

New Jobs, New Workers, and New Inequalities: Explaining Employers' Roles in Occupational Segregation by Nativity and Race

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While sociologists have shown how employers contribute to occupational segregation along lines of race, gender, and nativity, little attention has been paid to unpacking why employers engage in those practices. We take on this gap through a case study of hired labor relations on Wisconsin dairy farms, which have become segregated along lines of nativity and race in recent years. We ask how these workplaces have become segregated, what employers' roles in this process have been, and why, in particular, employers have engaged in practices that contribute to workplace inequalities. We find that employers engage in practices that leave immigrant workers clustered in the low-end jobs for a complex array of reasons: to maintain profits within a changing industry context, meet their own middle-class aspirations, comply with their peers' middle-class lifestyle expectations, manage their own concerns about immigration policing, assert their own class identity, justify the privileges that they and their U.S.-born employees enjoy on the farm, and maintain the advantages they have gained. We argue that sociologists seeking to explain employers' roles in occupational segregation must examine not only the stories employers tell about different worker groups but also the stories they tell about themselves and the contexts that shape their aspirations and identities. Doing so provides more complete explanations for why occupational segregation occurs and does the important work of bringing whiteness into the spotlight and showing how privilege is quietly constructed and defended. Keywords: occupational segregation; workplace inequality; symbolic boundaries; immigrant workers; illegality.

Work in "America's Dairyland" is changing hands. Rural Wisconsin has long reflected the pastoral model of small-scale family farms established by German and Scandinavian immigrants in the 1800s (DuPuis 2002; Gilbert and Akor 1988; Janus 2011). Yet our research shows that the state's dairy farms are expanding in size and increasingly hiring immigrants from Latin America, many lacking legal authorization to be in the United States, to do the low-level, arduous jobs of milking cows. Having hired these immigrant workers into nearly half of all dairy jobs over just the past 10 years, dairy farmers are thus playing an important role in rural Wisconsin's emergence as a new Latino immigrant destination (APL 2011).

In this article, we use this case as a timely opportunity to explain why employers organize workers in unequal ways. In so doing, we build upon scholarship that identifies how employers contribute to occupational segregation. Philip Moss and Chris Tilly (2001), Roger Waldinger and

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Michael I. Lichter (2003), and others using employer interviews and ethnographic observation have demonstrated that employers themselves engage in numerous practices that contribute to segregated workplaces, such as relying on racial and gender stereotypes in assessing workers, using those stereotypes to recruit workers thought to be most subservient, recruiting through specific worker networks, and telling stories about worker groups that naturalize unequal outcomes. These important contributions notwithstanding, the scholarship has provided few insights into *why* employers engage in those practices.

To provide a more complete explanation for why employers engage in practices that produce occupational segregation, we look not only at the stories employers tell about specific worker groups but also at the stories employers tell about themselves and the contexts within which they live. Through attending to Wisconsin dairy farmers' own biographies, identities, and aspirations, we glean a more thorough and nuanced explanation for why employers engage in practices that marginalize immigrant workers and naturalize that subordination. Namely, we find that employers organize workers in unequal ways not only because they succumb to stereotypes and greed but because the new and unequal organization of work and workers enables these employers to maintain profits within a changing industry context, meet their own middle-class aspirations, comply with their peers' middle-class lifestyle expectations, manage their own concerns about immigration policing, assert their own class identity, justify the privileges that they and their white, U.S.-born employees enjoy on the farm, and maintain the advantages they have gained.

Scholarship on Employers' Roles in Occupational Segregation

Considerable scholarship has documented occupational segregation by race and gender, showing persistent inequalities in terms of job placement, pay, promotion, authority, performance assessments, and treatment that further affect future job and career prospects. While neoclassical "supply side" perspectives attribute race- and gender-based inequalities to individual-level worker characteristics, sociologists using a wide range of methodological approaches and empirical contexts have demonstrated that workers' prospects in the job market are deeply shaped by race, gender, and other social structures independently of individual characteristics.

In this article, we build upon the body of occupational segregation scholarship concerned with employers' roles in such outcomes. Most such studies use in-depth interviews with employers and/or ethnographic observation in the workplace to identify the mechanisms through which employers organize work and workers in unequal ways. First, scholars have shown that employers attach meanings to race, nativity, and gender that make certain worker groups undesirable. Employers thus favor or discriminate against workers based on ascribed characteristics throughout the recruitment, interviewing, and position assignment processes; when evaluating the worth of skills; when allocating skills training opportunities; and when making promotions (Kanter 1977; Maldonado 2009; Matthews and Ruhs 2007; McDowell, Batnizky, and Dyer 2007; Moss and Tilly 2001; Neckerman and Kirschenman 1991; Reskin 1988; Steinberg 1990; Thomas 1985; Tomaskovic-Devey 1993; Waldinger and Lichter 2003; Zamudio and Lichter 2008).

Scholars have also shown that employers select for subordination. Employers seeking to fill low-end positions are principally concerned with maximizing worker compliance with the existing organization of work and otherwise maintaining control over the labor process. They use race, gender, and nativity as markers for such compliance and target groups deemed most likely to be compliant. The desired traits—willingness to take any job for any pay—are often coded as a "good attitude," "work ethic," and "soft skills" (Matthews and Ruhs 2007; Zamudio and Lichter 2008). Some scholars also emphasize that occupational segregation stems in part from the fact that employers have restructured work in ways that only the most subordinated workers would accept (Cranford 2005; Moss and Tilly 2001; Reskin 1998; Waldinger 1994).

Additionally, employers have been shown to reproduce segregation in the workplace by recruiting through existing workers' networks to staff low-end positions. Network recruitment facilitates restructuring, reduces hiring costs, gets workers to train and manage each other, reduces employee conflict, and enables employers to keep securing vulnerable workers (Cranford 2005; Granovetter 1995; Waldinger and Lichter 2003). Over time, those jobs become marked as "brown-collar jobs" or "women's jobs" and thus undesirable to other workers (Saucedo 2006; Tomaskovic-Devey 1993). In contrast to social capital scholarship that emphasizes the value of migrants' social networks for upward mobility, these studies instead find that "in some contexts immigrants may be piling up at the bottom rather than moving upwards" because of network recruitment (Cranford 2005:382).

Finally, these studies also demonstrate that employers use narrative devices to naturalize workplace inequalities. For example, many use racial or gender stereotypes to rationalize their statistical discrimination against certain worker groups or the clustering of particular groups of workers in low-end jobs (Holmes 2007; Kennelly 1999; Maldonado 2009; McDowell et al. 2007; Moss and Tilly 2001; Ruhs and Anderson 2007; Waldinger and Lichter 2003; Waldinger, Lim, and Cort 2007). At the same time, employers claim to be "colorblind" to deny their own culpability in racist practice and create an illusion of fairness (Maldonado 2009; Moss and Tilly 2001; Waldinger and Lichter 2003). Employers explaining the clustering of immigrant workers in low-end jobs also often invoke a "dual frame of reference" narrative—comparing immigrant workers' low-end wages and positions to wages they might have earned "back home" as a way of justifying occupational segregation by nativity (Maldonado 2009; Matthews and Ruhs 2007; Piore 1979; Waldinger and Lichter 2003).

While scholars have illuminated *how* employers contribute to unequal outcomes in the workplace, relatively little attention has been paid to unpacking *why* employers engage in those practices. Certainly, studies invariably imply that employers are focused on maximizing profits and succumb to broader racial and gender stereotypes in assessing and managing workers. Yet sociology has long demonstrated that profit maximization is an incomplete explanation for human behavior. Additionally, the work of "symbolic boundaries" scholars indicates that we might be missing much of the explanation by only looking at employers' perceptions of, narratives about, and actions toward specific groups of workers. In her study of working class men, Michele Lamont (2000) showed that members of social groups define and defend themselves *in opposition to other groups*—"in an 'us' versus 'them' relational logic" (p. 57) of symbolic boundary making that reinforces material inequalities. This approach draws our attention not simply to the claims one group makes about another and the associated material consequences, but to the fact that such claims have a relational quality. Moreover, Lamont explains *why* people draw gendered, racial boundaries—not only to explain another group's position but also to justify their own position, define themselves, and assert their own identity. Such findings suggest that, to fully understand why employers engage in practices and narratives that help to produce and naturalize occupational segregation, we need to pay attention not only to employers' claims about specific worker groups but also their claims about themselves and to the broader contexts within which they build and defend their own identities and status.

In this article, we contribute to scholarship on occupational segregation by asking why employers engage in practices that contribute to workplace inequalities. We do so through a case study of hired labor relations on Wisconsin dairy farms, which have become segregated along lines of nativity and race in recent years. We ask the following questions: How have these workplaces become segregated by nativity and race? What roles have employers played in this process? Why, in particular, have employers engaged in those practices that contribute to workplace inequalities? In addition to identifying how employers perceive and react to broader structures such as industry restructuring and nativist immigration politics, we also look at employers' lives, the stories they tell about workers, and the stories they tell about themselves. As we will demonstrate, employers engage in practices that leave immigrant workers clustered in the low-end jobs for a complex array of

reasons: to maintain profits within a changing industry context, meet their own middle-class aspirations, comply with their peers' middle-class lifestyle expectations, manage their own concerns about immigration policing, assert their own class identity, justify the privileges that they and their U.S.-born employees enjoy on the farm, and maintain the privileges they have gained.

In the next section, we describe the patterns of occupational segregation on Wisconsin dairy farms. Then, we describe the research methods we used to analyze how and why those patterns of segregation emerged. Subsequently, we describe the process through which dairy farm workplaces have become segregated by race and nativity. This process includes four parts: employers create new, low-end jobs as part of industrializing their operations; hire immigrant workers into the new jobs; draw symbolic boundaries to explain the resultant inequalities; and use several measures to maintain the new, unequal organization of workers. Throughout our discussion, we draw on employers' own stories about their lives and secondary data about the broader political economic contexts to explain why they engage in practices that produce workplace inequalities.

Evidence of Occupational Segregation on Wisconsin Dairy Farms

Our 2008 survey of Wisconsin dairy farms found that most immigrant workers were located in entry-level dairy jobs—the “milker” category in Figure 1. We should note that on large farms this category includes “milkers” and “pushers,” who work together, often as a team, to bring cows to the parlor, get them milked, and clean the manure from the parlor. For the sake of brevity, we have combined the three jobs, calling them “milkers.” Most of those immigrant workers (89 percent) were from Mexico, and 8 percent were from elsewhere in Latin America. Milking jobs

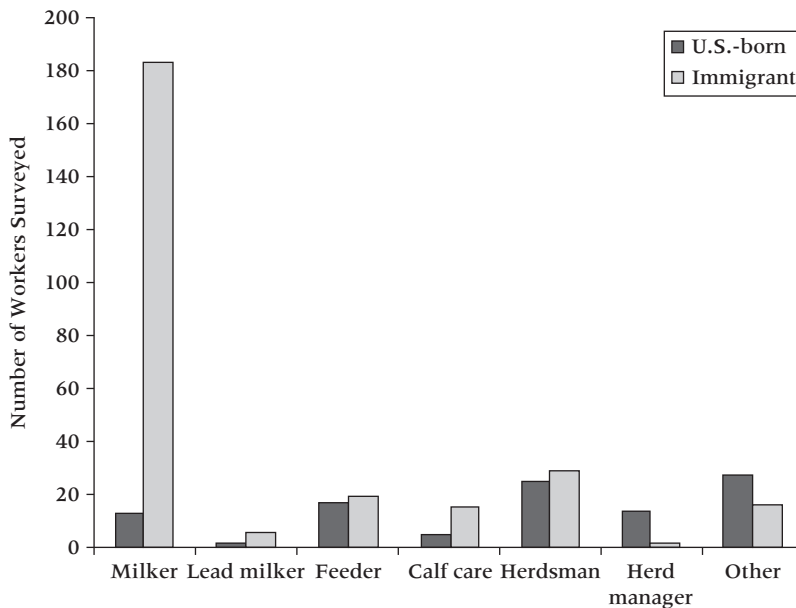


Figure 1 • Distribution of Surveyed Hired Dairy Workers, by Farm Task and Worker Origin

Note: This figure includes full-time and part-time hired employees; co-owners are not included.

are largely deskilled, require working on the weekends, often require working night shifts, and receive the lowest wages on the farm (\$9 per hour on average, with few nonwage benefits). Like most dairy jobs, these are year-round positions.

Dairy farm owners (not represented in Figure 1) do much of the nonmilking work themselves: negotiating with milk processors and input suppliers; monitoring feed rations, breeding, and calf care for the herd; and managing cropland, feed purchases, and employees. Most dairy farms have one to four owners who are typically immediate kin. When farmers do need to hire employees to help conduct the nonmilking tasks, they often hire U.S.-born workers for those positions. Most U.S.-born dairy workers are located in nonmilking positions (as shown in Figure 1). All U.S.-born dairy workers in our survey were identified as white, and they have worked for their current employer for seven years on average. The nonmilking positions involve a greater variety of tasks, higher pay (\$11 per hour on average), more decision-making authority, and more autonomy than the milking positions, as well as shifts that coincide closely with those of the traditional workweek. Wisconsin's dairy farms thus demonstrate clear patterns of occupation segregation by both nativity and race. The immigrant workers clustered in the low-end jobs are differentiated not only by their nonnative status but also because they are racially marked as "Mexican" or "Hispanic" by their employers and other residents of rural Wisconsin, while the U.S.-born workers clustered in the more desired positions are exclusively white.

On average, the immigrant workers we surveyed have lived in the United States for 7.5 years and have worked for their current employer for 2.5 years. Some of the immigrant workers first came to Wisconsin for jobs in other rural Wisconsin industries. Some worked in seasonal cannery jobs, where Mexicans and Mexican Americans have worked since the 1930s (Valdes 1991). Others worked in year-round meatpacking jobs, where Mexican immigrants have worked since meatpackers relocated out urban areas across the United States to undermine the power of unionized workers starting in the 1980s (Kandel and Parrado 2005). Other immigrant dairy workers previously worked in agriculture, construction, manufacturing, and janitorial jobs elsewhere in the United States (mostly in California, Illinois, and Texas). Half had not worked in the United States prior to their current dairy job. As we will elaborate later, most immigrant dairy workers found their current jobs through kin and peer networks.

Data suggest that the majority of Wisconsin's immigrant dairy workers lack legal authorization to be in the United States. We refrained from asking any of our research participants about individual workers' legal status because we detected high levels of anxiety about immigration enforcement in the area at the time of our data collection and did not have time to establish significant rapport with the participants before meeting with them. However, other data provide insights into the legal status of these workers. Eight of the 12 immigrant workers with whom we conducted in-depth, confidential interviews voluntarily divulged their lack of legal status to us. All of the 20 farmers we interviewed expressed concerns about legal status issues, and most voluntarily divulged having employed unauthorized workers. The farmers in a series of exploratory focus groups we conducted in 2007 as the first stage in this project consistently directed conversation to legal status issues. The hired labor sessions at all major Wisconsin dairy industry meetings in the past several years have been dedicated to legal issues associated with hiring unauthorized workers. Additionally, other researchers find that approximately half of immigrant agricultural workers in the United States are unauthorized (e.g., U.S. Department of Labor 2005). We explain later in this article that employers manage their concerns about legal status issues by limiting immigrant workers' opportunities for promotion.

The majority of the hired workers on dairy farms were male (83 percent of the U.S.-born workers; 92 percent of immigrant workers). Our survey data suggest that gender and nativity intersect in the organization of hired dairy workers, as immigrant women were particularly clustered in milking positions. Only 1 of the 22 immigrant women in our survey held a nonmilking job, whereas 14 of the 18 U.S.-born women in our survey held nonmilking jobs. This finding merits further investigation; we will not parse it out here, as it did not emerge in our employer interviews.

Research Data and Methods

To understand employers' roles in the emergence of occupational segregation by nativity and race in dairy farm workplaces, we focus on 20 semistructured interviews we conducted with dairy farm owners and managers in 2010 and 2011. Employer interviews are a useful method for understanding why occupational segregation happens, as they help to illuminate how employers perceive the structural constraints within which they operate, how they organize work and workers to manage those constraining structures, why they find certain groups of workers useful for certain tasks, and how they justify inequalities among groups of workers.

Employer Interview Procedures

We recruited farmer interview participants from the participants of a survey we conducted in 2008 (see "supplementary data" below). We purposively sampled for variation in two factors that seemed likely to influence employers' labor management practices: farm size (our sample included seven from "small" farms with fewer than 300 cows; five from "medium" farms with 301 to 900 cows; and eight from "large" farms with more than 900 cows), and employee demographics (our sample included 3 with only U.S.-born employees; 5 with a mix of immigrant and U.S.-born employees; and 12 with only immigrant employees). Consistent with the broader population of dairy farmers, most (16) of the 20 interview participants were male; all were identified as white; and most (19) were farm owners. All were from separate farms (i.e., none were co-owners).

Through open-ended questions, we asked our interview participants to describe and explain the organization of work and workers on their farms, describe their perceptions of and concerns about different groups of workers, and speculate about why dairy farms are largely segregated by nativity and race. The interviewer followed local parlance and referred to foreign-born workers as "immigrants" (while employers also used the terms "Mexicans," "Hispanics," and "Latinos") and U.S.-born workers as "locals" (while employers also used the terms "whites," "Caucasians," and "Americans"). The semistructured nature of the interviews allowed us to pursue certain themes of interest while also allowing the participants to narrate and interpret their experiences. This loosely structured approach also enabled us to develop the rapport necessary to discuss issues as sensitive as immigration enforcement and race. The interviews were conducted by one of the authors, a white woman familiar with dairy farming. Each interview took place at the participant's home or farm office, lasted one to two hours, and was recorded with the participant's consent. The interviewer recorded her observations and transcribed all of the interviews.

Employer Interview Analysis

Both authors read and coded several transcripts. Most of our coding themes emerged from the literature and original survey data that had prompted our interview questions (e.g., material motivations for expanding production and reorganizing work; mechanisms of reorganizing work and workers; perceptions of immigration enforcement; perspectives of different worker groups). Several themes emerged unexpectedly in the interviews (e.g., the rewards of the new industrial organization of work to employers, and the rewards of segregated workplaces to employers). Accordingly, drawing on the principles of grounded theory (Bryant and Charmaz 2007), we also coded for these emergent themes. We also identified the cases that did not seem to fit our emerging theories (namely, immigrant workers in nonmilking jobs) and used analytic induction to explain those deviant cases. Both authors then compared the coding schemes and discussed discrepancies, and subsequently developed one coding scheme. Then, one author coded the remaining transcripts. Later, after reviewers rightly noted that race, class, and gender norms appeared to intersect in motivating and shaping employers' labor management practices, we recoded the interviews accordingly and used an intersectional framework to help structure our discussion (Collins 1990).

Supplementary Data

Our descriptive data of dairy farm jobs come from a dairy farm survey we conducted in 2008. The farms surveyed were selected from a random sample of Wisconsin dairy farms thought large enough to have any employees (over 100 cows), and efforts were made to represent a variety of farm sizes and geographic regions. The survey participants included 83 farmers and all available employees (103 U.S.-born workers and 270 immigrant workers). The survey was administered on the farm by a bilingual, Latino researcher while the participants worked and took five to ten minutes to complete. The survey generated basic data about dairy farm labor force demographics, wages and other benefits, the organization of work, worker aspirations, and basic migration histories of immigrant workers.

To demonstrate how immigration enforcement shapes immigrant workers' experiences of illegality, we include here relevant key findings from 12 loosely structured interviews we conducted in 2008 with a subset of the immigrant dairy workers who had participated in our survey. All 12 were recruited at the time of the survey by the survey administrator. These interview participants included five women and seven men, and they represented a range of positions held on dairy farms (six milkers, two managers, and four feeders or other positions situated between milker and manager in the dairy farm workplace hierarchy). Two bilingual, white, female interviewers conducted these interviews with the workers in Spanish at a private setting of their choice, usually their homes. Each interview lasted one to two hours, and most consented to audio recordings. The interviewers recorded their observations and transcribed and translated all of the interviews.

Finally, to test the prevalence of the major employer narratives that emerged in our interviews among a broader population of farmers, we re-analyzed our notes from a series of five exploratory focus groups we conducted in 2007 with over 50 dairy and other farmers in Wisconsin. As the first stage in this research project, these loosely structured, unrecorded conversations were primarily designed to solicit farmers' major concerns about hired labor and recruit participants for subsequent interviews. Because we had not yet completed the survey at that point and thus were not aware of segregation by nativity and race on dairy farms, we did not ask about that pattern. However, re-analyzing the focus group notes enabled us to identify several themes that dominated focus group discussion, which turned out to be consistent with the themes that emerged in the farmer interviews. We also verified that none of the focus group notes refuted any of the patterns that emerged in the employer interviews. Note that the farmers we interviewed had not participated in the focus groups, so we could not ask them to comment on the focus group conversations.

Notes on Terminology

First, we refer to nonimmigrant workers as "U.S.-born" in this article but note throughout where respondents use different terminology. Second, we prefer to use the term "migrant" to describe foreign-born people living in the United States, because the term does not presume that the individual intends to reside in the United States permanently. However, because the workers we describe typically live and work at one place on a full-time, year-round basis, we use the term "immigrant" in this article to avoid the ways that "migrant farm worker" conjures up an image of a roving person who moves with the harvests. Throughout, we note where respondents use different terminology where appropriate. Third, we use the term "unauthorized" rather than "undocumented" to describe immigrants without legal status, as they commonly work and live with forged or stolen identification documents in order to appear "legal" and thus conduct basic activities such as acquiring a job, paying taxes, opening a bank account, and renting housing. Many immigrant workers believe that the paper trail of pay stubs and tax contributions may some day facilitate their bid for legal status. We avoid the common term "illegal," as it does not point to the specific legal infraction committed but instead portrays the immigrant as generally criminal in nature.

Occupational Segregation on Wisconsin Dairy Farms: How and Why Employers Contribute to Workplace Inequalities

We now explain how and why Wisconsin dairy farm workplaces have become segregated by nativity and race. We organize our narrative according to the process through which occupational segregation has emerged in this case and, throughout, we highlight why employers engage in practices that produce workplace inequalities. First, we describe how farmers industrialize their operations and create new, low-end jobs as part of that process. We explain that they do so to maintain profits and meet their own middle-class aspirations. Second, we describe how employers have hired a new group of workers to fill the new jobs and created new inequalities on the farm. We explain that these new inequalities enable farmers to comply with their peers' middle-class lifestyle expectations and manage their own concerns about immigration policing. Third, we show how farmers make sense of these inequalities through drawing symbolic boundaries between themselves and their different groups of workers. We explain that such narratives enable employers to assert their own class identity and justify the privileges that they and their U.S.-born employees enjoy on the farm. Finally, we describe the practices through which farmers maintain the new organization of work and workers, and we explain that they do so to secure the privileges they have acquired.

Industrializing the Farm and Creating New, Low-End Jobs for Hired Workers

Although Wisconsin dairy farms are still, on average, much smaller in scale than dairy farms in the western United States, the sector is industrializing in ways similar to other agricultural and non-agricultural industries and with the same goal of maximizing production (Barham, Foltz, and Aldana 2005; USDA 2011). In dairying, industrialization occurs on a wide spectrum of farm sizes and includes expanding the farm's herd size and upgrading the barns, milking parlors, tractors, and other equipment with the latest technologies. Industrial operations usually confine the cows indoors and feed them scientifically formulated feed rations tailored to each animal's life stage, rather than managing them on pasture. Some operations further boost production through using synthetic bovine growth hormone (Barham et al. 2005). Industrializing a dairy farm also usually includes intensifying production: shifting from milking cows twice per day in tie-stall stanchion barns to a system of milking the cows three times per day in machine-assisted milking parlors, which enable cows to be milked more expediently and reduce ergonomic strain for the worker. In many cases, expansion is the result of two existing farms joining together to increase efficiencies or to meet social obligations (e.g., so that children or other relatives can join and be supported by the business).

Dairy farmers manage farm expansion by hiring employees. As of 2006, at least 23 percent of all Wisconsin dairy farms hire some nonfamily labor, a percentage that increases quickly as herd size grows (Lloyd et al. 2006). The number of employees varies with farm size and family involvement. The highest number of employees recorded in our survey was 62; however, most dairy farms that hire any workers are still quite small and have only one or a few employees.

As dairy farmers expand their operations, they assign the vast majority of employees to one task: milking cows. Milkers work 8- to 12-hour shifts in a milking parlor that typically runs nearly 24 hours a day. In some cases, milkers work "split shifts," where they milk for approximately five hours in the morning and again in the evening. The milkers we interviewed have been at their current place of employment for several years on average and expressed appreciation for the fact that their jobs are full time and year-round, whereas most other entry-level agricultural jobs are seasonal. However, they also lamented that milking tends to be monotonous, dirty, and physically arduous, often requires working shifts that limit time with family and friends, and entails significant risks of ergonomic strain and injury from large animals. Indeed, many farmers we interviewed readily noted that they themselves despise milking cows:

It gets kind of old to work holidays and every weekend . . . We milked like 80 cows, or 70 cows. You did every holiday and every weekend. You got bigger so you wouldn't have to do it—so you could have employees help do it.

Expanding production and hiring employees enabled these employers to focus on the tasks they find more personally fulfilling and to create time for other activities.

Maintaining Profits in a Changing Industry. To some extent, dairy farmers industrialize their operations and reorganize work in this way to maintain profits in a context of industry restructuring that squeezes farmers' profit margins. Rising land values, volatile feed prices, and consolidation among farm input manufacturers have increased production costs. At the same time, inadequate federal price supports (often set below the cost of production) and consolidation among milk processors and food retailers have lowered the prices dairy farmers receive for their milk and leave all but the largest farmers unable to dictate any of the terms of trade with milk buyers (USDA 2004). This combination of factors is faced by farmers in a wide variety of commodity sectors and shrinks farm profits, pressing farmers to leave the industry or find new sources of value (Heffernan 1998). The dominant advice given to farmers by university researchers and extension agents, dairy industry organizations, bankers, and policymakers is that the only sure way for farmers to survive this difficult "cost-price squeeze" is to expand production, industrialize operations, fund those changes with loans, and hire workers to do the routine work of milking cows (Buttel 1993; Fitzgerald 2003; Lobao and Meyer 2001). In some other sectors (notably, hogs and poultry), processors have used their market power to compel farmers to engage in contract relationships in which the processor determines prices, inputs, and production schedules, and even supplies worker crews to the farm (Heffernan 1998). While dairy farms do not engage in such contract relationships, they are price takers as much as farmers in other industries are. In this difficult economic context, dairy farmers expand and industrialize production to maintain profits.

Meeting Middle-Class Aspirations and Dominant Masculine Norms. Our interviews indicate that farmers are motivated to transition to industrialized dairying and create new milking jobs not only by shifts in their own individual work task preferences and shrinking profit margins. Rather, industrialization and the creation of deskilled jobs for hired workers together serves as a mechanism through which these farmers can meet their own middle-class aspirations and comply with the dominant masculine norms in rural Wisconsin. As the following statements from two farmer interviews illustrate, hiring workers to do the milking helps these employers take vacations, allow their children to participate in sports activities in the evenings and on weekends, and attend those events.

When our four oldest children were all in high school, 1996, we did our farm expansion from 50 to 150 milk cows. Our children all helped on the farm every morning before school and every evening after school. My wife and I realized that we would need to hire some additional labor if we wanted to allow our children to be involved in some extra curricular activities.

When our kids were older, we wanted it where we could both attend our kids' events and actually see them . . . Contrary to what some of the locals think—that it is all about money—it is really about lifestyle.

As these narratives illustrate, hiring workers to do the milking helps these employers meet their own middle-class lifestyle aspirations and to be better parents to their children.

The following narrative suggests that farmers' aspirations are framed not only in terms of lifestyle but also in terms of class identity.

There was a point in my life where I was working hand-in-hand with my son and I said, "I'm a post-graduate degree person and you are going to go to college and be degreed, and here we are pushing and scraping manure around." I said, "I think there is a potential for us to do better than that." And that potential involved building a dairy and being more in management . . . I have a couple of engineering degrees and my son has an engineering degree and his wife is a graduate from Madison and my father graduated from Madison . . . We've always had a strong emphasis in my generation and prior generations back to my grandmother who was a college graduate at the turn of the last century.

That is, farmers can be motivated to expand their operations and hire workers to “push and scrape manure around” to comply with the scripts of a deeply rooted class identity that calls for managing others to do the mundane work.

Other farmers’ statements reveal the gendered nature of these middle-class norms that valorize industrialization. For example, an owner of a large dairy farm described how, approximately ten years prior, he went to work on a very large dairy in another state for a summer, “just to see how the big boys did it, you know. And I was like, yes, I think I want to do this.” This narrative reveals how expanding his operation enabled him to conform to dominant norms that define masculinity in terms of farm size and industrialization (see also Bell 2004).

Expanding production and creating milking jobs together constitute a way for farmers to respond to changing industry constraints, pursue their middle-class ambitions and identity, and comply with dominant masculine norms of rural Wisconsin. As will become clear in a later section, these farmers’ identities are not just gendered and classed but implicitly raced as well, as farmers come to hire immigrant workers for these new jobs and view their nonwhite employees’ aspirations and norms as very different from their own and those of their white employees.

Hiring New Workers and Creating New Inequalities

To fill these new milking jobs they have created, dairy farmers have had to find and retain workers who would accept those shifts and tasks. New workplace inequalities have emerged in the process of doing so, as new workers from abroad fill the milking positions while U.S.-born workers are clustered in the nonmilking positions.

The farmers we interviewed and those in our focus groups elaborated about the challenges in finding and retaining “U.S.-born” (or “white,” “Caucasian,” or “local”) workers to fill the milking positions on their farms. The following statement from one farmer represents a typical narrative: that U.S.-born workers would insist upon only doing nonmilking tasks, refuse the shifts that were available, and quit coming to work after a week or two.

When I moved home in ‘91, we started having more full-time employees, and that was the hell period . . . The white people [would last] six weeks, tops. People not showing up, not coming to work . . . I was finding myself milking two or three times a day, and constantly. I was getting done at midnight and then getting up at four and trying to do field work.

In about 2000, Wisconsin dairy farmers started hiring immigrant workers for these milking positions. They reported that these immigrant workers have come to them—that carloads of immigrant workers comb the Wisconsin countryside looking for work, happy to take the milking jobs; accept the late-night, weekend, and swing shifts offered to them; stay in those positions for years; and are eager to work as many hours as possible. None claimed to have actively sought out immigrant workers, as employers in other industries have done (see Maldonado 2009:1018).

Dairy farmers all emphasized that immigrant workers expressed two key characteristics that solved the problems they experienced with U.S.-born workers: immigrant workers were committed to working long hours and compliant with the tasks and shifts offered to them. As one farmer explained:

They don’t want to displease you . . . They are real defensive about losing their job. They want hours . . . They don’t complain about the job or anything like that . . . And they will do it the way you tell them to . . . They will work as many hours as they can . . . They’ll even hold down two jobs or something, just to get as much as they can.

In a public presentation in May 2007, one dairy farmer noted that his first immigrant employee worked 54 days in a row and summed up the experience by declaring, “It was too good to be true . . . I thought I’d died and gone to heaven.” Another dairy farmer was quoted in a Wisconsin newspaper article as saying, “Hiring Hispanics was the best decision I ever made. I don’t worry

about them not showing up. I had to send one home once because he was trying to milk while throwing up" (Pabst 2009).

The new immigrant workers have not fully replaced U.S.-born workers. Rather, a new inequality has emerged in Wisconsin's dairy industry: the new immigrant workers are clustered in the milking jobs, while U.S.-born workers are clustered in the more desired, nonmilking jobs. Dairy farmers insisted that their workplaces are meritocratic (as others have found; see Maldonado 2009). As one farmer asserted, "We just want equal opportunity, give everyone the same chance no matter what." Claiming that everyone has an opportunity to earn promotions means that those in nonmilking positions (including the employers) have earned their privilege fairly. Yet, because of how dairy farmers have reconfigured their operations, what they really need and value are workers who will comply with milking positions for years on end—not employees who expect to be able to work their way up. Such claims also obscure the fact that race and nativity confer privileges to whites and systematically disadvantage immigrant workers as dairy farmers decide how to organize work and workers, as we explain below.

Managing White Peers' Middle-Class Expectations. The clustering of U.S.-born workers in the more desired positions on dairy farms stems in part from the fact that employers must manage those workers' own demands for schedules that coincide with a middle-class lifestyle. At times, employers fire workers who refuse the shifts and positions offered to them. Yet strong social ties in these rural communities compel employers to accommodate requests from kin and peers for the desired shifts and tasks.

Several stories from our focus groups illustrate this pressure. For example, one farmer noted that, after hiring a local high school student to help with the milking, the boy's parents called and told him: "We've got a good basketball team here. You can't make him work this weekend." Another focus group participant noted that U.S.-born workers' demands for normal workweek schedules conflicted with his own efforts to help his children pursue middle-class goals: "Three years ago I had three white people [working for me]. But they wanted our kids to come home from college on the weekends so they could have weekends off. We want our kids to be at college, not on the farm." Echoing a statement we heard from nearly all of our participants, one farmer noted in an interview that "white guys" "don't want to work weekends." Occupational segregation thus stems in part from the fact that employers manage their peers' middle-class expectations by channeling U.S.-born workers into the more desired shifts and tasks.

Managing the Threat of Immigration Policing. The clustering of immigrant workers in the low-end jobs is also driven by the ways in which immigrant workers and their employers manage the threat of immigration policing. As we will explain, immigrant workers navigate this threat by consenting to the jobs and shifts handed to them, and their employers capitalize on it by refraining from promoting their immigrant workers.

Susan Bibler Coutin (2000), Nicholas De Genova (2005), Martin Ruhs and Bridget Anderson (2007), and other "illegality" scholars emphasize that, to understand immigrants' experiences, we need to critically investigate what it means to be perceived and treated as "illegal" at any time and place. That is, one's experience of "illegality" and its consequences in the workplace are contingent on local politics, policing practices, and perceptions. Starting in the 1990s but gaining legitimacy and resources through the post-9/11 "war on terror," the United States has invested tremendous resources into hardening its border with Mexico and actively policing immigrants in the interior of the country through raids and apprehensions in workplaces, homes, and public spaces (Andreas 2001; Coleman 2007, 2009; Cornelius 2001; De Genova 2007; Golash-Boza 2012; Hernández 2008; Mendelson, Strom, and Wishnie 2009; Rosas 2006a, 2006b; Varsanyi 2008; Walker and Leitner 2011; Waslin 2009). Local law enforcement units, state governments, private militias, and nativist bureaucrats have joined the cause of surveilling and punishing immigrants. Much of this nativist politics has targeted those racially marked as Latino and presumed to be "illegal," such as the immigrant workers on Wisconsin dairy farms.

Although Wisconsin does not constitute a major focus of the federal and local immigration enforcement efforts, policing happens there in various sanctioned and informal ways. Federal police have raided workplaces and homes; many employers have received “no-match” letters from federal officials advising them that an employee did not report a valid social security number; immigrants we interviewed reported having been asked by neighbors and low-level bureaucrats if they are “legal”; and various municipalities have passed local anti-immigrant policies such as English-only laws (Walker and Leitner 2011). Indeed, in 2009, the Wisconsin Governor’s Council on Migrant Labor initiated an investigation into the unsanctioned immigration policing practices conducted by Department of Transportation staff.¹ The immigrants we interviewed are acutely aware of such activity and regularly share relevant rumors and updates with each other.

As we have elaborated elsewhere, the immigrant dairy workers we interviewed emphasized that they live with memories of harrowing and expensive border crossings, under the weight of responsibilities to support their families and pay off debts, and fearful of being apprehended and deported (Harrison and Lloyd 2012; see also Stephen 2004). Thus they work long hours in the milking jobs (average of 57 per week), do not complain about their shifts or tasks, minimize their use of public space, and refrain from travelling home or otherwise taking vacations. For example, two immigrant workers explained to us that they work very long hours and refrain from taking days off because they need to pay off their debts to smugglers, who have been increasing their interest rates over time, and because the fear of encountering law enforcement makes them feel that they have nothing “safe” to do besides work: “You feel the weight of the debt. I want to work more hours a day, two hours more. The more, the better. The debt you owe and the interest make you think.” These two workers and several others noted that they leave their house only to go to work and, twice per month, to buy groceries. Dairy workers also refrain from traveling home for the same reasons, which is consistent with the broader pattern in which unauthorized immigrants have responded to U.S.-Mexico border intensification by “settling out” year-round in the United States rather than returning home seasonally to visit (Massey, Durand, and Malone 2003; Reyes 2004). Immigrant workers’ sense of deportability and strategies for navigating the contours of the policing landscape thus coincide well with the ways employers have reorganized work in their expanded operations. Contemporary immigration enforcement channels immigrant workers into low-end jobs and disciplines them to stay there, much like others have found with education (Willis 1977) and contemporary welfare institutions (Peck 2001).

Employers, too, are concerned about the growing threat of immigration enforcement. Most of the farmers who participated in our interviews and focus groups stated that they knew or suspected that at least one of their current or past employees is not legally authorized. Some of our research participants have received “no-match” letters from the federal government advising them that an employee’s reported social security number is invalid. Additionally, nearly all requested our advice about how to verify a worker’s legal status, how carefully they should examine worker identification cards, or how to hire an immigration attorney. Fully aware that many unauthorized migrants carry forged or stolen identification, employers expressed a general sense of uncertainty about the legal status of immigrant workers.

Employers respond to their own fears of immigration enforcement in ways that contribute to occupational segregation by nativity and race, largely by limiting immigrant workers’ chances for promotion. For example, some farmers reported to us that they refrain from training and granting responsibilities to presumed or actually unauthorized immigrant workers, as they would lose that “investment” if the workers were arrested for immigration violations. Several employers admitted that they were unwilling to promote immigrant workers into positions that require the use of tractors and other heavy machinery, as those require paperwork that might trigger an immigration-related investigation. Others noted that restricting immigrant workers to milking positions keeps them in the barn—out of sight—and thus partially hides employers’ hiring practices from scrutiny

1. From Harrison’s personal observations at the meeting of the Governor’s Council on Migrant labor, January 28, 2009.

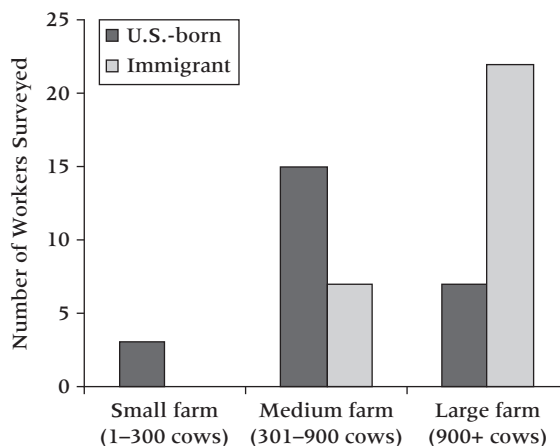


Figure 2 • Herdsmen Surveyed, by Immigrant Status and Farm Size

Note: This figure includes full-time and part-time hired employees; co-owners are not included.

by nativist neighbors and law enforcement (see also McCandless 2010). In other words, occupational segregation enables these employers to delicately balance the benefits of capitalizing on immigrants' presumed or actual tractability with the need to minimize the likelihood and consequences of drawing the attention of law enforcement.

We did encounter several immigrant workers who have been promoted into the more desired positions on dairy farms. To some extent, these exceptions further highlight the role of illegality in inhibiting immigrant workers' chances for promotion, as two of the three nonmilker immigrant workers we interviewed have legal status. The third is not legally authorized but had experience working on large farms and completed a year of veterinary school, and his employer might believe that he has legal status. Additionally, an immigrant worker's chances for promotion appear also to be at least partially a function of farm size (as evident in Figure 2). Larger farms have sufficiently numerous jobs that the farm owner(s) cannot fill all of the nonmilking positions through their own networks and have more complex structure of labor that allows for upward mobility. In contrast, small farms generally only hire milkers.

Drawing Symbolic Boundaries

As scholars have found in other contexts, dairy farmers have developed various ways to rationalize the fact that the valuable immigrant workers are overrepresented in entry-level jobs (Holmes 2007; Kennelly 1999; Maldonado 2009; McDowell et al. 2007; Moss and Tilly 2001; Ruhs and Anderson 2007; Waldinger and Lichter 2003; Waldinger et al. 2007). When asked to explain why dairy farms have become segregated by nativity and race in recent years, employers drew a complex set of symbolic boundaries (Lamont 2000) between themselves and white workers, and between whites and immigrants. Although employers' stories often focused on their workers, the claims convey their own raced, gendered, and classed identity and show how employers define themselves in relation to their different worker groups. As we will demonstrate in this section, such boundaries enable employers to not only explain workplace inequalities, but also to express their own class identity and to justify the privileged positions of whites on dairy farms.

Asserting Class Identity. In expressing their frustrations with U.S.-born workers for rejecting milking jobs and demanding better ones, employers differentiated themselves from U.S.-born workers who refused the milking positions by using moral claims that differentiate employers (as hard working) from U.S.-born workers (as lazy, having a poor work ethic, and feeling unreasonably entitled to the best shifts and tasks). In doing so, they expressed their own class identity. The following is just one example of the extensive comments of this sort that dominated the interviews and focus groups:

I think us Americans are all spoiled rotten little brats. I think the next generation, and I'm not sure why, but, they think everything should just be handed to them. And they shouldn't have to work. And they all think that they should start out three-quarters up the ladder, instead of starting on the bottom rung of the ladder and climbing.

By drawing boundaries between themselves and U.S.-born workers in this way, employers express their own class identity and assert that they have earned their middle-class status, whereas U.S.-born workers have not done so and are failing to comply with their class location.

Of course, disparaging U.S.-born workers for their "poor work ethic" dismisses those workers' motivations. As Margaret M. Zamudio and Michael I. Lichter (2008) suggest, U.S.-born workers' failure to show up for work and otherwise "lackluster performance" can be read as signs of resistance and agency—"an assertion of their right to work in a dignified manner"—rather than simply a character deficit, cultural problem, or indication of a disappearing "work ethic" (p. 587). At jobs in other sectors, workers can interact with their peers, stay cleaner, do varied tasks, work typical workweek hours, do work that is less physically demanding, have more opportunities to advance and take on responsibilities, receive overtime pay, earn nonwage benefits, have more flexibility with shifts, be covered by a union contract, and earn higher wages. Indeed, one farmer reflected upon the milking jobs on his farm by conceding, "I would not do that job."

Justifying White Privilege. Employers also drew racial boundaries between whites and immigrants along several lines to rationalize the clustering of immigrant workers in the milking positions. Doing so enabled employers to justify the privileged positions they and their U.S.-born employees enjoy on the farm.

Employers generously praised their immigrant workers for having a "good work ethic" and being "reliable" and "dependable" enough for milking jobs. Such praise dominated our employer interviews and focus groups and pivots around immigrant workers' purportedly cultural deference to authority and respect for working long hours:

How they interpret somebody, a boss, an owner, is extremely respectful, compared to what American workers interpret . . . They very much have a hierarchy interpretation of society and what those expectations are.

They are here to work. Their values are more similar to the farming community: . . . hard work, commitment, not scared of getting dirty.

Outside observers of the new labor relations on dairy farms also often hail immigrant dairy workers as "reliable." For example, in a 2009 *Wall Street Journal* article on the new role of immigrant workers on dairy farms nationwide, a university researcher was quoted as saying, "In the mid-'90s, I saw dairy managers who were afraid to expand their businesses because they couldn't find dependable help. Then, some dairies began to hire Latino immigrants, and found they were reliable and had a tremendous work ethic" (Jordan 2009). Framing immigrants as reliable rationalizes hiring them, and framing them as deferential rationalizes their overrepresentation in the low-end jobs.

Yet scholars have illustrated the need to critically evaluate the qualities that employers claim to find and value in various groups of workers. Waldinger and Lichter (2003) argue that "good attitude" is "the managerial euphemism for the proclivity to say 'yes' with no questions asked" (p. 225; see also Zamudio and Lichter 2008). Given that dairy farmers have the most difficult time getting U.S.-born workers to do the positions that immigrant workers have filled, immigrant

workers' "reliability" should be understood as a rhetorical placeholder for compliance. These narratives about "reliability" and "strong work ethic" fetishize unauthorized immigrants' structurally produced propensities to self-exploit and be compliant; obscure the ways that they shoulder the burden of current U.S. immigration policies, law enforcement practices, international trade policies, and farm restructuring; and depoliticize these consequences with claims of cultural difference.

This coding of compliance as "reliability" becomes clear when dairy farmers disparagingly characterize as "Americanized" those immigrants who reject or critique the terms and conditions handed to them (see also Maldonado 2009; Waldinger and Lichter 2003). One farmer explained this phenomenon among the "Mexicans" he has employed:

Once they become Americanized they aren't worth a tinker's darn. They started doing the same thing that the American workers did. And usually after a year they would not show up, calling in and saying, "Hey, I can't make it." Or they would just not show up . . . It is about every year. I've had three crews and they usually last about a year and then they get Americanized.

Employers also drew racial boundaries between whites and immigrants along lines of ambition to do complex management jobs. Doing so enabled employers to rationalize the contradictory fact that the "reliable" and "respectful" immigrants were clustered in the low-end jobs and justify the privileges they and their U.S.-born employees enjoyed. Employers characterized U.S.-born workers as assertive and proudly described themselves as role models to their children, leaders among their peers, and advisors to their immigrant employees. In contrast, employers characterized immigrants as unambitious followers and claimed that the pooling of immigrant workers in entry-level positions on dairy farms is due to immigrants' shared, cultural lack of interest in moving up. The following statements exemplify this classic stereotype of immigrant workers as "hard-working, but dumb" or "dependable, but unambitious" (Waldinger et al. 2007:6):

The Veracruz people, they are only milking. They don't have a lot of ambition to do other things.

What you find with the immigrant workers is they like a consistent job. They come in and they know what to do.

Few of them are motivated for an advancement.

I think with a lot of people that come from Mexico, they really aren't—their cultural background is not to seek promotion. Their cultural background is to stay in the soup.

They don't want to tell other Hispanics what to do. That's what I've seen.

Others asserted that, unlike farmers and U.S.-born workers, immigrants are naturally proud of doing mundane, routine work. For example, one employer asserted that immigrant workers' perspective on milking is, "We can handle this. We can do this. This is our forte . . . That is just where their comfort zone is." Drawing boundaries between whites and immigrants along lines of ambition enables employers to justify their own privileged hours and tasks, naturalize the clustering of immigrants in the low-end positions, and explain why U.S.-born workers do not have to compete with immigrants for the better positions.

Some employers drew gendered boundaries between whites and immigrants along lines of preferences and interests in ways that imply that the two groups have distinct sets of masculine norms. For example, one employer we interviewed explained that U.S.-born workers dominated the higher-level positions on dairy farms (in this case, that of "feeder") because "Caucasian" or "American" men naturally *enjoy* working with trucks and other large equipment: "The feeder situation, I'd have to say, that has something to do with, we all like to drive trucks and tractors. It is never going to leave us. It is just the way it is." Another farmer asserted that, unlike U.S.-born men, "Mexican" men are naturally happy to milk cows and stay in entry-level positions:

I've never had anybody that seemed to want to work and just milk cows and be satisfied with that, like the Mexicans do . . . They are just not as interested in being the top dog. They are happy to have a job, and milking cows is fairly easy . . . They don't have ambition to drive tractors like American guys, who want to be in the tractor all the time.

Such claims rationalize occupational segregation as an unproblematic consequence of racially differentiated masculine norms, where Mexican men purportedly enjoy different tasks than U.S.-born men. It is worth noting here that immigrants tell a different story. Nearly all of the immigrant workers we surveyed reported to us that they want to advance and learn new skills, especially in animal health care and machinery operation. Those we interviewed emphasized how monotonous the milking jobs were. As one stated, "Here is very monotonous. It is always the same, the same, the same, the same, the same . . ." Yet by drawing these boundaries in a context in which immigrant workers are afraid to complain, these employers naturalize the clustering of immigrants and justify the privileges that they and their U.S.-born workers enjoy in the workplace.

At other times, farmers justified U.S.-born workers' abilities to insist on better farm jobs by suggesting that whites and immigrants have different class norms in terms of different markers of success. For example, one farmer explained early in the interview why U.S.-born workers reject milking positions: "I'll be blunt. Milking is not a prestigious position." Later in the interview, this farmer explained that immigrant workers desire the milking jobs on his farm because "This is a prestigious position for them, I think."

Some employers attributed these racially differentiated definitions of prestige to poverty in immigrants' home communities. To legitimize the jobs to which immigrant workers are limited, a few farmers implied that coming from poor, Mexican households provides immigrant workers with a different set of class expectations than those of farmers or U.S.-born workers. For example, in the following statements, farmers identify immigrants' "dual frame of reference" (Matthews and Ruhs 2007; Piore 1979; Waldinger and Lichter 2003) as producing their "reliability":

They are just happy to have a job period. Because where they come from they have seen a lot of people that don't have a job and don't have money and don't have anything . . . There just aren't any jobs. They are just real lucky to get a job and have a little money and be able to function in the economy. They are just tickled.

What really makes them really reliable: all the ones I have are pretty much fresh out of Mexico . . . Those people grew up with nothing, and they appreciate what they get . . . They've got something. Where they come from they had nothing. They appreciate a job.

Asserting that immigrants and whites have different class norms, regardless of the reason, effectively justifies the privileged positions of employers and their U.S.-born employees.

Finally, some employers made racialized claims of different biological attributes between white and immigrant workers. Some arguments focused on physical characteristics. For example, one farmer hypothesized that few "Americans," "Caucasians," or "U.S.-born workers" are milkers because they "aren't able to move quite as fast as an immigrant worker" or don't have "the strength of being able to milk for 8 to 12 hours at a time." Another explained that immigrant workers are clustered in the milking positions because "it is a comfort zone for them. It is a job they can handle for their physical size." Others even made claims of groups' different intellectual capacities. For example, one farmer explained that "Mexicans" are not found in the advanced positions that require operating tractors because "they just conceptually don't get some of the same things" as "American" workers. Such boundary making enables employers to justify the privileged position of U.S.-born workers in the workplace relative to their immigrant counterparts and obscures employers' motivations for organizing their workers in unequal ways.

In sum, the employers we interviewed rationalized and thus reinforced workplace inequalities through drawing a complex set of boundaries between themselves, their U.S.-born workers, and their immigrant workers. In so doing, they asserted their own class identity and justified their own privilege and the relatively privileged positions of their U.S.-born employees. That is, occupational segregation and boundary making both help employers define who they are and who they want to be: ambitious, innovative leaders devoted to their kin and peers. Moreover, because their narratives focused on immigrants, whiteness and the privileges it entails remain largely obscured and unaccounted for.

Maintaining Unequal Workplaces and Securing Privilege

Employers engage in several practices that reproduce segregation on the farm: selecting for subordination, recruiting new milkers through existing immigrant workers' networks, and keeping the milking jobs as simplified as possible. As we explain below, doing so enables these employers to secure the privileges they have gained through the new, unequal organization of work and workers.

In interviews, employers describe how they actively select for subordinated workers who will comply with the terms handed to them. Dairy farmers reported that they seek workers who express subordination in several ways: working as many hours as possible, accepting any available shifts, not asking for days off, and willingly doing the same task, over and over, without complaint. As the following narrative illustrates, farmers actively search for and retain those employees who will stay in an entry-level position without complaint and lack the resources needed to demand otherwise:

You have to find the right type of person . . . Mellow. More of a follower, not a leader . . . [Before we hire them,] we try to have an interview with them with our interpreter and we kind of ask them some questions, to give you some feedback. And if they start giving you feedback where they are telling you how good they are going to be and what they could do for the farm . . . sometimes we just don't hire that individual because we know that all of a sudden a month from now, two months from now, they are going to start to get a little antsy in their job. Because it is the same thing. Because they want to do more. They want to get out of the parlor. They want to do different things, and we are going to have issues. So we look for the type of person that is more mellow . . . You have to look for the right type of person that is going to stick with the job . . . You have to be like robot milkers . . . The ones that don't speak any English are easier to work with, because they can't talk back . . . They just come and do the job.

Doing so enables these employers to fill the essential milking positions that they, their kin, and their U.S.-born peers reject. Although several employers expressly noted that they appreciate workers who take the initiative to learn new skills and take on responsibilities, the primary labor challenge that all dairy farmers face is keeping the low-level milking positions filled. Thus, their primary labor management tasks are to select for the types of workers who they believe will stay in such positions without complaint, and to fire those who express too much ambition, autonomy, or frustration. Dairy farmers' practices thus illustrate what others have identified as the "inclusionary aspect of discrimination" (Saucedo 2006:976). Employers actively select for perceived or actually subordinated groups of workers to fill particularly onerous jobs in order to "maximize vulnerability and minimize resistance" (Zamudio and Lichter 2008:578). It is worth noting that some of the qualities that employers appreciate in their immigrant workers (such as not speaking English) also make those workers "unwelcomed guests" in the local community, as evident in the rash of "English-only" ordinances across the United States (Walker and Leitner 2011).

To further maintain the new workforce, dairy farmers recruit new workers for the low-end positions almost exclusively through current immigrant workers' personal networks. Many of our interview participants explained that they no longer consider hiring "local people," "whites," or "Caucasians" for milking positions, because recruiting through immigrant social networks enables them to find more workers willing to take the jobs that others reject. Additionally, as the following statement from one farmer illustrates, recruiting through immigrant networks can reduce employers' own labor management responsibilities:

I don't even take job applications anymore . . . I haven't had a phone call for years. It's great. I just don't worry about it. I know there is going to be four people for every shift, seven days a week, and they are going to take care of stuff . . . If they want a day off, all they do is talk to one of the other ones and they figure it out.

Network recruitment thus helps these employers maintain certain advantages they have gained through the new organization of work and workers: more time for parenting, freedom from the mundane task of milking, and even freedom from managing the workers who do that task.

The fact that dairy farmers have largely deskilled these milking positions surely enables them to view their employees as “interchangeable” as this farmer seems to do.

Of course, immigrant workers can capitalize on network recruitment. These networks constitute an important way in which marginalized worker groups gain some control over the labor process: they fulfill their own obligations to kin and peers in selecting new co-workers, cover shifts in case of illness or other obligations, maintain wages, and otherwise create some flexibility and intra-group autonomy in the workplace (see also Vallas 2003:385-86). This is especially true on larger dairy farms, whose bigger workforces facilitate such practices; smaller farms often have only one or two milkers. Yet network recruitment via current employees’ networks for the lowest-level positions nonetheless tends to reproduce workplace inequality, as others have shown in other contexts (Cranford 2005; McDowell et al. 2007; Waldinger and Lichter 2003). As milking jobs are increasingly assigned to immigrants, they become marked as “brown-collar jobs” and thus undesirable to U.S.-born workers (Saucedo 2006; Tomaskovic-Devey 1993). Being hired into deskilled milking positions limits immigrant workers’ opportunities for skill development that could help them attain better jobs. Working long hours in late shifts for low pay further reduces immigrant workers’ abilities to attend English classes that might help them to attain better jobs, which is compounded by the fact that dairy farm jobs and workers’ homes are often far from urban areas where such classes are offered.

Finally, employers further simplify the low-end jobs in order to maintain the current division of labor. By creating deskilled jobs, recruiting through immigrant networks, and selecting for subordination, these employers often end up hiring workers with few English language skills. Although a few farmers offer English classes on the farm for their immigrant workers, most immigrant dairy workers and their employers face an almost complete language barrier. One farmer explained that he has adjusted to relying on workers who cannot speak English (those with “a language scenario”) for his milking jobs by keeping the jobs as simplified as possible: “You centralize and you can teach someone with a language scenario one task, and you can communicate on one task, and they didn’t have to do multiple tasks.” Continually simplifying the low-end work enables dairy farmers to manage communication problems and thus to maintain the profitability of hiring immigrant workers in the milking positions. Doing so also makes those jobs less attractive to workers with other options, thus further solidifying occupational segregation on the farm.

Conclusions

Our analysis extends existing theories of occupational segregation by demonstrating *why* employers engage in practices that contribute to occupational segregation. The first part of the process by which occupational segregation on dairy farms emerges is the fact that employers industrialize their operations and create new, low-end jobs; they do so to maintain profits and meet their own middle-class aspirations. To fill those new jobs, they hire marginalized, immigrant workers; these new inequalities enable farmers to comply with their peers’ middle-class lifestyle expectations and manage their own concerns about immigration policing. Dairy farmers make sense of these inequalities through drawing symbolic boundaries between themselves and their different groups of workers; such narratives enable employers to assert their own class identity and justify the privileges that they and their U.S.-born employees enjoy on the farm. Finally, farmers maintain the new organization of work and workers by selecting for subordination, recruiting new milkers through existing immigrant employees’ networks, and keeping the milking jobs as simplified as possible; employers do so to secure the privileges they have acquired. In other words, Wisconsin dairy farmers contribute to occupational segregation through the same practices that scholars have observed in other industries; what this case illuminates is *why* they do so. Namely, employers organize work and workers in unequal ways not only because they succumb to racist stereotypes and seek to maximize their own income, but because these practices enable them to defend who they are and define and become who they aspire to be.

The consequences are clear. These employers' status mobility is built upon the status immobility of the immigrant workers they hire, who shoulder the burden of employers' moves. Employers effectively offload the tasks they resent to workers who have little ability to contest the organization of work and the wages received. Employers secure more time with their own children, but workers with the late shifts and long hours have little time to be parents themselves, especially when living far from home (see Parreñas 2001).

Our research demonstrates that sociologists working to fully understand how and why workplaces become segregated must attend not only to the stories employers tell about different groups of workers, but also to the stories they tell about themselves and the contexts within which they struggle to survive and thrive. Doing so produces more complete explanations for why they engage in practices that produce occupational segregation. It also does the important work of bringing whiteness into the spotlight, showing how privilege is quietly constructed and naturalized, and demonstrating how oppression is not accidental or merely unfortunate but serves productive, albeit unequal, purposes. Illuminating employers' own lives and identity work thus brings occupational segregation research into line with the broader trend in sociology to analyzing the relational, coconstitutive nature of privilege and oppression.

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