

Socialization and Community in Workers' Unions of 21st Century Appalachia

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Introduction

As industrialization brought new jobs to major cities and coal mining to Appalachia in the late 17th century, laborers in the steel and coal industries worked sixteen or more hours a day in terrible conditions. These workers formed labor unions to ensure management provided fair wages, hours, and working conditions. From the mistreated coalminers' violent fight for a union in Appalachia during the 1921 Battle of Blair Mountain to the Wildcat strikes of the 1950s, solidarity in unions has been a significant focal point in the history of Appalachia. Because unions are such poignant and controversial organizations in Appalachian history, it is imperative to study the ideology and purpose of unions in a modern, specific Appalachian local to contribute to the numerous histories and perspectives regarding workers' unions in America.

Many anthropologists, journalists, and others with general interest in unions continue to study the presence and influence of labor unions in America and more specifically, Appalachia. From these authors, general themes regarding unions emerge, such as solidarity, collective action, and community coalitions. The main focus of these studies, however, is the perspective of union members and their families regarding solidarity and democracy within the union. As a result, there are limited management perspectives concerning unions in the anthropological literature. Thus, this ethnography, conducted within a factory in southern West Virginia with a United Steelworkers Union, intertwines both union and management perspectives to understand how each side views and contributes to relationships and solidarity across union lines.

Through interviews with union and management employees, observation of social interaction inside and outside the plant, and examination of local literature, I establish that the Appalachian identity is inseparable from the union identity. As a result, the "all for one, one for all" mindset of solidarity occurs not because of union affiliation, but because of the workers'

drive for the factory to flourish for the Appalachian community in which it exists. The self-identified blood of an Appalachian is found in “a common culture that has its roots in the religion/faith, family, adversity, humor, and work ethic that we have in common” (Benjamin, personal communication, January 29, 2018). The Appalachian community, therefore, is what intrinsically impacts how workers fight for their rights, interact with one another in the workplace, and apply solidarity to collective action in this specific workplace.

Theory

Labor unions were forged in the factories whose workers needed a voice. The union’s involvement, scope, and role has shifted with the economic and social changes within a community. For example, public employees created unions beginning in the early 1960s as the post-industrial era began. The foundation of public sector unions expanded the more traditional unions that still exist in the industrial sector even today. Even though the union scope is global, its impact is intimately intertwined with its local members.

History and Shortcomings

To fully understand an individual’s impact through involvement in a union, the goals and history of unions must be established. Traditionally, unions fought solely for fair wages and stable working conditions. The benefits of unions are outlined by Gamst (1987), who wrote of craft rail unions in West Germany and Great Britain in the 1980s. With the decline of industrialization, and thus the railroads, the long-standing railroad unions in these two countries were needed more than ever to stabilize the drastic changes implemented by the state that threatened workers’ rights. Here, the solidarity granted by unions was exhibited more in a difficult period compared to the flourishing economy of the railroads prior.

Similar to Europe, unions began in America in conjunction with industrialization in an effort to protect the rights of the workers (Cussen, 2016). In 1866, William Sylvis united farmers as well as skilled and unskilled laborers to form the first national organization of labor unions, National Labor Union (ushistory.org, 2018). With the downfall of this organization, the Knights of Labor created nation-wide union solidarity by allowing all wage earners, including women and African Americans, to join their ranks in 1869. The American Federation of Labor then served as the foremost national labor organization until the Great Depression.

Factories were built in major cities and coal mining was on the rise in Appalachia where laborers in these industries worked sixteen or more hours a day in deplorable conditions. The workers in the factories formed labor unions to ensure management provided fair wages, hours, and conditions to their employees. Unions first provided workers with the knowledge of their rights, which then gave them a platform on which to voice their concerns (Besky, 2008). Moreover, individual agency increased with the employees' knowledge of their rights.

From this agency sprouted the ability for the union to act as a democracy embedded within a company (Lazar, 2015); a union should grant workers an equal voice with management's in the company's decision-making process. This is a model for which unions strive, but Durrenberger and Erem examine the breakdown of this idealistic democracy in their ethnography of the election of International Brotherhood of Teamsters Local 705 in Chicago, fittingly entitled "Is This What Democracy Looks Like?" (Durrenberger, 2010). Democracy was seen in action in several facets of the union, from membership meetings to arguments in the class war, yet the members of this local felt like democracy failed them in the 2003 union presidential election because "a free and open election in a democratic union...replaced progressive leadership with a self-interested clique" (Durrenberger, 2010, pp. 34-35).

Furthermore, Duke *et al* (2010) explores more shortcomings of unions, specifically construction worker unions. Usually, the authors argue, being a union member ensures job security and enhances collective solidarity among its members. This is not the case for construction workers because lack of a steady job increases competition between members. There is a dualism in trade where the union attempts to fight poor working conditions, but in doing so, at least in the instance of construction jobs, it provides companies with cheaper labor. Additionally, since workers are forced to seek jobs by themselves without the help of the union, agency of individuals is increased while simultaneously decreasing self-image and solidarity within the union.

Although there were significant problems within a unionized workplace, unions began shifting with the economic power. The public sector became the focus of economic power in America; as a result, public sector unions were formed, such as teachers and health workers' union. A personal narrative of Suzan Erem (1997), a representative in a public health sector union, displays significant changes taking place within unions. The ideal model of the union was enacted in some ways throughout the country. Overall, unions in the early and mid-twentieth century had established themselves as influential organizations within the workplace, much like those of the craft rail unions in Western Europe, and gained many benefits for workers through negotiations with management of the companies. Erem (1997, p. 162) speaks to the solid foundation laid by early union members: "for decades, union leaders sat back and allowed a generation of members to enter the workforce without teaching them what had come before: the price that had been exacted for the benefits, wages, and protection they now enjoyed." Because of this foundation established by members in decades past, unions began turning their gaze solely from the shop floor to the communities in which they existed.

Community Impact, Collective Action, and the Common Good

Best defined by Kendra Coulter (2012, p. 101) “solidarity emphasizes workers’ connectedness and the need for collaboration and support, even when the specific sites, emphases, or actors vary. Solidarity is at once an idea, a feeling, a motivator, an aspiration, and a social force.” Collective action, as defined by Durrenberger (2010), is people working together to achieve a shared goal developed through solidarity. This exemplifies the importance of individuals contributing to the common good.

The backgrounds of individual members contribute to the collective action, which in turn influences the solidarity and contribution to the common good of the union. Each member of the collective whole has similar goals, yet a different background than every other member. Therefore, the individual’s perspective can contribute a unique solution to the problems that arise for the whole because each person has faced trials in a slightly different manner than others (Durrenberger, 2010). Specifically in the context of union solidarity, Coulter (2012, p. 109) says, “solidarity does not promote homogeneity, but rather understanding and support despite certain differences.” The heterogenous mixture of people allows for diverse ideas to shape the way collective action is exhibited, making each workplace exclusive in their mode of collective action.

With more diversity in the union, more perspectives influence and shape the organization and contribute to collective solidarity, both within the union and the community as a whole. Interestingly though, these perspectives merge to create labor power, which is defined as “the workers’ capacity to defend their individual and collective interests against employers” (Roca, 2014). Labor power relies on worker solidarity to communicate the needs of the whole. Unions provide labor power so that the voices of the inequitable can be heard more effectively.

The lack of homogeneity also means there are numerous factors that influence union member participation, from familial relations to the local environment. Richardson (2007, p. 90) even asserts that the union is structured around familism, saying the union is an “institutionalized family wherein rights and obligations in the workplace are acted through moral and social imaginings of brotherhood and sisterhood....” Stemming from this is the argument that the union should be more socially involved within the community and not just the workplace. Mollona (2009) says there are more minorities represented within a union, both as representatives and as members, partly due to the auxiliary groups formed out of the unions. Auxiliary groups are alliances for combined action, specifically committees fashioned directly from the union or community coalitions shaped in support of the union.

For example, Coulter (2012) studied two auxiliary organizations supported by unions in Canada. These organizations were started by the poorer union workers who felt they were not receiving enough recognition in the workplace. Here, class-consciousness has a direct effect on solidarity in a union. Class-consciousness, in this sense, derives directly from the Marxist theory of a person’s set beliefs, rank in society, and interests are based on their socioeconomic class. Based on this ideology, the middle-class union members were not experiencing the same problems as the lower-class members, so there was a lack of representation for the poorer workers. As a result, the auxiliary organizations were formed, which created more class-consciousness within the union itself. Once the other union members heard the struggles of their lower-class members, they joined with them to be a louder voice both in the workplace and in the community. Union members held several activism rallies and raised money for the neighborhoods in which there was the most poverty. By incorporating the surrounding community, the union provided a voice for the inequitable by granting poorer workers with the

agency they needed to exert their rights more thoroughly; in turn, this aided the people living in poverty in the local area of the union workplace.

In the same way, Reichart (2010) discusses the importance of coalitions in the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) strike against Pittston Coal Company in 1990. In Logan, West Virginia, a women's auxiliary group started "Logan Friends and Families" to assist the UMWA in their wildcat strike against the Pittston Coal Company. What began as an organization to assist in feeding striking miners and their families ended up granting these miners the funds and power to prolong the strike so they could negotiate a fairer contract. Reichart states, "Pittston had more power than the community group or the union" (2010, p. 98). This is an example of a lack of the union's labor power against the company; however, "the coalition of the two groups gave them sufficient power to prolong the strike and to 'hold out' for greater wage and benefit concessions" (2010, p. 28). The collective action exhibited by both the community and the local union directly exhibit how labor power is gained through solidarity of the union and the local in which they exist.

Appalachian Unions

The history of unions in Appalachia is a bitter one, beginning with the largest labor dispute in American history, the Battle of Blair Mountain (Andrews, 2016). In 1921, around 10,000 miners in Logan County, West Virginia rallied together and marched on Blair Mountain where 3,000 coal company supporters fought against them for over a week. According to Andrews (2016), millions of rounds were fired in this dispute. Originally, these miners could not unionize because of intimidation tactics employed by mine operators. Despite dreadful conditions both in the mines and company towns, the miners in Southern West Virginia could not change their circumstances due to private detectives of the company disbanding strikes and

any attempts at unionization. UMWA officials came to the region to assist the local miners in negotiating fair working conditions; however, the debate turned violent when the pro-union sheriff was shot dead upon entering the courthouse. This was the turning point that goaded the miners into action with the help of UMWA officials in August 1921. In the end, the miners lost this dispute, and the union did not fully enter the coalfields until the mid-1930s. This bloody chapter in Appalachian unions started a trend of violence and established an extremely discordant relationship between the union and the company of which it was a part. Reichart highlights viciousness in Appalachian unions (2010), sharing that the Pittston strike grew violent toward the end. Although the harsh neglect of companies contributed to the violence of early union members, the bloodshed left unions to be viewed negatively by the public.

Channell (2011) shows the interrelationship between neglect by the company and the diminished strength of the UMWA in her ethnography of the 2010 Upper Big Branch Mine explosion in Montcoal, WV. When Massey Energy bought the Upper Big Branch Mine in 1993, the union and company agreed to disband the union with the promise of rehiring two-thirds of previously unionized miners (Channell, 2011). This de-unionization at Upper Big Branch further diminished the presence of the UMWA in West Virginia mines. Although the majority of her article focuses on legislation that failed to protect these miners, she also cites several testimonies that exhibit how the lack of the UMWA in the Upper Big Branch Mine meant miners could no longer effectively fight for their rights. Unfortunately, this ethnography is another testimony of bloodshed involving Appalachian people and unions; however, this bloodshed may be blamed on lack of a union instead of the presence of one.

Violence also occurred on the company side, specifically toward women, as exhibited by Maggard (1987) and Reichart (2010), who both focus on women's role in mining strikes in WV.

Maggard (1987) shares testimonies of women being switched by company men while picketing for their husbands. Likewise, a woman told Reichart (2010) that women picketing at a bridge were run over by men in company trucks. These women represent the strength of Appalachian women, and like Erem (1997), Maggard (1987) and Reichart (2010), show that the union is not only the workers in the mines or factories, but a significant representation of community members as supporters. All authors write of women assisting in picketing and community activism while continually supporting their families at home. Both show that without women, the UMWA strikes would not have had the labor power to hold out for long. Here, Appalachian unions are the perfect example of community coalitions contributing to collective action and solidarity. Furthermore, these examples show that violence from the union and company side alike was non-discriminatory. With this in mind, we can see that unions have shifted from this violent mindset to the more cohesive organization of today's Appalachian workplace.

My Contribution

Consistently throughout this research, with the exception of a construction workers' union, unions empower workers, both as social and workplace activists, to be movers and shakers throughout the community and marketplace. This again is the direct consequence of the collective solidarity birthed from union membership. I examine how unions affect individual relationships/kinship in the workplace and their effect on solidarity in the modern Appalachian workplace as whole. There is a lack of management perspectives and examination of modern Appalachian unions in the literature. Therefore, I focused on the perspectives on both union and management members regarding solidarity and relationships in 21st century Appalachia.

Methods

Ethnographic Methodology

This study was conducted in Southern West Virginia with employees of a polypropylene plant which has a United Steelworkers Union. I observed union meetings, conducted interviews with management and union members, several of which were both management and union at one point or another, and reviewed written documents, such as union contracts. In order to have a balanced perspective, 20 employees were interviewed; 10 are union members, 10 are management. Once I had interviewed employees, I organized their interviews first into union and non-union members. From there, I looked for patterns in the words they used and emotions they expressed, especially in questions relating to solidarity or the opposite party. After that, I reorganized the data in chronological order according to age to glean how the younger generation views the union compared to older generations, especially how they think the union might have changed throughout the years. Finally, I looked at how the strike of 2010 affected relationships within the plant, both from union and management perspectives.

Survey Methodology

The survey data are derived from a survey of students taking the general education classes of Marshall University's Department Sociology and Anthropology that was developed and administered by the department's Senior Seminar course.¹ The survey was conducted between January 31 and February 16, 2018, where the students of the Anthropology and Sociology Senior Seminar class entered 13 classes on the Huntington campus, read the consent statement, passed out the forms, and collected the forms through a slit on the top of a box to ensure anonymity. One class from the Teays Valley and the Mid-Ohio Valley Center campuses

¹ The survey received Marshall IRB approval as study # 725823-6 under the title "Capstone Survey."

were administered by their instructors. An invitation to the online version, developed using Qualtrics, was emailed to students who took online versions of the courses during the same period. The total population of in-class students on Huntington campus was 422, from which we received 291 responses for a rate of 69%, the population from remote campuses was 25, from which we received 21 for a rate of 84%, and the population of online students was 164, from which we received only 2 responses, a rate that was so low that we decided to not use them. The population of students in the department's general education courses has been generally representative of the broader student body at Marshall who are taking general education courses.

Data

Ethnographic Data

The “insiders” of this population are those people who are currently or have been previously employed by this specific southern West Virginian plant. For this company, union workers are considered “hourly” employees while non-union/ company/ management employees are titled “salary” workers. Hourly workers are those paid by the hour. These workers automatically enter the union when they are hired. Salary workers are those in the management or engineering positions paid by an annual wage; they are the company employees. I will use these terms interchangeably.

Twenty total informants were interviewed one-on-one at various locations. Ten informants were union members, and ten informants were non-union. Furthermore, two salary informants were female and one hourly informant was female; the remaining 17 interviewees were males. Ages varied between 25 and 60 years old. Interviews lasted anywhere between 20 and 90 minutes.

I also conducted participant observation in the form of sitting in on morning safety meetings, attending the company's family day, and general involvement with employees within a community setting. Additionally, I was involved with several different meal-time rituals with certain employees.

Furthermore, a major strike occurred at this plant in 2010 that lasted for nine months. During that time, the plant changed ownership. As a result, informants generally referred to three different periods of the workplace: pre-strike (1960-2010), strike (9 months of 2010), and post-strike (2010-present). Relationships and sense of solidarity shift drastically based on these time periods as referred to by the informants.

Survey Data

The survey was constructed with a section for basic demographics, a section asking how often respondents engaged in given behaviors, and a section of statements which the respondent would indicate four levels strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) with neutral recorded but not prompted (see Appendix A for a copy of consent and questions).

Tables 1 and 2 report the general demographic makeup of the respondents, where 77.2% are between 18 and 20 years of age, 35.8% are male, 85.9% are white, 90.7% are in college straight from high school, 40.9% describe their parents as below middle class, 60.3% are from traditional households (parents and siblings), 56.1% of mothers and 64.3% of fathers have less than a baccalaureate education, 67.7% are from rural or small town settings, and 8.6% are from West Virginia. The largest religious affiliation is Evangelical at 33.8%, followed by "none" at 22.7%, though 73.7% report religion as either "important" or "very important." The largest political affiliation is Democrat at 23.4%, while 14.9% identified as "other liberal," 19.8% identify as Republican, 1.9% identify as "other conservative," 16.6% identify as "moderate," and

23.4% report that they “don’t care.” The distribution was clearly skewed to lowerclassmen as the majority of students were Freshmen at 56.9%, followed by Sophomores at 26.6%, with some 16.5% as upperclassmen. The distribution of students between Marshall colleges tended to over represent Health Professions, Liberal Arts, and Science, but it correlated more closely with the general population of students ($r=.86$) than the distribution of Freshmen ($r=.30$).

Table 3 reports frequencies of the responses from each question regarding the respondent’s relationship and opinions on labor unions. Three other questions were included in the survey as potentially relevant to ideology on unionism. They used the agreement format:

1. I want to work in a unionized job when I graduate.
2. Unions hurt workers more than they help them.
3. Unions have declined because big business and government hurt them.

A single scale emerged from two separate ones as relevant to the relationship between Appalachian culture. The first scale represents an affinity to aspects of craft and place in Appalachian culture, and consists of the following questions:

1. I would rather buy things made by people close to home
2. Handmade items are generally better quality than factory made items
3. I would rather live by hills and hollows than on flat lands
4. I would rather make things for people than work for a big corporation
5. Appalachian music and crafts are special and should be preserved
6. People who work with their hands should be given more respect

This *Appalachian craft and place* scale has a Cronbach $\alpha = .63$ and finds that 66.8% of respondents had that affinity to Appalachian culture. The second scale also represented an aspect of Appalachian culture, but more related to folk medicine. It consisted of these questions:

1. I have improved home remedies I was taught (e.g. ingredients, methods)
2. If I couldn't get to a doctor I would use a home remedy
3. For most common problems I prefer home remedies to doctors
4. I would be willing to share knowledge of family remedies with outsiders

The *folk medicine* scale has a Cronbach $\alpha = .65$, and 55.6% of respondents were above the midpoint of this scale. These two aspects of Appalachian culture combined in a broader *Appalachian culture* scale with a Cronbach $\alpha = .69$, and 64.2% of respondents were above the midpoint.

Analysis

Survey results correlating the relationships between demographics and union ideology will only be reported if they are statistically significant (probability levels of $p < .01$) anticipating the possibility of 6 false positive results (unless the p levels are much lower). From these results, it was determined that students who are older are more likely to say unions have declined because of the government ($r=0.206$, $p=0.001$) and are more likely to have siblings in the union ($r=0.159$, $p=0.005$). Students from West Virginia are more likely to say unions help workers more than hurt them ($r=0.168$, $p=0.006$). Students who fall under the *conservative* scale are less likely to say unions have declined because government hurt them ($r=-0.216$, $p < 0.001$) and are more likely to say that unions hurt workers more than help them ($r=0.274$, $p < 0.001$). Finally, students who fall into the *Appalachian craft and place* scale are more likely to want to work in a unionized job when they graduate ($r=0.181$, $p=0.004$), are more likely to say the government has caused unions to decline ($r=0.226$, $p < 0.001$), and are more likely to be surrounded by a network of people in the union ($r=0.183$, $p=0.002$).

Several general themes that fit with these scales emerged from trends in the qualitative data. Regardless of union affiliation, each employee acknowledged the past sacrifice of union members, specifically the coal miners of southern West Virginia. Furthermore, every single employee originally from Appalachia, salary or hourly, had a family member in a union at some point in time. From there, informants spoke of specific benefits and drawbacks of the union in this workplace. Union members cited job security, safety, and brotherhood at the forefront of the benefits. Salary and hourly alike address the staunch contract as a major benefit of the union. Drawbacks cited by both sides are protection for lazy workers and division due to the strike. Hourly employees argue the union grants protection for lazy workers as well as unfair wages as two major drawbacks to the union.

Discussion

To understand the function of the union in the modern workplace, I asked informants what specific benefits or drawbacks they see in the plant because of the union presence. Surprisingly, both sides saw negotiation of the contract as a major benefit. This black and white document gives workers a sense of security in procedures and guidelines that are not easily changed. One salary employee even said, “but that rulebook [the contract] gives you the guidelines on how the relationship will work, and assuming you hold true to that, it keeps you from doing stupid, irrational things” (Lincoln, salary, personal communication, February 13, 2018).

Surprisingly, a union member said of the organization: “the union is a thing, but not everything,” elaborating by admitting it “restrains you” (Matthew, hourly, personal communication, January 19, 2018) from doing the jobs of which you are capable. Salary and hourly employees alike see the union as a crutch used by lazy workers who want protection from

the consequences of their lack of work. In the same way, management members find the grievances filed by union employees a “waste of time” (Kendra, salary, personal communication, January 18, 2018).

Furthermore, promotions are based on seniority for hourly workers, yet salary workers have no job security based on years worked. As a result, jealousy arises in salary workers because of the job security hourly workers find in the seniority of union hierarchy. This creates some tension and reduces solidarity when negotiations take place. One salary member supports this idea when she said, “the union takes away from salary’s stability – you can’t make a union person do anything” (Cassandra, salary, personal communication, February 22, 2018).

Another major function of a union is giving workers the ability to go on strike. At this plant, the strike itself, beginning in 2010 and lasting 9 months, allowed for labor power and collective action. The union members felt that the company was abusing not only the rights of the hourly employees, but the salary employees as well. Therefore, the union members went on strike in order to display the solidarity they felt within their ranks: “we come together in solidarity as a union to get things done for everybody,” (Bradley, hourly, personal communication, January 23, 2018). In this way, the union members realized the strike was difficult for everyone, but they felt as if their strike was the best for every employee, not just the hourly workers.

Some salary employees understood the mindset of the union members, realizing “the union was gonna strike regardless” (Benjamin, salary, personal communication, November 20, 2018). Others were upset by how long it lasted, feeling as if the union members did not take into account how hard it was on the company people who had to remain inside the plant away from their families. To further the tension, some union members cursed at company members as they

crossed the picket line to come into work. This is reminiscent of the union ways during the Wildcat strikes and violence in the coalfields. Although tensions were high during and directly after the strike, it “feels like a family again at the plant.” (Samuel, hourly, personal communication, February 22, 2018).

In the end, the strike allowed for collective action within the union itself. This ignited some tensions, resulting in feuds between union and management that had been building for a decade or more. Solidarity existed in the union and management side individually, but not plant wide. There “were two different families” (Priscilla, hourly, personal communication, November 21, 2018). The union saw the strike as their collective action exhibited as labor power, while the management members viewed the strike as “silliness” (Kendra, salary, personal communication, January 18, 2018). This dichotomy essentially allowed for tension to be released while also creating solidarity afterward.

After the strike, there was a brief period where union and management were bitter with one another in the workplace, but now, “it feels like a family again” (Samuel, hourly, personal communication, February 22, 2018). Essentially, the strike allowed for the last remnant of the violent and divided unionism of the 20th century to dissipate in the workers. Now, in the morning safety meetings, there is no shortage of jokes, brotherly bickering, and poking fun at other employees. When trying to get two younger employees, one union, one management, to talk about their thoughts on the union, they continually referenced how much they “goof off but get the job done” (Tyler, hourly, personal communication, March 5, 2018) or the “shenanigans during long hours” (Daniel, salary, personal communication, February 20, 2018). This shows that relationships, especially with the younger generation, are more about how much you can laugh with people rather than if they pay union dues. The now plant-wide solidarity increases

through the daily interaction of employees across union lines because most employees are focused on the common good of the plant, their families, and the surrounding community.

Despite differences in opinions regarding the viability and effectiveness of a union, both salary and hourly employees say they see solidarity within the plant, defining it as a “one for all, all for one” mentality (Jacob, hourly, Wesley, salary, and Lincoln, salary, personal communication, January 29, February 5 & 13, 2018). Solidarity, they say, is seen more in the bad times than the good: “when the plant’s in the ditch, a problem, that’s generally when you see the solidarity” (Lincoln, salary, personal communication, February 13, 2018). Lincoln’s thoughts echoed those of many other employees. A younger company employee said, “I think solidarity is only needed when people who cause the problem are not willing to correct it” (Daniel, salary, personal communication, February 20, 2018). Whether the plant or a person is the opposition, solidarity occurs because something negative affects workers.

Not only when the plant is in trouble, but when a worker is personally facing an issue do the coworkers help each other out. Members of each side tell stories of when they personally were in trouble financially or medically. A union member, while choking up, said, “everybody gave money when I had my heart attack...they’re just good people” (Samuel, hourly, personal communication, February 22, 2018). Similarly, a salary employee’s husband developed cancer and struggled financially. Once again, employees banded together to take a monetary collection to help relieve some of the medical burden. Both refer to the collective whole, not solely union or management, but workers throughout the entire plant who cared enough about them to help them out in difficult times. This is solidarity.

While the contract is black and white, relationships are not. I began this project thinking that I was solely investigating unions, but the more the more people I talked to, the more I

realized the Appalachian identity is inseparable from the people who contribute to unionism in this region. Simply driving around the state proves this is true as signs announcing, “Proud Union Home” line driveways and yards. This is an interesting observation because West Virginia is a “red state” and general education students at Marshall who fall under the *conservative* scale are more likely to say that unions hurt workers more than help them. However, only residents of West Virginia were statistically more likely to have a larger union network, meaning conservatives are just as likely to be surrounded by people in the union as liberals or other political affiliates in the state.

In the same way, each employee I interviewed acknowledged the sacrifices made by past union members of West Virginia, specifically the coal miners who fought the bloody battles to attain the benefits the workers themselves enjoy today. Similar to the quote from Erem’s ethnography (1997, p. 162), workers in Appalachia today appreciate the work done by former union coal miners; without them, union and non-union members alike recognize they would not have the rights they do today. This mindset is a possible indication that political identity, such as conservative, is not as important to West Virginians when their ancestors have died for a cause generally supported by the opposing political party.

Both survey results and interviews contribute to the argument that the Appalachian identity and union affiliation are deeply interwoven. As seen in the survey results, general education students at Marshall University that are West Virginia residents are more likely to say unions help workers more than hurt them. Furthermore, students who fall into the *Appalachian craftplace* scale, a strong indicator of an identity with Appalachian culture, are more likely to want to work in a unionized job when they graduate, are more likely to say the government has hurt unions, and are more likely to be surrounded by a union network (meaning they have friends

or family directly involved in a union). Similarly, all but two of the workers who are originally from West Virginia or the surrounding area, union or non-union, have had at least one family member in the union. These results are supported by the numerous statements similar to, “I was raised in a union...I think back in the day in the coalfields that they had to establish a union in order to get their rights ‘cause the coal companies was just running over them” (Mark, hourly, personal communication, January 27, 2018). The labor history of Appalachia cannot be examined without including unions, exhibiting unionism is deeply rooted in the heritage of this region. As a result, Appalachians who work at this plant feel a deep sense of pride for the sacrifices made by their ancestors.

In the same way, the community surrounding this specific workplace is at the forefront of the workers’ minds. For example, the strike that occurred in 2010 was so difficult because “there were neighbors on both sides of the fence” (Matthew, hourly, personal communication, January 18, 2018). Despite rising tension during the strike, striking union members outside the plant offered help, such as car or house repairs, to those company members who could not go home. In one instance, an hourly employee fed a salary employee’s cows while they were on strike so the salary member’s family could have beef for the winter. These same neighbors recalled a story where the salary employee watched his neighbor, the hourly employ, pull up to the picket line on the camera. He saw a cooler in the bed of the truck, and as he looked closer, he realized the cooler was his. This demonstrates the neighborly conduct of these born-and-bred West Virginians did not change because of union tensions.

This neighborly mindset is also exhibited through organized events. Once a year, the company hosts a Family Day at a local park, which allows the families of employees to interact with one another outside the plant. Lincoln stated this is different from places outside Appalachia

because “everybody knows everybody” (salary, personal communication, February 13, 2018). Food and laughter are shared with each other, the children of union members not caring if they are playing with a company member’s child. An event like this would be unlikely to have occurred during the violence of Wildcat strike of the 1950s coal mines. Therefore, while Appalachian and union affiliation are deeply intertwined, the violence associated with Appalachian unions in decades past has shifted to one of more neighborly conduct.

Just as the neighbors within the plant continued to care for one another, the employees at the plant continually look outward at the surrounding community. For example, after the strike, a few union members were disciplined because of an action taken outside of the company’s parameters. A worker involved with this said he disobeyed orders because if the part they had fixed were to have broken, the entire surrounding community would have been decimated. He placed priority on the community rather than his job because Appalachia is his home. Once again, this exemplifies Richardson’s dynamic of familial nature within a union environment. However, the distinction with this specific plant is the family atmosphere is a result of solidarity found in the Appalachian community rather than a union identity.

In conclusion, workers at this plant feel that unions are still needed today, but there are significant drawbacks of the union in this workplace, such as protection for lazy workers. However, the commonality between workers is found in the work they do every day more so than in union dues. Solidarity is forged in difficult times across union lines because workers are concerned about the well-being of each other, the plant, and the community in which they live.

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Table 1. Demographic Makeup of General Education Students

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
age by group					
Valid	1 18-20	239	76.4	76.8	77.2
	2 21-24	51	16.3	16.4	93.6
	3 25-29	10	3.2	3.2	96.8
	4 30+	10	3.2	3.2	100
	Total	311	99.4	100	
Missing	System	3	0.6		
Total		313	100		
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
State residence					
Valid	.00 not given	25	8	8	8
	1.00 WV	232	74.1	74.1	82.1
	2.00 adjacent northern	24	7.7	7.7	89.8
	3.00 adjacent southern	13	4.2	4.2	93.9
	4.00 other not adjacent	15	4.8	4.8	98.7
	5.00 international	4	1.3	1.3	100
	Total	313	100	100	
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Political identity					
Valid	1 other liberal	46	14.7	14.9	14.9
	2 democrat	72	23	23.4	38.3
	3 moderate	51	16.3	16.6	54.9
	5 republican	61	19.5	19.8	74.7
	6 other conservative	6	1.9	1.9	76.6
	7 dont care	71	22.7	23.1	99.7
	Total	308	98.4	100	
Missing	System	6	1.6		
Total		313	100		
	Total	355	100	100	

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics on Demographics

Is a grandparent union	313	0	1	0.07	0.261
Is a parent union	313	0	1	0.17	0.373
Is sibling union	313	0	1	0.03	0.158
Is cousin union	313	0	1	0.04	0.207

Are aunts/uncles union	313	0	1	0.1	0.295
Are friends union	313	0	1	0.12	0.331
Are family friends union	313	0	1	0.12	0.32
No family union	313	0	1	0.722	0.44871
Nobody union	313	0	1	0.6102	0.48848

Table 3. Frequency of statistics relating directly to labor unions

A grandparent is in a union						
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	
Valid	0 no	290	92.7	92.7	92.7	
	1 yes	23	7.3	7.3	100	
	Total	313	100	100		
A parent is in a union						
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	
Valid	0 no	261	83.4	83.4	83.4	
	1 yes	52	16.6	16.6	100	
	Total	313	100	100		
A sibling is in a union						
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	
Valid	0 no	305	97.4	97.4	97.4	
	1 yes	8	2.6	2.6	100	
	Total	313	100	100		
A cousin is in a union						
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	
Valid	0 no	299	95.5	95.5	95.5	
	1 yes	14	4.5	4.5	100	
	Total	313	100	100		
An aunt/uncle is in a union						
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	
Valid	0 no	283	90.4	90.4	90.4	
	1 yes	30	9.6	9.6	100	
	Total	313	100	100		
A friend is in a union						
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	
Valid	0 no	274	87.5	87.5	87.5	
	1 yes	39	12.5	12.5	100	
	Total	313	100	100		

A family friend is in a union							
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent		
Valid	0 no	277	88.5	88.5	88.5		
	1 yes	36	11.5	11.5	100		
	Total	313	100	100			
No family is in a union							
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent		
Valid	0	87	27.8	27.8	27.8		
	1	226	72.2	72.2	100		
	Total	313	100	100			
Nobody the know is in a union							
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent		
Valid	0	122	39	39	39		
	1	191	61	61	100		
	Total	313	100	100			
I want to work in a unionized job when I graduate							
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent		
Valid	1.00 Strongly Disagree	33	10.5	12.6	12.6		
	2.00 Disagree	143	45.7	54.8	67.4		67.4
	3.00 neutral	6	1.9	2.3	69.7		
	4.00 Agree	65	20.8	24.9	94.6		30.3
	5.00 Strongly Agree	14	4.5	5.4	100		
	Total	261	83.4	100			
Missing	System	52	16.6				
Total		313	100				
Unions hurt workers more than help them							
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent		

Valid	1.00 Strongly Disagree	30	9.6	11.4	11.4		
	2.00 Disagree	154	49.2	58.6	70		70
	3.00 neutral	7	2.2	2.7	72.6		
	4.00 Agree	56	17.9	21.3	93.9		27.4
	5.00 Strongly Agree	16	5.1	6.1	100		
	Total	263	84	100			
Missing	System	50	16				
Total		313	100				

Unions have declined because government and big businesses hurt them

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	
Valid	1.00 Strongly Disagree	6	1.9	2.3	2.3	
	2.00 Disagree	101	32.3	38.4	40.7	40.7
	3.00 neutral	1	0.3	0.4	41.1	
	4.00 Agree	125	39.9	47.5	88.6	58.9
	5.00 Strongly Agree	30	9.6	11.4	100	
	Total	263	84	100		
Missing	System	50	16			
Total		313	100			

Appendix A.

Survey Consent

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled “Capstone Survey,” designed to compile a wide range of data from Marshall students. The survey is being conducted by students in a Sociology and Anthropology Capstone class of Marty Laubach of Marshall University. This survey asks you to fill out the non-identifying questionnaire concerning your basic background, attitudes, and perceptions. The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Your replies will be anonymous, so do not put your name anywhere on the instrument. Participation is voluntary and if you choose not to answer any or all questions, you can submit the partially or completely blank form. When you submit the form, please place it in the closed box with the slit on the top so that nobody can see your responses. Submitting this survey form indicates your consent for use of the answers you supply.

If you have any questions about the study you may contact Dr Marty Laubach at (304) 696-2798. If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research participant, please contact the Marshall University Office of Research Integrity at (304) 696-7320.

By completing and returning this survey, you are also confirming that you are 18 years of age or older.

You may keep this copy of this consent form for your records.

Age 18-20 21-24 25-29 30+	Gender id: Trans? Male - Agender - Fem	Race (circle all that apply) White – African Am – Asian Am – Native Am – Other – International		
Transfer student: Y N	GPA:	Major:		
Class: Fr – So – Jr – Sr	Switched majors: 0—1— 2+	College: CAM-COB-COEPD-COHP-COLA-RBA-COS- CITE-UC		
I am in college because: out of high school—lost job—keep job—get promotion—change career—kids gone— divorce				
Financial aid I receive: loans—grants—scholarships—veterans benefits—government assistance—other—none				
The parent(s) I lived with are: on assistance—working class—lower middle—middle—upper middle—upper class				
I mostly grew up with: mother—father—step mother—step father—siblings—step siblings—other family— adopted				
Highest education: Mother Not HS – HS – technical – Assoc – Bac – Grad – Doctor		Highest education: Father Not HS – HS – technical – Assoc – Bac – Grad – Doctor		
Home: rural—small town—small city—large city		State residence: WV– KY– OH– VA– PA– NC– other– international		
<u>Religion</u> 1 Evangelical (e.g. Baptist, Church of Christ, Faith Christian) 2 Charismatic (e.g. Pentecostal, Holiness, Assembly of God) 3 Mainline protestant (e.g. Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, Episcopal) 4 Non-denominational Christian 5 Catholic		Me	Father	Mother
		Me	Father	Mother
		Me	Father	Mother
		Me	Father	Mother
		Me	Father	Mother

6 <i>Spiritual but no organized religion (e.g. New Age, NeoPagan, Native American)</i> 7 <i>None</i> 8 <i>Other (e.g. Muslim, Hindu)</i>	Me Me Me	Father Father Father	Mother Mother Mother
<i>How important is religion:</i> (0= not important, 1=somewhat important 2= very important)	<u>To Me</u> 0—1—2	<u>Father</u> 0—1— 2	<u>Mother</u> 0—1—2
<i>Extracurricular groups I am involved in college?</i> 0—1—2—3—4— 5+	<i>In high school:</i> 0—1—2—3—4—5+		
<i>Political identity:</i> other liberal—democrat—moderate—republican—other conservative—don't care			
<i>I attend to news:</i> Daily—2-3 times/week—once/week—2-3 times/month—monthly— never			
<i>Average hours per week worked in job:</i>		<i>Average hours per week studying:</i>	
<i>Number of people I help support:</i> 0—1—2—3 +		<i>Number of children I have :</i> 0—1—2—3 +	
<i>Took college prep, AP, dual credit courses:</i> (none at my high school)—(available but I didn't take)—1—2—3—4+			
<i>Sexual preference:</i> Hetero – bisexual – homosex – other		<i>People I know bi- or homosexual:</i> none—one—few—many	
<i>People I know who attended college:</i> grandparent—parent—brother/sister—cousin—aunt/uncle—friend—family friend			
<i>People I know are military veterans:</i> grandparent—parent—brother/sister—cousin—aunt/uncle—friend—family friend			
<i>People I know are current military:</i> grandparent—parent—brother/sister—cousin—aunt/uncle—friend—family friend			
<i>People I know in labor unions:</i> grandparent—parent—brother/sister—cousin—aunt/uncle—friend—family friend			
<i>My military status:</i> None—Guard—Reserve—ROTC—active—vet		<i>I am aware of veteran programs on campus:</i> Yes—No	
<i>Circle each you do often:</i> weights—running—cardio—yoga—meditation—martial art—walk 1 mile—none of these			

<i>How often do you</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Some- times</i>	<i>Rare</i>	<i>Never</i>
Play amateur sports	Often	Some	Rare	Never
Play role-playing game at gathering of friends/group (e.g. D&D, LARP)	Often	Some	Rare	Never
Visited a public library since I came to Marshall	Often	Some	Rare	Never
Preserve foods by canning, smoking, or other methods	Often	Some	Rare	Never
Drink alcoholic beverages	Often	Some	Rare	Never
Post messages about people or activities that should be publically shamed	Often	Some	Rare	Never
Use condoms when I engage in sexual activity	Often	Some	Rare	Never
Go out to a bar/dance club	Often	Some	Rare	Never
Get help from librarians at Marshall	Often	Some	Rare	Never
Use Marshall's free tutoring system	Often	Some	Rare	Never
Visited a public library before I came to college	Often	Some	Rare	Never

Stay inside with computer games or social media instead of going out	Often	Some	Rare	Never
Go hunting or fishing	Often	Some	Rare	Never
Play online multiplayer computer games (e.g. World of Warcraft)	Often	Some	Rare	Never
Find myself “food insecure,” unsure that I will have enough to eat for the day	Often	Some	Rare	Never
Give what a waitress or waiter would consider a “good tip”	Often	Some	Rare	Never
Collect artifacts like arrowheads	Often	Some	Rare	Never
Learned life skills people used before modernization and industrialization	Often	Some	Rare	Never
Engage in sport fan activity (tailgate, game parties around the TV)	Often	Some	Rare	Never
Do outdoor activities	Often	Some	Rare	Never
Am sexually active	Often	Some	Rare	Never
Engage in social media activity (e.g. facebook, twitter, snapchat, 4chan)	Often	Some	Rare	Never
Use the MU transit system	Often	Some	Rare	Never
Go to restaurants that are not “fast food”	Often	Some	Rare	Never
Engage in non-sport fandom activity (e.g. bands, e-games, cosplay)	Often	Some	Rare	Never
Attend or host a private party at someone’s house/apartment	Often	Some	Rare	Never
Play collectable card games (e.g. Magic: The Gathering, Pokemon)	Often	Some	Rare	Never
Post on social media defenses of friends you feel are being attacked	Often	Some	Rare	Never
I make time for myself to reflect inwardly	Often	Some	Rare	Never
<i>Circle your level of agreement for each statement:</i>	<i>Strong agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Dis-agree</i>	<i>Strong disagree</i>
I am as willing to shame people I know online as strangers for wrongdoing	SA	A	D	SD
The faculty here at Marshall are mostly very open and helpful	SA	A	D	SD
I should not have to take classes that are not part of my major	SA	A	D	SD
It’s crazy for people to spend real money for items in computer games	SA	A	D	SD
I fact-check online accusations against anyone before reposting	SA	A	D	SD

<i>Circle your level of agreement for each statement:</i>	<i>Strong agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Dis-agree</i>	<i>Strong disagree</i>
I tip a regular percent or amount unless the service or meal is really bad	SA	A	D	SD
Studying ancient myths tells us a lot about our own society	SA	A	D	SD
I tip higher for celebrations than just regular meals	SA	A	D	SD
Unions have declined because government and big businesses hurt them	SA	A	D	SD
I ensure a server gets a good tip even if someone else picks up the check	SA	A	D	SD
I came to college knowing what job I want when I leave	SA	A	D	SD
I would prefer restaurants pay a living wage than have servers rely on tips	SA	A	D	SD
Public libraries are no longer useful in the internet age	SA	A	D	SD
People should have artifact collections (arrowheads) analyzed by professionals	SA	A	D	SD
I am likely to leave female servers a higher tip than male servers	SA	A	D	SD
Sometimes I feel society could collapse and I would have to care for myself	SA	A	D	SD

I have life skills to offer a group if society collapsed	SA	A	D	SD
It is better for the servers if I tip in cash rather than on a card	SA	A	D	SD
Fairy tales can be found hidden throughout pop culture	SA	A	D	SD
I leave my waiter/waitress a tip based on their appearance	SA	A	D	SD
Sometimes it is OK if species die off for people to have jobs	SA	A	D	SD
I support the coal companies doing what they need to for job creation	SA	A	D	SD
I prefer e-books to physical copies of books	SA	A	D	SD
It was easy to find help when I was confused about issues at Marshall	SA	A	D	SD
I would be willing to share knowledge of family remedies with outsiders	SA	A	D	SD
Handmade items are generally better quality than factory made items	SA	A	D	SD
The foreign language requirements hindered my interest in liberal arts majors	SA	A	D	SD
Despite school and other stresses, I am generally happy and healthy	SA	A	D	SD
It is easier to keep with healthy practices with a group setting	SA	A	D	SD
I feel less responsible to ensure the server gets a good tip if I am in a group	SA	A	D	SD
Unions hurt workers more than help them	SA	A	D	SD
I am being treated like a good and valued person by admin at Marshall	SA	A	D	SD
I would like to learn how to survive off the grid	SA	A	D	SD
I am being treated like a good and valued person by teachers at Marshall	SA	A	D	SD
I leave a smaller tip if the food takes too long or is cooked incorrectly	SA	A	D	SD
I expect most public figures to turn out to be hypocrites on some issue	SA	A	D	SD
People who work with their hands should be given more respect	SA	A	D	SD
I have been criticized by family or friends for spending too much time online	SA	A	D	SD
Veterans are not treated well by this country	SA	A	D	SD
People who dig or find artifacts (arrowheads) should report finds to authorities	SA	A	D	SD
I would rather buy things made by people close to home	SA	A	D	SD
People who claim to fight for social justice are just pushing their special interest	SA	A	D	SD
I feel better about myself when I participate in a spiritual group	SA	A	D	SD
Online public shaming often goes too far	SA	A	D	SD

	<i>Strong agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Dis-agree</i>	<i>Strong disagree</i>
<i>Circle your level of agreement for each statement:</i>				
I would rather make things for people than work for a big corporation	SA	A	D	SD
Recent veterans seem more angry than civilians	SA	A	D	SD
I would rather live by hills and hollows than on flat lands	SA	A	D	SD
I base a tip more on server attitude/friendliness than on their efficiency	SA	A	D	SD
I believe I can achieve success in life	SA	A	D	SD
The government is spending too much on the environment	SA	A	D	SD
I am more likely to use a condom with a stranger than an acquaintance	SA	A	D	SD
Mankind is supposed to exercise dominion over the earth	SA	A	D	SD
If I couldn't get to a doctor I would use a home remedy	SA	A	D	SD

For most common problems I prefer home remedies to doctors	SA	A	D	SD
Public libraries offer more than books to their patrons	SA	A	D	SD
I feel better about myself when I exercise with a group	SA	A	D	SD
America is letting in too many immigrants	SA	A	D	SD
I am more likely to use a condom when sober than when intoxicated	SA	A	D	SD
The government spends too much on veterans' benefits	SA	A	D	SD
I like movies that are based on childhood fairy tales	SA	A	D	SD
I could survive well by myself off the societal grid	SA	A	D	SD
I would get better grades if teachers did a better job of teaching	SA	A	D	SD
I liked fairy tales as a child and will tell them to my children	SA	A	D	SD
I look for computer games based on fairy tales and myths from various cultures	SA	A	D	SD
Recent veterans have difficulty adjusting to civilian life	SA	A	D	SD
It is morally acceptable to sell artifacts (arrowheads) to collectors	SA	A	D	SD
Most of the news I see on my social media is trustworthy	SA	A	D	SD
I fact-check material I see online	SA	A	D	SD
I would rather vote for a hypocrite from my party than any opposite candidate	SA	A	D	SD
I will tell a server if my meal is not satisfactory	SA	A	D	SD
You can learn a lot about other cultures by studying their myths and fairy tales	SA	A	D	SD
Appalachian music and crafts are special and should be preserved	SA	A	D	SD
It is a valuable use of social media to shame public hypocrites	SA	A	D	SD
I use condoms every time I engage in sexual activity	SA	A	D	SD
Fairy tales I heard as a child taught me something about society	SA	A	D	SD
The math requirements hindered my interest in science majors	SA	A	D	SD
I will have to move away from Appalachia for a job in my field	SA	A	D	SD
I look for friends in groups that emphasize spirituality, health, or nature	SA	A	D	SD
I have improved home remedies I was taught (e.g. ingredients, methods)	SA	A	D	SD
Spiritual/religious practices are important aspects of my well-being	SA	A	D	SD
I am more likely to use a condom with someone from another school	SA	A	D	SD
I want to work in a unionized job when I graduate	SA	A	D	SD
I would pay to get skills if I could avoid laboring through learning and practice	SA	A	D	SD