pace until the pressure is relieved to the point that I can select high range and finish the job. Some trailers can be cranked in high range under a load, but this is hit and miss. I resent the tractor drivers for not doing it



differently and I resent the lack of consistency between trailers in this respect, and I resent the company for not maintaining the equipment to make my job easier.

This plays into my individual labor process doubly. First, the lost time resulting from the difficulties that I encounter directly affects how many loads in a day I can get which is my wage, and second, it is wear and tear on my body. In order to compensate myself for these conditions I have found myself doing two things. One, to save time I don't crank the landing gear all the way or up down when hooking and unhooking. Two, I don't do thorough inspections of the trailers once I am hooked up in the field. Preferring instead to crank up the landing gear to point that I am confident that it will not hit the ground, and kicking most of the tires to check for flats and looking to make sure my turn signals are working on the rear trailer.

One day, after about five weeks of working for this company my feelings about how they operate came into clear view. I had the feeling that due to the seasonal nature of the work (and other things I should talk about here) that the company must operate in a way to realize as much profit as possible in the shortest amount of time – a point I will get to later also. One of the ways this became apparent is in the maintenance or lack thereof of the equipment. My own truck that I drove daily was having three consistent issues and another that has happened twice: the clutch brake was not operating properly, the truck is underpowered especially in the higher range gears (i.e., getting up to highway speeds), the check engine light was on, and the intermittent issue is that my axle has leaked significant amounts of oil - twice.

First, the clutch brake slows down the input shaft on the transmission to allow for smoother, and quicker, shifting from neutral into the forward or rearward gears. I can still shift into those gears with a worn-out clutch brake, but it requires me to force the shifter into those gears and using the friction of gear-on-gear to slow the input shaft enough to force it into gear.

Given that my job entails a lot of stopping and starting every time I have to force it into gear requires more and a longer effort than it should. I reported this issue for a week straight on our Daily Vehicle Inspection Report and it was never addressed. I stopped writing it up.

Second, something is going on with the turbocharger on the engine (I suspect) that is inhibiting the engine from performing as it should. It accelerates fairly normally in the lower range gears, one through five, but in gears six through ten it is fairly underpowered. Again, since my job requires countless occurrences of getting up to speed throughout the day this translates into lost time for me. Again, I wrote this issue up for about a week, it wasn't addressed. I stopped writing it up.

Third, the check engine light has been on in my truck since I started driving it. I went through the display features which allows me to see if there are any engine faults and there are. The extent of these faults is unknown to me because further engine analysis requires a laptop to be plugged in to diagnose the problems.

The issue of leaking axle oil is the one that demonstrated to me, explicitly, how little the company cares about maintenance. One day I was doing my walk around at one of the fields I was picking up from and noticed a lot of oil on the wheel of my truck coming from the axle seal. I reported it to the dispatcher over the CB radio, the dispatcher called the mechanics, and then I was told by the dispatcher that it was okay to drive back, but to take it to the shop so they could 'tighten the bolts'. Now, I'm not a mechanic but I've done my share of vehicle repair. And I know that once oil starts leaking it is not a matter of just 'tightening the bolts'. It indicates that a seal has gone and it needs to be replaced. So, I dropped it off at the shop when I got back to the yard, and since I had already picked up nine loads that day, I opted to go home rather than get another truck and get another load. I assumed that once the mechanic saw the issue firsthand,

then the appropriate steps would be taken to fix it. The next day it was parked back on line and ready to use again. I thought, “good, they fixed it.” A week later I was picking up another load in the field, doing my walk around and saw oil leaking from the same axle again. Again, I called it in, this time, however, the dispatcher just said, “ok,” which I, at this point already dubious of how much they cared about the equipment, took to mean that I should just drive it back. I was not told to take it to the mechanic, but after I dropped my load in the yard, I took it back to the shop. The mechanic got out his battery powered ‘impact wrench’ and tightened the bolts, to my surprise? I told him that this same thing happened to this same axle one week ago and he said, “yea something must have happened to it. But it costs too much money to fix it now. The company will just wait until the end of the season and decide what to do.” To this the mechanic added, “you know that truck that was totaled (referring to another truck)? They might just take the axle off of it if they can.” Then, the icing on the cake, “It’s all good. That big round thing in the middle, I forget what it’s called, it’s full of oil, so it should be alright.” Now, again, I’m not a mechanic. But that ‘big round thing in the middle’ is called a differential. I learned that when I started working on cars when I was 15. And yea, it has oil in it, but at this point a bunch has already leaked out. There’s a fine line in any friction components between enough oil and catastrophe. But this doesn’t seem to cause any concern at this company.

A final word and thought about this scenario. There is a huge difference between official policy and practice at the company. On the one hand they say to always inspect your vehicle, but I have witnessed other drivers arriving to the yard and climbing into their trucks without so much as kicking the tires. Have they just caught on to the same thing I have? That no one actually cares about maintenance? Finally, this seems to be the epitome of the maximization of short-term

profits. The company only cares about keeping the equipment on the road in any way possible to keep getting loads of tomatoes until the season ends.

Burawoy like his predecessor Roy find that earning higher wages is not often cited as a rationale for working harder, “It is not so much the monetary incentive that concretely coordinates the interests of management and worker but rather the play of the game itself” (85). So, the question presents itself, is it better to do more loads that are closer or fewer that are farther, or some combination of the two? Again, we the drivers do not get to choose, so we are left we trying to feel what feels legitimate and if the company is playing by the rules thus generating consent.

I myself prefer the loads that are farther away, and as it turns out, these are the loads the veteran or senior drivers feel entitled to. I prefer this for a number of reasons. One, is that it extends the time between having to get out of the truck and drop empty trailers and hook up to loaded ones. Each trailer’s ‘landing gear’ (the legs that are cranked down and up to support the trailers when they are disconnected from the truck) are unique. Some are very easy to use and go up and down with little difficulty. Others are extremely onerous and require a great deal of effort on my part which annoys me greatly. Since I never really know what I’m going to get, I would prefer to limit the frequency of finding a bad set. Second, is that it gives me more time to drive the truck. I like to listen to music or podcasts, and also just enjoy this aspect of the job. Plus, in the summer when it is very hot, it’s more time in the air conditioning. Third, is that there are several points upon returning to the yard that slow down my day in a way that I am not fond of like going across the scale, going through the ‘grader’, dropping and hooking, and finally getting dispatched again. These are all moments when forces external to my own “application of knowledge, skill, ingenuity, speed and stamina” (Burawoy 1979:84) feel like they are conspiring

against me. Other things are outside of my control as well. Each farmer harvests at a different speed with differing amounts of machinery. Thus, it is often the case that the farmer who is running two harvesters instead of one is also the closest to the yard and we find ourselves making several trips there in a day in order to keep up with their production. Additionally, there is the cannery, on whose property our company operates. They run into their own production issues and when they do, they slow down the processing of tomatoes, reducing the return of empty trailers to the yard, and thus our ability to return to the fields with empty trailers to change out for loaded trailers.

I have determined my own quota, which is ten loads in a day. I see (and hear through the radio communications) that other drivers are significantly faster than I am. Each of us is playing the game for our own reasons in our own way. It is not lost on me that I am thinking through a lot of these ideas of surplus value extraction, exploitation, playing the game, etc. while I am at work. I also understand that the material circumstances that create the conditions for how we play the game are all different. I think I am one of the only drivers who refused to work seven days a week. This comes back to how monetary incentives are not the only reasons we go to work or not go to work, and suggests how the subjectivity of the worker confounds any discussion of a rational economic actor. I think about how it is important to reproduce myself and how the act of reproduction of myself is in conflict with the production process. Ten loads in a day takes into account that there will be a combination of loads that are close and some that are farther away. This number correlates to an average amount of pay per day that suits my needs. It is a long days' worth of work, but at a pace that I find manageable and safe. However, whether or not I can achieve this quota is out of my hands. Harvest rates, processing and canning productivity, mechanical problems can keep me from getting ten loads, or even the case that I

don't work at all on a given day which has happened several times. Burawoy discusses what keeps workers playing the game and it rests on three conditions: "First, when uncertainty is too great and outcomes are entirely beyond the control of the players; second, when uncertainty is too slight and outcomes may become completely controlled by players; third, when players are indifferent to the possible outcomes" (Burawoy 1979:87).

I can see this reflected in my mixed feelings about not meeting my self-assigned quota. The first condition, in my situation, is easy to dismiss. If I am scheduled to work, I can be reasonably certain that by showing up to work my company will provide me enough leeway to work semi-autonomously and that I can put my skills and stamina in the direction of getting loads. I can be reasonably assured that there will be empty trailers to deliver to the field and loaded ones to bring back to the plant. My truck will work as it should and I will receive pay for what I do. The second condition bears on the idea of work that is too easy or is too rote. Here again, I can reasonably expect that it will not be. All the conditions that were mentioned about how I can get excessively slowed down are equally probable to run smoothly and efficiently, and this varies for each roundtrip from the fields. This promotes game playing. If one round trip is burdened with excessive slowdowns, the next one I am more apt to find ways to maximize my speed and efficiency in order to make up for lost time. The last condition, for me, is the most salient. On the one hand I recognize that it will hurt me financially to not make my quota or not work at all. On the other I am extremely happy to either get home or stay home and engage in the things that I do enjoy doing, to catch up with the things that fall behind when working consistently, and to attempt to do an equal share of housework. Since my wife works remotely and I have teenagers at home during the day during the summer she takes on an unequal burden of social reproduction which I am responsible for attempting to close that gap. So, the days when

I get home early or don't work are days that I try and find that balance. It leaves me often wondering how much I actually care about going faster or working harder.

First, it's important to think about how a seasonal agricultural trucking operation deals with realization of profit given uncertainties in production and how this is reflected in the labor process. The production process can be simplified into three pieces: harvesting, transporting, and canning. There are certainly other ways to tomatoes to customers that do not involve agricultural trucking and canning; however, this study and my research is around this triad.

When I began the job the first loads of tomatoes, I was picking up were organic tomatoes that were being grown in the central valley between Interstate 5 and 99, south of Lathrop and north of Bakersfield. We only did this for a few weeks and given that the season for tomatoes lasts from July to October we can speculate that the reason that we only hauled from there for a few weeks has everything to do with the smaller production of organic tomatoes relative to non-organics. The other evidence to support this has to do with the number of loads we brought back to the cannery. Each driver was only bringing one load per day and there are about ten drivers on the day shift. It is true that legally we only had enough hours of allowable driving time in each day to make round trip, but nevertheless, there were days went I did not even work because we had too many drivers and their production was slowed down due to the crop not being ready. All that being said, one day when I was driving back north, I decided to count how many tomato trucks were coming down south on Interstate 5. I counted every truck of all kinds headed south and kept track of the tomato trucks. After I had reached 100 trucks total, 65 of them were tomato trucks. I would estimate this only took fifteen minutes at the maximum. There were a few days when I rode with another driver. One of us got paid for the load and the other got paid by the

hour. This was done to ensure that drivers would not quit when things were slow, but still other days I didn't work and wasn't paid for it.

The workload changed considerably after the organics were done being harvested and transported from the 'south'. I was told the job would be from 6AM to 6PM, but thankfully that has yet to materialize. What has changed is the number of loads per day and the distances. Now I get somewhere between nine and eleven loads per day, which averages out to about one per hour. As mentioned previously one load involves hooking up to empty trailers, getting dispatched, driving to the field, dropping the empties, hooking up to loaded trailers, driving back to the yard, scaling, grading, and dropping the loaded trailers. That is one load. This is possible because the average distance from the yard is 5-10 miles. With a change in workload is the concomitant change in worker behavior. Time is money. Reduce time, increase money.

I have certainly thought about what arrangement I prefer. Driving south or driving local. Driving south requires long periods of sitting but also having to be extra alert due to the requirements of driving a truck. This is exhausting. Moreover, because the return trip passes through three cities and takes four hours the opportunities for getting stuck in traffic increase dramatically. Driving a truck in traffic is just awful. If you've ever driven a car with a five-speed manual transmission in traffic just imagine what it's like with a ten-speed and no room for error. But going south only requires hooking and unhooking one time as opposed to well over a hundred when driving locally. The driving is broken up into smaller chunks but it's over much worse roads. There are no traffic issues ever since I'm only driving on county roads and a few short sections of freeways that can easily be bypassed. I'm definitely much more tired after a day of driving locally. I'm undecided which I prefer. Driving south is more of a truck driving job while driving locally is more of a delivery driver job.



## **Chapter Conclusion**

Driving a truck is a challenging job that is characterized by long hours, low pay, and poor working conditions. This experience is reflected in Burawoy's theory of the game, which suggests that workers in secondary labor markets are subject to a legitimation crisis that makes it difficult for them to assert their rights and demand better working conditions. Even those of us who are aware of the game and its mechanics are still sucked into playing it, as the structural constraints and power dynamics of the labor market are difficult to overcome.

Technology has played a role in shaping the trucking industry, but it has not necessarily improved working conditions or increased pay for truck drivers. The introduction of autonomous trucks may lead to significant job losses, and it is unclear whether the jobs that will be created will provide better pay and working conditions for truck drivers. Furthermore, technological advances in trucking have often been used to increase productivity and profits for trucking companies, rather than to benefit workers.

Despite these challenges, trucking remains an important industry that is critical to the functioning of the global economy. It is clear that there is a need for greater transparency and accountability in the industry, as well as more comprehensive data collection and better regulation to protect the rights and interests of truck drivers. By continuing to study and analyze the trucking industry, we can gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the labor market and work to develop policies and practices that promote greater social and economic justice for all workers.

## **Chapter 5 - Turnover (Churn) in the Trucking Industry: It's not a shortage.**

### **Introduction**

In the US economy, all workforces have been affected by cutthroat competition. In the late 1970s, Keynesianism, the economic theory that emphasizes government intervention to stabilize the economy, seemed to fail due to stagflation, a combination of stagnant economic growth and high inflation. This led to the application of a uniquely American neoliberalism as the only perceived option, characterized by deregulation, privatization, and “free-market” competition.

This trend was assisted three decades earlier by the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act in 1947, which limited the power of labor unions and gave employers more power in labor disputes. By the late 1970s, there were few laws in place protecting workers, leaving them largely defenseless against the erosion of their associational power by big business and the State. As a result, big business and the State systematically dismantled workers' rights to organize, resulting in an increasingly atomized and individualized workforce by the 1980s. The collective action of big business in the 20th century was so effective at dismantling workers' opportunities to organize that unions and strikes are now rare and stigmatized, even by those who need their protections most. Unfortunately, this erosion of associational power has led to an unequal distribution of wealth and power, with a shrinking middle class and a widening gap between the rich and poor. The effects of this trend can still be seen today in the struggles of workers to earn a living wage and have a voice in the workplace.

As our political-economy continues to prioritize the interests of capital over the interests of labor, workers are left with few options other than to continuously acquire and build their human capital in order to remain relevant in the job market. This unfortunate reality is a result of

the erosion of worker rights and protections over the past few decades. Without strong legal and political protections, workers are nearly defenseless against the power of big business to dissolve associational power in the working class, resulting in an increasingly atomized and individualized workforce. As a result, workers are forced to rely on market mechanisms such as job mobility to express dissatisfaction with wages or working conditions. Smith (2006) calls this mobility effort bargaining, and it is a form of labor resistance that can be expressed externally, by finding a new job, or internally, by threatening to find a new job if certain demands are not met by the employer.

However, changing jobs is not always a viable option for all workers, as employers often count on a certain amount of inertia in order to continue the status quo. This is especially true for workers with lower levels of human capital, who may not have the skills or resources to quickly transition to a new job. Furthermore, while changing jobs may provide some relief from unsatisfactory working conditions, it does not directly oppose capitalists. To truly oppose capitalists, workers must struggle against them both individually and collectively to control their own labor effort and minimize the extent to which capitalists exploit and control them. This includes political struggles to expand worker rights and their capacity to organize collective associations. While having and belonging to unions may provide some protection and leverage for workers, those collectives must be actively pressuring employers for material changes in the workplace in order to truly pose a threat to the status quo. As Erik Olin Wright (Wright 2000b) asserts, changing jobs is simply a market mechanism for workers to express dissatisfaction with wages or working conditions, but it is not a direct challenge to the power of capitalists.

Smith (2006) has pointed out that Marxist approaches to workplace conflict have been given pride of place in the literature. These approaches emphasize collective action such as

strikes and collective bargaining as a means of achieving the greater good, while individual acts such as quitting are often not seen as impactful to employer-employee relations. However, while these approaches are not entirely misguided, they may be overly idealistic and prioritize perfect outcomes over practical ones.

The idea that effective worker power could bring about significant change in the capitalist system is not a new one. However, despite the recognition of worker power as a potential game-changer, the reality is that it has yet to materialize in a significant way. As the author notes, labor and work have changed significantly since the 1970s, making it difficult to argue that there are any jobs worth sticking around and fighting for. In light of these challenges, the question is what can be done to address workplace issues and conflicts in a practical manner? While traditional collective action approaches such as strikes and bargaining may have their place, it may be necessary to explore alternative approaches to organizing and advocacy that take into account the changing nature of work and the labor market. This could include, for example, focusing on policy changes and advocacy at the national level, or exploring new forms of worker organization such as platform cooperatives or worker-owned businesses.

Ultimately, the key challenge facing workers and their advocates in the current context is to find ways to effectively address workplace issues and advocate for the rights and interests of workers in a manner that is both practical and effective which will ultimately look like a compromise with employers rather than war of movement. This will require a willingness to engage in new and innovative approaches to organizing and advocacy, as well as a recognition of the changing nature of work and labor relations in the 21st century.

## **The Contemporary (neoliberal) Economy**

Regan, Thatcher, “There Is No Alternative”, even Francis Fukuyama’s famous ‘the end of history’ are all associated with the neoliberal moment. Did economic liberalism triumph, or a better question is how we assess whether it did or not, and from who’s perspective.

Neoliberalism has gotten a lot of academic attention in the last four decades no doubt due to the myriad of ways it has changed our society and economy.

Authors looking at neoliberalism cause and effects have addressed housing, homelessness and the way the poor have come to be managed (Alatorre 2016; Amster 2008; Snow and Anderson 1993), the way in which competing priorities in academic institutions are motivated by neoliberal policies (Keighren et al. 2017), how states come to be understood as entities with particular spatial characteristics, and how changing relations between practices of government and national territories may be challenging long-established modes of state spatiality (Ferguson and Gupta 2008), the climate crisis and ecosystem services (Kull, Arnauld de Sartre, and Castro-Larrañaga 2015; Robertson 2006; Swyngedouw 2010), rationality, homo economicus and risk perception (Galt 2013), and the development of neoliberalism across space and time (Peck and Theodore 2012).

Through the lens of workers, like truck drivers, economic liberalism was not the tide that raised all ships. The rise of neoliberalism came with, “policies to curb the power of labour, deregulate industry, agriculture, and resource extraction, and liberate the powers of finance” (Harvey 2005:1). It attempts to bring all human action into the sphere of the market as a state project which creates and preserves an institutional framework appropriate to such practices as private property rights, free markets, and free trade.

As succinct as Harvey is and as clear a political and ideological program as he makes it, neoliberalism is not so cut-and-dried. Peck and Theodore (2012) make a point to show that there is a plurality of *neoliberalizations*. That,

*there was no locus classicus, as such, and as a result actually existing neoliberalism cannot be defined exclusively in relation to a fully articulated and preceding ideational programme. The moving map of actually existing neoliberalism is, of course, inescapably more complex. There was no single birthplace, to which all subsequent formations can be genealogically tagged, but a series of localised manifestations, the mutual referentiality and interdependences of which have deepened and densified with time, in the context of continued uneven development rather than simple convergence (183).*

One feature of neoliberalism germane to the study of labor is how, “The temporary contract supplants permanent institutions in the professional, emotional, sexual, cultural, family...domains (Harvey 2005:4). More broadly however, for workers, the last four decades have brought declining wages, growing economic insecurity, and poorer working conditions. Paradoxically, Brecher writes, “While individualistic ‘free-market’ ideology has become increasingly prevalent, working people are less and less able to solve their problems through individual strategies” (Brecher 2014:3). While declining wages and economic insecurity are features of neoliberalism, these are not new conditions that workers find on the job.

The Fordist model of stable employment through collective bargaining which equated to stable commodity markets has been replaced by short-term profitability, highly mobile capital, and international competition. The result of which has degraded and undermined long-term economic prosperity.

## **For a 21st Century Class Compromise**

Erik Olin Wright (2000) argues that class compromise is a fundamental feature of capitalist societies, as it allows for the formation of a stable capitalist class structure that can persist over time. He suggests that there is a "reverse J-curve" relationship between working-class power and capitalist-class interests, where, as working-class power increases, the capitalist class becomes more interested in making concessions and compromises to maintain their power and stability. Conversely, as working-class power declines, the capitalist class becomes less interested in compromise and more interested in maintaining their power through coercion and repression. Wright argues that the key to understanding class compromise is to focus on the relative balance of power between the working class and the capitalist class, as this balance determines the degree to which compromise is necessary for the maintenance of stability.

In the post-1980 neoliberal era in the United States, the trucking industry has undergone significant restructuring. The industry has faced pressures from deregulation, increased competition, and technological advancements, which have led to changes in the employment structure, working conditions, and wages for truckers. These changes have put workers in a precarious position, where they are often forced to accept low wages and poor working conditions due to the lack of job security and high turnover rates in the industry. This situation raises questions about the possibility of building a positive class compromise between workers and employers in the trucking industry.

Erik Olin Wright's formulation of class compromise offers a useful framework for analyzing this issue. In Wright's view a positive class compromise is one in which workers cooperate with employers by, "work[ing] hard and diligently to maximize the profits of capitalists" and employers cooperate with workers by, "pay[ing] workers as much as possible

and treat[ing] them fairly in the workplace; accept[ing] worker's organizations" (Fig.4, 970).

However, the balance of power between the two groups is crucial in determining the strategy of game play. As the balance of power shifts, the game strategy also changes. The question is, what can shift the balance of power in favor of workers in the trucking industry?

The state can act as an economic actor that strives to create conditions that provide for its own reproduction, as argued by Przeworski (Przeworski 1985), Block (1977), and Rogers and Streek (1994). However, it is important to note that the state's role in creating a positive class compromise is not straightforward. The state is not a neutral entity and its actions are often shaped by the interests of the capitalist class. Therefore, it is crucial to examine the relationship between the state and the capitalist class, as well as the political-economic mechanisms that influence state policy. The state can act as an economic actor to create conditions that promote workers' rights and raise wages. These authors highlight the potential of the state as an actor in creating favorable conditions for workers, promoting workers' rights, and raising wages. By acting as a mediator between workers and capitalists, the state can facilitate a positive class compromise and promote the economic well-being of all parties involved.

The state can implement policies that strengthen workers' rights and shift the balance of power in favor of workers. For example, the state can enforce labor laws that protect workers from exploitation, promote collective bargaining, and provide social welfare programs such as healthcare and education. Political parties also play a crucial role in improving the material well-being of workers while simultaneously solving problems for capitalists. Rogers and Streek (1994) argue that insofar as gains are to be made to workers in the current economic system is when a political party "improves the material well-being of workers and solves a problem for capitalists that capitalists cannot solve for themselves." Further, doing so will "win enough



political cachet to contest capitalist monopoly on articulating the 'general interest.' In this view, the state is seen as a site of political contestation, where different interest groups compete for power and influence. Political parties that advocate for workers' rights and social welfare programs can gain support from workers and challenge the capitalist monopoly on articulating the 'general interest.' The state's ability to intervene in the economy is also shaped by its spatial and institutional context. The state can create favorable conditions for workers through local policies that support small businesses and promote economic diversification. Moreover, the state's ability to provide social welfare programs can also be influenced by spatial factors such as income inequality and regional disparities in economic development.

Block argues that the state plays a crucial role in facilitating investment in business. The state can intervene and facilitate economic activity, and its interest in expanding its own power and assuring a reasonable level of economic activity can align with capitalist interests and lead to effective actions that benefit both workers and capitalists. Block discusses the ruling class, its relative power, and (in)ability to solve problems. He argues that the capital class is actually not well suited to solving problems of a political nature which is why it lobbies politicians to do this work for them. Block's point is that "[capitalist] rationalization can emerge as a by-product of state managers' dual interest in expanding their own power and in assuring a reasonable level of economic activity. The more power the state possesses to intervene in the capitalist economy, the greater the likelihood that effective actions can be taken to facilitate investment [in business]" (26).

Drawing on examples from Scandinavia, Wright (2000) argues that a positive class compromise can be achieved through a combination of state intervention and strong unions. In these countries, the state has implemented policies that support unionization, such as the right to

collective bargaining and worker representation on company boards. These policies have enabled workers to negotiate better wages and working conditions, and have created a more equitable balance of power between workers and employers. The trucking industry provides an interesting case study for examining the possibility of building a positive class compromise in the neoliberal era. While the industry faces significant challenges, such as high turnover rates and deregulation, the role of the state in creating conditions that favor workers provides a potential solution. By implementing policies that support unionization and raise wages, the state can shift the balance of power in favor of workers and create a positive class compromise.

Theoretically a mutually beneficial situation between employer and employee can exist. It is generally true that realized gains to either workers or capitalists will realize losses to the other and the relationship is historically zero-sum and antagonistic. The best example of when this was least true was when the Teamsters were at the height of power and master service agreements guaranteed gains to both unionized workers and capital.

During Jimmy Hoffa's tenure as the leader of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, both truck drivers and employers had different perspectives on the union's power and influence. From the truck driver's perspective, the union provided job security, better wages, and improved working conditions. The Teamsters negotiated labor contracts that provided healthcare benefits, pensions, and other forms of compensation that improved the standard of living for truck drivers and their families. This increased the loyalty of the drivers to the union and its leadership, which was one reason why Hoffa was able to maintain his grip on power for so long.

On the other hand, employers benefited from the union's ability to provide a reliable and stable workforce, which reduced labor costs by minimizing employee turnover. The Teamsters also played a key role in maintaining labor peace by negotiating collective bargaining

agreements that prevented strikes and work stoppages, which could be disruptive and costly to businesses. The union's power was such that employers had to take the Teamsters seriously in negotiations and often had to make significant concessions to avoid labor unrest.

One example of the mutual benefits of the Teamsters' power was the establishment of the National Master Freight Agreement in 1964. This agreement set uniform wage scales, working conditions, and benefits for truck drivers across the country. The agreement provided drivers with job security, while also ensuring that employers had access to a reliable and consistent workforce. Another example is the establishment of the Central States Pension Fund, which provided retirement benefits for Teamster members. The fund was initially supported by contributions from employers, but it was later expanded to include contributions from employees. This ensured that drivers had access to a secure retirement, while also reducing the burden on employers.

Labor management under this regime involved bargaining and compromise with the understanding of mutual benefit and this period underscored Wright's reverse j-curve model at its end point where worker associational power was greatest and employer benefits were great. The union provided drivers with job security, better wages, and improved working conditions, while employers benefited from the stability and reliability of a unionized workforce. The Teamsters played a key role in maintaining labor peace and negotiating collective bargaining agreements that prevented strikes and work stoppages, which benefited both drivers and employers.

Of course, in non-unionized shops discontented workers don't have this kind of power and practically feel that the way to exercise their agency by quitting as a relief valve for simmering antagonisms. Such is the case in the trucking industry today with so few unionized

firms left and automation on the horizon. Trucking, however, is unique in that modern truckers are not organized as they once were and their specific associational power as truck drivers is very low. Quelling discontent and managing antagonisms for the purpose of preventing unionization is a distant concern for trucking firms. Their main focus is on the cost of high turnover and preventing its effects on their bottom lines. How to keep good truckers in bad jobs seems to be the subtext of their shrill pleas to stabilize and expand the driver labor pool. The deep irony is that while truckers in the US in 2022 have very little associational power, the formation of collective organizations of workers such as unions, they do have a high degree of structural power. Structural power can be conceived of something passive or accidental. Wright suggests that it is the power that exists because a labor market is tight or something is strategically located at the nexus of supply and demand. In recent times we could easily use the term “essential worker” to denote structural power. It is like potential energy, the energy stored within a body because of its relative position to other bodies. The metaphor is doubly apt in this conversation because potential energy releases its energy when work is done upon it – *work*. Additionally, the unit of energy is called a joule and is symbolized by the letter *J* – the reverse of which is what we are aiming to solve for.

There are many issues inhibiting class compromise today. One is that there are far more independent truckers and small trucking companies than there were in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. This makes it more difficult to negotiate industry-wide agreements. The glut of truckers and trucking companies results in greater competition and the necessity to cut costs to stay afloat which leads to a lack of uniform wage scales, working conditions, or benefits. Two, the shift in labor relations over the past several decades means that unions have less influence and power in many industries including trucking. This lack of power means that the trucking industry is resistant to

working with unions or signing agreements that provide job security and benefits. Instead, they prefer to hire independent contractors or temporary workers instead, although in California this issue has been addressed through the passing of AB5. Three, the regulatory landscape has changed. In terms of deregulation, the Motor Carrier Act of 1980 removed many of the restrictions on the trucking industry that had been in place since the 1930s. While the act was intended to increase competition and lower prices, it also led to a race to the bottom in terms of wages and working conditions. Companies began cutting costs by hiring independent contractors and leasing equipment, which allowed them to avoid paying benefits and following labor laws. This shift also made it more difficult for drivers to unionize and negotiate better wages and working conditions.

The trucking industry has repeatedly lobbied government officials at various levels to grant greater access to potential trucking labor power, citing a supposed shortage of available workers and warning of potential economic disruptions. However, our analysis shows that there is no actual shortage of trucking labor, especially in California. Rather, the appearance of a shortage is created by high turnover rates due to poor retention.

Labor turnover is a manifestation of labor mobility, which is expressed externally by quitting. It represents the agency of individual workers and their ability to express discontent. High turnover rates demonstrate the zero-sum classical antagonisms that often preclude class compromise in a capitalist economy. In other words, workers quit their jobs when they feel that their wages and working conditions are inadequate, leading to turnover rates that make it seem like there is a shortage of workers when in fact there is not.

The trucking industry's focus on labor mobility, rather than on improving retention rates, has led to a situation where workers are constantly quitting their jobs, creating the appearance of

a labor shortage. This has allowed the industry to justify lobbying for greater access to potential labor power, while ignoring the root causes of turnover and poor retention rates.

Why do workers work as hard as they do? Because of 'the game'. We can see that Burawoy's concept about "the game" aligns with the idea of the labor process as a site of conflict between workers and employers; between control over one's work and subordination to others, as well as the conflict between productive activities and production relations. In this context, workers are not just passively accepting their role as subordinates, but actively engaging in a struggle for control over their work and the production process. This is particularly relevant in capitalist systems of production, where employers rely on the extraction of surplus value from workers' labor to generate profit. This suggests that employers may be more dependent on surplus value extraction through the game, and that there may be a third way of balancing the needs of both workers and employers. If we consider the question of whether the game takes on a different mechanism if workers' associational power is allowed to contribute to and set the rules of the game, we can see that the role of unions and other worker organizations is critical. These organizations can provide a collective voice for workers and help to balance the power dynamic between labor and capital. In turn, this can lead to more equitable and fair working conditions that prioritize workers' needs and rights. Moreover, the game and class compromise can be seen as two sides of the same coin, as both are shaped by the dynamics of power and control in the workplace. It's also worth noting how turnover is related to both, as high turnover can be an indicator of workers' dissatisfaction with the game and their lack of control over their work, which in turn can impact worker productivity and the overall profitability of the business. Thus, employers may need to consider alternative models of production that prioritize worker well-being and engagement, rather than solely relying on coercion and the extraction of surplus value.

Finally, we must acknowledge that the game is specific to a system of production that pays workers a base (reproduction wage) with the potential for more. This suggests that hourly and salary workers, who receive nothing more for working harder, are motivated instead by the coercion that comes with the consequences of losing one's job or the opportunity to make higher wages and achieve higher status. In this sense, the game can still exist under different production regimes, but the specific mechanisms that drive workers' motivations may differ.

The 'extraction of labor effort' by employers of employees is made possible by either spending money on actively managing employees or paying them more money. The data suggests that truckers work harder and longer for several reasons and while some of the rationales appear spontaneous underlying it all is a material basis. It is interesting to note that the trucking industry appears to function as a profit-making industry best when it spends less on actively managing employees or paying them more money. One example so clearly shown is by Viscelli (2016) in his analysis of the contractor model of trucking. Wherein truckers are in debt peonage with carriers and have no choice but to worker harder, longer to just stay above water. In any case, most truckers appear to be content with their situation and while they wish things were better materially, continue to drive and don't indicate switching careers. The cost of switching could be too great also, or at least perceived to be. Though my survey data suggests that truckers feel that driving pays better than non-driving jobs. However, I'm not totally sure if they are doing the math on hours-pay and are simply looking at their end of week wages because that is the only calculus that really matters and seems to be a worthwhile compromise. Whether or not trucker's wages can be considered 'efficiency wages' is another question (Wright 2000). Are their wages above the market equilibrium? Perhaps but not to 'reduce shirking' as Wright discusses. Truckers don't shirk and one cannot do so on a piece rate wage system. The relations

of production in the trucking industry center and pivot on the idea of milage driven or loads gotten (though this is less true of hourly or salary wages in the industry). Any wages paid above the market equilibrium are simply an employer's effort at an individualized strategy of negative class compromise to reduce turnover.

As already discussed, the trucking industry does not use internal labor markets. If a person is hired as a trucker their career trajectory most often ends 30 years hence behind the wheel still driving a truck. Through human capital acquisition and through leveraging their understanding of the industry, occasionally a trucker can leverage him or herself into a dispatching position. However, these jobs for large firms are largely technology driven and those qualifications are not common among truckers.

It is clear that the current regime of production is that of a capitalist utopia. The working class is "sufficiently atomized and disorganized" and capitalist have a "free hand in organizing production and appropriating the gains from increased productivity without fear of much collective resistance" (Wright 2000:986). The modest wage gains from the pandemic will be short lived as consumer spending and thus freight demand wanes. The only recent collective resistance by truckers was protesting vaccine requirements. This type of action signals that real action aimed at improving wages and working conditions is not even on a trucker's radar. While most drivers feel that they should be paid more, especially for waiting, they are resigned to this never materializing. Many in fact were concerned that if they were paid more than their companies would make less money. Wright's theoretical modeling of the reverse J curve of class compromise, while a worthwhile exercise in possibilities, has some issues. Wright knows what these issues are and elucidates them thus. The main thrust is that some conditions cannot be met in either extreme whether for capitalists or workers. On the one side if there are legal statutes



precluding the full exploitation of workers then capitalists can never realize their utopia. On the other side with legal protections of private property workers can never realize their utopia. These realities should make everything easier, however. Neither side has to feel overly concerned that the pendulum will swing entirely out of their favor. I'm not saying this will feel good for either side but at least it provides possible starting and finishing locations.

The most fascinating part of this model and theoretical discussions of worker associational power comes at the end when we consider the macroeconomic conditions under which workers associational power has been eroded. One of the ways discussed by Wright is to buy cheap and sell dear. Or make things in the global south for a pittance and sell them in the west. Offshoring production quickly eroded worker power and with it a strong wage. Moreover offshoring is possible in myriad industries so it is easy to see how wages and working conditions have declined so drastically for so many. However, US trucking cannot take place anywhere other than the US. So, how can we begin to understand that for a time a class compromise existed and then it ended in 1980 and now, rhetorically speaking, is impossible to achieve again. As an aside this points to the fact that there is no historical evidence supporting the teleology of democratic socialism least of all in the US since we have rolled back some of the most important features that are required under such a political system.

A serious problem for achieving class compromise is the how compromise has been cast by the left in the US. The left feels like it is reformist, not enough, capitulation – and it totally is. And that's a shitload better than where we are now. Wright's main and best point is the gains in worker associational power will be more durable when it is shown how that power will also benefit capital and not simply be set on injuring it.

## **What is Turnover?**

Turnover is imbricated in the trucking game. It fits squarely into the context of making out and the legitimation crisis suggested by Burawoy (1979). Turnover is possible because of low barriers to entry into the labor market, common to secondary labor markets. If the ease of quitting was met with difficulty in hiring then the practice might not be as prevalent, and indeed, may result in complete withdrawal from the industry. To be clear turnover is only one expression of worker resistance and isn't intended to hurt one's employer so much as increase one's odds of making out. It is not imbricated in larger expressions of resistance from without the industry. It is an individual job and therefore consent and resistance is individualized.

High turnover is the antithesis of the class compromise affected by the Teamsters. The Teamsters, through their collective bargaining power, were able to negotiate job security, higher wages, and better working conditions for their members, which not only benefited the workers but also helped to stabilize the industry and promote productivity. High turnover creates a situation where workers are constantly entering and leaving the industry, making it difficult to establish a stable workforce that is invested in the success of the company. It prevents the establishment of long-term relationships between workers and employers, which are essential for building trust, cooperation, and shared interests. Employers come to view workers as expendable and may be less inclined to invest in training and development, leading to lower skill levels and reduced productivity. Additionally, high turnover can lead to lower job satisfaction, which can negatively impact worker morale, productivity, and cooperation. Moreover, the issue of turnover is not only relevant to the trucking industry but is also a pervasive issue in other low-wage industries where workers face precarious working conditions and low pay. The individualization

of consent and resistance is a common feature of many low-wage jobs, where workers are often isolated and lack the collective bargaining power that comes with union representation.

The trucking industry would have us believe that the phenomenon of high turnover is actually a ‘shortage’ of drivers. The trucking ‘shortage’ has made the American Transportation Research Institute’s top ten list since the 1980s. It is indeed a deliberate tactic employed to further their lobbying efforts and to create a sense of urgency that could lead to policy changes that benefit the industry. By framing the high turnover rates as a shortage, the industry is able to position itself as a victim and divert attention away from the working conditions and compensation that contribute to the turnover. This narrative not only absolves the industry of any responsibility for the problem but also serves to demonize the workers who leave, painting them as unreliable and uncommitted. In reality, the high turnover in the trucking industry is a reflection of the larger systemic issues within the industry, such as low pay, poor working conditions, and a lack of support for workers. By individualizing the problem, the industry avoids addressing the root causes of the issue and fails to consider the impact that these issues have on the larger economy.

### **Retention & Turnover**

The rate of turnover, or churn, at large carriers is often well over 100 percent (Burks and Monaco 2019; Keller and Ozment 1999a, 1999b; LeMay et al. 1993; Min and Lambert 2002; Richard et al. 1995). The reasons carriers give for such high turnover in trucking is that it is primarily an earnings and home time issue. Taylor (1991) argues that such high turnover is the result of, “far more driving jobs than there are drivers” (49). This may be true nationally, but DMV records in California show that there are three times as many CDL holders than the

industry claims it needs. Turnover happens when a worker leaves a job for another in the same segment of the industry ostensibly in pursuit of higher wages, although this motive is somewhat in dispute given that turnover mostly happens within the trucking industry with drivers leaving one company for another with similar earnings and home time (Burks and Monaco 2019; Phares and Balthrop 2021; Richard et al. 1995). Proximal concerns for retention also include time away from home, quality of equipment, relationship with dispatcher, and tenure (Keller & Ozment, 1999; Phares and Balthrop, 2021). LeMay et al (1993) have shown that longer average length of haul and older fleets are also positively correlated with turnover. Turnover rates are higher at large firms and a possible interpretation for this is that smaller firms can maintain open communication with drivers and sustain positive relationships (LeMay et al, 1993).

The research on driver retention is conclusive that compensation and working conditions must be improved industry-wide to reduce turnover. What isn't fully agreed upon is the degree to which improved working conditions will mitigate compensation that is average or below average across segments, or the degree to which other factors are equally responsible for reducing turnover. The main argument being that better human resource management techniques will ameliorate voluntary turnover (Taylor, 1991; Richard et al, 1995; Keller & Ozment, 1999). While improving the soft-skills of those in direct contact with drivers, the dispatchers, should be implemented if not only to humanize the drivers, one can only persist so long under desperate economic conditions before one has to seek better compensation.

Hegemonic control, in which consent between employer and workers, is generated to produce commodities (Burawoy 1983). A person's disposition, or habitus, makes them ideal for certain types of work and not others, and capital endeavors to make use of individuals or groups whose disposition lends itself to certain production processes (*ibid*:122). Halpin and Smith

(2017) support this and show how “recruitment and hiring practices constitute part of an overarching apparatus of control wherein managers imagine or anticipate that particular people will be ideal for particular jobs and positions” (710). However, they also ask, “how and why people endeavor to become those ideal workers—often through signaling, identity and impression management, and by engaging in employability and employment management activities” (711). Dispositional theory assumes a pre-formed individual that only requires minor tweaks from management to embody the characteristics required of an acquiescent worker regardless of the mode of production. However, dispositional theory may not be applicable to all workers in all industries, or at all. Managers seeking active participation in the production process have proceeded by structuring labor in such a way that allows for nominal amounts of freedom within an otherwise structured and constrained production process.

The turnover rate in the TL sector remains around 100 percent, as mentioned previously. Belman & Monaco (2001) note that, “the median driver had worked in his or her occupation for twelve years, median service with the current employer was eighteen months” (507). Monaco & Grobar (2004) found that among port drivers at Los Angeles and Long Beach that tenure was approximately 18 months among those surveyed while average years driving was eight. Perspectives on why this is the case differ. The trucking industry has suggested that a low-quality workforce, and tougher federal regulations are inhibiting the recruitment and retention efforts. The industry has also acknowledged that compensation may be an issue and have implemented tactics to slow turnover such as sign-on bonuses, profit sharing, flexible schedules, career advancement possibilities, reduction in non-driving activities, among other incentives (Min & Lambert, 2002; Taylor, 1991). Scholarly research, on the other hand, has demonstrated that wages, home time, and positive working relationships with dispatchers are critical (LeMay et al,

1993). The ATA's recommendation that younger drivers and apprenticeship programs will create a pipeline of high-quality labor into the workforce and recruiting more women and minorities ranks at the top of their list for retention initiatives. Min & Lambert (1999) argue that the law of supply and demand inhibits carriers from sourcing and retaining labor. However, there is a surplus of labor available to this industry, and that labor markets in this industry are behaving as expected (Burks & Monaco, 2019).

The disposition of driver's dispatchers can play an important role in retention. Keller & Ozment (1999) have shown that dispatchers' relationships with drivers have a large impact on a firm's ability to retain drivers. Dispatchers who are more empathetic, solicit driver feedback, and engage in solution finding behaviors go a long way toward retaining drivers. In addition, dispatchers are often overburdened with drivers for whom they are responsible which can make personal attention and conflict resolution difficult. Drivers who are burned out from too much time on the road will lead to diminishing returns (Keller 2002) and when carriers and dispatchers are not responsive to the needs of drivers will seek better working conditions (Keller & Ozment, 1999).

### **Truck Driver Shortage**

Some segments of the trucking industry have claimed to be experiencing a shortage of truck drivers for decades. The first mentions of such shortages began soon after the industry was deregulated in 1980. The American Trucking Association released its first analysis of the driver shortage in 1987. A driver shortage has been at the top of the American Trucking Associations list of top concerns almost continually since. Industry analyzes suggest the shortage is a result of an aging driver workforce and declining interest in the job among younger generations. Non-industry sources, however, consistently contest this view, suggesting instead that there is, in fact,

no driver shortage at all. In fact, there are millions of available drivers, they have simply decided not to work in some segments of the industry that offer low pay and poor working conditions. (Burks and Monaco 2019; Phares and Balthrop 2021). Instead, the problem appears to be one of retention and labor models intentionally, or at least knowingly, built around high turnover. Due to significant public subsidies and competitive markets that reward the carriers with the cheapest labor, key segments of the industry have consistently high turnover. While better employers have historically not suffered from the retention problems of these segments, even they are now experiencing the fallout as the worst segments of the industry serve as the main recruiters and trainers of new drivers. Even better employers are reporting difficulty hiring new labor.

The irony is that trucking (and other) firms want a stable and dependable (and dependent!) workforce, but they do not and refuse to provide the material conditions for this to exist. They also then get angry and cry foul (“shortage”) when truckers demonstrate their (nominal) agency and resistance to exploitation by getting a different job that provides the things that are important to them. The secret that the firms aren’t telling us explicitly, but that we can see and hear in their actions and lobbying, is that they want to fully control the workforce and their access to new workers whom they can also control. For instance, they seek younger drivers and more women of color, both of whom demonstrably are easier to exploit because of material and immaterial conditions in our political-economy. The industry wants a more socialized form of labor organizing but without the concomitant rise in wages and working conditions that made those past and perhaps future labor regimes possible; they want to control them as a group. They could be said to desire a compromise in which the benefits are largely symbolic and illusory.

One of the main thrusts of the trucking industry’s assault is aimed at recruiting workers. An integral part of any labor process analysis is recruitment (Halpin and Smith 2019). If you’ve

been paying attention on the highway in California, you might have noticed the ways in which carriers attempt to recruit drivers. More miles, more cents-per-mile, more home time, dedicated runs, no touch freight, drop and hook. These advertisements are not for you driving your car. They're aimed at other truckers, and they are enticing. They also demonstrate clearly what it is that truckers want out of their driving job. But how well do these claims work? While there is a great deal of misinformation and misleading advertising seasoned truckers are not oblivious to it. The recruitment methods of carriers are aimed primarily at new drivers, as Viscelli (2016) has shown. Demographics play a role in recruitment as well. It has been shown that those most likely to select into the industry are veterans, minorities, those who are married, and reside in rural areas (Belzer 2001). Higher education, non-citizens, and disabled folks are less likely.

The occupational choice model of the truck driver shortage attempts to demonstrate that there are other occupations or industries, after weighing options and ability, workers will opt into. Despite historical analyses that show that transportation, warehousing, and construction were the largest competitors for drivers in the occupational choice model, data shows that in recent years the largest origin for trucking entering the industry is unemployment. Truck drivers are twice as likely to come from and end up unemployment than any other industry or occupation (Phares and Balthrop 2021).

Similarly, the industry frequently claims that it is in capable of attracting sufficient numbers of workers by raising wages, raising the question of whether the labor market for truckers is "broken." However, Burks & Monaco (2019) demonstrate that a shortage does not exist *per se* despite high turnover. Workers are responding to wages and job quality in the same manner workers respond in other similar occupations. "The market for truck drivers appears to work as well as any other blue-collar labor market, and while it tends to be "tight," it imposes no



constraints on entry into (or exit from) the occupation” (Burks & Monaco 2019:1). Perhaps due to their methods, both studies display different results in terms of what industry or occupation truck drivers leave to. Besides unemployment, Phares & Balthrop (2021) see construction as the primary destination while Burks & Monaco (2019) show it as other transportation jobs. Both studies conclude that wages in trucking have remained relatively high compared to other occupations that require similar human capital endowments and job skill requirements.

Interestingly, the data show that, “point estimates of heavy truck drivers exceed those of other blue-collar workers...driver employment is increasing over time, and it is associated with earnings that are increasing in nominal terms and strong relative to those in other occupations with similar educational requirements” (Burks & Monaco 2019:5).

While there is clearly high turnover in trucking, there is no evidence of a shortage of drivers. A possible shortcoming of the study by Burks & Monaco (2019) is their evaluation of the conditions under which a person will choose to exit trucking. Their variables, which only include pay and hours, do not fully capture the suite of economic and social conditions in which new drivers can find themselves. As Viscelli (2016) has pointed out, new drivers are often trapped into a system of debt peonage while they repay carriers for the costs associated with those carriers training them and/or the lease agreements they’ve entered as ‘owner-operators’. With nowhere to go and huge payments they are obligated to work off, it would not be a strange finding to see that for-hire truckers from time period 1 would stay in time period 2 (Burks and Monaco 2019:14).

One major issue not addressed in the literature that pertains to occupational choice (Phares and Balthrop 2021) is the specific opportunities that exist for a given worker in a specific place. Choice suggests options and opportunities for work even among low-skilled workers, but

these options can be highly constrained. Trucking does provide an option for those whose job choices are limited due being located in a specific place. When the option of doing service industry work and the known hours and earning potential is weighted against the promise of ‘more miles more pay’ choice becomes less germane to discussions on occupational choice. It isn’t until the realities of trucking hit home that a worker may make a more informed decision whether to leave the industry or attempt to find an employer who offers job characteristics that are more appealing to the employee. Even then without requisite experience for those higher paid jobs a worker’s options remain limited. The key finding from Phares & Balthrop’s (2021) study is that the occupation that truck drivers are most likely to come from and leave to is unemployment. In fact, three times more truckers are sourced from unemployment and end up in unemployment than the next competitive industry, which is construction.

### **The State and Labor**

The state’s relationship to labor is never passive and the extent to which it intercedes as an arbiter between capital and labor suggests its position is dependent on both and yet controls their outcomes. “The process of production also includes political apparatuses which reproduce those relations of the labor process through the regulation of struggles” (Burawoy 1983:587). Market and managerial despotism was superseded by state legislation, a ‘hegemonic regime, which set minimums on wages and by installing mechanisms which gave workers’ rights and protections against arbitrary actions by employers such as social insurance, unemployment compensation and rules, regulation, and labor and employment law enforcement (Burawoy 1983; Halpin 2015). This, however, prompts the necessity of workers to be persuaded to cooperate with management, for consent to supersede coercion, although never completely.

From this perspective, the most important such condition in the post feudal era has entailed the division of social reality into apparently separate spheres of "economic" and "political" activity. This historically problematic structural condition enables the differentiation of a sphere of private economic activities from one of public political action, and hence entails the possibility of the modern form of state (as well as capitalist production). The characteristics of particular states are not directly determined by this relation but rather are the result of open-ended In the course of such struggles, the boundary separating and defining the economic and the political spheres of social activity may become an object of contention, potentially altering the character and meaning of the state in a particular social formation (Rupert 1990).

Fred Block (1977) argues the state mediates relations between itself, capital, and society. He is seeking to understand who rules in modern industrialized societies. Rupert similarly discusses the characteristics of particular states and how they are the, "processes of historical construction linking institutional state building, capital accumulation, class formation and conflict, and interstate competition and warfare" (Rupert 1990:431). How is it that capitalism, at least here in the United States, has a profound ability to meet both economic and labor crises and recover from them if the state is merely a crude instrument and appendage of the ruling class? On the one hand, in terms of an economic crisis, then perhaps capitalism and its relationship to the state could rationalize itself by forcing concessions which improve business confidence. However, on the other hand, in terms of a crisis resulting from labor and given the size of the labor movement, there are moments that should have been enough to create a crisis from which it could not recover. One function is that the state plays an ideological role in maintaining social order. Second, is that in order to preserve the interests of capital generally the state must act in contradiction to capital in particular which we observe by concessions to labor and also price

controls, and tariffs. In order to carry out these actions the state must have more autonomy than the instrumental theory would allow which is to, “see the state as a reflection of the interest of certain groups in the capitalist class” (Block 1977:6). Third, the ruling class is not politically cohesive (Block 1977:8). It is helpful here to envision capitalism personified not simply in elites but in state managers and the working class as well. The thrust of his technique is to problematize the idea that the state as merely an instrument of capital. Instead, as Rupert shows, “States, state powers, and the social relations in which they are embedded are thus viewed as socially produced and historically mutable” (Rupert 1990:431). Harvey writes, “Paradoxically, a strong and powerful social democratic and working-class movement is in a better position to redeem capitalism than is capitalist class power itself...it is not without a strong element of self-interest either because it is ordinary people who suffer, starve, and even die in the course of capitalist crises rather than the upper classes” (Harvey 2005:153).

What we find is that the state managers both reproduce the social order in their interactions with labor and contribute to capital expansion through concessions to capitalists. The state’s role is never passive. As it depends on revenues to reproduce itself it tends to favor the development of jobs and ‘professions’ that are held by state workers. Moreover, the state holds the authority (or monopoly) to validate what constitutes labor and employment and what does not. In effect it mediates the coercive nature of labor. In Block’s (1977) analysis, class struggle remains the dynamism that rationalizes capital expansion primarily through the wage mechanism (*ibid*:21). Crucially, we see an element of the counter-movement described by Polanyi in the way class struggle seeks to protect itself from the disembedding process by seeking assistance from the state. Nevertheless, with the expansion of state power resulting in worker protections is an equal expansion in state power to rationalize capitalism (*ibid*:22). As such, labor, state managers,

and capitalist are all imbricated in ongoing crises. “The state supports those it depends on for taxes and votes - large firms and the upper working and middle classes” thus also contributing to segmented labor markets, to which we will return. (Hirsch 1980:142). The state requires revenue through taxes in order to function. Firms generate higher revenues by extracting the greatest amount of surplus value through fragmenting the labor process and reducing wages and benefits.

To extricate ourselves from ongoing crises requires altering our perceptions of markets. “Markets are social structures...not the expression of some natural law, but as strategic action projects...at particular historical moments” (Sallaz 2013:10). This is keeping with the contention that markets are transhistorical phenomena as Polanyi argues. Polanyi explained how all societies have had some sort of economy but that those societies were never controlled by the aforementioned market system. However, there have been markets of some kind since the later Stone Age, but they were incidental to economic life. They existed under the principles of reciprocity, redistribution, and exchange. However, the market system which revolves around the buying and selling of commodities, including labor markets, and the price mechanism is a relatively new system in history.

## **Chapter Conclusion**

So why should workers just get another job instead of organizing for a better one? In industries like trucking this is the best advice one can give or receive. No matter how much human capital you acquire you will never be monetarily rewarded for it as a trucker doing trucking. The job is driving a truck. There are few if any internal labor markets left, enterprise benefits are few and far between and shoddy when they do exist, the job isn't place based unless you're a local driver, and the workforce is atomized [independent contractors are excluded from

FLRA legislation], and all truckers are excluded from minimum wage statutes. So yes, go find the job that offers more and better of the things that you want.

## Chapter 6 - Conclusion

After conducting extensive research on the trucking industry, several thoughts come to mind. One of them is that while many drivers have no plans to quit and will continue to drive until retirement, there are approximately 350,000 other drivers in California who have chosen not to pursue trucking as a career. These individuals either obtained their license but quickly discovered they did not enjoy the job, did it for a while but could not bear it, found alternative employment, or experienced other factors that outweighed the benefits of truck driving. Therefore, it is essential to consider the opinions and perspectives of both those who remain in the industry and those who have left it.

As a former truck driver, I found the job generally detestable, and the lack of upward mobility was an intractable problem that prevented me from continuing in the industry. However, I acknowledge that my desire for upward mobility is not necessarily class-based, and my perspective may be clouded by elements of elitism. Furthermore, some drivers contend that their pay is carefully calculated to maintain their employer's profitability, which suggests that driver compensation is optimized for the employer rather than the employee.

During conversations with some drivers, I proposed the idea of holding carriers and shippers materially responsible for delays to optimize their workday. Some of these drivers had not previously considered this possibility, highlighting the existence of an element of not-knowing in the industry that employers may seek out in drivers. The discourse around the necessity of competition is pervasive and debilitating, and most drivers have valid complaints about their jobs, except for the racist excuses for the decline of the industry. However, underlying these complaints is the inescapable reality that they must have a job, often this job, and there is likely no way out. This is what capitalist realism feels like.

The term "sweatshops on wheels" was coined by labor researcher Michael Belzer to describe the difficult working conditions faced by many truck drivers. According to Belzer, many trucking companies exploit drivers by paying them low wages, forcing them to work long hours, and denying them adequate rest breaks and access to basic amenities such as toilets and showers. While it is true that many truck drivers face difficult and sometimes dangerous working conditions, it is also worth noting that not all drivers experience the industry in the same way. Some drivers work for companies that provide good wages and benefits, offer flexible schedules, and prioritize safety and driver well-being. Data and interviews suggest that these companies are smaller and the distance between driver and owner is smaller creating an atmosphere of camaraderie. Additionally, for some drivers, the autonomy and independence of the job can be a source of satisfaction and fulfillment. It is also important to note that many drivers, despite the challenges they face, remain committed to the job and feel a sense of pride in their work. For many, trucking is more than just a job - it is a way of life and a community. This sense of camaraderie and belonging can be a powerful motivator, even in the face of difficult working conditions.

Burawoy's theory of the game argues that workplaces are divided into four categories: consent, negotiation, coercion, and resistance. The trucking industry, as I have discussed, is a complex and multifaceted industry that includes elements of all four categories.

At the level of consent, many truck drivers may view their work as a source of pride and identity, despite the challenging working conditions and low pay. They may feel a sense of camaraderie with other drivers and a sense of purpose in their work, which can contribute to a sense of consent and participation in the game of trucking. However, as I have discussed, there are also significant elements of coercion in the trucking industry, including long hours, low pay,



and the threat of job loss or retaliation for organizing or speaking out against poor working conditions. These forms of coercion can limit workers' ability to negotiate for better pay and working conditions and can make it difficult for them to resist the demands of their employers. At the same time, there are also elements of negotiation and resistance in the trucking industry. Workers may negotiate for better pay and working conditions through collective bargaining and union organizing and may resist the demands of their employers through strikes, protests, and other forms of direct action. Those limited options notwithstanding, there has been a decline in unionization in the trucking industry, which has led to a reduction in collective bargaining and direct action by truckers. As a result, many truckers have turned to job turnover as a means of improving their working conditions and wages. This has been a key strategy for truckers to negotiate better pay and working conditions, particularly in an industry where unionization rates have been on the decline.

Burawoy (a la Gramsci) discusses the concept of hegemonic regimes, which refer to the ways in which dominant groups maintain their power and control over society. Hegemony is a form of power that operates through consent rather than coercion, in which the ruling class is able to establish its values and ideas as the norm, and thus gain the support and cooperation of the subordinate classes. Hegemony is the process by which the ruling class maintains its the economic and political systems and also controls the cultural and ideological aspects of society. This is achieved through institutions such as schools, churches, and the media, which disseminate the ruling class's values and beliefs, and shape the way people think and act. In this way, the ruling class is able to establish a "common sense" view of the world, which is accepted as natural and unquestionable.

Burawoy applies these ideas to the workplace and argues that hegemonic regimes are also present in the realm of labor relations. He suggests that management operates as a hegemonic force in the workplace, using various tactics to establish its authority and control over workers. These tactics include the use of managerial ideology, the manipulation of worker consent, and the creation of "symbolic violence" through various forms of coercion. In the context of the trucking industry, hegemonic regimes can be seen in the ways in which management seeks to maintain its control over the workforce, and the ways in which it uses various tactics to achieve this. For example, trucking companies may use a variety of techniques to control the behavior and attitudes of truckers, such as surveillance, monitoring, and the use of incentives and punishments. In doing so, they seek to establish their authority and control, and to maintain the existing power structures and relationships within the industry.

However, there are also elements of resistance and negotiation in the trucking industry, which suggest that the hegemonic regimes are not all-encompassing or invincible. While the power dynamics within the industry may be heavily skewed in favor of management, there is still room for workers to assert their agency and challenge the existing power structures, through collective action and other forms of resistance. Overall, the trucking industry can be seen as a complex and dynamic game, with elements of consent, coercion, negotiation, and resistance. Burawoy's theory helps to illuminate the power dynamics and challenges within the industry, as well as the potential for workers to organize and advocate for their rights and interests. With the rise of autonomous trucks, these power dynamics are likely to shift in significant ways, as technology companies and manufacturers gain more control over the industry.

Advances in autonomous vehicle technology have significantly improved the prospects of self-driving trucks, with many companies already testing autonomous trucking systems. Tesla

and Waymo are two prominent examples of companies that have invested in this technology. Experts predict that self-driving trucks could become a common sight on roads within the next decade. This development could revolutionize the trucking industry, transforming the way goods and materials are transported across the country. The rise of autonomous trucking also poses significant challenges to the trucking industry and its workforce. One of the most significant concerns is the potential for job losses and wage stagnation for truckers. If self-driving trucks become widespread, the need for human drivers could decrease, potentially leading to significant job losses. This could have ripple effects throughout the industry, with reduced bargaining power for workers leading to lower wages and fewer benefits.

Some experts argue that the technology could also create new opportunities and jobs in areas such as maintenance, logistics, and software development. These new jobs could help to offset some of the potential job losses and wage stagnation resulting from the rise of self-driving trucks. However, the veracity of this promise is debatable given the current and growing capabilities of AI. Moreover, it remains unclear how the trucking industry and its workforce will respond to the rise of self-driving trucks. The industry is a vital component of the global economy, transporting goods and materials across vast distances and playing a crucial role in global supply chains. Truckers and the Teamsters union have a long history of fighting for better pay, benefits, and working conditions, but it is unclear how the rise of autonomous trucking will impact their power and influence. The industry could be transformed in ways that are difficult to predict, and its long-term future remains uncertain. Ultimately, the question of whether self-driving trucks will surpass the extant power of organized truckers and their unions remains to be seen. While advances in technology may give companies more control over their operations, truckers and their unions will likely continue to play a crucial role in shaping the future of the

industry, advocating for their rights and pushing for a more equitable and sustainable future for all.

The trucking industry today precludes most forms of labor organizing because it is characterized by a complex web of labor relationships that can make it difficult for workers to organize and advocate for their rights. One major factor that precludes many forms of labor organizing is the prevalence of independent contracting within the industry.

Trucking companies often classify their drivers as independent contractors rather than employees, which allows them to avoid many of the legal and regulatory requirements that apply to traditional employees. Independent contractors are not entitled to benefits such as health insurance, workers' compensation, or unemployment insurance, and they are not covered by most labor laws that protect employees' rights to organize, collectively bargain, and engage in strikes. The use of independent contractors in the trucking industry is rooted in a long history of juridical decisions and regulatory policies that have made it difficult for workers to assert their rights. For example, in the 1940s and 1950s, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) excluded independent contractors from coverage under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), which effectively precluded them from forming unions or engaging in collective bargaining. Later court decisions and regulatory policies further expanded the scope of independent contracting, making it more difficult for workers to assert their rights. Today, many truckers are classified as independent contractors, even though they work exclusively for a single company and are subject to many of the same requirements and restrictions as traditional employees. This has made it difficult for them to organize and advocate for their rights, as they are not covered by most labor laws that protect employees' rights to organize and collectively bargain. The issue of independent contracting in the trucking industry has been a hot topic in recent years, particularly with the

passage of Assembly Bill 5 (AB5) in California. AB5 was enacted in 2019 and went into effect July 2022. AB5 codified the “ABC test” for determining whether a worker is an employee or an independent contractor.

AB5 has had a significant impact on the trucking industry in California, as many trucking companies have relied on independent contractors to avoid paying benefits and complying with labor laws. The law has been met with both support and opposition, with proponents arguing that it will protect workers' rights and ensure that companies pay their fair share of taxes and comply with labor laws. Opponents argue that it will lead to job losses and harm small businesses that rely on independent contractors. Despite the controversy surrounding AB5, it has brought the issue of independent contracting to the forefront and has led to a renewed discussion about the rights and protections of workers in the gig economy. Its passage in California has sparked a larger conversation about the need for labor law reform and protections for workers in the modern economy.

In addition to the use of independent contracting, the wage relationships of workers to employers also make it difficult for truckers to organize. Many truckers are paid by the mile rather than by the hour, which can create incentives to work long hours and take on additional work without adequate compensation. Overall, the complex web of labor relationships within the trucking industry, including the use of independent contracting and the prevalence of piece-rate or per-mile pay structures, can make it difficult for workers to organize and advocate for their rights. While truckers and their unions have a long history of fighting for better pay, benefits, and working conditions, they face significant challenges in a regulatory and economic environment that often precludes traditional forms of labor organizing.

Dogma and rhetoric about organized labor in the United States has created ideological recalcitrance in workers about the value and possibility of union power. In the United States, there is a long history of anti-union sentiment and rhetoric, which has contributed to a broader cultural and ideological recalcitrance about the value and possibility of union power among workers. This dogma and rhetoric about organized labor has been propagated by a range of actors, including employers, politicians, and conservative media outlets, and has been reinforced by a range of legal and regulatory policies that have made it more difficult for workers to organize and bargain collectively.

One major factor contributing to this ideological recalcitrance is the pervasive narrative that unions are corrupt, inefficient, and out of touch with the needs of workers. This narrative has been propagated by employers and conservative politicians, who have used it to justify anti-union policies and practices, such as "right-to-work" laws and restrictions on collective bargaining. The media has also played a role in reinforcing this narrative, often portraying unions as greedy and self-serving, rather than as advocates for workers' rights. Another factor contributing to this ideological recalcitrance is the historical legacy of racism and anti-communism in the labor movement. In the early 20th century, many labor unions excluded or marginalized workers of color, contributing to a broader sense of alienation and mistrust among minority communities. Later, during the Cold War, unions were often targeted by anti-communist hysteria, which further stigmatized and marginalized them in the eyes of many Americans. These ideological factors have contributed to a broader cultural and political environment that is hostile to unions and labor organizing. Workers are often discouraged from organizing or joining unions, and many believe that collective bargaining is either impossible or

not worth the effort. This has made it more difficult for unions to build power and advocate for workers' rights and has contributed to the broader decline of organized labor in the United States.

Workers who want to join or organize a union may face significant barriers in doing so. These barriers can be legal, economic, social, and related to employer tactics. For instance, some states have passed "right-to-work" laws, which prohibit unions from requiring workers to pay dues or join the union as a condition of employment, thereby reducing unions' membership and funding. Many workers also fear retaliation from their employers or the loss of their jobs if they try to organize, especially in highly competitive or anti-union industries. Additionally, workers in the gig economy or who are classified as independent contractors may not have the legal protections or bargaining power of traditional employees. On a social level, anti-union propaganda and messaging can make workers feel like unions are corrupt or out of touch with their needs. Moreover, the legacy of racism and anti-communism in the labor movement has created a broader sense of alienation and mistrust among minority communities. Finally, employers may use aggressive tactics to prevent workers from organizing or joining unions, including intimidation, retaliation, and the use of anti-union messaging. They may even hire consultants and law firms that specialize in union avoidance strategies. These barriers demonstrate the ongoing struggle between workers and employers over the right to organize and bargain collectively.

Overall, the dogma and rhetoric about organized labor in the United States has created significant barriers to union organizing and advocacy, reinforcing broader cultural and political attitudes that are often hostile to collective bargaining and worker power. To overcome these barriers, unions and their allies must work to challenge and dismantle the anti-union narratives

that have become so pervasive, and build a broader movement for worker power and social justice.

In addition to the anti-union discourse is actual actions taken by industries, employers, and trade organizations. This has included a range of tactics, from legal and regulatory restrictions on organizing and collective bargaining, to physical violence and intimidation.

One common tactic used by employers and industry groups is the use of anti-union propaganda and messaging. This can take the form of advertisements, public relations campaigns, and other forms of media that seek to undermine the legitimacy of unions and paint them as corrupt or self-serving. For example, during the early 20th century, employers often circulated pamphlets and other materials that portrayed unions as socialist or anarchist organizations that posed a threat to American values and democracy. Another tactic used by employers and industry groups is the use of legal and regulatory restrictions on organizing and collective bargaining. For example, "right-to-work" laws, which have been adopted in many states, prohibit unions from requiring workers to pay dues or join the union as a condition of employment. This weakens unions by reducing their funding and membership and makes it more difficult for them to negotiate on behalf of workers. Employers and industry groups have also used physical violence and intimidation to suppress labor organizing. This has included tactics such as hiring private security forces to harass and intimidate workers or using police and military forces to break up strikes and protests. Other tactics used by employers and industry groups include the use of blacklists to prevent workers from finding employment if they have a history of union organizing, and the use of surveillance and espionage to monitor union activities and gather intelligence on organizers and their supporters.



In recent years, several high-profile cases of anti-union efforts by companies have come to light. In 2021, Amazon workers in Alabama voted on whether to unionize with the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU). However, the company engaged in a concerted anti-union campaign, holding mandatory meetings to discourage workers from organizing, distributing anti-union materials, and even changing traffic lights to prevent organizers from approaching workers outside the warehouse. Similarly, in 2014, Volkswagen workers in Tennessee voted on whether to join the United Auto Workers (UAW) union. The company and several anti-union organizations waged a campaign of intimidation and misinformation, including holding mandatory anti-union meetings, threatening job losses if workers voted to unionize, and even offering bribes to workers who opposed the union. In 2011, the state of Wisconsin passed a law that stripped most public-sector workers of their collective bargaining rights, sparking massive protests and legal challenges, but ultimately succeeding in weakening public-sector unions in the state. In 2019, McDonald's workers in several cities staged strikes and protests calling for higher wages and the right to form a union. However, the company responded by firing several workers who were involved in the organizing efforts and has been accused of using surveillance and intimidation tactics to suppress union activity. Similarly, in the same year, Delta flight attendants voted on whether to unionize with the Association of Flight Attendants (AFA). The company launched a campaign of anti-union messaging, including holding mandatory meetings where managers discouraged workers from unionizing, and distributing anti-union materials that contained false information about the impact of unionization on wages and working conditions. Despite this, the flight attendants voted to unionize with the AFA. These cases highlight the ongoing struggle for workers' rights and the lengths that some companies will go to prevent unionization.

The history of labor organizing in the United States and around the world is marked by a long and ongoing struggle between workers and employers over the right to organize, bargain collectively, and advocate for better wages and working conditions. While labor unions have made significant gains over the years, they continue to face significant barriers and opposition from powerful industry groups and employers who seek to undermine their power and influence.

As I conducted my research on the trucking industry, I quickly realized that data on trucking is woefully insufficient, disorganized, and unclear. The state and federal governments have done little to improve this in all the decades that trucking has been around. It was difficult to find reliable sources of information, and even when I did find something, it often conflicted with other sources. This made it challenging to get a clear picture of the state of the industry, especially when it came to the truck driver shortage.

The lack of reliable data on the trucking industry has been a long-standing issue. In a report published by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, it was stated that the data on trucking safety and operations has "historically been inadequate, disorganized, and incomplete" (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2018). This has made it difficult for policymakers to make informed decisions about regulations, safety measures, and workforce issues in the industry. One of the major issues with the data on trucking is the lack of standardization across different sources. For example, different organizations may define "trucking" or "trucker" differently, leading to inconsistencies in the data. Additionally, data collection methods and reporting requirements may vary from state to state, making it difficult to compare data across different regions. Furthermore, some data may only be available through voluntary reporting by trucking companies, which may not accurately reflect the true state of the industry.

This lack of reliable data has been particularly problematic when it comes to the truck driver shortage. While the shortage has been widely discussed in the media and among industry experts, there is a lack of consensus on the extent of the shortage and its underlying causes. According to the American Trucking Associations (ATA), the industry was short about 61,000 drivers in 2018, a number projected to rise to 100,000 by 2023 (American Trucking Associations, 2019). However, other sources have disputed these claims, arguing that the shortage is largely a result of high turnover rates rather than a lack of available workers (Benanav 2019). Without clear and reliable data, it is difficult to assess the validity of these claims and to develop effective policies to address the issue. Another challenge in collecting data on the trucking industry is the misclassification of truck drivers as independent contractors rather than employees. This practice is widespread in the industry and makes it difficult to obtain accurate information about the number of workers, their working conditions, and their compensation. In many cases, companies that classify drivers as independent contractors avoid paying taxes and providing benefits, such as health insurance, retirement plans, and workers' compensation. A report by the National Employment Law Project found that misclassification of truck drivers is a significant problem in the industry, with as many as 90% of port truck drivers in California being classified as independent contractors. This misclassification not only affects the drivers' compensation and benefits but also makes it difficult to regulate the industry and enforce labor laws. It also hinders efforts to collect accurate data on the number of workers and their working conditions. Given these challenges, it is not surprising that the available data on the trucking industry is often incomplete, unreliable, or conflicting. This highlights the need for more comprehensive and accurate data collection methods, as well as greater transparency and accountability on the part of trucking companies and government agencies. Only then can

policymakers and stakeholders make informed decisions and develop effective policies to address the challenges facing the industry.

As a former trucker, researcher, and PhD candidate, my positionality and experiences have undoubtedly shaped my impressions of being a trucker. While I have firsthand knowledge of what it's like to drive a truck and the challenges that come with the job, my positionality as a researcher and PhD candidate has also provided me with a different lens through which to view the industry.

For example, my background in academia has given me a critical perspective on issues related to labor, capitalism, and inequality. This means that I am more likely to view the trucking industry through the lens of power relations, and to question the dominant narratives that are often presented by industry leaders and policymakers. My experiences as a former trucker also give me a unique insight into the industry, but it's important to recognize that my experiences may not be representative of all truckers. It's essential to acknowledge that the experiences of truck drivers are diverse and that my experiences may not necessarily reflect the sentiments of many truckers. There are many different types of trucking jobs, from long-haul driving to local delivery driving, and each of these jobs may come with its own unique set of challenges and rewards. Furthermore, the experiences of truck drivers can also vary based on their race, gender, ethnicity, and other factors.

As a researcher, it's important to be aware of my positionality and biases and to be open to learning from a diverse range of voices and experiences. However, much of what I saw and heard I attribute to cognitive dissonance. When individuals are faced with conflicting beliefs or values, they may experience cognitive dissonance, which can lead to psychological discomfort and tension. In the context of trucking, drivers may experience cognitive dissonance when they

recognize that their job is physically demanding, isolating, and potentially dangerous, yet they continue to perform it. This made it hard to listen to truck drivers and to consider their perspectives and experiences when conducting my research.

One way that truck drivers may cope with this cognitive dissonance is by rationalizing or justifying their job. For example, they may focus on the financial rewards of the job, such as a high salary or the ability to support their family. They may also point to the sense of freedom and adventure that comes with being on the open road or the pride they feel in delivering goods across the country. These rationalizations can help to reduce the psychological discomfort caused by cognitive dissonance and allow drivers to continue performing their job. Additionally, drivers may also engage in social comparison to cope with the challenges of their job. They may compare themselves to others in similar situations and conclude that their job is not as bad as it could be. For example, they may point to the long hours and challenging conditions of other blue-collar jobs or compare their job to those who are unemployed or underemployed. This social comparison can help to justify their job and reduce the discomfort caused by cognitive dissonance. Furthermore, cognitive dissonance can also affect drivers' decisions to stay in the industry or leave. Those who are more successful in rationalizing or justifying their job may be more likely to stay in the industry, while those who struggle with cognitive dissonance may be more likely to leave.

Another significant finding was that trucking in its historical form as a high-paying blue-collar job is gone and is unlikely to return due to many factors. Technological advances, globalization, and changes in the structure of the industry have contributed to the decline in wages and working conditions. This has resulted in a significant decrease in the attractiveness of trucking as a career choice for many workers. Moreover, the transition to autonomous trucking is

expected to lead to significant job losses. There is little promise that these losses will be met with a surplus of jobs to support autonomous trucking. Even those jobs that will be created will be technical jobs that are outside of the typical human capital, which most truckers have acquired. This raises questions about what will happen to the many workers who currently make their living in the industry.

Erik Olin Wright proposed a class compromise where employers and workers would come to an agreement to share the benefits and risks of an industry in a way that would be mutually beneficial. However, the trucking industry is uniquely challenging for such a compromise because it relies heavily on recruiting workers from economically disadvantaged areas, who may have limited options for employment. This is due to the spatial distribution of capitalism, as described by David Harvey. Capitalism thrives on spatial inequalities, where certain geographic areas are more conducive to profit accumulation than others.

In the case of the trucking industry, the spatial distribution of capitalism has resulted in the concentration of economic opportunities in urban areas, leaving rural areas with few employment options. This has created a labor pool that is geographically concentrated, making it difficult for truckers to collectively bargain for better working conditions or higher wages. Furthermore, the trucking industry's reliance on this labor pool means that even if workers are dissatisfied with their job, they may have limited options for other employment opportunities. Therefore, achieving a class compromise in the trucking industry would require addressing the spatial inequalities that make it difficult for workers to have bargaining power. This would involve creating economic opportunities in rural areas, reducing the industry's reliance on a geographically concentrated labor pool, and addressing the structural factors that contribute to the economic disparities between urban and rural areas. However, given the systemic nature of

these issues and the deeply entrenched spatial distribution of capitalism, it is unlikely that these changes will be implemented in the near future.

Burawoy's concept of legitimization crisis refers to the loss of legitimacy and authority of employers and management in the eyes of workers. In the case of the trucking industry, this is due to the low wages and poor working conditions that many truckers face. As a result, many truckers have a sense of alienation from their work and do not feel valued or respected by their employers.

High turnover in the industry can be seen as a response to this legitimization crisis. Many truckers leave their jobs because they feel that they are not being treated fairly or that their work is not meaningful. This creates a labor market in which employers must constantly recruit new workers to replace those who have left. This cycle of high turnover perpetuates the low wages and poor working conditions that contribute to the legitimization crisis in the first place. The lack of stability and security that comes with high turnover also contributes to the alienation and disempowerment of truckers. This can lead to a sense of hopelessness and resignation, making it difficult to organize for better wages and working conditions.

The high turnover in the trucking industry is not simply a result of individual choices or preferences but is a response to the legitimization crisis that exists within the industry. To break this cycle, significant changes are needed in the industry, including higher wages, better working conditions, and greater respect and recognition for the work that truckers do. However, without government intervention and industry-wide cooperation, it is unlikely that these changes will occur.

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**Appendices  
General Findings**

**Survey Results**

Figure 1 - Q137 - How did you hear about your current truck driving job?

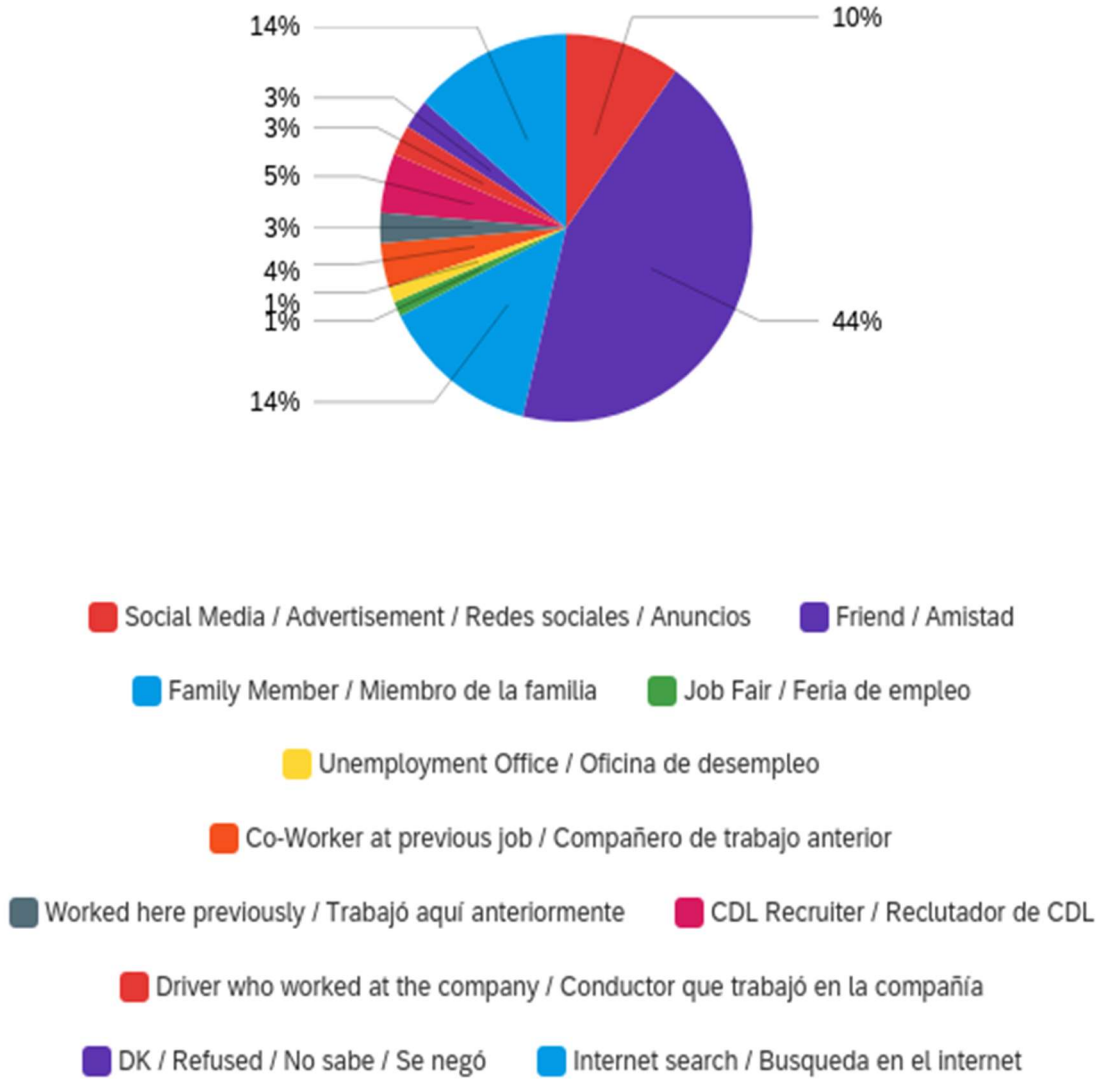
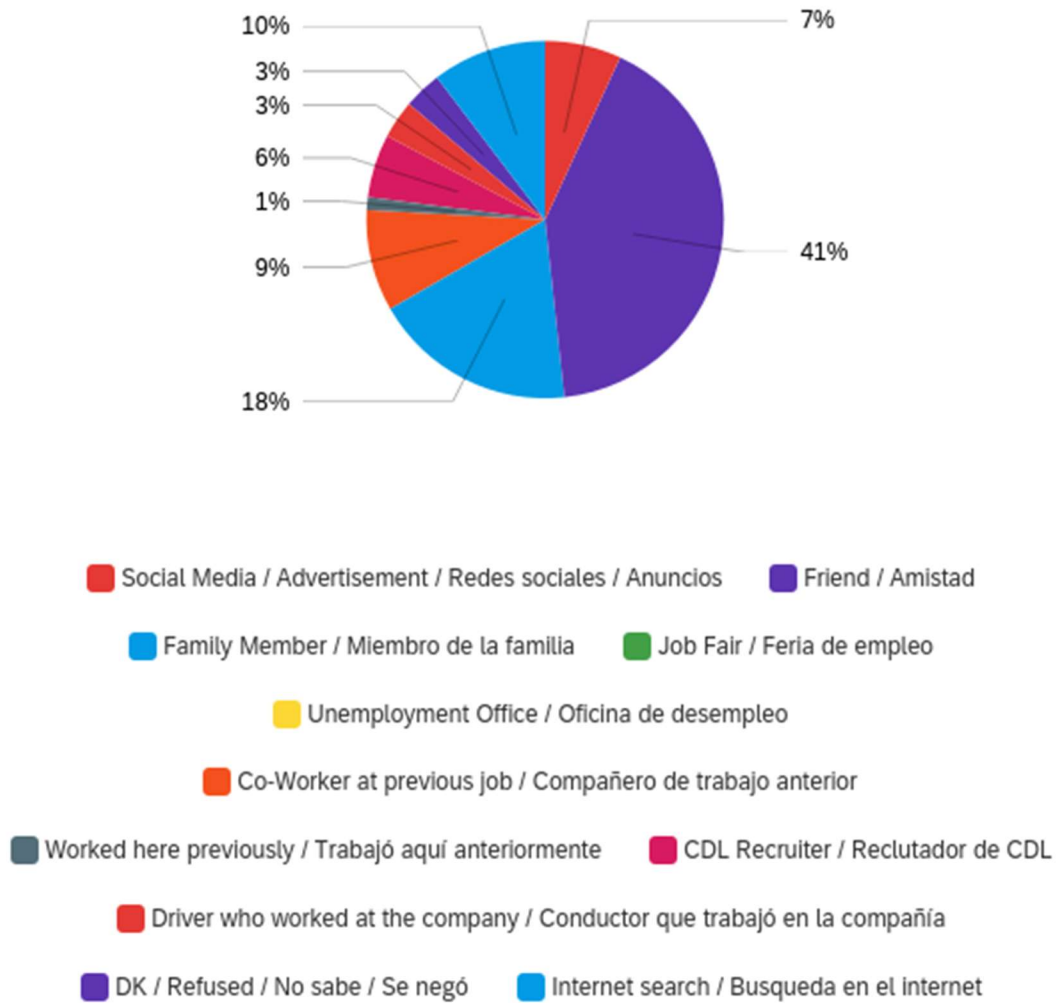


Figure 2 – Q132 (In-Person) How did you hear about your current truck driving job?



*The strength of personal connections is consistent with data on recruitment practices. On one hand it shows that company reputation is only as good as a trusted person’s opinion. It also shows that companies don’t need to focus on advertising in a plurality of locations. By having some online presence and then treating drivers well, people will come to them for work.*



Figure 3 - Q138 (Online Survey) What factors led you to decide on this company?

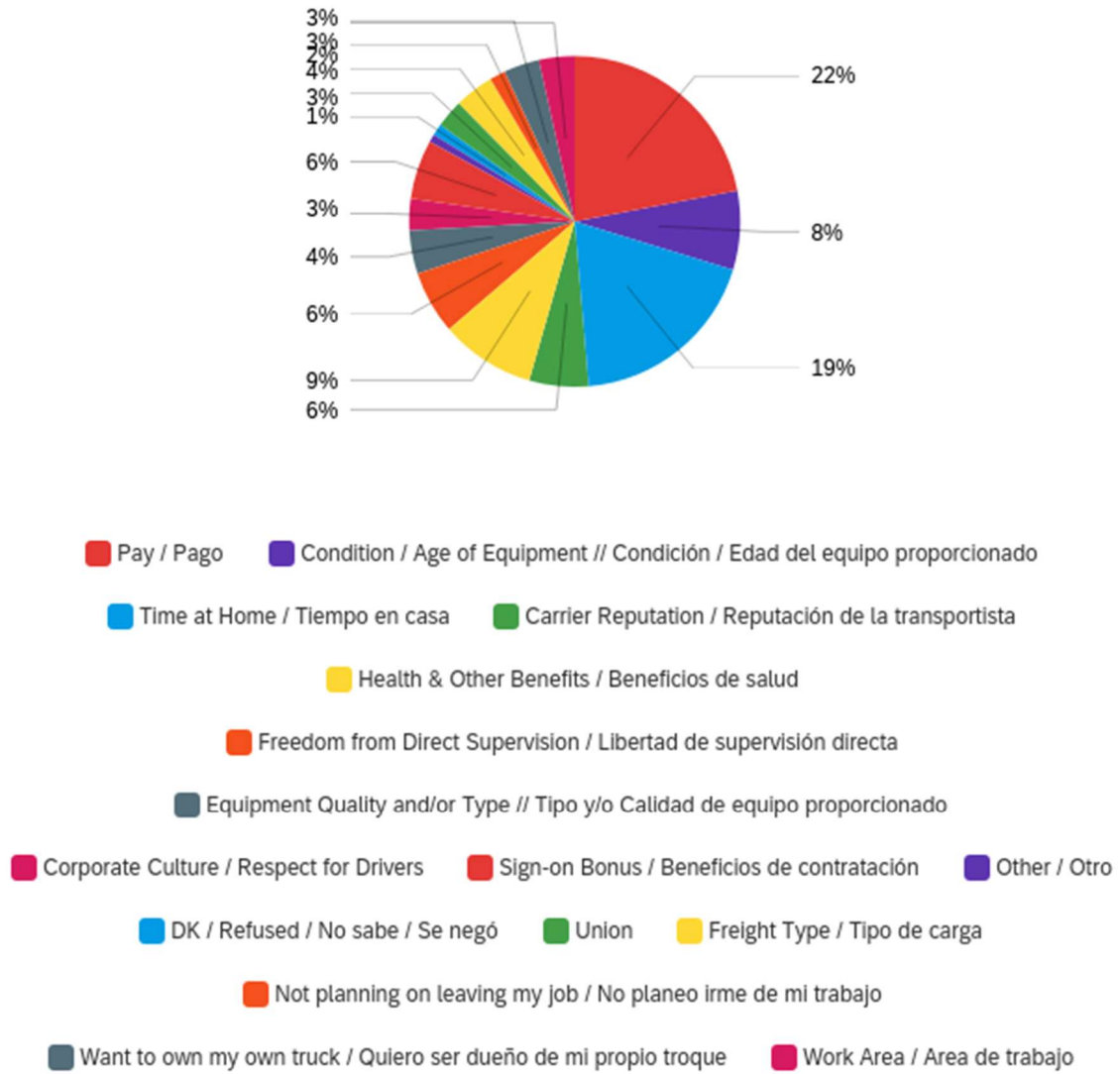
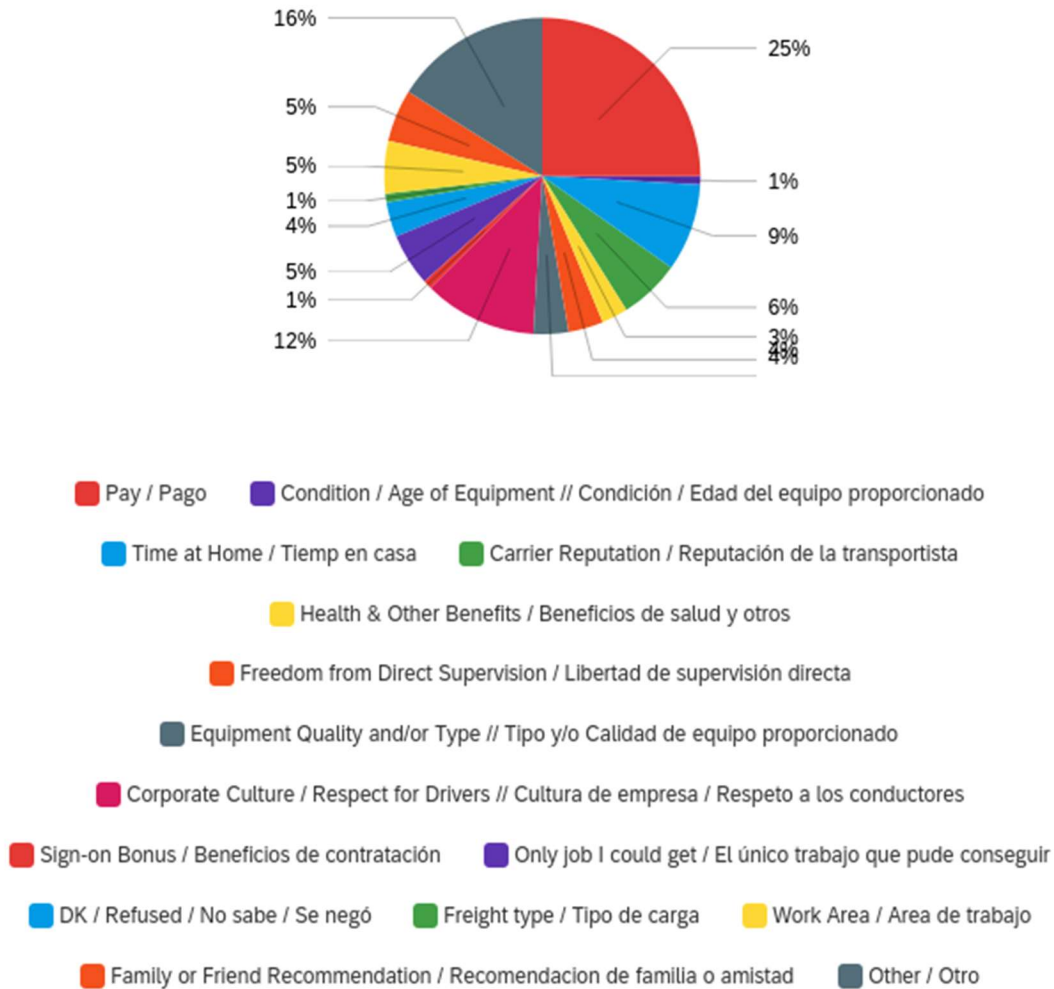


Figure 4 – Q133 (In-Person Survey) What factors led you to decide on this company?



*Regardless of all things people are making a choice when taking the job on its material benefits. What they get out of the job once this part is established is a separate conversation. There is no discussion by Burawoy about why the guys he worked with chose Allied (or Geer in Roy’s time). So we don’t have an understanding of their ulterior motivations. Yes, consent is generated in the workplace but what gets workers into a specific workplace – this analysis shows that its money.*

Figure 5 - Q140 (Online Survey) - When you think about your next truck driving job what are the most important job quality factors?

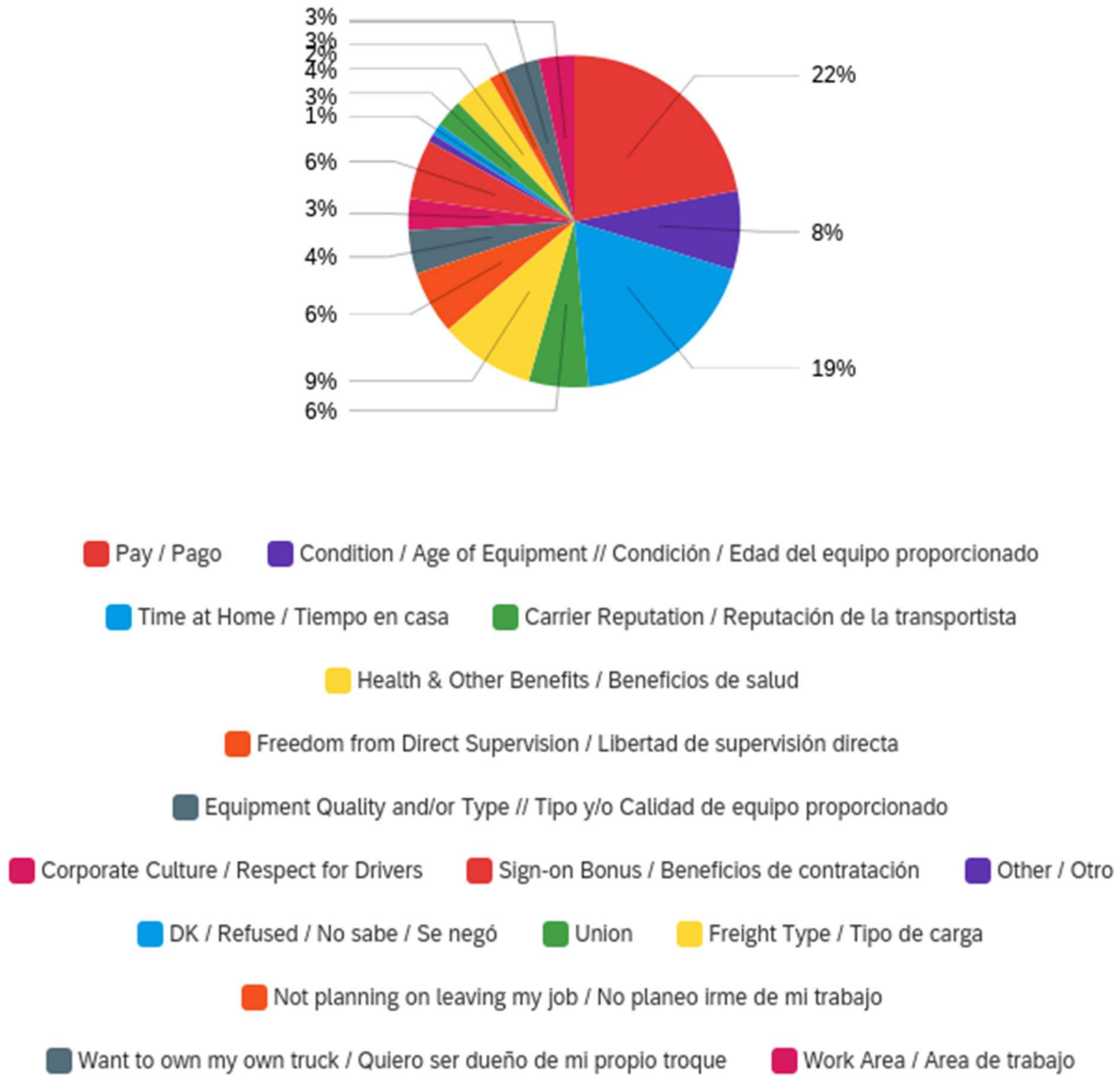
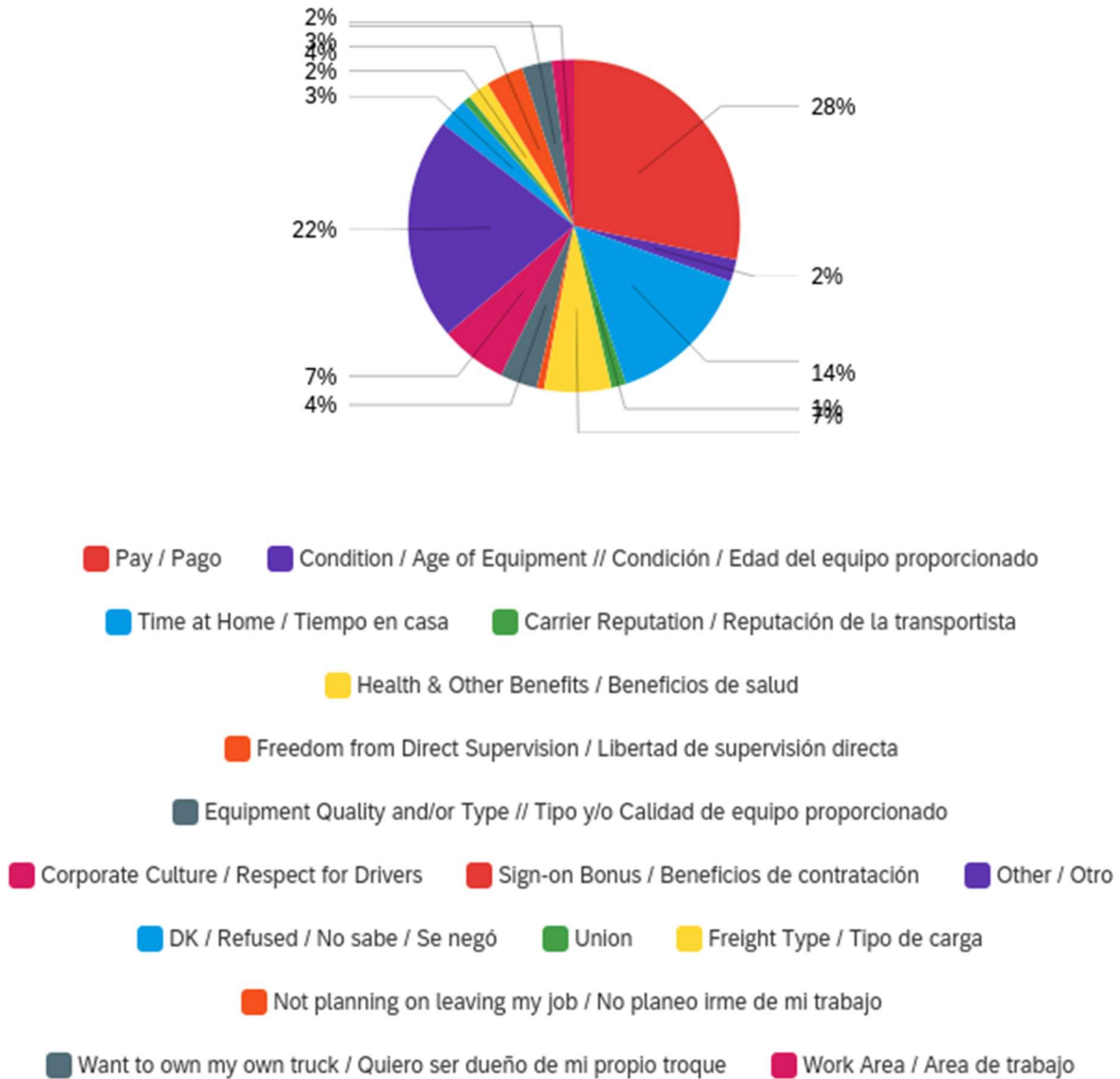


Figure 6 - Q135 (In-Person Survey) - When you think about your next truck driving job what are the most important job quality factors?



*We can see from this chart that is what is moving people from job to job, when they switch jobs. The literature suggests that the labor market is not behaving exactly as it should, but it is. When wages are up, people go towards those jobs.*

Figure 7 - Q141 (Online Survey) Would you recommend this job to a friend or loved one?

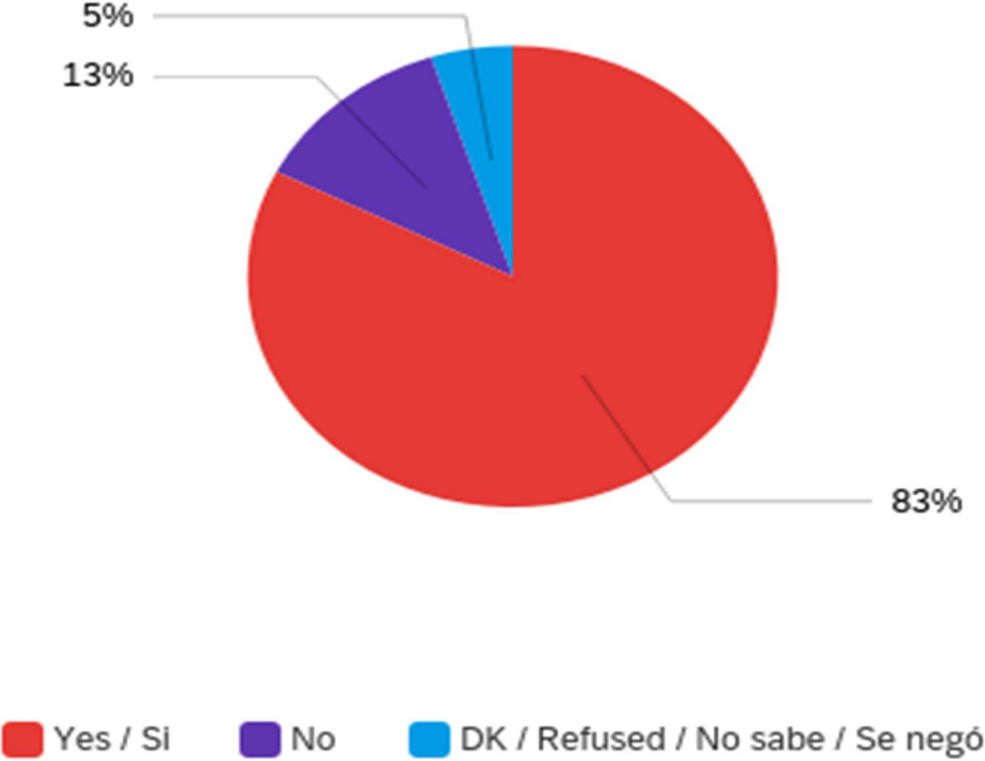
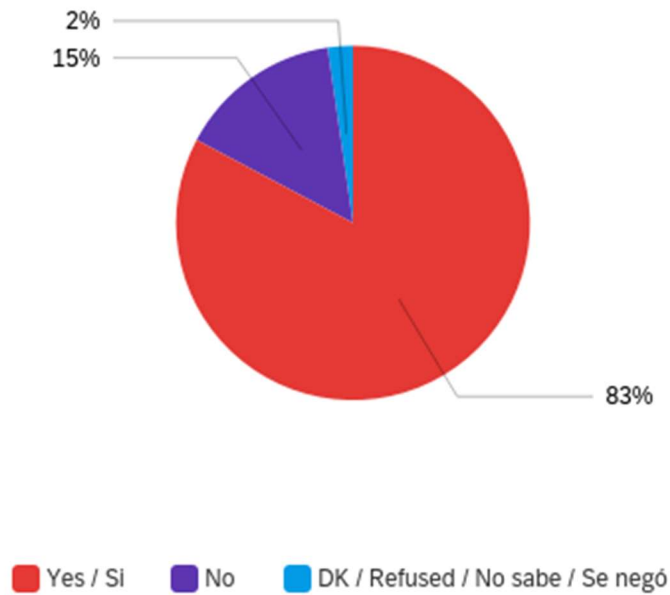


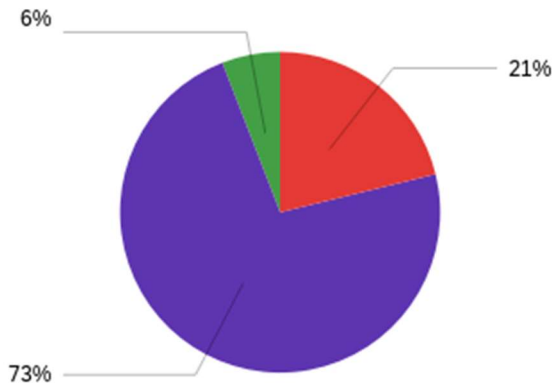
Figure 8 - Q136 (In-Person Survey) Would you recommend this job to a friend or loved one?



*I think this is the most impressive statistic of all. The trucking industry couldn't ask for better press than this. This isn't the kind of statistic that shows that labor market conditions are anything but responding to normal market mechanisms. We could assume that if these two numbers were exactly opposite and drivers were citing pay as their primary motivating factor that the trucking industry might really be in trouble. Everything we've seen is that if companies offer more pay, and to some extent more home time, they will recruit more drivers. What this means is that any driver shortage, real or imagined, is tied directly to the trucking industries handling of employee pay.*

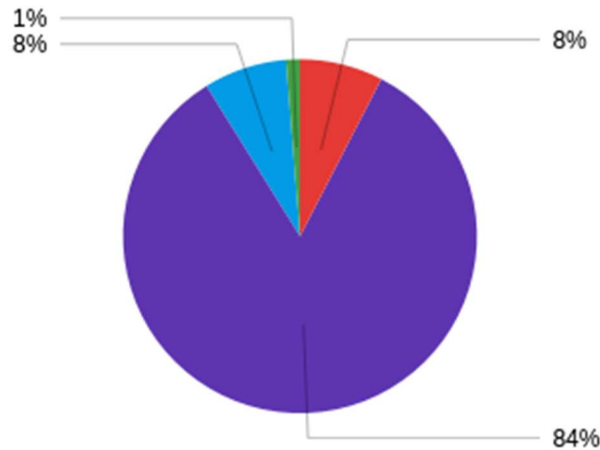
**This next bit of data should shut the industry up completely.**

Figure 9 - Q143 (Online Survey) Are you thinking about quitting as a truck driver?



Yes / SI   No   DK / Refused / No sabe / Se negó   I'm retiring / Me voy a retirar

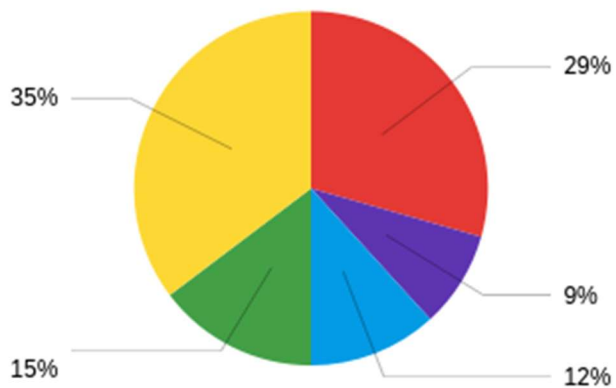
Figure 10 - Q150 (In-Person Survey) Are you thinking about quitting as a truck driver?



Yes / SI   No   DK / Refused / No sabe / Se negó   I'm retiring / Me voy a retirar

*Overwhelming drivers are staying in the industry. But and if the industry is concerned about the other 21%, what can they do?*

Figure 11 - Q147 (Online Survey) For Seasonal Drivers, when this job ends how do you plan to earn money?



■ Another type of truck driving / Otro tipo de manejo de troques

■ Some other job (non-driving) / Algún otro trabajo (no de manejo)    ■ Unsure / No esta seguro

■ DK / Refused / No sabe / Se negó    ■ Unemployment / Desempleo

*This data is consistent with the interviews I undertook while a seasonal tomato hauler in the Sacramento Valley.*



Figure 12 - Q149 (Online Survey) For how many more years do you expect to be working as a truck driver?

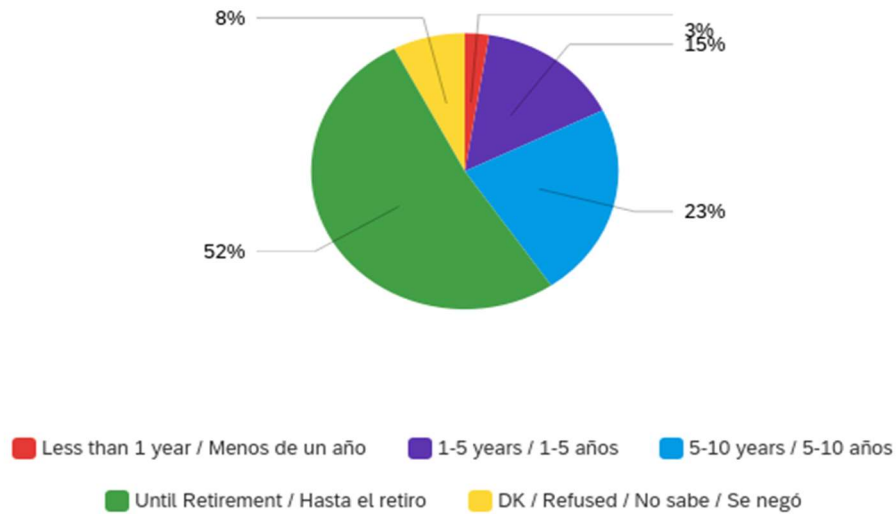
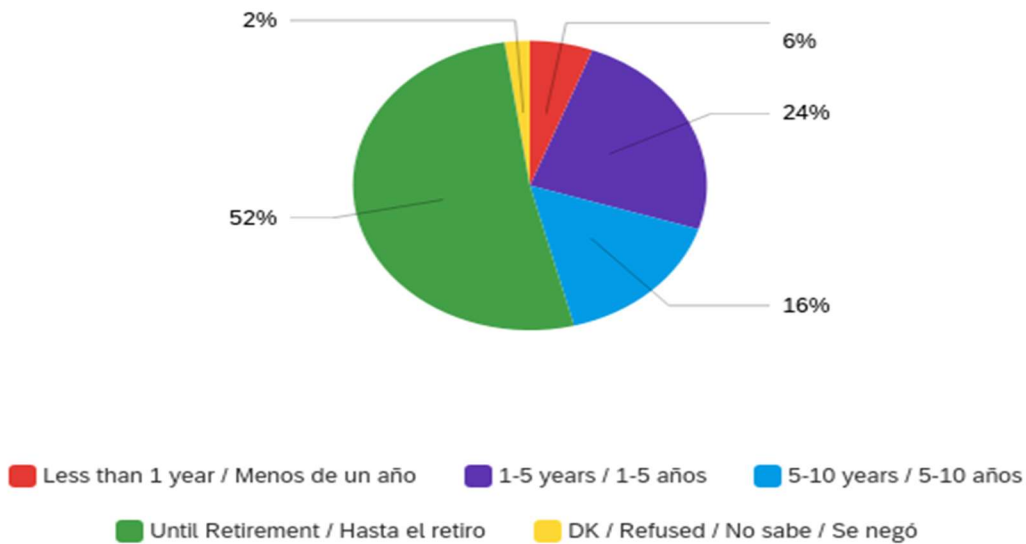


Figure 13 – Q146 (In-Person Survey) For how many more years do you expect to be working as a truck driver?



*This data is crucially important. Due to the average age during our surveying (approximately 50 years old), and the average retirement age in the United States of 70 years old, the jobs for drivers will ultimately contract precluding the need for additional recruitment. If the industry simply retains the drivers currently working, they'll be set.*

Figure 14 - Q152 (Online Survey) Would you prefer a different, non-trucking job?

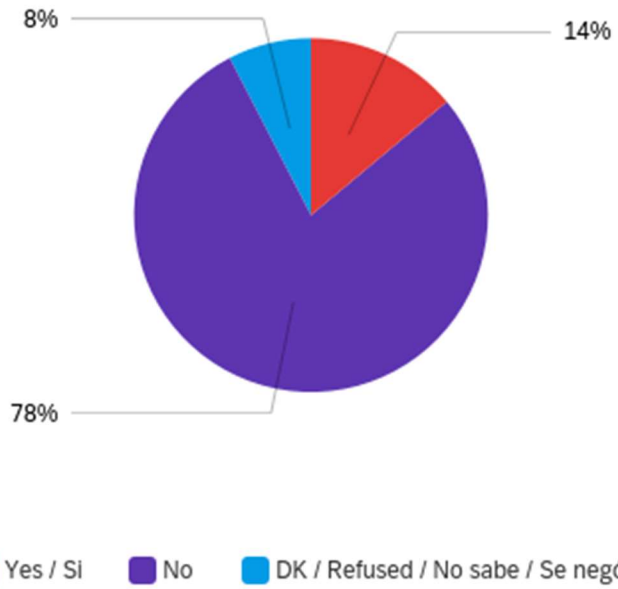
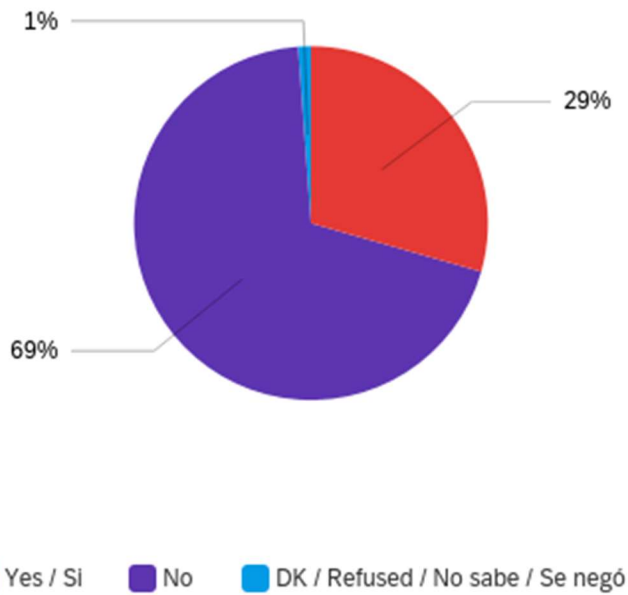


Figure 15 – Q147 (In-Person Survey) Would you prefer a different, non-trucking job?



*Yes, truckers have a lot of legitimate things to complain about. However, they're not going anywhere.*