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Building Connections. Building Forums:
Understanding the Empowerment Strategies of Temporary Workers

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ABSTRACT

Building Connections. Building Forums:
Understanding the Empowerment Strategies of Temporary Workers

Lisa Sumner

This study is an analysis of the temporary help industry in America. and the empowerment strategies used by temporary workers to overcome the barriers and limitations of their employment. Network-building and the use of web technologies are analyzed as strategies to improve the conditions of temping. Websites and zines are understood as creating spaces for dialogue. dissent. and organizing. which may overcome the spatial separation and surveillance of temps in the workplace: a feature which discourages traditional modes of organizing. Network-building is analyzed in terms of it's efficacy in integrating the emerging temporary worker's movement into the broader social struggles of postructuralism. and anti-globalization. Web communication and technology are examined to determine how the inherent fluidity and fragmenation of this medium. can enhance or impede collective efforts to improve the conditions of temporary work.

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Illustration Credits

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Introduction

*My theory is even if hell exists, I can't possibly go there when I die
because I've already served my time doing data entry at places likes this*

Laura Winters. from *Best of Tempslave*

This thesis contends that the increasing use of temporary workers contracted through multinational agencies like Manpower, Kelly Services and Olsten Staffing promote inequitable labour conditions, which temp workers themselves are opposing through the burgeoning temporary worker's movement. As temporary worker's have voiced collective opposition, and developed networks of politicized resistance in the aim of realizing more just and equitable working conditions, it is suggested that their actions constitute an embryonic social movement shaped by 'online' strategies. This concept of social movement will be developed with the work of Burris (2000) and Castells (1997). This thesis aims to understand critically how through forging social networks and using web technologies, temp workers can overcome inherent logistical obstacles to traditional organizing and political action, and cultivate viable methods for change with the aim of encouraging temp industry reform.

The topic of this thesis in particularly timely. With temporary work increasing, and resistance being voiced through widening networks converging with a multiplicity of latemodern social struggles, and the innovative use of 'online' technology, this work magnifies contemporary dialectic tensions. These tensions are on the one hand connected to broader issues of neoliberalism, social economic restructuring, the impact of new communication and information technologies and globalization and on the other hand

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influenced by the anti-globalization movement, poststructuralist/identity struggles, and resurgent anarchism. Through analysis of the tension between corporate use of temp agencies for staffing and temp worker's resistance, many current developments and conflicts are highlighted.

Temporary work arrangements, specifically those contracted through the augmenting use of corporate temp agencies, typically produce inequitable working conditions in need of reform. Temporary work arrangements, contracted through the agencies of the temporary help industry (THI), are largely exploitive and inequitable based on the disparity in wages, benefits, status and conditions temp workers are subject to when compared with their permanent counterparts doing comparable work. In response to the limitations of temping, a growing temp movement is emerging aimed at improving conditions in job and wage parity. Specifically, I will analyze the strategic efficacy of establishing social networks and coalitions with groups sharing overlapping concerns. As well the use of internet websites as a means to overcome some of the obstacles to dialogue and organizing inherent in temping will be examined. I have selected specific websites to conduct my analysis based on their significance in promoting awareness to the 'temp cause', establishing strategic and diverse network affiliations, and in some cases achieving significant legal and union victories. The coalitions, websites, and zine I have chosen are: Working Partnerships Membership Association/ www.wpmembers.org, SiliconValleydebug/siliconvalleydebug.org, Washtech, North American Alliance for Fair Employment/ www.fairjobs.org, www.temp24.7.com and Tempslave/Tempzine.

The questions directing my analysis are the following: How are network building and

the use of web technologies strategically effecting the emerging temporary worker's

movement? How is the fluidity and fragmentation inherent to web communication

impeding or enhancing attempts at collective action to improve temping? What

'successes' have these strategies achieved? How are these networks linked both online

and off, to other poststructuralist struggles and anti-globalization campaigns? How is the

salience of resurgent anarchist sensibilities witnessed in the temporary worker's

movement to be understood? Chapters two through four will attempt to address these

queries.

While the internet itself is not bound geographically, the terrain of this thesis is. My

discussion is situated predominately in an American context for a few principle reasons:

firstly, the socio-economic, political and legal particularities which have facilitated the

development of an inequitable temporary work arrangement are specific to America. To

some degree the expansion and/or historic presence of American temp agencies like

Manpower, Kelly Services, Olsten Staffing throughout Canada, combined with provincial

governments favouring deregulation and welfare reform, have led to alarming similarities

in temping conditions which are discussed in the first chapter. However as the majority of

networks and coalitions operative in the emerging temporary worker's movement are

American, assessing the efficacy and potential impact of the strategies of the movement

will be restricted to the American temp industry, and to the oppositional temp worker's

movement which has developed in response to it. Finally, remembering the American

context is important when considering that temporary employees rarely receive benefits

such as health care which is one of the central, heavily critiqued, disparities in temp employment.

   While not limited to high-tech zones, some of the coalitions discussed in this thesis were spearheaded by labour groups in regions displaying a heavy presence of information/high-tech industries. The high-tech industries tend to heavily employ temps, specifically in both clerical and assembly work, contracted through the plethora of agencies operative in those areas. To that extent there may be certain localized or regional dimensions which have contributed to the grassroots success of some temp initiatives based out of Silicon Valley, California and Washington state.

   The first chapter is essentially a political economy of the temporary help industry necessary to establish the conditions of temping. This will be helpful in understanding why a resistance movement has emerged. This thesis does not intend to condemn or present a one-sided perspective of temporary work arrangements. Indeed freelancing contract work or 'free agency' (Klein, 2000) holds the potential to free workers from "the arbitrary edicts of petty managers" and "live up to its promise of genuine flexibility"(254). However the realization of the benefits of labour flexibility have been somewhat circumscribed by a deregulatory, neoliberal context in which temporary or contingent work often "pans out as the worst of both worlds: monotonous work at lower wages, with no benefits or security, and even less control over scheduling (Klein, 2000: 254). Moreover, the generally inequitable conditions of temping tend to take unfair advantage of more broadly existing disparities related to gender, race, and ethnicity. Physically dangerous assembly work as well as low-paying clerical placements are

disproportionately staffed by women, youth, minorities and immigrant workers while the higher end, professionally-skilled contract work tends to employ 'less marginalized' groups. The barriers to traditional forms of political action inherent in temp work-specifically the institutional and geographic separation of places of work from where temps sell their labour to the agency (Sparke, 1994), as well as the highly surveilled, restrictive environment of temping, which often discourages dialogue and political participation will be analyzed.

In the second chapter, network-building, characteristic of contemporary social movements (Castells, 1997)(Burris, 2000) and web technologies will be explored and suggested as possible strategies which could overcome some of the obstacles outlined in chapter one. An understanding of the temporary worker's movement as an organized struggle for equality, demonstrating it's similarities to poststructuralist campaigns which share overlapping concerns given the THI's exploitive and discriminatory practices, will be advanced using the theories of Fraser (1997), Nash (2000) and May (1994). Melucci's (in Nash, 2000) notion of the mutability, flexibility and negotiation of postmodern movements will be explored to better grasp the temp movement's connection to both labour, identity and anarchic, anti-globalization efforts. Finally, the suitability of online technologies will be suggested given the medium's ability to transcend the temporal and spatial restrictions of temping, and promote information concerning labour rights, lobbying, petitioning and subversion through anonymous interactive forums and postings.

The third chapter addresses important methodological issues in conducting online research, and website analysis. Important criteria such as networking, accessibility, accuracy, and treating online rhetoric are selected as relevant categories for analysis given that possibilities and limitations of web and network-based empowerment strategies are influenced by these concerns. Burris's (2000) methodology of social network analysis adapted to website study is explored with particular reference to his notion of weblinks as indicators of salient ideological affiliation. The concept of networks and online linkages will round out analytical themes used to critically discuss the temp movement. Finally, the subjectivity of temp discourse analyzed in on and offline texts and forums will interpreted as reflecting 'little narratives' (Lyotard in Loader, 1997) which may reveal qualitative dimensions influencing the networks, sensibilities, and recurring concerns active in the temp movement.

In the fourth and final chapter the theoretical and methodological notions developed in the preceding chapters are applied to the analysis of the selected coalitions, sites and zine. Temping's connections to poststructuralist struggles, and resurgent anarchism are explored. The ideological connections to the anti-corporate and anti-globalization movement, anarchic web links, as well as the zine origins and influences of the more anarchic sites, are suggested as contributing to the evident traces of anarchism in the temp movement. In examining the labour, poststructuralist, and anarchic, anti-globalization influences in the temp movement, the possibility that the temp issue can successfully merge 'old-school' with 'new' social movements through it's networks and online links is explored.

It is suggested that obstacles effecting accessibility could reproduce existing disparities active in temp work whereby the most marginalized groups may be limited in terms of online participation by economic and cultural barriers. Of the lower-paid temps, clerical or 'office' temps seemed most likely to benefit and engage in online participation. Accuracy, misinformation and rhetoric will be evaluated with particular reference to anarchic sites, online advice, and discussion forums.

It is suggested that the mutability and hybridity of the well-organized labour politics of certain networks blended with the irreverent, DIY appeal of other temp initiatives presents a strength and effective strategy for politicizing temp work. An approach which could avoid the rigid, 'stodgy' divisive politics of the left which weakened collective opposition to capitalist institutions in the past.

Chapter One: The Expansion of Temporary Employment and the Contraction of Labour Rights and Social Protections in America

In order to critically analyze the social action and dissent of temp workers, we must first cultivate an understanding of the distinct inequities active in temporary employment. This research aims to document the existing limitations and empirical realities of employment through temporary help agencies such as Manpower and Kelly Services. My discussion is situated predominately in an American context given that the socio-economic, political and legal particularities which have facilitated the development of a regressive temporary work arrangements are specific to the U.S. As well, American social specificities are particularly important when considering that temporary employees rarely receive benefits such as health care, and are ineligible for unemployment insurance.

This analysis will establish temping's relationship to social and economic restructuring, define the triangular employment relationship distinct to temping, and explore the institutionalized marginality of temps as compared to their permanent counterparts. The final section will detail the spatial separation of temps from both their employer (the temp agency) and coworkers, as well as analyze the restrictive and highly surveilled conditions of temping which all act as barriers to dialogue and traditional forms of labour organizing. These obstacles will provide an understanding of the need for alternate forums for dialogue, protest, and organizing to improve the conditions of temping, and precipitate industry reform.

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Social and Economic Restructuring and the Rise of Temping

Temping has contributed significantly to that nineties epigraph "the new employment relations." Characterized by "precarious employment, based on the institutionalization of short-term, individualized employment relationships, greater work-time instability and systematic underemployment" (Peck & Theodore, 1998), temporary employment contracting is quickly growing into a defining feature of postfordist economic relations.

The results of growth in 'flexible' patterns of work has been described by Harvey (1989:150-151) as a labour market structure characterized by downsizing, substitutability and organized in terms of a core-periphery, where the core-a steadily shrinking group-, which is central to the long-term future of the organization, is made up of employees with full-time, permanent status (in Garsten, 1999). Permanent employees enjoy greater security, with benefits such as pensions and insurance and the opportunity for advancement and professional development. The periphery on the other hand encompasses two rather different sub-groups, the first consisting of full-time employees with skills that are readily available in the labour market, such as clerical, secretarial, routine and lesser skilled manual work. The second portion of the peripheral group includes part-timers, casuals, fixed-term contract staff, and temporaries, experiencing even less job security than the first group, and subject to greater numerical flexibility (Harvey 1989 in Garsten). Generally the benefits of core-periphery flexibility are reaped by firms and their core employees, while peripheral temps are offered little in the way of

advantages, and arguably significantly increased disadvantages which will be demonstrated in this chapter.

Since the early 1970s, the tremendous growth of contingent or temporary work "has played a key role in the dramatic restructuring of employment relations in the United States (Gonos, 1997:81). Prior to the seventies employer's remained reluctant to incorporate temporary help workers as a regular part of their workforce, the practice only becoming prevalent in the late seventies and early 80s, "coinciding with what Carre (1994;49) labels large-scale structural changes in the employment practices of firms that use temporary help workers" (Vosko, 2001:138). Emerging "in this era of corporate downsizing and a general sense of job insecurity", the temporary employment relationship has flourished and the notion that that American workers have become disposable has pervaded the American consciousness (NY Times, 1996 in Barker and Christensen, 1998:1). The mid-1980s saw temporary employment grow at more than ten times the rate of the U.S. labour market as a whole, and recruitment through temporary help agencies has accounted for fully one-fifth of all new jobs created in the U.S. since 1984 (Peck & Theodore, 1998:656). In fact, by the early 90s, the magnitude of temping's impact upon the landscape of American labour was so pronounced that even *Time* magazine took note, in a 1993 cover story entitled "The Temping of America" (Morrow in Gonos, 1997: 81). Garsten (1999) summarizes it concisely in stating "temporary staffing agencies have found a niche in providing organizations with temporary personnel, turning the idea of numerical flexibility into a business idea" (602). Garsten's

point is demonstrated in Manpower's current status as the largest U.S. employer (Barker and Christensen, 1998)

While the temporary help industry has indeed propagated in the deregulatory atmosphere of late-stage capitalism, the difficulty of obtaining accurate statistics about contingent work has accentuated obstacles impeding close observation and analysis, which would aid reformers in documenting and advancing regulation of the exploitive aspects of the industry. Some of the controversy surrounding contingent work derives from the fact that "fundamental aspects of this phenomenon are not understood" (Barker and Christensen, 1998:11). There is a lack of precision concerning the numbers and size of the workforce and demographic makeup. Moreover, conceptualization and enumeration of contingent work has been plagued by confusion, and misclassification problems regarding categories of self-employed, independent contractors working for one employer, and part-time/part-year arrangements (Barker & Christensen, 1998:11). One major problem occurs within the human resources departments of firms contracting temporary help who do not keep clear, or diligent records, regarding their use of temp workers and indeed perpetuate a "widespread absence of data collection and record keeping by corporations on workers who hold temporary, hourly, part-time, or contract jobs" (Nollen and Axel 1998:126).

With the reliability of statistical measures questionable, one of the benefits of pursuing an analysis of social networks active in the temp coalitions and websites selected in this thesis, is that it permits a more qualitative account of temping. Through looking at temp discourse on websites and in zine contributions, demographic dimensions and actual working conditions may be revealed which are not apparent in quantitative data.

Temporary help agencies place workers ranging from scientists, lawyers, and

managers to computer programmers, clerical workers, telemarketers, sewers, and

assemblers (Figure 2). Vosko (2000) has pointed out the THI has been active for decades,

employing workers from 'marginalized groups' (ie. women, immigrants and 'people of

colour'), however it is only recently that the industry began to enlarge the demographics

of its pool of workers, to include more professional and white-collar employees.

The temporary help industry remains sex-segregated internally and it is characterized

by income polarization both between women and men and among women and men

themselves, based largely on criteria related to race, immigration status, and age

(Hamdani, 1996 in Vosko, 2000).

The overrepresentation of women, 'minorities', immigrants and youth have created

overlapping concerns between efforts to improve the conditions and status of temping,

and broader attempts to address the cultural politics of exclusion in America. When

examining the diversity and characteristics active in the networks, coalitions and websites

analyzed in later chapters, the salience and strengths of aligning with a diversity of

movements and organizations to advance the standards of temping will become evident.

Vosko (2001) has suggested that the traditional standard employment model is

crumbling being replaced by temporary work as a new normative model of employment

relationships. Vosko (2001) suggests the THI is becoming a new, normative employment

standard substantiated in the ILO's effective abandonment of the longstanding maxim

that 'labour is not a commodity' (8). Vosko's (2001) assertion is based on actions at the

eighty-fifth International Labour Conference where the International Labour

Organization took the "unprecedented measures to legitimize the temporary help

industry ending its historic stance against labour market intermediaries, and its

unqualified support for the standard employment relationship" {(ILO 1994a,b; ILO,

1997) (7)}. Presenting a gender analysis of the growing acceptance of temporary work

contractors internationally and in specific depth to Canada, Vosko (2001) has linked "the

feminization of employment as a whole" to "the extraordinary growth and expansion of

the THI" (124). Dimensions of feminization of employment active in contingent work

include: the maintenance and the possible intensification of sex segregation in the labour

market; the casualization of employment, which is linked to the increasingly 'feminized'

character of a range of job types (clerical, administration, assembly and service sector

work); and finally increased income and occupational polarization between women and

men and among women themselves (Vosko, 2001).

Sparke (1994) has noted the multiple levels of political complicity contributing to

temping's transition from the margins into normative terrain. Appropriating British

researcher Walby's observations of "the new flexibility offensive"-the side-stepping of

traditional employee rights active in the United Kingdom through increased temporary

contracting as opposed to permanent hiring, Sparke (1994) suggests borderless

similarities are promoted where globalization, deregulation and *laissez-faire* government

flourish.

When looking at provincial responses there exists obvious parallels in the deregulatory

legitimacy extended to the THI between most of Canada and the U.S. Only in Quebec,

"which has historically applied the strictest regulations to private employment agencies,

did the government entertain the possibility of a more rigorous framework for regulating the TER" (Vosko, 2001:203). Quebec, as the only provincial or territorial jurisdiction in Canada where there is currently any prospect for strengthening regulations surrounding the TER, and where unions have taken the issue of regulating the industry to the Supreme Court, (208), offers a uniquely promising example which could prove instructional to other governments and worker groups contending with temporary help agencies. It will be interesting to see how Quebec maintains its regulatory position in face of mounting normative acceptance of the deregulated THI in North America as a whole and at the supranational level, "where greater legitimacy is on the horizon for the THI and the framework for regulating the THI is relatively weak" (Vosko, 2000:209).

Complicit governmental involvement with the temporary help industry's success is witnessed in the emergence of 'workfare' social assistance programs. In Ontario, a recent provincially-based policy initiative falling under the Ontario Works program known as *Workfirst* requires 'employable' social assistance recipients to register with temporary help agencies in their job search (Vosko, 2000:9).

As Vosko (2000) has suggested, the example of *Workfirst* provides the clearest evidence to date of the Canadian state's role in legitimising the temporary employment relationship as a viable alternative to the standard employment relationship, thereby increasing the level of coercion in the labour market (13).

Similar initiatives have been implemented throughout various states in the U.S. leading many researchers to conclude that:

> At exactly the point that "tough love" (a kind of term limit for welfare benefits) has been adopted as a solution to women's dependence on the state for aid for themselves and their children, large numbers of women

find themselves in jobs that provide inadequate support" (Barker & Christensen, 1998:12).

In 2000, one of the selected temp coalitions in this study, the Campaign on Contingent Work, a Massachusetts member of the National Alliance for Fair Employment-a coalition organized in 1998 against the abuse of temp workers, discovered the state was funneling welfare recipients into temp jobs through "One Stop Career Centers" run by nonprofits throughout Massachusetts. The federal U.S. government had told states to replace welfare offices with such 'career centers' by July 1 2000. "For each former welfare recipient the centers place in jobs (temp or otherwise) they receive $3,000 from the feds, many of the temps are placed by Manpower, a national temp agency" (Scher, 2000:6).

Indicative of the kind of network-building strategies and practical demands of the temporary workers movement, the Campaign on Contingent Worker along with other members of the National Alliance for Fair Employment organized community-based actions, and demanded that all temp agencies sign an industry code of conduct laying out living wages, benefits and working conditions for temps, and the permitting the right to organize. NAFFE's demands were similar to the "temp workers bill of rights" designed by Working Partnerships, a Silicon Valley-based coalition affiliated with the American Federation of Labour, both organizations will be examined in detail in later chapters. Such proactive examples display the tactical advantages of new and creative approaches to organizing and bargaining fostered through associations between unions and community groups, which have been posited as at the forefront of effective strategy for advancing the temporary workers movement (DuRivage et al, 1998).

Along with innovative methods of organizing and bargaining and the cultivation of coalitions to further the conditions and workplace autonomy of temporary workers, out-

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dated labour laws and labour relations systems which do not recognize the ambiguous status of temporary employment need rectifying, in order to be responsive to working conditions "for the twenty first century" (DuRivage et al, 1998:280). Specifically in need of reform is the presumption by both current labour laws, and unions, that employees are fixed to one worksite and one individual employer. Occupational and regional unions and pre-bargaining associations between unions and community groups, have been suggested repeatedly in the literature as alternative organizing methods which would prove more sensitive to the realities of temporary work. As DuRivage (1998) has suggested "a systematic look at proactive union responses to contingent work would provide a clearer understanding of the interplay between social relations in the firm, the market, and the political environment" (279). In addition, comparative research examining various countries and labour movements approaches to dealing with temping can prove highly illustrative, however for the purposes of this thesis such a comparative discussion is a little beyond the restrictions of scope. Important for our purposes here is the notion that cultivating alliances and networks between labour organizers and the shared interests of a diversity of community groups tackling the politics of exclusion are appropriate strategies for reforming the inequities antagonized through the temporary help industry. Moreover in later sections of this chapter we will see how inherent barriers to traditional on-site organizing which are active in temping, require more than just locally-based initiatives but also a presence and forum is needed online, to overcome some of these obstacles and encourage action which goes beyond local and state level politics.

It should be noted as Vosko (2000) has highlighted that:

> ...beyond adapting outmoded modes of regulation, the only way to improve the substandard conditions of employment associated with temporary help work is through embracing broader-based bargaining initiatives that make collective representation possible...building more inclusive representational structures is an enormous task, one that necessitates a shift in emphasis and priorities not only among state actors but among various segments of organized labour and civil society as a whole (Vosko, 2001:13).

The attempts at merging interlacing concerns to realize the sorts of recommendations which place emphasis on collective strategies integrating both labour as well as diverse 'poststructuralist' interests, are active in the selected websites and coalitions which will be analyzed in later chapters. Those case studies will present on opportunity to examine applied examples of network-building which more fully integrates "civil society as a whole" (Vosko, 2001) as a strategy to improve the conditions of temp employment.

Offering a contrasting perspective from theorists suggesting temp work as an increasingly normative employment arrangement, Garsten (1999) has suggested that the standard production and standard employment relationship continue to constitute the normative structure. Interspersed within this traditional structure are more fragmented and volatile, smaller-scale labour markets according to Garsten (1999), with "terms such as 'atypical employment', 'contingent workers'. and the like, express{ing} the pre-eminence of the full-time, regular position and its ideological significance" (604).

While the normative significance of the prevalence of temporary work contractors remains contested, we can say with some assuredness temp work will continue to expand in America as well as globally. At issue now is a question of whose values and voices

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will determine how the conditions of temping and 'flexible employment' will develop. This is a fundamental issue, which makes analyzing the challenge for inclusion in shaping the future of temp work occurring in the selected coalitions and websites which will be analyzed in later chapters, so timely.

A triangular employment relationship

Despite the lack of consensus on size and demographics, the proliferation of temporary work "represents a profound deviation from the employment relations model that has dominated most of this century's labor relations" (Barker and Christensen, 1998:2). It is easy to get swept up into a statistical oblivion of seemingly uncontrollable market forces to account for temping's considerable impact and growth and "profound" altering of "the basic contract between employer and employee that has defined at least in principle, the fundamental obligations between the firm and the worker" (Barker & Christensen, 1998: 2). In order to better understand the multi-faceted factors contributing to the proliferation of the temporary help industry, Gonos (1998) has advised against a solely economic framework for studying contingent work, criticizing analysis which places exclusive emphasis on cost-cutting to explain the growth in temporary work. In an effort to clarify the historic development of temping to it's current prominence, Gonos (1997, 1998) has documented the role of government, lobbying and policy, offering detailed examination of the complicated coemployment situation agency temping institutionalizes. As Gonos (1997) has demonstrated, a calculated, corporate-backed lobbying effort pursued by temporary help firms allowed for this remarkable shift in the way employees are acquired and retained: "Without the supportive framework ultimately

provided by government, temporary work as we know it could not have become the staple part in the scheme of employment relations that it is in the Untied States today" (Gonos, 1998: 170).

An essential distinguishing feature of temp work is its triangular employment relationship. This means that THFs {temporary help firms}, although 'assigning' workers to their clients (or user firms), simultaneously place these workers for legal purposes on their own payroll, billing clients in an amount covering wages, overhead, and profit (Gonos, 1997). This triangular arrangement is in itself not a recent innovation, being present since the late nineteenth century when labour market intermediaries became prevalent. What is new and at issue is the revised legal status of temporary help firms (Gonos, 1997). Rejecting the status of intermediary, the THI carried out an effective lobbying effort state-by-state for recognition as the legal employer of workers sent out to client firms, an arrangement which current labour laws are ineffective in addressing. As Gonos (1997) illustrates, "the designation of THFs as legal employers was the result of a protracted campaign carried out by the temporary help industry (THI) and its corporate backers over four decades, a campaign that continues today" (82).

In using this specific arrangement, THFs established a different form of practice than that of the "permanent" employment agency that collects a one-time fee as compensation for the placement of a worker as a regular employee with another firm. In that scenario, a standard employer-employee relationship is established between the worker and the firm with which she is placed, and the agency steps out of the picture. The THF, on the other hand, maintains a formal tie to the worker, as her "employer", whether her stint of employment with a particular client firm lasts a few hours, a week or several months or years, thereby profiting from the arrangement every hour that work is being performed.
The central purpose served by maintaining this ongoing arrangement...is that it effectively severs the employer-employee relationship between

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workers and those user firms on whose premises they work and for whom
they provide needed labor input. That is, this arrangement, allow the THF
clients to utilize labor while avoiding many of the specific social, legal,
and contractual obligations that have increasingly been attached to
employer status since the New Deal. This as Ricca (1982:147) says, is the
raison d'etre of the "temporary help arrangement, while the user firm's
control over the duration of worker's assignments is its byproduct (Gonos,
1997:85-86).

This strategizing and achievement of a clearly imbalanced employment relationship,

one predicated on evading benefits traditionally allotted to employees, has allowed core

firms throughout the economy to rid themselves of legal obligations with respect to the

increasing peripheral, or temporary portion of their workforce. Becoming "a key

mechanism for the dramatic restructuring of employment relations that began in the

1970s, that is, for the break-up of what Kochan et al. (1986) call the New Deal model of

industrial relations" (Gonos, 1997:86).

Vosko (2001) in labeling the temporary coemployment situation a "precarious

employment relationship," has emphasized worker confusion over the role of the agency

and who their employer is, as at the heart off the precariousness of the temporary

employment relationship. "The confusion heightens tensions for workers, coercing them

to work faster and tolerate unacceptable conditions and monotonous work from

whomever they work as they are often unsure of who is responsible for retaining them"

(Vosko, 2000:177).

Raj Jayadev, a temp worker, journalist and activist involved in the temporary workers

movement in Silicon Valley, California, conveys some of the confusion created by this

ambiguous employer status:

> Although I don't think Manpower and Hewlett Packard have formally
> merged or publicly announced some sort of marriage, I must link the two
> names together when referring to my 'employer' because the truth is I am
> confused as to who I actually work for. It may seem odd, but you would
> be surprised how complicated working through a temporary agency can be
> (Jayadev,2000:2).

Indeed uncertainty created by this confusing employment arrangement is a central

and recurring lament in temp zines and web discussions. The efficacy of these temp

forums efforts to clarify the ambiguities of the unconventional employment relationship

to better inform and empower temps, is the subject of chapter four's analysis.

The preceding section has aimed at establishing the historic, socio-economic,

political and legal circumstances contributing to the coming to prominence of the

temporary help industry throughout much of North America. As well the negative,

structural repercussions such a development has had for social and employment

protections has been evaluated.

In the next section, in order to fully demonstrate the shortcomings of temporary

agency employment for workers and the need for reform, I will explore in greater detail

the qualitative, ethnographic dimensions of temping occurring at the 'micro' level, in and

aim to understand why the use online technologies to better conditions of temping is a

particularly responsive strategy. The heightened regulations and surveillance active in

temping environments will be analysed next to understand the increased obstacles to

dialogue, awareness and organizing inherent in temp work.

'Just a temp': Exploring the Marginality of Temporary Workers

I feel very used. I feel humiliated, I feel degraded, mostly, I feel used.
That I'm someone like a tap that you can turn on when you're needed and
then turn off when they get a cheaper person. My friend who temps shares
my feelings: of a great sense of insecurity, a great sense of uncertainty, a
great sense of being apart, because we have nowhere to put down roots,
we don't know where we're going to be the next day, we can't build
relationships, we can't make friends, we're totally isolated from the
mainstream working populace. We have no loyalties, no, nowhere to go.

–Pat Dupont, Temp (as quoted in Sparke, 1994)

It is little wonder, given the emphasis placed on utility and substitutability active in

temporary work, that an intense sensation of objectification is widely experienced by

temps. Nussbaum (1999) has suggested the treatment of individuals in terms of their use

value or instrumental utility as a prime means to objectify and, hence, dehumanize a

person. Media advertisements commissioned by various agencies and the overall

marketing discourse surrounding temp work offer explicit reference to the '"fragility of

contracts" and "substitutability" of employees (Garsten,1999: 606). "The message here is

clearly one of substitutability. The skills and experiences of one particular employee can

easily be substituted for those of another. Skills and experiences may be bought, sold or

leased just like any other commodity on the market" (606). One might argue that *all* wage

labour treats workers as commodities. However the triangular employment arrangement

whereby workers are contracted and sold for a profit by temp agencies to client firms,

more fully articulates and accentuates the commodification of labour occurring in

temping

While temporary contracting has come to envelop a variety of occupations, clerical

and light-industrial work tends to predominate in the want ads posted by agencies, in the

academic literature, and in the discussions of the online temp sites. In a study of the

Chicago temp industry, one of the largest in America, Peck and Theodore (1998) (see

also Peck & Theodore: 2001) have noted two especially "dynamic" segments of the

industry-the aforementioned light-industrial contracted through day labour hiring halls,

and the "expansion of a large, often multi-national temp sector serving mid and high level

markets...of an increasingly corporatized voice" (657).

In the coalitions, sites, and zines, the subject of chapter four's analysis, both these

segments are 'targeted' for reform and/or heavily critiqued. Particularly in the temp

networks being cultivated in the high-tech industrial regions of America, where the

expansion of temporary work which runs the gamut from assembly work to information

processing and information technology work, has advanced the politicization of temp

work more acutely there than in other regions.

There is no lack of tales of light-industrial terror from the temp webzines and this is

reiterated in numerous case studies and ethnographies of the industry. This is the area

where the base exploitation of the industry is at its most physically manifest, and where

the industry's inside "axiom of the 'warm body delivered on time" most clearly holds

true" (Peck & Theodore, 1998:658). Of course, there exists variation in the exploitation

to which this descends, at possibly its worst is the day labour contractor located in the

low-income neighborhood:

> Here, employment relations are at their most fragile and contingent: temp
> workers are subjected to a process of "hyper-commodification", in the
> sense that they are traded on a price-oriented basis almost as if they were
> an undifferentiated, industrially-produced commodity...Satisfying clients'
> needs, preference, and even prejudices is paramount...reflecting the fact
> that most agencies are trading in 'unskilled' labour, screening of workers

is crude and mechanical, although most agencies claim to make an effort to avoid placing vagrants, drunks, or addicts, a practice known in the industry as 'body slamming' (Peck & Theodore, 1998:658).

Given that day labourers are temporary, considered expendable, and without protections and benefits the work is typically more hazardous and contracted with less 'screening' of workers. Here at this negative extremity of the industry "the mere threat of not working exerts a profound disciplining effect on workers' behavior...a hiring hall manager explained, "if they don't go out ...one day, they don't eat. That's how it is"(Peck & Theodore, 660). While this clearly illustrates the industry at its most dehumanizing, the high level of control exerted by agencies over employees through punitive "work deprivation" (Rogers & Henson, 1994) is a constant and pervasive feature transcending the echelons of employment offered. The grip which this mechanism of control achieves obviously fluctuates depending on the urgency of financial need of the individual workers. However, as is repeatedly demonstrated, despite temp agencies public relations mythology espousing the new flexibility they offer to housewives, unemployed youth, and workforce reentrants, the bulk of the workers employed in temp work 'chose' it, due to unemployment and lack of a permanent alternative source of income (Parker, 1994). The days (if they ever existed) when temping was used as a "supplement to the male breadwinner" (Vosko,2001:119) have since passed.

The Relationship between Temping and the Politics of Exclusion

As Martella (1992) has concluded "the data do not support the prevailing labor-supply explanation that temporary work is increasing because married women with children want alternative work schedules" (2122A). This is not to deny the possibility

that there are women and men, single, married and otherwise, who do temp because the

arrangement offers some flexibility complementing their particular circumstances.

However, in temporary clerical employment, a huge and growing segment of the

temporary help industry,

> the majority of temporary clerical workers are single women who use
> temporary work as a wage-gap measure to earn income while between
> permanent jobs...the flexibility available from temping is limited to time-
> off without pay between assignments (2122A).

The temporary help industry "is predicated on instability, exploitation, speed and

price" (Peck and Theodore. 1998:670). As there is "no market in attempting to tackle

employers' discriminatory hiring policies" (Peck & Theodore, 1998:66) abuses of the

power temp agencies have sought to create are rampant, ranging form opaque

discrimination. racist stereotyping, and an alarming rate of sexual harassment.

In his 1969 monograph, *The Peripheral Worker*,

> Morse describes a historically rooted workplace hierarchy in which blacks.
> immigrants, and women were assigned or accepted secondary or
> 'disposable' roles due to sociocultural exclusions based on race, ethnicity,
> and gender. In his view such exclusions produced the subsequent waves of
> contingent or disposable workers and facilitated the successful bifurcation
> of the American workplace..." (Barker and Chrisentensen,1998:10).

By the late nineteenth and into the early twentieth century American society had,

according to Morse, developed deep-seated negative attitudes toward the kind of people

who did the irregular, intermittent, part-time jobs that make up the bulk of the peripheral

economy. Workers employed in peripheral jobs were seen as outsiders and inferiors to

those who worked in the central core of the economy at full-time/full-year jobs (Barker

and Christensen, 1998). From the late nineteenth century onwards, "these outsiders have included blacks, newly arrived European and Asian immigrants, and women-members of groups marginalized by race, gender, and ethnicity" (Barker and Christensen, 1998:7). It has been suggested that this pattern largely continues today "with biases firmly entrenched being imposed upon current temps" (Barker & Christensen, 1998:308). Indeed "any research agenda developed around contingent workers must recognize that minorities and women participate disproportionately in the contingent workforce" and that current labour law fails to address these discriminatory practices active in contingent hiring (Barker and Christensen, 1998:309).

The marginalization of temps illustrates how the social and economic exclusion of temp workers has overlapped with the historic and persistent marginalization of women, 'minorities', immigrants, in America. These similar concerns and conditions helps us to understand why aligning with a multiplicity of poststructuralist struggles for recognition and equality could prove an effective means at achieving real progress in improving the conditions of temping, a subject which will be returned to in later chapters.

The greater vulnerability to racial discrimination and sexual harassment that temp workers are at risk of was documented in Rogers and Henson's (1997) study. Women workers were literally reprimanded with calls at home after hours from agency supervisors for not meeting the appearance the agency and client wished to have the temp conform to. I personally recall a temp assignment in which I was subjected to repeated

evening calls at home from the agency representative requesting that I "remove the nose ring" and "not where shoes with laces." The fact that I was employed to sit for eight hours a day behind a table at a furniture convention which concealed my unsightly laced shoes from view was apparently besides the point.

Clerical temping is without a doubt an overwhelmingly female occupation. To such an extent that it has been called "highly feminized," a "gendered workforce," and its growth has been indicted as "creating a second class labour ghetto that exploits existing inequalities active in patriarchal relations" (Sparke, 1994). Moreover. Vosko (2001) has suggested temping's growth is indicative of the "feminization and racialization of labour relations" (201). In light of such attributes apparent in temping. the converging interests between representational politics organized around racial, ethnic and gender inequity and the improvement of temp rights can be more fully understood.

The clerical sector of temporary employment, like the general full-time clerical sector, is predominately composed of women (Bureau of Labour Studies {BLS} 1995:Howe, 986). Historically, this association of temporary work with women's work was reflected in the common inclusion of the infantilising term 'girl' in the names of the earliest temporary agencies (e.g. Kelly Girl, Western Girl, Right Girl). While temporary agencies have formally modernized their names (i.e. Kelly Girl became Kelly Services), the continued popular usage of the outdated names accurately reflects the gendered composition of the temporary workforce (Rogers & Henson).

As Sparke (1994) has shown, "temping in Canada, for example, is gendered at a

number of levels as "women's work," the workforce is disproportionately 75% female

(303). In America,

> ...a recent survey by the national association of temporary services (1992)
> estimated that 80 per cent of member agency temporaries were women:
> Belous (1989) estimated that more than 64% of the entire workforce are
> women, and more than 20 per cent of the temporary workforce is Black.
> Furthermore, a recent government survey concluded that "workers paid by
> temporary agencies were more likely than workers in traditional
> arrangements to be women, young, and black (BLS 1995, 4) (Rogers &
> Henson, 1997: 220).

Recognizing as other's have noted, that the "concepts and measurements used in

official statistics {are}...often inadequate or inappropriate for analyzing women's work"

(Cousins, 1994), and that they are also particularly problematic for gauging definitively

the makeup of temporary work given its transitory nature. I offer these figures to allow

for some impression of size and division within this industry, however the limitations of

the figures should be noted.

This discussion of the discriminatory nature of temping is important to understand the

links between temp rights, and poststructuralist struggles politicized around the issue of

social and cultural exclusion in America, and will be referred back to in later chapters.

The industry preys off existing disparities active in social stratification to extort the

greatest control over groups traditionally marginalized, and at times subject to increased

passivity in the form of workplace compliance augmented by cultural conditioning and

financial constraints. Indeed it has been noted elsewhere the disproportionate number of

African-Americans employed in industrial temp work (Kelly, 1997), as well as the

astounding number of recent immigrants employed through temporary contractors in the manufacture of high-tech ware in America's largest, and most celebrated tech corporations (Hossfeld, 1990. Parker, 1994).

Hossfeld (1990), in examining the shocking polarization occurring around gender and ethnicity prevalent in the high-tech firms of Silicon Valley, has concluded that "the high-tech industry is at the forefront of these trends toward a globalized, "gendered" labour division" (150).

> ...high-tech firms find immigrant women particularly appealing
> workers not only because they are "cheap" and considered easily
> "expendable" but also because management can draw on and further
> exploit preexisting patriarchal and racist ideologies and arrangements that
> have affected these women's consciousness and realities (Hossfeld,
> 1990:157).

As alluded to earlier, Silicon Valley has been a forerunner in both exploitive temping practices and dialectically. extensive mobilization efforts emerging in response to those practices. Coalitions and initiatives like Working Partnerships and Silicon Valley Debug, are designing strategies to combat corporate manipulation of existing inequities salient in the region, and will be detailed and analyzed in later chapters.

As Sparke (1994) has noted, Suzanne Reimer (1992:170) has put it thus: "it is not simply a matter of coincidence that peripheral workers are 'often women': rather, gender, is of fundamental importance to the ways in which {this} work is organized" (303). Women are clearly seen as more deferential, more willing to tolerate an inhospitable working environment, particularly if the work is viewed as temporary (Hossfeld, 1990), and thus less likely to commit the lament of temp agencies-'complaining.' As this greater tolerance on the part of women has grown out of historically contending with greater

oppression and social obstacles than men typically, the logic extends to other marginalized groups disproportionately represented as temporary employees, specifically recent immigrants and "minorities," though these categories are by no means mutually exclusive.

Even the white collar professions of Silicon Valley and other high-tech centers, have displayed a pension for temporary immigrant workers sponsored through H-1B employment visas specific to skilled hi-tech workers. During Silicon Valley's boom occurring in the late nineties, the allotment of H1-B employment visas was steadily increased with Indian, Chinese, and Taiwanese nationals forming the "principal sources of professionals" to the Valley (5), with India noted as the "major supplier of engineers" to the valley in recent years" (Cheung & Yang, 1998:2). Detractors of the controversial H1-B visas argued that the visas were used by employment contractors and client firms as an exploitive tool used to encourage foreign professionals to temporarily migrate and accept lower wages in exchange for employer-sponsored American citizenship (Alarcon, 1999: 1383). Moreover, civil rights and labour groups have criticized the recruitment from abroad pointing to the availability yet under representation of Black, and Latino American professionals in Silicon Valley (Roach, 2001).

Indeed, when the hi-tech boom subsided recently many tech workers temporarily sponsored on an H1-B visa found themselves both unemployed and facing a "world filled with uncertainty" and possible deportation (Biers, 2001; see also Soloman, 2001).

Both the coalitions and websites of the organized temps who formed the Washtech Alliance of Technology Workers who maintain the washtech.org site, as well as a linked site Netslave.org, have targeted the disparities in 'IT' temping. Washtech has achieved a

rather notable Supreme Court victory against Microsoft and will be returned to in later analysis

Vosko (2001) has documented the exploitation of recent immigrants active in the Canadian temporary help industry. Customers, managers and officials of the temporary help industry have promoted the industry's role in employing recent immigrants and providing them with much needed 'Canadian experience'. Agencies and firms have displayed a noted preference for employing immigrants as well as workers of a particular nationality or ethnicity who are believed to 'work harder' and accept conditions Canadian citizens would not. Such practices both "reinforce a racialized division of labour in the THI" as well as mislead and placate immigrant employees who believe they will benefit from the experience in their job search. In fact, the industry's promise of 'Canadian experience' proves blatantly false as client firms using temporary labour typically refuse to give reference letters to temps as this would connote employee status and the benefits that go with it, which firms actively avoid.

Marginality is inherent in the transitory position of the temporary worker. The disproportionate hiring of individuals from historically marginalized groups serves to further cement and perpetuate existing disparities within the temporary help industry and society more broadly. Furthermore, beyond exploiting existing inequities, the THI's regressive character effectively extends precarious or marginal status to ever-wider groups of individuals.

In Garsten's (1999) research based on participant observation at Swedish agencies and in America at Apple computers, she concedes the fragility, and precariousness of U.S.

temping compared with Sweden. Garsten (1999) witnessed the marginal status of temps

at Apple institutionalized through the wearing of special badges, differing in colour from

those of regular employees, connoting the inferior status of temps who were restricted

from certain locales and company meetings, and offered little opportunity to take part in

classes or seminars.

Barker (1998) suggests the concept of moral exclusion as providing an "organizing

framework within which contingent work can be explored and theorized" (200).

> Moral exclusion is said to occur "when individuals or groups are
> perceived as *outside the boundary in which moral values, rules, and
> considerations of fairness apply*...they are perceived as nonentities,
> expendable (Opotow, 1990:1). Opotow notes that instances of "moral
> exclusion occur when we fail to recognize and deal with undeserved
> suffering and deprivation...in this case harm doing results from unconcern
> or unawareness of others' needs or entitlements to basic resources, such as
> housing, health services, respect, and fair treatment" (Barker, 1998:199-
> 200).

In distinguishing temps as transitory and somehow inferior to permanent employees,

the denial of benefits and entitlements such as health care, fair treatment and pay,

becomes both normalized and legitimated.

The temp worker's historic status as peripheral and 'other' has been further

antagonized by the discriminatory hiring practices of agencies which exploit existing

social disparities in employing a disproportionate number of women, immigrants and

people of colour. These individuals are assumed to 'work harder' and be less likely to

'complain' about inhospitable conditions due to cultural conditioning and disadvantaged

structural positioning. Morse has shown that the marginal perception of peripheral

workers has extended to largely encompass temp workers as a whole. Thus fostering a

dehumanizing environment in which substitutability is emphasized and the individual

temp is treated largely as a nonentity, highly replaceable, and unworthy of an equal level

of respect and financial security.

Temping, Surveillance and Human Commodification

> It is largely as a force of production that the body is invested with relations
> of power and domination; but on the other hand its constitution as labour
> power is possible only if it is caught up in a system of subjection.

Michel Foucault (as quoted in Sparke, 1994:313).

The importance of discipline as a modern mode of control, the techniques of the

prison and the workplace acting as a mirror for one another as elaborated by Foucault

(1979), are widely active in the contemporary temp agency which has proudly garnered

itself increased control over employees not possible in less precarious arrangements.

From the moment one applies with a temporary agency the conditioning begins

immediately with the battery of tests an applicant must complete. As Vosko (2000) has

observed:

> the psychological test plays a disciplining role as well...it prepares the
> applicant for the often undernumerated nature of temporary help work.
> One question in a psychological test that I took was, "If you knew that
> someone else doing the same job as you was making more money, how
> likely would it affect how hard you work...This question is not only
> constructed to establish what motivates the temporary help worker, but the
> degree to which s/he is willing to accept the low status, low pay, and
> insecurity associated with many forms of temporary help work. It is
> designed to help provide the customer with workers who are compliant
> and obedient (Vosko, 2000;144).

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As well, similar to the Ontario workfare conditioning Vosko (2000) has documented, agencies are quick to remind or introduce applicants to the 'reality' that stable, permanent work is rarely tenable 'nowadays'. I personally recall performing a typing test at a major temp agency in San Francisco in which the content to be typed was comprised of 'information' regarding the high rate of unemployment and the absence of rewarding, permanent employment in the labour market.

Another favorite method of agencies to enhance and monitor worker discipline is through the presence of an on-site agency representative. On-site agency representatives are becoming increasingly popular to oversee temps who have often been brought in to diffuse a "production line-particularly where there is a history of labour problems" (Theodore & Peck, 1998: 664). On- site arrangements have been celebrated by temp agencies and heavily marketed in an effort to procure clients, singing the praises of the liberating amount of control it imparts to the company:

> You have so much control…Any time you can get an on-site, you can
> have more control of your people…the companies just order people and
> they don't have to deal with it (Theodore & Peck, 1998: 664-665).

The presence of on-site managers is also a service by which the temporary help agency aims at establishing themselves as the 'employer of record' (Vosko, 2001:150) to 'free' the client firm from observing benefits typically extended to employees as was established earlier in the discussion of the ambiguity of employer status. "Huxley's words that "today every efficient office, every up-to-date factory is a panoptical prison in which the workers suffer…from the consciousness of being inside a machine" (Bell, 1960:224)

find a suitable application in the temp industry. As Parker. in his "monograph of the

industry" (Gonos, 1997) *Flesh Peddlers & Warm Bodies* has concluded:

> The modern, bureaucratic organization of temporary work means
> greater employment instability for growing numbers of workers as
> employers restructure. maintaining lean payrolls in the face of heightened
> economic competition and political conservatism...for workers in the
> industry it is yet another bureaucracy that must be negotiated daily, a third
> party that evaluates them, monitors them, and shapes their immediate
> working lives (Parker, 1994:53).

The recent film *Clockwatchers* offered an, at times both unnerving and hilarious

depiction of the Kafkan sense of diminished autonomy and surveillance one experiences

working as a temp. In one scene, the temps desks are centralized to a heavily monitored

office space complete with video cameras. Mary, the 'rebel temp' played by Parker

Posey, in lamenting "I'm sick of being treated like a criminal...We're in a god-damned

fishbowl" expresses a common frustration of temping in corporate America. Many of the

anecdotes and stories contributed by temps and published in the zine *Tempslave*. which

will be returned to later in this analysis. reveal similar incidents of heightened

surveillance due to the stigmatized status of temps (Appendix 1). Winters (In Kelly,

1997) recounts her last job:

> On my first day I don't have a magnetic security card. and as I loiter in the
> front of the building trying to get in so I can work, people eye me
> suspiciously, insert their cards, and slide into the building sideways, afraid
> that I'll follow them in....When the suits find me cooling my heels in the
> lobby, waiting for my temp assignment to being, the witch hunt begins
> before I can even say hello:
> "Who let you in?"
> "I don't know. I just walked in."
> "Someone had to let you in. What did they look like? Was it a male or a
> female?"
> "I don't know."
> My stupid act convinces them I'll be a good worker, and they issue me a
> security card and show me to my cubicle." (74).

Indeed the sense of being under some sort of normative monitor is intensified by the emphasis placed on physical appearance in clerical temping. Garsten (1999) has observed the surveillance and presentation of self in looks and emotions (607) temporary work demands, and has tied this tendency to larger changes in the realm of work requiring increased dealings with the public and an emphasis on customer service:

> ...work increasingly involves not just mental or manual work, but also 'emotional' work-work where were an explicit part of the job is to display a particular set of emotions (Hochshild 1983). Temporary employees often spontaneously invoke experiences of being observed, judged or monitored, both by their clients and their agency. For some, being monitored include anxiety and stress, never being sure of whether you are performing well enough, constantly trying to please...For almost all interviewees, though, temping means paying more attention to your looks, manners, and appearance (608).

The 'stupid act' that Winters (in Kelly, 1997) alluded to illustrates one of the many ways temps try to navigate the often absurd conduct requirements monitored while temping.

Garsten (1999) has stated that "temporaries are often expected to express a certain degree of adherence to the organization leasing them and to be flexible enough to 'fit in' with the work environment in terms of personality type and value orientation" (609). Through monthly 'parties' and the spread of newsletters with pay cheques celebrating the 'temp of the month' temp agencies attempt to cultivate a sense of corporate belonging. Observing such incidents, "it is obvious here that we are dealing with 'cultural engineering' (Hannerz 1992) as a method for enhancing ties between employees and organizations, with rhetorical images defining modes of appropriate thinking and acting" (Garsten, 1999: 608). Garsten suggests temp agencies, like other contemporary

organizations construct "imagined communities" to generate bonds of loyalty and

responsibility amongst loosely connected individuals.

As Garsten highlights, Bauman (1992) considers the efforts of creating a sense of

community "as being related to the relative lack of stability and institutionalized

continuity that characterize imagined communities (and we may add, many organizations

in the post-industrial era)" (Garsten, 1999:608)

The continuous efforts to promote a sense of commitment and belonging among
organizational members may be seen as a reflection of the increasingly fickle character of
many contemporary organizational structures. However, the reflective bent, in turn,
generates constant demands for monitoring actions and restructurings, so this process can
never be fully accomplished, but rather creates new needs for cultural management along
the desired lines (Bauman, 1992: 95).

In praise of human agency it is worth noting that most researchers have recorded

cynicism and boredom on the part of temps with regards to transparent attempts at

cultivating loyalty through occasional snacks and newsletters. Indeed, a fundamental

importance of the websites to be examined in later chapters, occurs in allowing a means

for the reassertion of sardonic detachment and reaffirmation of identity and value

orientations differing from the imposed values promoted by the temporary agency, thus

reducing the degree of normative internalization and discipline achieved by the THI.

For instance the mantras and attitudinal conditioning permeating both agencies and the

worksites of temping, are repeatedly scorned in the online temp discussion forums and

zines. The following posting which appeared on the Tempzine discussion forum, and is

included in the *Best of Tempzine Online*, irreverently mocks the frequently heard

comments of managers and docile coworkers alike. The following sentiments were

categorized under the subject heading "Duckspeak':

"We're all team players here".
"We work weekends all of the time, but the managers will order pizza and let you turn on a radio quietly or listen to your Walkman."
"The work can get difficult, but we all really enjoy the challenge."
"We really reward worker enthusiasm here. For example, we give a $100 bonus to the employee who wears the best Halloween costume to work on Halloween every year."

Winters (in Kelly, 1997) sardonically presents company attempts at fostering morale through "attitude" posters appearing "every ten feet or so on the walls" which encourage team spirit through weak attempts at acronyms-Together Everyone Achieves More (74). Typically corporate attitudinal conditioning is both mocked and reappropriated in temp texts with a new, often scathing, spin which subverts the intended meaning. Winter's (1997) and the anonymous net participant quoted above, illustrate the ways in which websites and temp produced media texts can allow temps to reject the internalization of agency and company values. recuperate some autonomy. and voice a critique of existing conditions.

In keeping with the excessive normative regulatory demands active in temping. women are often judged on the basis of physical attributes and rewarded with better paying assignments if they 'make the cut'. Essentially, as Rogers and Henson (1997) in their study of the hyper feminization of this branch of the industry concluded:

It quickly becomes apparent that the type of femininity one must do in temporary work is white, middle class, heterosexual femininity...the consequences of the gendered/raced/classed organization of temporary work are a lower paid. back-office job or no job (223).

The coming to prominence of the temp industry in these frosty days of economic imperatives is hardly coincidental but rather represents a dialectical avenue of mutual legitimation inherent to the labour relationship within capitalism (Sparke, 1994). In both

separating workers from the site of the agency which employs them. and separating

temps from other agency temps, the conditions of the temp industry discourage the

occurrence of dialogue, true personal relations, and occlude an environment conducive to

political organizing and solidarity. These features are further augmented by the excessive

demands of conformity and 'performance' placed upon temps. As a result temp workers

are subject to a degree of alienation which can be internalized into an anomic

disconnection, and loss of identity, evident in other forms of work but significantly

heightened within the specific constraints of temping.

As Vosko (2001) has suggested it is these "micro-level processes" occurring at the

"level of intra- and inter-firm relations" which "heighten the precarious character of

temporary help work" since it is here that "temporary help workers experience a

profound degree of commodification and that the THI's ability to prevent large–scale

worker resistance is most apparent" (159). The promise and illusion that a temporary

assignment may lead to permanent position is a particularly effective method

undermining potential challenges and opposition from temporary employees which has

been well-noted amongst researchers.

The stories of disillusioned temps who feel 'strung along' by promises of permanent

employment translating into increased pay, respect and health care benefits abound on the

discussion forums of temp websites and zines.

Jorgensen and Reimer (2000) have observed the rise of 'permatemps', that is,

employees who for all practical purposes are part of a company's permanent workforce

but are actually employed through a temp agency- as "one of the most striking new

developments" characterizing the nineties boom in contingent work (38). 'Permatemps'

are found in all sectors of the economy, from low-wage service jobs to high-tech, new-economy jobs (38). Extending temporary contracts indefinitely rather than hiring an employee on full-time has been practiced by many large corporations for years. Most notably Microsoft hired nearly 35 per cent of its workers through temp agencies that provided limited benefits and inferior wage scales. Many were working in core areas such as Office software development. For years Microsoft fought off a legal challenge from the permatemps but in 1999 the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth circuit ruled against Microsoft, deciding that the workers were in fact employees and ordering Microsoft to pay back pay at permanent employee wages. This ruling holding that many Microsoft temps were really permanent workers "could signal the beginning of real reform" (Jorgensen & Reimer, 2000:39) and has become something of a watershed case in its challenge to one of the central 'flexibility' advantages temps are promoted to impart to companies-specifically the avoidance of employee status and therefore the denial of: benefits, opportunities for advancement, professional development and wage parity with core workers. The permatemps victory, spearheaded by Wash-Tech-a union organized by young workers and affiliated with the Communications Workers of America, against Microsoft will be discussed and analyzed in later chapters given the magnitude of its significance.

The increase in youth unemployment and underemployment has been connected to temping and 'permatemping'. Jorgensen and Reimer (2000) have suggested the rise of temporary work as an important contributing factor to the economic decline of young workers:

> As a generation of the most highly educated young adults in American
> history leave high school and college and enters the labor market, these

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job hunters often end up in the service sector with low pay and few, if any, benefits…Despite considerable economic growth, life for most young adults has, by economic measures, stagnated or declined since the early 1970s. Near full-employment has not produced much of an increase in bargaining power. Young adults today may have CDs instead of vinyl, and laptops instead of typewriters, but they have lost a great deal of their ability to raise families, buy a home, save for retirement, and otherwise support a standard of living that was once fairly typical (39).

The overrepresentation of youth in temping has formed the basis for Silicon Valley debug, a project designed for and by the 'unheard voices of the 'young and temporary' in the San Jose area (svdegug.org). As well many of the temp websites, zines and media texts appeal to this same demographic through irreverent, anti-corporate aesthetics and attitudes. The youth dimension of temp resistance is an important one as it situates the issue of inequitable temp work within the broader context of the anti-globalization movement and resurgent anarchism. These issues are central to the analysis in this thesis, and will be returned to in later chapters.

As one of the central objectives of this research is to explore avenues which could facilitate the attainment of real flexibility through temping for workers, Garsten's (1999) application of anthropologist Victor Turner's concept of liminality to temping is helpful, if recuperated to understand the subversion and agency being demonstrated by youthful temps on selected websites and zines. In examining the predicament of the "permanently temporary" and temporary workforce it is important to recognize the "ambiguous character" of temping (Garsten, 1999:609). In articulating liminality as an "inherent trait of our times" (609) Garsten outlines, the liminal person in Victor Turner's work as "an ambiguous figure, capable of upsetting normative orders and of transcending institutional

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boundaries" (609), existing in a state of being which is 'betwixt and between' social

structures which she likens to the status of temps. Garsten (1999) contends that it is in

these 'interfaces' or 'limens' where innovation occurs, something well known and much

experienced by artists and shamans in Turner's analysis. Garsten (1999) suggests it is in

the deviation from the standard employment relationship, the transitory nature of the

position which evades roles assigned by law, custom, convention and ceremony that

enables the temp with open possibilities both positive and negative, and elevates the daily

condition of temping to a contested terrain open to multiple interpretations.

Many websites, zines and other media texts produced by temps demonstrate the

recuperative manipulation of their status as 'just a temp' which allows them room to

subvert and disrupt the inequities of corporate America and agency temping 'from the

'inside' (leaving 'timebombs' which undermine the company long after the temp has left

is a common practice recounted in the discourse of temp websites and text).

As Garsten's (1999) seems to be offering the concept of liminality to some how

redeem temp work and overlook the structured inequities and negative conditions of

temping which have been documented in this chapter, application of her concept of the

liminal temp receives qualified and adapted application in this analysis.

This analysis has chosen to focus on the emergence of websites and other media texts

developed for, and by temporary workers, as well as the network-building strategies of

the temporary workers movement, because its is hypothesized that these 'new' tactics

may possess the ability to transcend, or reduce, many of the major obstacles which

prevent the realization of greater flexibility for temps. Specifically, one of the greatest

barriers to cultivating resistance and improving working conditions culminates around the fact that temp work is transitory and individuals employed through agencies have no one worksite to organize around.

> By institutionally and geographically separating places of work for sites where temps sell their labour, the organization of temping not only occluded a space of political action but does so in a way that reflects and concretizes the individualism of the market...temps rarely meet one another, let alone try to organize and protest...because they do not meet, temps have little chance of sharing complaints, comparing notes on good and bad agencies, or of exchanging critical stories about work. Any chance of forming solidarity is further eradicated by edicts like that of Kelly's introductory video: "Your pay rate is confidential and must not be discussed," Moreover, the agencies foster a culture of competitive individualism using schemes such as "Temp of the Month" (Sparke, 1994:314-315).

While the multiple locations temps are dispatched to surely inhibit bonds which could prove fruitful in building effective opposition to exploitive elements of temporary agency employment, it is the contention of this research that new technologies, specifically the Internet combined with coalitions active in the temporary worker's movement presents a viable strategy for transcending spatial and temporal obstacles inhibiting worker discourse and organizing.

Despite the innumerable odds that have been erected to render temp workers increasingly voiceless and fragmented, human innovation can appropriate the products of capitalism in unintended, and subversive ways, as Sparke (1994) has hinted towards:

> the obstacles at any attempt to organize temps are considerable...{but} new forms of capitalist flexibility may sometimes open opportunities for workers as well as posing threats...it might be possible to find in the prism of temping a flexible form of politics which, if it could articulate the heterogeneity of temporary work, would provide a model for new, less rigid, and more open forms of labour organization in the twenty-first century (Sparke, 1994:318).

Conclusion

Temporary work, given its growing global legitimacy and practices, appears to constitute a fundamental shift away from the standard employment relationship of permanent, occupational security towards increasingly temporary, liminal and precarious employment. Given that workers employed through the temporary help industry suffer a well-documented level of hypercommodification, alienation, discrimination and overall exploitation with regards to treatment and lack of wage parity and benefits, clearly the temporary employment relationship is badly in need of reform. To achieve a balance, in order for both employers *and* workers to enjoy the much-touted flexibility of temporary employment the obstacles inhibiting collective discussion of conditions and organizing must be overcome.

The next chapter will present a detailed exploration of the empowering potential of network-building within new social movements, coupled with the Internet's role as a space allowing for innovative strategies of social change and resistant practices. These strategies will be understood as strategic avenues particularly well-suited to overcoming the spatial separation and intense regulation of the temp working environment.

Chapter Two: Postmodern Transitions, New Technologies and Contemporary Social Movements: Establishing the Context for the Temporary Worker's Movement

In this chapter the efforts, dissent, organizing and overall politicization demonstrated by selected temp coalitions, zines and websites seeking both greater recognition of the disparities active in temping, as well as improved working conditions, will be understood as an emerging social movement. The concept of 'social movement' in this thesis is similar to Burris's (2000) understanding of how certain factions of the far right, neo-nazi and militia groups, Christian fundamentalism, skinhead and specific skinhead thrash bands, can be seen as contributing to the white supremacist movement as contributing to a collective movement. In a similar manner, the collective action and protest witnessed in the temp coalitions, websites, and zines will be understood as a broad-based oppositional movement emerging in response to the spread, and inequity of the American temp industry, with networks possessing both weaker and more salient links of affiliation to one another (Burris, 2000). Links are used to analyze what kind of social formation is characterizing temp opposition and resistance which is recognized as not yet a fully formed movement, but rather one in it's embryonic stages.

Using Melucci's (in Nash, 2000) theory suggesting the dynamic fluidity and mutability of contemporary social movements characterized by shared, divergent, and negotiated values and objectives, assists an understanding of how the diversity of temp coalitions, websites, and zines, may build flexible and adaptive networks reflective of the heterogeneity of temp workers themselves. Moreover, the flexibility and fragmentation characteristics of web technology (Poster, 1997, Loader, 1997) is understood as offering a compatible medium facilitating the linking of diverse networks. However, viewed as a

strategy, online protest and organizing remains potentially constrained by current

technological and organizational limitations which will evaluated in the next few

chapters.

The spread in temp work is not a phenomenon occurring in isolation but rather connected

to broader transformations flourishing in a context of neoliberalism, deregulation and

globalization, connections which were established in the preceding chapter. Accordingly,

the links of the temporary worker's movement to both poststructuralist struggles for

inclusion, anti-globalization actions and resurgent anarchism will be understood as a

dialectical response to declining social, political and civil protections which a discussion

of Castells (1997) and Nash (2000) will establish.

The Web, Latemodernism and the Promise of Change

Given the obstacles to more traditional forms of protest and organizing while temping,

the innovative and resourceful use of the Internet by dissenting and mobilizing temps and

labour organizers, to improve the rights, equity and conditions of temping, is critically

analyzed in this thesis. As a non-hierarchical, decentralized forum particularly well-suited

to the realities of spatial separation, and the intense regulation characteristic of temp

working environments, strategic and creative use of the net offer an interactivity and

diffusion of information which is constrained in more conventional forums and 'offline'

media. However, the possibilities and limitations of web-based resistance requires

careful, critical evaluation given the relative 'newness' and lack of empirical data

regarding online social action

When embarking on an evaluation of the potential of advancing the temporary

worker's movement through the facility of 'cybertechnologies,' a certain degree of

skepticism and awareness to the broader discourse surrounding new technologies is

warranted. Both utopian theorizing and dystopic predictions abound in popular dialogue

addressing this topic. A critique of these opposed but equally misleading positions is

prevalent in academic discourse (see Loader, 1997; Smith and Kollock, 1999; Holmes,

1997).

Smith and Kollock (1999) have encapsulated scholarly misgivings in suggesting that:

> the kinds of interactions and institutions that are emerging in cyberspace
> are more complicated than can be captured by one-sided utopian or
> dystopian terms" the focus of academic research should be "on describing
> and analyzing patterns of online social interaction and organization as they
> exist ... The outcomes are not uniformly positive or negative. The new
> opportunities and constraints online interaction creates are double-edged,
> leading to results that can amplify both beneficial and noxious social
> processes"(Smith & Kollock, 1999: 4).

Following in this line of thinking a dialectical approach to evaluating the potential of

cyberspace for facilitating the emancipation of marginalized groups is necessary. Both in

terms of liberating the online participant from the restrictions of 'offline' identity

revealing personal and physical characteristics, and through the possibility of cyberspace

constituting a new public domain advancing social movements, which is evaluated in this

thesis, a careful analysis grounded in observation and a "more informed discussion about

the nature of the changes heralded in by the new ICTs [information and communication

technologies} is required (Loader, 1997:7).

In an effort to couch this analysis within a contextualized, informed discourse. it is

necessary to develop the relationship between ICT's to broader contemporary transitions.

Specifically the declining role of nation-states; the proliferation of social movements

based around identity and/or special interests; and the decline of 'metanarratives'

replaced with the prominence of what Lyotard (in Loader, 1997) has called "little

narratives," are relevant considerations for understanding the strategies and dynamics of

the collective social action of temporary workers. Lyotard's concept of 'little narratives'

are defined as "creative, playful and self-refining validation of local discourse which has

no reference to claims of external scientific universality" (Loader, 1997:8). The shift

from overarching dominant narratives to 'little narrartives' has been suggested as a key

transition complementing the role of cyberspace and characterizing online discourse.

Poster has elaborated similar observations in noting 'the Internet seems to encourage

the proliferation of stories. local narratives without any totalizing gestures and it places

senders and addressees in symmetrical relations. Moreover. these stories and their

performance consolidate the 'social bond' of the Internet 'community'...(1995b: 92 in

Loader, 1997:7).

When analyzing the online participation on discussion forums as well as the literary,

journalistic, and comic visuals of sites like svdebug. Temp24-7. tempzine and *tempslave*,

the overall discourse can be interpreted as consisting of 'little narratives'. The accounts

told by the temp themselves, 'in their own words', give voice to the 'street level' (Kelly,

1997) lived reality of temping. The anecdotes, stories, discussion postings and 'threads'

(responses to postings), vividly depict the human impact of the macro-level shifts which

are increasing the prevalence of temp employment.

Lyotard foregrounds the importance of information and computerization in the

"development of what he describes as 'the knowledge society' (1984), referring to a post-

industrial context where knowledge becomes commodified through the use of

information and communication technologies" (in Loader, 1997) . Indeed Lyotard's

concept of a 'knowledge society' is well-supported, and evident in growth in sectors of

employment which are increasingly contracted through temp agencies, such as

information technologies, date processing, and high-tech assembly work. Where temp

work was once restricted to clerical staffing and light-industrial work, in the past two

decades a shift to more professional and diversified employment as well digital

manufacturing has occurred, an expansion which was discussed in the preceding chapter.

As Loader (1997) has demonstrated, an abundance of the burgeoning literature on the

economic and social restructuring of the advanced capitalist societies, is predicated upon

the notion that such transformations are driven by the revolutionary developments in a

range of information and communications technologies (ICTs).

Beginning in the early nineties online communication began to garner considerable

attention as a development of far-reaching and significant societal impact:

> Since 1993, computer networks have grabbed enormous public
> attention...computer networks, once an obscure and arcane set of
> technologies used by a small elite, are now widely used and the subject of
> political debate, public interest, and popular culture...Instead of people
> talking to machines, computer networks are being used to connect people
> to people"(Wellman & Gulia, 1996, in Smith and Kollock, 1999: 3).

One of the fundamental fascinations accounting for the 'hype' surrounding new technologies is based in the compression of time and space digital communication is capable of. As Loader (1997) has articulated the innovation presented by new ICT's to transcend the parameters of modernist organization and techniques, and facilitate new forms of dialogue and social interaction not geographically restricted (Loader. 1997). It is these particular features, temporal and spatial transcendence, which this thesis seeks to understand as a previously unavailable strategy holding the potential to overcome many of the barriers to dialogue, organizing, and political awareness inherent in the temporary work arrangement.

In suggesting that web technologies may offer a technological innovation useful for diffusing awareness and improving the conditions of temping, it is not the intention of this thesis to overextend cyberspace's 'revolutionary' potential. Indeed it is important to avoid the kind of mystification of cyberspace which critics contend has contributed to a more general misunderstanding of the relationship between ICTs and global restructuring (See Bennahaum 1996; Brook and Boal, 1995; Robins; 1995 in Loader, 1997:7).

It is also of particular importance in analyzing the benefits and limitations of using web technologies to advance specific labour conditions, to avoid overstating the idea "too prevalent on the left as well as the right that globalization and technological change have combined to bring us into a new era" (Editors, 2001:1). Labelling such assertions exaggerated "hype" which obscures class struggle, the editors of the stalwart *Monthly Review* dismiss such claims that contemporary changes are somehow epoch-shifting. Wood (in Piven, 1998) remains firm that "what we are witnessing is the diversification and extension of the old logic of the mass production commodity" whereas Piven et al

(1998) have suggested that the "the innovation and development characteristic of capitalism is interacting with shifts in class power to produce convulsive changes not only in patterns of production and exchanges but in patterns of culture and politics" (1).

Both Piven and Wood assertions are affirmed in different factors active in the temporary workers movement. The permeance of class and labour provide a foundation upon which some on and offline coalitions and organizations, some affiliated through the enduring American Federation of Labour, have solidified organizing efforts and achieved most tangible successes. Examples include Washtech's legal victory against Microsoft securing back pay and recognized employed status for Microsoft's permatemps. and Working Partnerships successful "justice for janitors" union drive to organize contingent, largely Latino, janitors in Silicon Valley. Indeed the role of temp work and temp workers in revitalizing the American labour movement would proves an interesting analysis in itself which will be briefly addressed in chapter four and the conclusion.

While it is important to recognize the dimensions of class and labour in temp work as demonstrating vestiges of a lingering and contested conflict in America. it is equally critical to acknowledge the role of technology and cultural politics in this particular struggle. The politics of social exclusion active in the contestation of temp work are accentuated by the heavy presence of women, 'minorities', immigrants and youth in temping. These more representational features are particularly salient in regions were an influx of migration has been precipitated by the prevalence of work, which is typically temp-contracted, as is occurring in the Silicon Valley area. The cultural dimensions of temporary work inequity are active issues illustrated in the importance of building diverse

alliances which coalitions. projects and websites like Working Partnerships. svdebug, NAFFE/Fairjobs.org continue to cultivate.

In seeking to understand the strategic use of the internet and social network-building in a critical orientation which is not overly embracing, yet also not rigidly averse to the possibilities of new technologies, this thesis hopes to avoid an ambiguous portrayal of cyberspace. In detailing the specificities of use, and how it may facilitate resistant. and oppositional practices as a forum for solidarity, organizing, and diffusion of pertinent information regarding rights and agencies. as well, as through analyzing connections to offline organizations, subcultures and media texts. this thesis hopes to avoid a misleading, superficial depiction of the web's potential. The possibility of treating the net as some kind of "homogenous virtual public or common space that cloaks the multifarious usages of ICTs" (Loader, 1997:7). and glosses over the negative assimilist prospect cyberspace poses globally, will be avoided through a clear and careful methodology which is outlined in the next chapter.

Rather than positing cyberspace as a grand overarching impetus of cultural. political and economic reverberations globally it would appear more illuminating to understand cyberspace as a development interrelated to, effecting and effected by, concurrent late modern changes. As part of a larger body of literature addressing the dramatic changes of contemporary society and the 'transforming qualities' of new technologies. Harvey and Poster have merged well the links between 'the condition of postmodernity' and larger structural changes (in Loader, 1997:7). Poster's 'second media age' synergizes postmodern culture with wider political, economic and social change through the

mediation of ICTs. It is suggested that in this way we can consider, in some sense, cyberspace as a manifestation of the postmodern world given it's fragmented, decentralized, 'process of becoming' poststructualist attributes. Harvey (in Loader, 1997) has also suggested cyberspace as characteristic of a wider fragmentation which is contributing to the development of a multi-centered world, a world possessing converging social and electronic networks.

One of the most notable and ambitious attempts at comprehensively exploring the impact of global restructuring and new information technologies has been offered by Castells. With his recent trilogy, particularly the second volume *The Power of Identity* (1997), Castells examines the growth of identity-based social movements resistant of dominant meanings put forth by the social structures of the global-information society. Castells places emphasis on what he suggests are the effects of these struggles, specifically the undermining and legitimacy crisis induced in the increasingly outmoded institutions of the democratic nation-state. As Castells (1997) work elaborates some of the central themes at issue in this thesis, some discussion of his work is warranted here.

Castells (1997) starting point is what he calls "the Network Society" or Net. Castells suggests the network society characterizes a new, revolutionary form of social structure in the Information Age. The key features of this social structure include globalization, capitalist restructuring, organizational networking, and the 'virtual culture' produced by the prominence of new communication technologies (5).

Essentially Castells views these key features occurring with the increased expansion

of capitalism, and the dissemination of information through new media technologies, the

features which characterize globalization.

Castells (1997) suggests that the capitalist state's monopoly on the organization of time,

and space, is being usurped by "global flows of capital, goods, services, technology,

communication and information" (243). According to Castells (1997) control of the

network society does not reside in the hands of state institutions as much as it does in the

hands of a small elite dubbed "globapolitans" described somewhat fantastically as "half

beings, half flows"(69). Castell's (1997) controlling network of a "small elite" makes

reference to the same group which Sassen (1996) has mentioned when discussing the

"powerful economic actors now operating globally" (Sassen: 26). Thinking back to

chapter one, the global expansion of Manpower, the U.S' s largest employer, and it's

increasing relationship with corporations such as Microsoft and Hewlett Packard, can be

better understood in light of the characteristics of globalization which encourage merging

relationship between large, multinational corporations. Illustrative of the temp industry's

expansiveness, Manpower has even established itself in Beijing, China in recent years.

Castells (1997) implicates the ratios of government foreign debt and government

net borrowing on GDP, the central bank's currency reserves, government expenditures,

and countries' exports as indicative of decreasing state autonomy and "increasing

dependence of governments on global capital markets" (247). Like Sassen (1996),

Castells (1997) has noted that while the state may be losing its central power, it has not,

according to Castells (1997), lost its "influence"(243). Both Sassen (1996) and Castells

(1997) make reference to the legal regulatory role nation-states possess in influencing

new global contracts relating to labour market conduct in a global age. It is important to remember the retaining influence of the regulatory influence of the state when considering improving the temp industry. As was demonstrated in chapter one. distinct governmental responses at both the national, and international level {in the case of the international Labor Organization's recognition of labour market intermediaries (Vosko. 2001)}, reflect the ability to influence the way temping, and more broadly labour flexibility, develops through specific regulatory decisions. Distinctions in national, provincial. and even regional contexts, have an influence upon how temping develops. This is evident when observing Silicon Valley's prevalent use of temp labour. as well as in observing the opposition and mobilizational efforts which have responded to the inequitable conditions of temping in that area. efforts which will be analyzed in detail in later chapters. While local distinction do influence the development of temping this is not to diminish the influence of globalization which is also evident in the heavy use of temp agencies in Silicon Valley, reflective of merging corporate relationships being formed between multinational's like Manpower and Hewlett Packard. In fact. during Silicon Valley's 'boom' in the late nineties. thousands of computer programmers and developers were contracted through temp agencies with satellite offices in India, Taiwan and China and brought to Silicon Valley with the lure of working visas. With the decline in the digital industry many of these workers have been deported or left in 'limbo' (Soloman. 2001) (See Appendix 2 and Appendix 3a & 3b)

With corporate alliances being merged between multinational temp agencies and corporations, and workers being contracted from abroad. to a significant extent as a cost-saving and management strategy. these cases hint at some of the looming threats

globalization. and the growth of the temp industry, can pose to social protections on a broad-scale. Castells (1997) sees as unlikely "a global social contract (reducing the gap without necessarily equalizing social and working conditions), linked to international tariff agreements, {which} could avoid the demise of the most generous welfare state" (253).

It is this augmenting loss of autonomy and inability to ensure social security which is implicated as the key source of the legitimacy crisis of state and civil society by Castells (1997). Castells (1997) suggests the globalization of production and investment which threatens the welfare state. also threatens the legitimacy of western industrial states as the welfare state has been "a key element in policies of the past half century and the main building block of legitimacy" (Castells:252). The issue of the diminishing legitimacy of the nation-state, and the jeopardizing of social, civil and legal rights, brings us to an important and enduring tension. If the linkages between the fight for more equitable condition in temping. poststructuralist concerns. and resurgent anarchism are to truly understood. some exploration of the lasting contestation of the state's role, and it's ability to ensure citizenship protections, is necessary.

The Politics of Exclusion: Inequitable temp work, reduced social protections & poststructuralist movements

With the growth in the temporary help industry correlating with increasing social and employment insecurity, some discussion of shrinking citizenships protections is necessary to fully appreciate and situate the emergence of the temporary workers movement within the context of globalization

This discussion is important to understanding why and how networks between diverse coalitions, organizations, and projects are involved in strategies to improve the conditions of temp work. It is also useful in furthering an understanding of the temporary worker's movement as a collective action with multiple facets, seeking parity, and in these characteristics similar to many contemporary social movements, such as feminism. Essentially given the discriminatory practices of the temp industry, which were outlined in chapter one, the conditions and status of temping antagonizes a politics of exclusion effecting a diversity of social groups, and encouraging their involvement in opposing temping's inequity. To fully understand the impact of temporary work's lack of benefits and labour protections, and how globalization and deregulation influence those limited entitlements, an awareness of the historic development, conflict, and decline effecting social, civil, and politic protections is necessary.

Skeptical of the future of the nation-state in a period increasingly effected by global pressures, Castles and Davidson (2000) have called into question the nation-state's ability to function as the "global norm for political advancement" (2). They have noted the "problematic" nature of citizenship in recent years, as witnessed in the emergence of multiple citizenship campaigns which desire the extension and altering of citizenship rights to better reflect a broader spectrum of social groups, and concerns. Like Castells (1997), Castles and Davidson (2000) have demonstrated the decline of central control of national governments in a world increasingly dominated by the "embracing character of global relationships" governed by "the speed of reaction through electronically networked markets and media" which transcend national boundaries (Castles and

Davidson, 2000:4). Both Castles and Davidson (2000) and Castells suggest the destabilizing effects of globalization on "national-industrial society" (Castells: 7), and the threat to the welfare state that the imposition of global markets create. The increasing unwillingness of nations to pursue welfare policies which ignore global market pressures has marked a serious blow to civil, social and labour protections which have called into question the legitimacy of national institutions which gained much of their relevance by ensuring such protections (Castells: 252).

Through a critique of T.H. Marshall's influential work, Nash (2000) demonstrates how citizenship rights were generated out of an older sociological understanding of social inequality which "took class as the principal axis of inequality"(156). Ignoring other dimensions such as gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation this model of citizenship based on T.H. Marshal's model, is criticized by Nash as falsely universal and actually highly specific to Marshall's assumption of a "cultural homogeneity among the citizens of the nation' in post-war Britain (159). This assumption has proven highly problematic and limited in addressing the needs of a multiplicity of citizens and has given rise to many of the struggles for recognition which have significantly characterized 'new social movements'.

Significant cultural shifts have revealed the inadequacies of existent citizenship rights in western capitalist countries. In particular, the decline of the patriarchal nuclear family has generated serious challenges to the central male breadwinner model many welfare systems are premised on. As was demonstrated in the first chapter, temp workers are not exclusively bored housewives but rather demographically varied and typically dependent

on temping due to an absence of alternative sources of income. Within an American context where social rights have been circumscribed by a political climate favouring privatization, and economic growth rather than social programs, the lack of health and unemployment insurance in temp work makes the repercussions of welfare cutbacks, and dwindling or unresponsive social protections particularly threatening. These dangers are especially acute for many temp workers given the disproportionate hiring of women, minorities, youth and the poor-individuals belonging to social categories with the most restricted economic leverage.

As seen in the previous chapter Vosko (1999) has offered a detailed analysis of the repercussion for labour and social rights the decline in welfare protections, and in some instances replacement with 'workfare' (a program in which social assistance recipients are obliged to seek employment through private employment agencies which receive public funding from government sources) have induced.

While a transition to poststructuralism revealed the long neglected importance of identity and difference in social struggle and oppression, recent writers like Klein (2000) have reminded us that attention to the economic or class basis of exploitation should not be sacrificed in the process:

> The basic demands of identity politics assumed an atmosphere of
> plenty...In the representational politics of the New Economy nineties,
> however, women as well as men, and whites as well as people of color,
> were now fighting their battles over a single, shrinking piece of pie-and
> consistently failing to ask what was happening to the rest of it...In this
> new globalized context, the victories of identity politics have amounted to
> a rearranging of the furniture while the house burned down (Klein,
> 2000:121-123).

As has been established earlier, this thesis seeks to understand the emerging temp movement in it's full complexity wherein class and cultural and identity politics coincide. Fraser (1997) has highlighted the general shift to a focus on identity in "postsocialist conflicts" where "group identity supplant class interest as the chief medium of political mobilization. Cultural domination supplants exploitation as the fundamental injustice" (11). Fraser while recognizing the importance of cultural politics and difference, goes the crucial step further than Castells (1997). Displaying a sensitivity applicable to current socio-economic change, Fraser (1997) attempts to address the "new intellectual and practical task" of social theory by developing a "critical theory of recognition which combines the cultural politics of difference with "the social politics of equality" (Fraser, 1997:12).

Fraser (1997) has emphasized the inextricable boundness of economic and cultural marginalization, citing the distinction between the two as merely "analytical" (15). What becomes readily apparent when reading Castell's (1997) work is the interlinking of issues, movements, and people which defy tidy or mutually exclusive categorization. Like Fraser, Castells has highlighted the overrepresentation of minorities amongst the socially excluded. Fraser has referred to this as the "bivalent" nature of race, meaning that, like gender, race occupies a position of double injustice which is "traceable to both political economy and culture simultaneously" (Fraser, 1997:19).

This 'double injustice' is particularly salient in the U.S. and reflects a 'bivalent' inequity which is certainly active in the exploitation of temporary workers as has been established in the previous chapter, with an overrepresentation of women and 'people of colour' on the employee rosters of temp agencies, and particularly prevalent amongst

unskilled and/or lowpaying clerical, and light-industrial assembly work. In understanding

the shared interests of diverse organizations combating exclusion, we can better

understand the basis for certain alliances cultivated in efforts to improving temping.

Moreover, as a strategy which attends to the identity aspects of structurally reproduced

injustices, the temp movement could possess a flexibility and inclusiveness which

accurately reflects the heterogeneity of temp workers and their values, which could prove

beneficial in strengthening their cause.

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Castells (1997) has addressed this emerging tendency of social movements to be

loosely organized networks united around specific objectives. Nash (2000) as well has

emphasized networks as forming the basic organization of contemporary movements.

The concept of social networks is useful in understanding the tendency of social

movements to be locally based around specific issues, containing a fluid membership and

loose authority structure (Nash: 2000:104). An understanding of social movements as

fluid, loosely connected networks is particularly compatible with the organization of

cyberspace. Whittle (1997) has observed that "seeking local solutions is the wave of

change most readily enabled by cyberspace" (409). The local initiatives of Washtech and

Working Partnerships have been particularly effective likely because they were able to

cultivate local initiates affiliated with community groups and national organizations, in

regions which are relatively 'wired' to online technologies.

Castells (1997) has also emphasized locally-based, grassroots movements and new

communication technologies as defining characteristics of contemporary movements.

Castells (1997) has praised the international success the environmental movement

achieved through cultivating regionally-motivated grassroots movements. Pointing to the ability to make local issues global concerns, the environmental movement is "arguably one of the most comprehensive, influential movements of our time" (Castells, 1997:69). Nash (2000) has highlighted the global networks of the environmental movement as a significant organizational development revealing the artificiality of state boundaries which suggests a:

> politics which is conducted outside conventional political institutions and which aims mainly to foster a new political culture of environmental awareness. In this way, the networks of the environmental movement may contribute to a growth in transnational practices and orientations which mean the emergence of a "global civil society" the citizenship of which would involve "the creation of a new collective identity" (Falk in Nash: 214-115).

Castells (1997) highlights how "ecological discourse cuts across various political orientations and social origins within the movement, and that provides the framework from which different themes are emphasized at different moments for different purposes" (122). This adaptive ability to 'gel' with a diversity of groups and disparate identities has benefited the environmental movement with a framework and themes which correspond well with the "fundamental dimensions of the new social structures, the network society, emerging from the 1970's onwards" (Castells, 1997:122).

Castells suggests (1997) information technologies have assisted the environmental movement in achieving a broad-based diffusion engendering awareness and support. Weblinks have allowed for affiliations and an acknowledgement of sympathetic interests to grow. Castells (1997) work is useful when analyzing the networks, websites and initiatives opposed to the current conditions of temping as it pinpoints key areas: specifically the avoidance of overly rigid ideologies and the establishing of sympathetic

alliances across a broad spectrum, from which to evaluate the collective movement's efficacy.

An awareness of the pitfalls of an overemphasis on local, or grassroots action, which ignores influences occurring at the macro-level, and "leaves out the essential relation *between* state and local power" (Pramas, 1997: 2), is helpful in avoiding too reductionist a rendering of the dimensions of struggle and oppression. What I hope to do in these chapters is present an analysis of the temporary work industry, and the temporary workers movement which is growing in oppositional response to the existing injustices active within that industry, which is sensitive to both class, and structural factors, without discarding the importance of identity and the fluidity of local membership and coalitions. Race, gender, ethnicity, and local affiliations generated within the broader community of struggle underlines the necessity of both solid political- economic understanding coupled with attention to the kinds of concerns, and fluidities, the questions and transitions of postmodernism, poststructuralism and new technologies, like cyberspace, have posed.

By neglecting the economic basis of inequity and struggle, something of a static immobility is chained to the manner in which social movements are treated by Castells (1997). Overall, Castells effort is impeded by attempts to suggest a revolutionary shift while maintaining an empirically-premature position of capitalist triumph, a position which seriously limits potential avenues of change.

Mutability, Inclusion and Contemporary Social Action

Part of the discrepancy in Castells (1997) theorizing about social movements can be attributed to his adherence to Touraine's model of social movements. Melucci, Touraine's former student, has revealed Touraine's model to be limited in addressing the pluralities and ongoing process of negotiation which Melucci suggests characterizes contemporary social movements (in Nash, 2000:137). Castells (1997) puts forth Touraine's view of social movements as seen as representing a unified subject, or collective actor. Melucci has suggested that this emphasis on unity reduces the critical importance of the inherently plural nature of social movements (in Nash, 2000). In this way, rather than downplaying differing ideological principles and affiliations within movements as Castells (1997) does, divergent political orientations can coexist within a struggle not predicated on unity. As Nash (2000) has stated in explaining Melucci's position, there exists different levels of action in every movement, and "different groups of actors with different reasons for their involvement in collective action" (138). As well the "structural determinism" and "objective" definition of the state of the conflict as witnessed in Castells' (1997) appropriation of Touraine's typology is limited, according to Melucci, as it neglects the constant renegotiation and reconstruction which goes on in movements (in Nash: 138). Essentially, Melucci highlights that there is not necessarily some predetermined large-scale vision inherent in social movements but rather a progression of mounting, merging and diverging objectives.

Melucci's (in Nash, 2000) deeper understanding of the dynamic nature of collective social action more fully and clearly addresses the complexities, convergences and divergences occurring in contemporary movements. When observing the temporary

worker's movements in its range of coalitions, websites and zines that, I am suggesting, collectively play an active role in contributing to awareness, voicing resistance and advancing the empowerment of temporary workers and the conditions of temporary work, a multitude of similarities and distinctions become apparent. In terms of objectives, ideologies, and tactics, the various initiatives from *tempslave*! to the American Federation of Labour's *Coalition for Fair Employment* affiliated with the Silicon Valley-based *Working Partnerships*, represent differing approaches which nonetheless converge around their opposition to the exploitive labour practices of the American temporary help industry. In abandoning outmoded attempts to create a unity and cohesion within current social movements, Melucci's theory provides a framework which is sensitive to a diaspora of political action, while clarifying the ambiguity, constant renegotiation, and shifts which are ongoing in social movements given their predication on change, and avoidance of stasis.

Temping & Resurgent Anarchism

> ...*the fact that something is vague and elusive doesn't necessarily make it trivial and unimportant*
>
> Karen Rosenberg (2001)

Having suggested that contemporary social movements are far from tidy, cohesive phenomenons operating clearly discerned ideological roots, tactics, or trajectories the interpretative door has been opened as to how most accurately, if not most cleanly, understand the dynamics of the temporary workers movement. May (1994) offers a compelling avenue for untangling the composition, strategies and orientations of the

temporary workers movement. In his important book *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism* (1994), May demonstrates the parallels between poststructuralist political thought and the anarchist tradition. May suggests that anarchism "possesses the kinds of general political perspective and analysis that could characterize it as a forerunner to current poststructuralist thought." and provide a tactical and philosophical framework from which to interpret poststructuralist campaigns. Given the resurgence of anarchism in recent years largely connected to the anti-globalization movement in which "groups are likely to be hostile not only to corporations but to capitalism" (Epstein, 2001:1). May's work proves very timely.

> The anarchist tradition has provided its philosophy in a general way rather than through specific analyses, providing an outline of a framework within which to understand poststructuralist political philosophy. Like poststructuralism, anarchism rejects representational political intervention. For anarchists, the concentration of power is an invitation to abuse. Therefore anarchists seek political intervention in a multiplicity of irreducible struggles. As Kropotkin wrote, "{A} further advance in social life does not lie in the direction of a further concentration of power and regulative functions in the hands of a governing body, but in the direction of decentralization, both territorial and functional.

In linking poststructuralist thought to essentially anarchist principles. May (1994) articulates an important critical connection especially salient in current social action, and particularly enlightening in understanding the temporary workers movement. As has already been established earlier in the chapter, a large body of social thought has elaborated the diminishing role of the nation-state augmenting a latemodern tendency towards greater fragmentation feeding the active presence of a multiplicity of struggles for recognition, and more inclusive and responsive political processes. This skepticism of a politics operated from 'the top down' has proven influential in spurring the growth of local-level, grassroots politics generated out of shared interests and similar objectives

which can, and often do, grow into larger, loosely structured social networks with a greater diversity of objectives, orientations, and tactics reflective of poststructuralist fragmentation. Moreover, according to Castells (1997), public disenchantment with contemporary political institutions, at least in the western industrialized nations, as seen in the perceived unresponsiveness of the party system and the dominance of "political informationalism" (321) —where media is seen as a central site of political battles- has led to a resistant recoiling into affiliations with more primary identities built around ethnicity, nationality, regionality, gender and sexual orientation. Signaling a retreat into the self, and self-affirming identities, which both resist and challenge the dominant meanings put forth by informational global capitalism, this kind of resistant self-determination demonstrates similarities to anarchist values of self-actualization, freedom and the rejection of centralized, and concentrated power.

In detailing these developments which are often interpreted as poststructuralist in nature, the similarities to an anarchist philosophy and program become apparent. By applying the work of May (1994) and other authors examining resurgent anarchism, the explicit web linkages and latent anarchism operative in many of the sites of the temporary workers movement can be better, and more clearly understood. Moreover, the intrinsic fragmentation which characterizes both the temporal and spatial impermanence of temping is better understood through a poststructuralist sensitivity to decentralized forms of organization. Furthermore, a posstructuralist understanding of control is recognized in the Foucaudian conception of discipline, surveillance, and potential internalization of temp agency edicts analyzed in the first chapter. Indeed a recognition of the multiple sources that power and coercion derive from in temping (such as economic constraints;

cultural and psychological conditioning; and gendered compliance (Hossfield,

1991;Vosko,2001) illuminates an understanding of the resistant temp practices analyzed

in this thesis, as representing a plurality of coutertactics to reduce, or reject, corporate

capitalism and temp industry control in all it's manifestations. Finally, while I am

employing May's (1994) demonstration of the evident similarities active between

anarchism and poststructuralism, I would not collapse the movement into an anarchist

campaign, but rather suggest there are traces of anarchism active in both the resistant and

oppositional practices of temps, and the anti-corporate ethos of some of the websites and

zines.

Anarchism itself has been ambivalent regarding concrete objectives which go beyond

a critique of state power. In many ways this limitation has been reproduced in the sites

and zines like temp24-7, tempzine and tempslave, which this thesis contends, given web

links and recommendations of anarchist texts, as well as explicit anti-corporate rhetoric

and a DIY (do-it-yourself) sensibility, demonstrate an 'anarchist sensibility' to use

Epstein's (2001) term. Lacking the organization and 'within the system' change of the

labour-based temp sites, the proactive objectives offered on anarchic sites are generally

limited to sabotage, theft, vandalism, critiques of capitalism and a latent sense of mutual

aid.

While the contemporary anarchist strains witnessed in the temporary workers

movement and the anti-globalization movement more broadly, where the "the

intellectual/philosophical perspective that holds sway in these circles might be better

described as an anarchist sensibility than as anarchism per se" (Epstein, 2001:1) may not

wholly conform to May's poststructuralist anarchism, but his efforts to revealing the links

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between contemporary political philosophy and anarchism, prove nonetheless useful in understanding the oppositional, alternative vision active here, and all the more salient given the well-commented upon anarchic nature of cyberspace (Poster, 1997; Loader, 1997; Smith and Kollock,1999). Importantly, the appeal of anarchism as a "radicalism of last resort" may significantly be traced to its "advantage of exclusion, the nobility of failure" which has left it's theoretical purity untainted by the disappointments of actualization (Rosenberg.2002:31).

Analysis of both anarchism and cyberspace are laden with difficulties. There is something somewhat too ethereal and fluid to entirely pin down. Poster (1997) articulates well the difficulty of understanding the manifestation of politics online. Poster has noted that discussion of the political impact of the Internet has focused on a number of issues: access, technological determinism, encryption, commodification, intellectual property, the public sphere, decentralization, anarchy, gender and ethnicity (213). Poster (1997), in contemplating the ramifications for democracy offered by the emergence of cyberspace, has suggested existing theoretical tools and "modernist interpretation" (213) as limited and outmoded for promoting an understanding of the social and political impact of the Internet. Poster (1997) suggests ideas of the public sphere, technology, and the democratic process carry loaded and conflicting baggage from the enlightenment and modern period which are both inadequate, and inappropriate for understanding new forms of political participation (214).

Poster highlights the prevalent tendency of both "corporate members and Marxist critics" (213) alike, to understand the Internet as "an extension of or substitution for

existing institutions" (213). Poster (1997) is weary of such thinking which views the Internet in a merely instrumental way, a way that does not attempt to put forth any critical conceptual breakthroughs to match the technological development the web has posed. Viewing the Internet as essentially a tool derives from a modern perception, "advancing the goals of its users who are understood as preconstituted instrumental identities" (Poster, 1997:216). To reflect postmodernist perception, Poster suggests thinking of the Internet as a social space, "its effects are more like those of Germany than those of hammers" (216).

As "above all a decentralized communication system" which is "also decentralized at a basic level of organization since, as a network of networks, new networks may be added so long as they conform to certain communication protocols", Poster (1997) remarks "the issue now is that the machines enable new forms of decentralized dialogue" (220). As such, the Internet's demonstrated ability to "instantiate new forms of interaction...which pose the question of new kinds of relations of power configurations between participants " begs the question which Poster (1997) posits "are there new kinds of relations occurring within it which suggest new forms of power configurations between communicating individuals (216)?"

Such 'new power relations' are not easily understood given our current limitations in conceptual thinking which Poster notes. Given the tendency toward non-hierarchical, generally symmetrical, decentralized relations which seem "to discourage the endowment of individuals with inflated status" (225) and the Internet's nature which "institutes a communicative practice of self-constitution" (224) the similarities and compatibilities with the anarchist tradition encouraging egalitarianism, freedom, creativity and free

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expression are evident, yet admittedly calling upon an old canon rather than offering

anything intellectually revolutionary. Whether collectivities or individuals visiting

cyberspace to transcend repressive parameters be they governmental, employment-

related, or identity-based choose to align or categorize themselves with anarchist

principles, there exists nonetheless the potential for something undeniably resistant in

Internet relations. For the purposes of examining the temporary workers movement given

the links and anarchic nature of some of the content and discourse of a few prominent

sites, particularly the 'ziney' ones, exploring anarchic strains can prove illuminating.

However, it is recognized that rather than presenting an innovative conceptual pathway,

this thesis is satisfied, for the time being, to explore the 'resistance' being fostered online

and within coalitions.

While Poster's (1997) work is highly effective in heightening awareness to the

limitations of existing sociological theory and interpretation, in terms of suggesting

anything adequately novel or futurist-inspired to grasp the Internet's nature (perhaps

cyberpunk is better suited to these questions as has been suggested (see Loader, 1997:3),

Poster (1997) appears in the end satisfied with offering a critical work. His essay points

out the mistakes we are too avoid and potential beacons, such as new forms of dialogue

which challenge traditional political participation and authority, we should steer towards

in devising increasingly appropriate questions and frameworks for understanding the

impact of new communication technologies sociologically. As Poster (1997) writes:

> in the absence of a coherent political programme, the best one can do is to
> examine phenomena such as the Internet in relation to new forms of the
> old democracy, while holding open the possibility that what might emerge
> might be something other than democracy in any shape that we may
> conceive it given our embeddedness in the present (in Loader, 214).

Regarding the resistant potential of new technologies, the question remains ongoing if postmodern modes of domination will effectively close these emancipatory avenues or not. By looking at the emerging temp workers movement, the anarchic dimensions, the revitalized American labour politics, and the use of networks reveal both the potential being fostered as well as illustrating existing limitations as well. Moreover, where the anarchic aspects of the net and its users are understood in this thesis as demonstrating a progressive 'left' potential, there exists the equal possibility for a libertarian brand of "anarcho-capitalism," much favoured in the industry side of computer and cyber technologies, which aggressively maintains a "dimly veiled social Darwinist/property-is-next-to-godliness/everything-is-contractual political and economic philosophy" seeking to further an "Ayn Rand inspired utopia" (Borsook, 2000:98). Cyberspace remains a highly contested zone manifesting many of the prominent political tensions active today, the future outcome of which is very difficult to predict as Poster (1997) writes,

> Assuming the US government and the corporations do not shape the Internet entirely in their own image and that places of cyberdemocracy remain and spread to larger and larger segments of the population, what will emerge as a postmodern politics? If these conditions are met, one possibility is that authority as we have known it will change drastically...a new term will be required to indicate a relation of leaders and followers that is mediated by cyberspace and constituted in relation to the mobile identities found therein (Poster, 1997:225).

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to develop and outline the theoretical framework and background through which the case study analysis of selected temp websites, and coalitions active in the temporary workers movement, will be traced. I have contextualized the emergence of the temporary workers movement within the broader

discourse of globalization which Castells (1997), Nash (2000) and others have examined.

Further situating temp struggle has been enhanced through a review of postmodern,

poststructuralist, and technological transitions as elaborated by Poster (1997), Loader

(1997) Smith and Kollock (1999) and others. Temp worker's resistance, as witnessed on

the sites, zines and coalitions under analysis, has been linked to the cultural politics of

poststructuralism given the politics of exclusion reproduced in temping which is reflected

in the ethnic, gender and youth-based coalitions and websites. Finally, resurgent

anarchism's connection to the temp worker's movement has been explored with the work

of May (1994), Epstein, (2001) and Rosenberg (2002).

Chapter Three: Approaching Online Methodology

This chapter will detail the methodological orientation use to analyze the efficacy of social network-building and online technologies in cultivating the emerging temporary worker's movement. I have selected specific websites to conduct my analysis based on their significance in promoting awareness to the 'temp cause', establishing strategic and diverse network affiliations, and in some cases achieving significant legal and union victories. The coalitions, websites, and zine I have chosen are: Working Partnerships Membership Association/ www.wpmembers.org, Silicon Valleydebug, Washtech, North American Alliance for Fair Employment/ www.fairjobs.org, www.temp24.7.com and Tempslave/Tempzine. As well, briefer but relevant inclusion of other media texts such as films like *Clockwatchers*, and *Haikou, Tunnel* which offer a widely diffused irreverent critique of temping, will be analyzed when considering issues of access and McLuhan's (1996) notion of media ecology.

The questions directing my analysis are the following: How is network building and the use of web technologies strategically effecting the emerging temporary worker's movement? How is the fluidity and fragmentation inherent to web communication impeding or enhancing attempts at collective action to improve temping? What 'successes' have these strategies achieved? How are these networks linked both online and off, to other poststructuralist struggles and anti-globalization campaigns? How is the salience of resurgent anarchism witnessed in the temporary worker's movement to be understood?

The analysis is situated predominately in an American context for a few principle reasons. Firstly, the socio-economic, political and legal particularities which have facilitated the development of an inequitable temporary work arrangement are specific to America as mentioned in the introduction and chapter one. To some degree the expansion and/or historic presence of American temp agencies like Manpower, Kelly Services, Olsten Staffing throughout Canada, combined with provincial governments favouring deregulation and welfare reform, have led to alarming similarities in temping conditions which were discussed in the first chapter. However as the majority of networks and coalitions operative in the emerging temporary worker's movement are American, assessing the efficacy and potential impact of the strategies of the movement will be restricted to the American temp industry, and to the oppositional temp worker's movement which has developed in response to it.

While not limited to high-tech zones, some of the coalitions discussed in this thesis were spearheaded my labour groups in regions displaying a heavy presence of information/high-tech industries. The high-tech industries tend to heavily employ temps, specifically in both clerical and assembly work, contracted through the plethora of agencies operative in those areas. To that extent there may be certain localized or regional dimensions which have contributed to the grassroots success of some temp initiatives based out of Silicon Valley, California and Washington state.

As this thesis seeks an understanding of websites and weblinks as 'virtual' pathways connecting the temp movement and diffusing awareness to empower temps, important dimensions in analyzing websites include: the efficacy and impact of online networking,

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web (and zine) discourse understood as 'little narratives' (Lyotard in Loader, 1997), and issues of accessibility, accuracy, and treating online rhetoric.

Burris's (2000) methodology of social network analysis is adapted to the website study, in particular reference to his notion of weblinks as indicators of salient ideological affiliation. Moreover the existence of offline organizations will be made clear, given that projects and organizations which exist exclusively online hold a more limited potential due to firstly, the temporality of the net (ie.the maintenance of websites is very erratic) and secondly, the enduring importance of regionally-based organizations for initiating involvement renders sole 'virtual' existence less effective in advancing change.

Web postings, discussion forums, the site's mission statement or vision, and zine contributions will be treated in a similar manner to interview materials and oral histories. They will be interpreted as subjective accounts which shed light on qualitative circumstances which are lost through other methods which make greater claims to scientific validity such as labour statistics. In this sense, the discourse of selected sites and zines primarily, as well as other media created by temps (films, documentaries, plays etc) can be understood as illuminating 'little narratives' (Lyotard in Loader, 1997). Given the controversy surrounding the reliability of American statistics due to the ambiguity around the classification of temp workers which was discussed in the first chapter, it is likely that a focus on the discourse contained in the postings, forums and cultural products contributed by temps themselves may offer a more reflective picture than quantitative measures which would be inappropriate to a study of this sort of material.

As this methodology has been developed and informed by applying the advice of various cybertheorists addressing obstacles. and important issues encountered when analyzing web technologies. some expanded discussion extrapolating the origins of several of these criteria and methods will be presented next.

A Critical Approach to Cyberspace

Given the pronounced reordering and wider fragmentation cyberspace characterizes, with the world "becoming multi-centered"... ICTs are accelerating the shift towards an expanding sphere of indirect relations, making remoteness (but not necessarily impersonality) their predominant feature(Loader.1997:15).

In the next chapter the facility of this remote communication to complement and transcend the isolation of temping will be evaluated.

If, as Loader states, "cyberspace is to some extent an anarchistic world (17)", with most Usenet newsgroups being "anarchic in the technical sense of the term-they have no central authority but retain an "order and structure (Smith and Kollock.1999:6). it is important to nevertheless, proceed with caution and not overextend the idea of liberty, or put forth a notion of complete freedom online. The critique which Loader (1997) cites, of the "utopian school of future 'cyberlifestyles' which sees cities becoming depopulated. instant electronic democracy replacing the need for governmental structures and services and a dominant ruralist lifestyle emerging for a dominant 'majority' of the population" (139) illuminates certain important misgivings with alternative societal visions that even Bookchin (1971) has been guilty of narrowly, and with significant anti-urban bias. adhering to. To be sure, if cyberspace does present important. previously unavailable

avenues for realizing diverse and even alternative social organization, it remains a 'real'

space of organization in the sense that Poster has suggested, and its communication is

fraught with the limitations and shortcomings common to any social space. As Wellman

and Gulia (1999) have articulated

> The failure of the ideal of complete freedom in cyberspace was an early
> phenomenon. In the mid-1970s, Alluquere Rosanne Stone writes, "the age
> of surveillance and social control arrived for the electronic virtual
> community(Stone 1991: 91). The Communitree project-a bulletin board
> intended as a free expression forum for spiritual and intellectual discussion
> among adults was hacked into by teens who posted obscene messages.
> Communitree had to introduce technical means to enable the system's
> administrator s to monitor users' activities and censor "inappropriate"
> messages as a necessary measures to maintain order (Wellman and Gulia,
> 1999).

It is recognized that any notion of the Internet as some free domain of endless liberty

would be erroneous and pointless to advance. The thesis's concern with web technologies

is grounded in the objective of critically understanding the possibilities and limitations of

improving the conditions and solidarity of temping through online forums and resources

of selected temp websites. Primarily as the websites under analysis are connected to

existing coalitions, discourses, an initiatives existing offline as well, many of the

contested contentions surrounding the potential of 'online community' are less relevant.

The objectives and characteristics of the online dialogue and interactivity being analyzed

in this thesis, are quite distinct from the discourse of strictly online social spaces such as

MUDs in which participants often adopt or adapt various identities The web is

understood in this research as a innovative space which can overcome some of the

intrinsic spatial and normative barriers in temping which prevent traditional methods of

expressing dissent and organizing. The purposes of this study are more straightforward. to treat the Net as "only one of many ways in which the same people may interact. It is not a separate reality. People bring to their online interactions such baggage as their gender, stage in the life cycle, cultural milieu, socioeconomic status, and offline connections with others" (Wellman & Gulia, 1999:170). By approaching the potential benefits and constraints of online technologies for improving the conditions of temping, I hope to avoid the kind of "parochial analysis" which examines the Net as some sort of "isolated social phenomenon without taking into account how interactions on the Net fit together with other aspects of people's lives" (Wellman & Gulia, 1999:170).

Viewing net members participation in a multiplicity of discussion forums as a "technologically-supported continuation of a long term shift to communities organized by shared interests rather than by shared place...or shared ancestry" (Smith & Kollock, 1999:5) allows us to explore the online and offline social networks. weblinks which are connecting and alerting temps to the solidarity and resources active and available through temp networks. This leads to an understanding of the web as both a social space (Poster 1997), and a viable strategy for enhancing communication and access to pertinent resources. In the case of the temporary workers efforts the purposes of net usage are communication and advancement, at the individual level to lessen alienation, educate and build a sense of solidarity which can also be tapped into at the collective level to encourage union membership, political awareness, and to establish stronger networks of support. Indeed, the Internet has proven effective in online organizing in the past, as it was in the case of striking Israeli university professors in their fight against the government (Wellman and Gulia, 1999:172), and the well-publicized tactics of the

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Zapatistas (in Castells, 1997). We will see in chapter four how these multiple avenues of subversion facilitated by the net have manifested in various creative uses in the coalitions and websites analyzed.

The "promise that networks will create new places of assembly" (Smith and Kollock, 1999:4) will be evaluated through an analysis of postings, contributions and online discussion forums active on selected websites. As well, the greater "anonymity and pseudonymity" online which encourages documented computer-mediated behavior which is "relatively uninhibited and nonconforming" (Reid in Smith and Kollock, 1999:111) will be evaluated in the website analysis in the next chapter. The discretion and possible anonymity of online participation on selected temp websites will be argued as offering a significant benefit to temps in overcoming the highly regulated sanctions and restrictive environments of agency placements.

Access, Accuracy and Rhetoric Online

In this section we will discuss concepts and criteria important in evaluating the temp websites analyzed in the next chapter. The online community characteristics which will figure in to this discussion include the importance of access, ethos, rhetoric-and the implications of online rhetoric in relation to accuracy of information circulated and widely diffused through temp websites.

Whether choosing to conceptualize cyberspace as a 'space' as Poster (1997) suggests, or in more modernist thinking as a tool (can a space not serve as a tool?) the issue of access remains, in either case, essential. Access has remained central to any discussion suggesting new technologies as a possible vehicle for advancing the status of

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marginalized groups. While advocates are hopeful for an emergent "digital democracy",
the realities of power which support an "information aristocracy" and further a "digital
divide" (source) of "information haves and have-nots" requires addressing (Carter, 1997:
137).

In Mele's (1999) study of online organizing amongst an African American community
group seeking involvement and professional advice in urban planning regarding the
revamping of the Jervay Place inner city housing project, Mele has emphasized the
indispensable importance of access to not only technology, but also knowledge and
financial resources. Based on this experience, Mele points out that the implications of
online organizing for social change are unclear:

> The success of the Jervay Place residents rested on their access to
> knowledge,technology, and financial resources. The ability to export the
> organizational lessons of Jervay Place will therefore be limited to the
> extent that other communities lack these resources. Nevertheless, the
> Jervay Place residents have at least demonstrated the potential of online
> networks to decrease the costs of communicating and organizing. As one
> resident said, "on that machine in the center, there are people who are
> listening (Mele, 1999:23).

Mele's (1999) study point to the possibility of a venue or forum to promote awareness
of the typical inequity of temping, not jut to temps but to a wider audience. As many
Americans may be unaware or unfamiliar with the questionable conditions of temp
placements, through the weblinks active on other sites net participants could become
acquainted with the temp issues which may further awareness and extend networks of
support.

One of the difficulties in investing considerable hope in publicly -funded computer
resources, is that this both ignores augmenting cutbacks and sustains conditions of

dependence in which government act as a benevolent guardian, a role as has been

established in chapter two, state institutions are increasingly reluctant to assume. As

Loader (1997) articulates in considering issues of access:

> It is necessary to address the cyber-libertarian assertion that they "are
> creating a world that all may enter without privilege or prejudice accorded
> by race, economic power, military force, or station of birth"(Barlow,
> 1996a)...such weeping assertions surely need to be embedded within the
> social context of access to the Internet. Although data on usage are at
> present limited, they do not indicate that anything more than a small
> percentage of the world's population is online and that the majority
> probably come from affluent countries and have professional
> backgrounds. The degree to which a wider range of people may become
> 'wired' is likely to be heavily dependent upon public policy-making and
> corporate planning, which once more invokes the role of politics in the
> development of cyberspace (7).

When thinking specifically of temp access to online technologies, it would seem

that one of the advantages of at least the abundance of clerical sector employment

contracted through agency placements, is precisely the access to computers, free

photocopying, and various pens and office supplies easily appropriated which sites like

tempslave! and *temp24-7* are quick to promote. As for the multitudes of temps contracted

for light-industrial and assembly work, the area composed of the highest concentration of

'minorities' and women, it would seem obstacles to access could remain a barrier to

obtaining info, engaging in forums and organizing, and may replicate disparities existing

within broader society in the world of temping, where the lowest paid and most

marginalized temps might have the most limited possibilities for access. Indeed, while

this research, like that of other studies, remains "optimistic about the potential of the

Internet to act as a realm for political interaction with concrete effects on the off-line

world...issues of access continue to qualify claims regarding the widespread political

potential of the Internet" (Reid, 1998:222). Moreover, assessing the demographics of

online participants remains difficult, with most research concluding usage remains "typically male" (Bayam, 1998: 41). The importance of access retains a centrality, and will be returned to in the next chapter when attempting to evaluate the impact of web technologies in advantaging temp efforts.

Given the centrality of dialogue on websites and forums, certain theorists have raised the issue of accuracy in content in what is a medium animated by rhetoric. Particularly when examining the content and discussion forums of the temp sites emerging out of the zine tradition, a considerable amount of flamboyant rhetoric and anti-corporate ethos is active. Gurak (1998) in her analysis of the online protests over Marketplace and the Clipper Chip has examined the discourse and exchanges which took place, through the lens of rhetoric. In both cases privacy advocates were outraged at what were viewed as attempts on the part of business on the one hand, and government surveillance on the other, to compromise individual privacy rights.

Marketplace was to be a direct mail marketing database for MacIntosh computers which would contain information about 120 million individual American consumers. The Clipper chip was a specific encryption chip used by government to descramble phone calls. In both cases, community and privacy advocates used the Internet to disseminate information and organize people with common values on privacy and encryption (Gurak, 1998:244). Through discussion forums and massive email postings to Lotus in the case of Marketplace, as well as an Internet-based petition drive which garnered 47,000 signatures in reference to the Clipper Chip advocates mounted successful online campaigns. Gurak (1998) suggests "that two rhetorical features, powerful and quick *delivery* on computer

networks and a strong community *ethos* were critical to both social actions"(250).

Through a common ethos and the instantaneous delivery of emailing which was able to

transcend temporal and spatial restrictions, organizers were able to sustain action in

absence of face-to-face methods of establishing presence and delivering messages.

However, as Gurak highlights the accuracy of the information circulating went seemingly

unchallenged and relied heavily on the assumed authority of certain mobilizers who

dominated discussions, and the spread of postings. Gurak contends both theses

campaigns demonstrated the "double-edged sword" of online communication. The

"promise of online communication for crossing physical boundaries and allowing people

of common interests and goals to meet and act across space and time" was compromised

at the same time by "a certain peril" which Gurak describes as encouraging a "kind of

insularity and the spread of inaccurate information. with participants trusting "the Net

Community" even in the face of some obvious factual errors" (244). As the websites

subject to analysis in the next chapter are 'forum for resistance' their irreverent use of

rhetorical features are a pronounced issue. How these rhetorical features impact upon

their efficacy upon their impact as a forum and a resource will be evaluated.

Reid (1998) has also "worked toward a perspective on language use that emphasizes

the rhetorical nature of virtual space" (214). Based on studies of MOO's and MUD's,

Reid suggests that for the Internet's potential as a site of free and open discourse to be

realized, the space of discussion must truly support a democratic environment which,

given the prevalence of 'flaming' (verbally abusive dialogue) and dominant personalities

monopolizing input. she suggests it currently lacks. Reid states that "from the perspective

of a rhetorician, this ultimate breakdown (in civil, respective exchange) seemed to be a

quite clear lesson that virtual communities are *not* the agora, that they are not an open and

free public discourse" (216). While virtual speech and action may possess "the

spontaneity and immediacy of traditionally undocumented social speech," part of the

problem stems from the tendency of people to become fixed in opinions given the

"indelibility of writing" online communication requires" (220).

> We are what we write in a far more intimate and inflexible way than we
> are ever purely or merely what we say face-to-face. A primary
> characteristic of flame wars-those intensely vitriolic exchanges that
> regularly erupt in online environments-is the speed with which individuals
> become polarized and fixed in their opinions (Reid, 1998:220).

Given the sites under consideration in this study culminate around the common values

and objectives of temporary workers, the incidence of 'flaming' and harsh exchanges

occurring in MUD type environments in far less likely. However, the issue of accuracy

and the influence and input of a handful of organizers are relevant concerns in the temp

sites selected, presenting the risks to accuracy similar to those outlines by Gurak and

Reid. Writers such as Whittle (1997) however, have suggested the medium of online

exchange holds the potential to increase the factuality and credibility of web material. As

Whittle (1997) writes "many assertions that are factually wrong that might slide by at a

meeting get nailed online, where readers have the time and resources to check facts"

(396).

When evaluating the temp sites which will be fully examined in the next chapter,

attention to the source, tone and manner of exchange, and to the extent in can be

determined the accuracy, active in postings, content, and discussion forums, will be

analyzed

Networks

In an effort to broaden understanding of the organizational and mobilizational structure of the white supremacist movement, Burris et al (2000) have proposed a methodology of applying the formal methods of social network analysis to study the Internet. In "treating links between Internet websites as ties of affinity, communication, or potential coordination," Burris investigates the structural properties and ideological affiliations active in the "relatively decentralized" white supremacist movement and proposes this strategy as an effective method for the study of online contemporary social movements and the articulation of their networks (215).

While the formal methodology of social network analysis is beyond the expertise of my study, I believe that using an adapted version of Burris's model will manifest a picture of the formal ties or personal connections between organizations, or more simply in other instances, to allow for an indication of ideological affinities or common goals different temp coalitions, zines and their websites may share. Moreover as articulated in chapter two, Burris's (2000) conceptualizing allows for a more flexible understanding of social movement which is appropriate for understanding the loose affiliations, and sense of solidarity characterizing the on of offline collective action of temps, and temp networks Heeding Burris's advice, an awareness to the possible limitations of Internet links as indicators of broader patterns of social movement structure is recognized. As Internet links are "a much 'cheaper' form of affiliation than those that are maintained through other lines of communication or association, so the links among websites are likely to be denser and less selective than non-virtual ties among organizations" (Burris,

2000:216). Mindful of this, to ensure that a meaningful representation of the temporary workers movement is presented, I will articulate where links reflect offline coalition ties, or reflect looser connections which simply allow a conveyance of ideological affinities and/or broad, common objectives. Burris's methodology is intended as "generally an inductive and exploratory enterprise" which may "clarify the salient lines of cleavage within the network" displaying "compatible or sympathetic" links (219-220). The links can shed light on what kind of social formation is occurring in temporary worker's resistance.

Given the prevalence of networking or coalition-building strategies generated out of shared interests or similar objectives which has been documented as prevalent in the actions of contemporary social movements (Castells, 1997), Burris's methodology is particularly well-suited. This will be demonstrated when addressing the affiliations and tactics operative in the temporary workers movement as manifest in the selected websites and organizations including Working Partnerships, NAFFE's Coalition for Fair Employment, WashTech. *tempslave!* , tempzine and temp24-7.com.

Website and Coalition Diversity

The methodology of both Wellman and Gulia (1999) and Burris (2000) who in essence suggest examining the networks and links online groups to uncover their affiliations to offline connections complements the theoretical orientation (Melucci{in Nash, 2000, May, 1994) pursued in this research suggesting contemporary collective action as mutable, subject to negotiation, and flexible and adaptive in terms of ideology and strategic positions. With groups of varying orientations holding similar objectives on

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certain issues while fragmenting on others. emphasis lies less on unity. a characteristic

magnified by a transition from modern to postmodern movements (Melucci {in Nash}

2000). In this sense an understanding of the critical and politicized efforts of temp-

relevant coalitions and projects sharing common objectives analyzed in the next chapter,

can begin to be understood as an emergent temp worker's movement.

The decentralized, non-hierarchical organization of cybertechnologies were discussed

in the preceding chapter. The dynamics of the temporary worker's movement in many

ways manifest these characteristics, with the diversity of websites, organizations, and

coalitions active in seeking temporary worker's advancement running the gamut from

fairly traditional union politics, to waging opposition through cultural practices,

creativity, and more radicalized anarchic resistance. A detailed description of the

selected coalitions and websites is presented next. In chapter four, an analysis of the

characteristics and potential impact of the coalitions and sites will be analyzed, and an

evaluation of how they operate as a network, as well as how they are weakened or aided

by online technologies will be presented.

Working Partnerships Membership Association/ www.wpmembers.org

Formerly www.atwork.org now wpmember.org is a site and coalition operating a

temporary workers forum which is linked and affiliated with the South Bay Labour

Council's "Working Partnerships," a non-profit organization and website based out of the

San Jose area of California. Given its proximity to the high tech industries of Silicon

Valley, where temporary work is favoured by the corporations that operate there, the

existence of a forum and coalition of resistance to temporary work is necessitated as

Klein (2000) has noted:

> Part-timers, temps and contractors are rampant in Silicon Valley-a recent
> labour study of the region estimates that between 27 and 40 percent of the
> valley's employees are "contingency workers", and the use of temps there
> is increasing at twice the rate of the rest of the country. The percentage of
> Silicon Valley workers employed by temp agencies is nearly three times
> the national average (249).

Working Partnerships USA is a non-profit organization "dedicated to rebuilding the

link between regional and community well-being, and developing state and national

workforce development and employment policy that truly benefit working

families"(www.atwork.org). The partnerships which make up the coalition include the

South Bay Labour Council, local community leaders, clergy, student group's, women's

organizations, housing activists and environmentalists. The coalition was spearheaded as

a collaborative venture by Working Partnerships AFL (American Federation of Labour)

leader Amy Dean and seeks to advance the status of temp workers, diminish corporate

power, and promote more equitable living and working conditions in the area. Dean's

revamped unionizing methods, specifically the forging of coalitions at both the local and

national level and her innovative use of new technologies, were the subject of a recent

article in *The Economist*.

The 'temp worker forum', is committed to improving the conditions of temping in the

Bay area and more broadly. While the coalition is quite active even developing a health

care plan for members, the site itself could be more frequently updated. The site is

designed as an "on-line resource to help workers negotiate the difficulties of contingent

employment in Silicon Valley"(www.atwork.org). The idea is to maintain a "constantly

evolving resource" which establishes a rating of area agencies, and a code of conduct for agencies to uphold, all developed through concerns noted by the input and survey answers of temps who visit the site. A questionnaire is posted which visitors are encouraged to complete and email to contribute to the study the South Bay Labour Council is conducting to rank agencies, and address the most immediate complaints of temps. The site offers a database and resource guide of temp relevant material, in addition to advice on union building and the opportunity to "share your temp tale!" to make a "positive difference in the lives of temporary workers" (wpmember.org). As stated on their website, documented stories "will be shared with political leaders, members of the press, temporary workers and the greater community".

In an effort to achieve greater workplace autonomy and equity, temp workers are increasingly using the technology of Silicon Valley to better the conditions of temp work.

Silicon valley debug. www.siliconvalley.debug.org

As we saw in chapter one, Jorgensen and Reimer (2000) have connected the rise in temp work to the increase in youth underemployment and the economic decline of young workers. www.siliconvalleydebug.org a featured link active on the Working Partnership's, Wasthtech and NAFFE's Fair Jobs sites, appeals specifically to these marginalized workers. SVDebug is a youth project sponsored by the non-profit Pacific News Service. The project is coordinated by Raj Jayadev, journalist, temp worker, and activist involved in the temporary workers movement in Silicon Valley, California. Jayadev's journalistic works investigating conditions in an "unglamorous sector of the New Economy" (Cagen, 2000:14) have revealed the realities of assembly line work in

manufacturing at Hewlett Packard and the exploitation of immigrant temp labour contracted through Manpower. Determined to debunk the "myth about the Information age: that technology is produced by some sort of divine intervention-so advanced that it requires no physical labor or manufacturing" (12-13) Jayadev's work has appeared in the independent media both online (*Alternet.org*) and off (*To-do List*), as well as mainstream media like the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Silicon Valley debug is conceived as a creative initiative which "uses art, writing, and dialogue to allow youth and workers to educate each other" (debug). Encouraging journalistic, literary and artistic contributions and collaborations from specifically the "unheard voices of Silicon Valley's young and temporary" (under 30 years), debug aims to "provide a space for people to think critically". The project develops this critical mindset through pieces detailing both temping and other life experiences as well as seminars and information related to local issues, labour organizing and anti-globalization concerns. The website serves to inform and empower young temp workers, "by showing that everyday stories and struggles are important" the project aims "to create a culture of organizing and inspire a rage to action,"(svdebug) while also offering creative terrain to showcase and develop pieces of journalism, visual arts and web design skills while waging opposition at the site of culture. The project produces a zine full of the stories and comics appearing on the site which is available free at the San Jose Public Library and for order online.

Washtech & washtech.org

Like Working Partnerships and svdebug, Washtech deals largely with the conditions

of temping in the computer industry, but dealing more in 'white collar' sectors of

employment like software design and programming. Wash-Tech is a union organized by

young workers and affiliated with the Communications Workers of America which also

actively maintains the www.washtech.org website. Washtech gained notoriety and

exposure for the temporary worker's movements after winning a court ruling in their

favour against Microsoft. Following a 1990 IRS challenge to Microsoft's classification of

'orange badges' as independent contractors and consequent ruling that these people were

actually employees of Microsoft and the company should be paying their payroll tax, a

group of employees classified by Microsoft as contractors launched a lawsuit against the

company, claiming they were regular workers (Klein, 2000). In 1999 the U.S. Court of

Appeals for the Ninth circuit ruled against Microsoft, deciding that the workers were in

fact employees and ordering Microsoft to renumerate back pay at permanent employee

wages. For years Microsoft had fought off a legal challenge from the 'permatemps' that

is, "employees who for all practical purposes are part of a company's permanent

workforce but are actually employed through a temp agency" (Jorgensen and Reimer,

2000:38). Klein (2000) has articulated "the only way to tell them {permatemps} from the

'real' Microserfs is by the color of their badges: blue for perms, orange for permatemps"

(250). The ruling served to solidify Washtech's viable resistance and since that time an

IT worker has run for house of representatives, a featured story on their home web page.

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Similar to the union politics of working partnerships temp forum the washtech.org, washtech's website, also offers a discussion forum. postings and a "it happened to me..." section, links to other relevant sites like Working Partnerships. the option to join the washtech union, information about organizing and company reviews. legislative issues, wage and benefit parity issues and debate/discussion topics related to discrimination within the high-tech industry. Apropos to a site initiated and maintained by IT workers the web address is memorable and precise, the site is easy to locate and navigate, and is frequently updated.

It should be noted that "many of Microsoft's high-tech freelancers are hardly defenseless victims of Bill Gates' payroll concoctions, but are freelancers by choice" (Klein. 2000:252). Indeed free agency and contract work is preferred by many workers in the skilled, higher paying echelons of temp work. This being the case the sites often feature agency rankings and tips on where and how to secure the fullest benefits of freelancing.

North American Alliance for Fair Employment/ www.fairjobs.org

Formerly the National Alliance for Fair Employment this non-profit labour organization has recently gone North American wide. NAFFE's most notable campaigns to date have been coordinated by the coalition's Campaign on Contingent Work Massachusetts member, a coalition organized in 1998 against the abuse of temp workers. In opposition to 'workfare' (state funneling of welfare recipients into temp jobs) the coalition organized actions employing Situationist style theatrics and demanding that all temp agencies sign an industry code of conduct laying out living wages, benefits and working conditions for temps, and the right to organize. This coalition uses methods and

illustrates an approach offering an interesting blend of the first three sites. The site is fairly well-maintained featuring articles detailing "What's wrong with temp work?" information on organizing, and a forum for discussion and posting stories so visitors can "read how workers around the country are taking a stand and making a difference".

The site also operates links to Washtech and debug as well as a new site www.TempNY.com, which is similar in irreverent contempt for the industry as temp24-7 and tempslave, and lists Best of Tempslave as a recommended resource for temps.

www.temp24.7.com

The unfortunately defunct temp24-7 site smoothly attended to both career advice for freelancers and independent contractors, as well as featuring coping strategies for disgruntled temps. The site was operated by former temps and produced through the alternative publishing company Flypaper Press, and specifically intended as an online resource in which temps could "commiserate" with one another and have access to pertinent information regarding labour rights. agency rankings, etc. The design of the site itself was aesthetically very inviting as it featured an abundance of humorous illustrations. animated shorts, "temp tales of terror" personal accounts. an advice column and "temp terms" 29. Much of the humour and collective sentiment generated by the site was at the expense of temp agencies and corporate culture. The site was well-organized and updated weekly. Temp24-7 proudly declared it's DIY, 'by temps-for temps' sensibility:

> To those of you who are new to T24-7, you may have noticed that all of
> the stories, complaints, questions, etc. on site are written by real temps.
> We really strive to make T24-7 a community for temps to commiserate
> with others like them and also tell corporate

America and the world about their personal struggles with temping. So without your contributions, this site wouldn't be possible. We at T24-7 hope that you'll submit your anecdotes and gripes, too (from www.temp24-7.com).

Temp 24-7 was very successful at creating an inclusive, fun and highly informative site-one definite asset of the temp24-7 site was an advice column where temps could ask practical queries from more seasoned temps concerning rights, pay rates and tactics for dealing with unruly employers ranging from excessive workloads, to racial and sexual harassment. Temp24-7 while anti-corporate was not anti-branding with the site peddling merchandise-clothes, hats, movies, mousepads, bags and coffee mugs that bear the insignia of some sort of triumphant, subversive temp imagery. The existence and dynamic activities of sites like temp24-7 redefined temps in a position of autonomy and served to cultivate a temp culture which was well linked to the network of temp coalitions and their websites selected here in addition to others, and was featured in both *Wired* and *Fast company*.

Tempslave! & Tempzine www.geocities.eureka/Office/1621

Due to the rather unmemorable and often changing web address, this site is more accurately referred to as "tempzine" or tempslave online, and will be referred to as tempzine within my thesis. Unfortunately due to lack of funding and staffing this site has significantly declined. The links and forum are completely inactive and the remainder of the site has been stagnant for months. As such, like temp24-7 which was operative during much of my thesis research, I will detail some current, but mostly, past features of tempslave online. In both style and content the Tempzine site exhibits many similarities

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with www.temp24-7.com, but was a little less explorative with the technology, less savvy with web design-the site being awkward to navigate, and very infrequently updated. The Tempslave! zine itself is published quarterly. While originally a collaboration with Jeff Kelly, the creator, editor, and publisher of the *Tempslave* zine, tempzine or tempslave online, is no longer produced with Kelly's (1997) involvement, however the site still retains an affiliation to the zines origins.

Tempzine online at it's best was similar to temp24-7.com in terms of promoting an opportunity and forum for practical advice from other temps (the *best of tempzine* is available online and comprised of a collection of posts from the discussion forum), making accessible resources regarding agencies, and encouraging the expression of contempt at exploitive agencies and corporate values generally. As the inspiration for tempzine originated as from the zine created by Jeff Kelly, the site delights in illustrations and cartoons depicting unpleasant things happening to mean bosses, and features quirky visual elements similar to Temp24-7.

By far the most sardonic of the sites, the dialogue, tone and posts remain true to the original vision and sensibility of the zine, conceived and initiated by Kelly during the last two weeks of his employment at an insurance company he had been temping at for a year, under the promise of imminent permanent employment which never came. Finding himself, soon to be out of work (again), and recognizing the "tricky game" being waged by American corporations in "betting the bank that working people will overlook the scenario and accept temp work as a reality" he set out to produce (on company time, equipment and resources) a zine that was originally conceived as "as a personal documentation of my own frustrations" (Kelly, 1997:viii). Hitting a nerve, the zine

quickly grew to include other voices and became known in alternative publishing circles,

and then began reaching a more mainstream audience-Kelly being contacted for

interviews and information about the burgeoning temp agency growth from such sources

as the *New York Times, Wall Street Journal, US News and World Report, USA Today,*

CBS News, Wired, and NPR (National Public Radio) (viii). Tempslave! went on to

develop an international readership revealing the augmenting global expansion of temp-

work contractors and has been recently profiled in *Wired* and *Fast Company*. The zine

itself is still a recommended resource on many temp sites and has become required

reading at the University of Wisconsin (www.geocities.com/tempzine).

. Kelly attributes the success of *Tempslave!* this way: "Like the temp agencies, it filled a

void for the kind of working people who were frustrated enough to put into words their

frustration with their work lives" (ix). Kelly regards the zine as evoking "the tradition of

oral history", the writing coming from "the gut, the street level of experience," from

writers and cartoonists who "are not outsiders to the issue; rather, they are active

participants with a first person view of the situation at hand" (ix).

Recognizing that:

> Anomie, isolation, disillusionment work best within small, disconnected
> groups or individuals. Working people tend to focus blame on themselves
> for their economic situation. However, the isolation falls away when
> people of similar circumstances begin to recognize shared interests and
> career paths. This shared recognition is the beginning of the formation of a
> consciousness. The formation of consciousness is the first important step
> leading to action (Kelly, 1997: viii).

The consciousness-raising and critical dialogue encouraged by tempslave persists in

the availability of the *best of Tempslave* at alternative and anarchist bookstores and fairs

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across the U.S. and Canada, as well as it's online promotion on many of the active temp sites. Moreover the influence of *tempslave* resonates on many new sits like tempnyc.com and netslave.org both linked to the Washtech and NAFFE/Fairjobs sites.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the methodology which will be pursued in the analysis of selected websites, coalitions and cultural texts created by temps and temp work organizers. In seeking to address the efficacy of network-building and online technologies for improving and politicizing the conditions of temping, specific concepts and categories of analysis have been selected for use in developing the next chapter's case studies. Specifically issues of accessibility, accuracy and rhetoric, and networking will be integrated when assessing the merits and limitations of web-based strategies and network building. Burris's (2000) methodology suggesting weblinks as indicators of collective and ideological affiliation will be applied. As well, Lyotard 's concept of 'little narratives' (Lyotard in Loader, 1997) will be used in interpreting the web discourse of selected sites and zines primarily, as well as other media created by temps (films, documentaries, plays etc). The discourse in temp websites and texts will be treated as similar to interview material or oral histories, and understood as holding the potential to reveal qualitative dimensions of temping lost through more quantitative methodology.

Chapter Four: Understanding the Empowerment Strategies of Temporary Workers

The preceding chapters have attempted to outline the obstacles and limitations of

temporary work and the theoretical potential of cybertechnologies and coalitions, for

posing collective resistance to advance the temporary worker's movement. In this chapter

specific analysis of websites, organizations, coalitions, and in some instances

independent media, critiquing the temporary work industry and calling for reform will be

evaluated, in an effort to assess the possibilities and barriers these strategies further in

terms of improving the conditions of temping. It will be suggested that site links

reflecting existing networks, demonstrate the diversity of affiliated groups active in the

temporary worker's movement. This diversity will be understood as serving to strengthen

the temp movement. It will also be suggested that the latent anarchism of some websites

and zines can be understood as an expression of opposition to the alienating conditions

acutely manifest in much temp work, and can be traced to a resurgent anarchism

threading through contemporary social struggles. Issues of access, accuracy and rhetoric

and the concept of little narratives (Lyotard, In Loader: 1997) discussed in chapter three

will be revisited, and applied to website analysis to evaluate the benefits, and limitations

the use of internet sites and links bring to building temp networks seeking to advance the

movement's objectives.

The Connection of 'Temp' Politics to Poststructuralist Struggles

In the preceding chapters the concerns of identity struggles fighting against

discriminatory and marginalizing treatment in America, were demonstrated as pertinent

issues overlapping into temporary work, and dialectically, factors consciously integrated

into the temporary worker's movement by organizers and participants. Discriminatory hiring practices have meant many poststructuralist struggles have coincided with certain objectives of the temporary worker's movement. The industry preys off existing disparities active in social stratification to extort the greatest control over groups historically marginalized in America. Women, 'minorities', immigrants and the poor, are often subject to increased passivity in the form of workplace compliance, given their greater vulnerability to temp agencies' manipulation of existing disparities in power which have been conditioned through economic, cultural and gendered distinctions. Through taking unfair advantage of power differentials active in the broader American context, the temp industry extracts greater control over temp workers.

Through organizing around these 'similarities of exclusion' in an effort to increase solidarity, and cultivate a strengthened 'front' of resistance, The South Bay Labour Council and its affiliation with Working Partnerships USA (wpmember.org) is establishing networks between women and Latino groups; environmental and housing activists; and church, labour, community-based leadership. The strategies of Working Partnership's demonstrate an awareness of the importance of integrating multiple alliances, and addressing inequity in all it's dimension, as inequality in America tends to perpetuate a 'double injustice' around issues of race, ethnicity and social class (Fraser, 1997). This diversity imparts a strength to the movement to improve temping conditions, by aligning the issue of contingent work within a wider network of social and economic justice objectives (Appendix 4). Many of these objectives have been characterized by a redressing of 'politics of exclusion' which have solidified a 'digital divide' in the Silicon Valley region, whereby the intense high-tech economic boom the area experienced in the

late nineties, served to intensify stratification and disparate working conditions connected to issues of identity and culture (*The Economist* 'Latinos in Silicon Valley: the digital divide'. April 17, 1999).

Obviously as the South Bay Labour Council which is spearheading the campaign on temp work in the Silicon Valley area, is a labour-based organization affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, axes like class and labour remain vital in the coalition's organizational network. Rather than sacrificing class for identity, or identity for class, as a basis for collective action and solidarity, the South Bay Labour Council through Working Partnerships is building a more fluid alliance for mobilizing temp workers. and demonstrates a vibrant example of how the temp issue can merge 'old-school' movement's with new social movements. A successful integration which runs contrary to a large canon of contemporary social thought that has treated political-economy and poststructuralism, as incompatible companions (see Castells. 1997). Tactically this is important to the temp movement as an overemphasis on identity might prove divisive. and serve to alienate or exclude certain social groups, such as 'white guys,' who have also been plunged into inferior temp employment through economic restructuring, and have expressed concerns over 'reverse racism' on temp site discussion forums.

Siliconvalleydebug (svdebug.org) has demonstrated a similar attention to representing, and integrating the diversity of issues active in the conditions of temp work in Silicon Valley. Svdebug's stated aim to give a voice to the young and temporary, taps into the rather salient issue of youth overrepresentation in temp work, a basis for building solidarity that both the svdebug initiative, as well as other forums examined in this analysis, have used to further the networks of the temp movement. Moreover, svdebug

reflects the ethnic and cultural diversity of the San Jose area in the diversity of collaborators and contributors active in that project and website.

The disproportionate representation of youth in temp work has been widely documented in this study, and has been the organizing force around sites like svdebug. Furthermore, youthful currents run through the majority of the websites and present a principal axis where poststructuralism, anti-globalization and anarchism (May, 1994) can meet.

Moreover, activism, identity struggle, and anarchist sensibility merge in the efforts of "Little Joe" (1997), as recounted in *Get fucked bigDaddy! Featuring an Openly Gay Boy!* Little Joes recounts the subversive practices he pursued at a temp assignment at a "company that backed the Christian coalition" (97). During his final interview the boss, who Little Joe has dubbed "BigDaddy," has been impressed by L.J.'s past employment as a church pianist, wondering why L.J. didn't have a church job anymore. LJ asserts "an honest response would have been "I would rather lay down in my own vomit that take part in the hypocritical subculture known as American religion" (98). BigDaddy then deems it appropriate to inquire of Little Joe (1997), "don't you think a man and a woman have the best kind of relationship?"

> I smiled and nodded my head. I assured BigDaddy that I was the heterosexual worker he wanted me to be...I knew I was going to have fun at this job. Maybe more fun than anyplace I've ever worked.
> How did I know that three months of fun awaited me? Easy. You see, I'm gay. I can come across really straight (whatever that means) when I really need to have a decent job for a while. I'm an activist too. I take jobs at fundamentalist companies and totally destroy them from the inside out. It brings me such joy!...the president of the company always wants me to go out with their daughter...They think I'm an outstanding young Christian boy. Ha! (99).

Little Joe goes on to recount the pilfering, loafing and sabotage he engaged in while

working for BigDaddy. He gleefully exclaims "I even sent out a gay newsletter, all of

which was paid for by this company that backed the Christian Coalition. It was priceless"

(99)! LJ leaves, in addition to the numerous other classic temp 'timebombs' a "goodbye"

letter, recounting his exploits and his "being a gay activist", as he was moving out of state

and no longer relied on the agency for assignments.

While 'Little Joe' may be exceptional in his breadth of political motivation in turning

the tables on his temp environment, his tactics and sentiments certainly are not. Rather

they reflect a strong oppositional sentiment not only explicitly anti-corporate, but also

taking aim at a wide range of conservative impulses hostile to multiple poststructuralist

concerns. (See Appendix 5)

Temping & Resurgent Anarchism

> It might be something as simple as everybody just staying home from
> work. Fuck it. Withdraw your energy. If people stop responding to the
> system, it's doomed.

> John Zerzan (in Jensen & Dodge, 2001)

In chapter two the connections between poststructuralism and anarchism were

discussed, and May's (1994) work detailed. Like poststructuralism, May (1994) writes

"For anarchists, the concentration of power is an invitation to abuse. Therefore anarchists

seek political intervention in a multiplicity of irreducible struggles" (221). Beginning

with Bakunin and Kropotkin, anarchism has sought progress not in the further

concentration of power but rather in the direction of decentralization, both territorial and

functional. (May, 1994). Poststructuralism and anarchism have shared a common desire for the freedom for self-actualization. and the resistance to all forms of domination which would prevent this realization. The temporary help industry and the condition of 'temping' as a "prism for contemporary capitalism" manifesting the "perfect articulation of alienated labour" (Sparke, 1994:296) have come to embody a power configuration preventing fundamental principles of anarchism such as; freedom, voluntary association, and the "Everyone according to need" doctrine which many anarchists value. Through its historic equation of wage labour with slavery and demand for it's abolishment, anarchists have found the highly commodified temp employment arrangement unacceptable.

Responses have ranged from temp agencies being repeated targets of bombings by self-proclaimed anarchist group such as GRAPO in Spain (www.sfgate.com), to the far more common, non-violent tactics of sabotage, theft, and subversive attitudes evident in the discourse and graphics of sites and zines like tempslave, tempzine, temp24-7 and tempnyc. In style and tactics, temp anarchism is similar to the 'anarchist sensibility,' Epstein (2001) has characterized the anti-globalization movement as possessing:

> Many among today's young radical activists, especially those at the center
> of the anti-globalization and anti-corporate movements, call themselves
> anarchists. But the intellectual/philosophical perspective that holds sway
> in these circles might be better described as an anarchist sensibility than as
> anarchism per se. Unlike the Marxist radicals of the sixties, who devoured
> the writings of Lenin and Mao, today's anarchist activists are unlikely to
> pore over the works of Bakunin (2).

Epstein (2001) suggests that for contemporary young activists today:

> anarchism means a decentralized organizational structure, based on
> affinity groups that work together on an ad hoc basis, and decision-making
> by consensus. It also means egalitarianism; opposition to all hierarchies;
> suspicion of authority, especially that of the state; and commitment to

living according to one's values and a likely hostility "not only to corporations but to capitalism" (1).

This hostility is evident on temp sites, however the vision of a "stateless society based on small, egalitarian communities" (Epstein. 2001:10) not fully articulated. The sites offer more of an anarchist critique, borrow tactics, and encourage a mutual aid similar to countercultural movements of the 60s, which displayed many similar tenets and tactics to anarchism. In an effort to understand resurgent anarchism. Rosenberg (2002) has suggested "it's possible that anarchism is visible on the left because it has less competition at present. Now as in the late 1960s, it may channel discontent after other outlets have been rejected (Rosenberg, 2002:30-31).

Similar to the sixties when social discontent was fuelled with youthful disenchantment with existing institutions, and social practices. disillusionment, particularly among the young, continues to be a lingering factor in anarchism's appeal. As temping continues to cultivate it's niche. and increasing numbers of workers are turned its way out of lack of options, subversion and disillusionment is finding fertile ground. Trevor Rigler's (1997) piece *My Last Temp Job?* echoes the experience of many a recent college graduate who turned to temping believing the industry rhetoric of 'finding the right job for you'. Rigler (1997) went to Kelly Services optimistic, "hoping to gain experience and earn some money as well" (62). Rigler (1997) recounts the experience that followed:

> A call finally came one blustery January afternoon. It was a Kelly boss:
> "Mr. Rigler, it says on your application that you once worked in a copy store...?"
> "That's correct, I replied in my most business-like tone. "And it says that you are good at binding, collating, and that sort of thing...?"
> "Of course," I chirped, my bosum full. "I am quite familiar with those procedures". "Well, that's just great because we have a job lined up for you", she said, almost as excited as I was (64).

Upon arrival at his temp assignment Trevor is greeted by a man who directs him to a seat:

> I quickly seated myself and looked up at him, beaming. Mr._____ picked
> up an odd-shaped piece of paper from the stack, bent it in a few places,
> then glued it with a strange tool. He placed the completed object, a folder
> to my right. "Got it?" he asked somewhat sarcastically. ...five or six
> folders later, my head began to ache. I felt so confused.
> My doubts resurfaced. I thought of the battery of high-end tests I had
> performed so well on and the promises of good jobs, great jobs even.
> made by the all-knowing Kelly Bosses. I simply was not the right person
> for this particular assignment. Why, the day before I had turned in a
> research assignment about middle-high German love poetry. I was
> intelligent, well-versed in political thought, and a darn good speller to
> boot. What had gone wrong? (in Kelly, 1997:66-68).

Trevor's story is typical. As Parker (1994) has observed, "Most workers...had

imagined that the temporary firms would recognize their existing skills and talents and

utilize them fully. Many expressed resentment at finding they were just "warm

bodies...mere commodities" (53). Jessica Cohen (1997) succinctly conveys in *My First*

Temp Job, the profound existential crisis potentially incurred while temping:

> ...eventually, I came to this epiphany: I was getting paid to waste my
> life. By doing this all day long, I had lost all drive to pursue anything
> fruitful or interesting. It was as if someone said to me: "Go sit in that
> corner for an hour, don't do anything, and I'll be back
> with ten bucks", and repeated this hourly, and then asked me to come back
> the next day for more of the same (in Kelly, 1997:128).

Education and class consciousness presents a potent ingredient for politicized,

disgruntled young people disappointed and embittered by false hopes repeatedly unmet.

The growth in anti-corporate mobilizations in America, a pervasive distrust of power, and

an overall ambivalence, and cynicism, regarding electoral politics are some of the

dialectical responses to disillusionment, and shrinking social protections, which are

widely recognized as emerging out of frustrations with the inadequacies of latestage capitalism.

The postings in discussions forums, submitted anecdotes, and oral histories appearing on online sites like tempzine. temp24-7, and tempNYC and zines like *Tempslave*, are saturated by this sort of sardonic disillusionment and awareness of 'being screwed'. A popular coping strategy and anarchic position promoted by the contributers, and net participants, is to assume the guise of a "spy who has infiltrated their company (Temp X, 1997) to destroy it from "the inside out" (Little Joe, 1997). An article appearing in *Fast Company* entitled "A Spy in the House of Work" exposing the travails of temping for Manpower written by simply, 'the spy', demonstrates the liminal position of the temp, which can be manipulated in subversive positioning and practices. Even the permatemps of the more mainstream Wasthtech coalition, have been referred to as 'contretemps' (Lieber, 2001), in recognition of both their politicized, oppositional practices and their 'liminal' status as temps which situates them in an ambiguous position of potential subversion within work environments with permanent employees (Garsten, 1999).

Hari (2002) has discussed the growth of "champagne anarchism" a term used to describe growing involvement of youth in Western countries opposing corporate culture through involvement in the anti-globalization movement, squatting, boycotts, vandalism and the rejection of unfulfilling work. Founding members of the Anti-Capitalist-Action, based out of Britain, sum up the sensibility well: "we are all victims of capitalism, albeit obviously on a sliding scale. We're much better off than the developing world-but we're still screwed over" (in Hari, 2002:27). Srini based out of San Francisco, summed up this dissident ennui succinctly with his popular Situationist-inspired stickering campaign,

gaining national appeal, stating simply—"fuck work" (www.unamerican.com). Both tempslave, tempzine online, and the now defunct temp24-7, revel in cultivating a temp culture built on similar anarchic sentiments, further intensified by the frustration of dependence on temping.

Temp culture manifests itself in multiple fashions: in the development of a kind of TempSpeak-those representing corporate interests are inevitably referred to scatologically or as something to the nature of "Pigdog," a choice of epithet harkening back to the zine tradition, which is an obvious aesthetic and discursive influence. Temp24-7 even offers a recurring item "Temp term of the Week" in which discursive terms and mantras prevalent in the temp industry are recast from the critical positioning of temps. Finally, in creating a community of mutual interests which seeks "to advance the status of temps through generating an ever-expanding temp Network" (temp24-7), the sites embrace, and diffuse a firmly anti-corporate ethos. Temp 24-7 offers a hilarious and satisfying mock video game pitting TEMPS against SUITS. The player is encouraged to "Go ballistic" on the likenesses of Bill Gates, in celebration of the Supreme Court temp victory against Microsoft, Ted Turner and Ross Perot (See Appendix 6).

Recommended reading and resources on the tempsites further awareness of the inequities active in temping, and cultivate an anti-corporate, anarchist sensibility and tactics. Temp24-7 recommends Martin Sprouse's (1992) controversial *Sabotage in the American Workplace*, Norman Soloman's (1997) *The Trouble with Dilbert* decrying the cartoon's hegemonic influence, and Scott Milzer's (1996) *Going Postal*. Tempzine online was linked, and indexed, through various search engines to anarchist sites containing the downloadable versions of the works of Bertrand Russell, Kropotkin, and

contemporary anarchist authors like Bob Black's whose *Abolition of Work* offers

arguments informed by the writing of the abovementioned theorists as well as Foucault.

Daniel Bell, Marshall Sahlins, and the anarchist John Zerzan.

John Zerzan's role in revitalizing anarchism in America through his writing and

influence upon Eugene, Oregon's 'hotbed' of anarchist activists who were indispensable

in 'shutting down' the WTO conference in Seattle in 2000, have been 'spotlighted' in

recent mainstream media sources such as *Harper's Magazine* and the *Utne Reader* (see

Samuels, 2000; Jensen & Dodge, 2001). In part due to the fact "that the mainstream

media have discovered anarchism" (Jensen and Dodge, 2001) and it's connection to a

myriad of contemporary themes ranging from ecoconsciousness, civil disobedience, the

right to self-determination, and 'New Age' concerns, the poststructuralist similarities to

anarchism, as well as the orientation's timeliness, are becoming increasingly recognized

and likely furthering the philosophy's appeal. Anarchist political philosophy is no longer

reserved to society's fringes. nor confined "only to a range of anti-authoritarian journals,

tabloids, and zines" (Jensen and Dodge, 2001), but rather is engendering widened appeal

which will undoubtedly prove useful in extending networks of support, and further

politicizing the inequities of temporary work with zines like tempslave, and sites like

tempzine, being indexed online with anarchist sites and texts. The salient connections,

demonstrated in this analysis, which infuse anarchism into some temp tactics and

sensibilities also, dialectically, could bring many anarchist's, or the anarchist-curious, to

temp websites and zines which may be linked, or resourced, on anarchist websites. In this

way, merging online pathways between anarchism and temping could serve to broaden

the networks of support in the temp movement by engendering increased anarchist participation.

Tempslave and *temp24-7*, and more recently tempnyc linked to the Washtech site, construct texts which challenge the mythologies of the temp industry. revel in the subversion of the workplace and reject and recast the meanings associated with words like 'temp', 'sabotage', and 'work' (Appendix 7). Temp texts delighting in "pilfering as much as possible" and using company resources to produce activist newsletters or zines, suggests Ehrlich's (1996) notion of building a "transfer culture" through the use of tools of the "decaying" society (301).

Tempslave! and temp24-7 generate a new ethos fiercely at odds with the values espoused by corporate America. which finds resonance in multiple contemporary struggles. While the temp24-7 was active. it was a recommend weblink on many of the less radicalized temp sites explored in this analysis. Kropotkin's (1995) and Reclus's (in Fleming, 1989) notions of mutual aid, in which cooperation and social bonds, rather than competition, are emphasized as integral to survival. is a palpable influence in the multiplicity of alliances and sites active in the temporary worker's movement. Moreover, placing emphasis on cooperation, rather then embracing a Darwinian interpretation of social evolution emphasizing struggle, demonstrates the distance from capitalism that anarchic sensibilities active in the temporary worker's movement pursue. Though advancing an anarchist sensibility, temp efforts might foster receptiveness to a more structured anarchism. complete with alternative vision and social agenda, on the American political spectrum.

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Temp tactics, anarchism and the zine tradition

Both the popular www.temp24-7 site in addition to tempzine, *tempslave* and

siliconvalleydebug, while not exclusive to youthful workers, possess a definite youthful

irreverence in content and 'zine' design. The discursive and design elements of the site

are revealing of the sites roots in the aesthetics, and sensibility, of the zine genre which in

itself may account for a significant amount of the anarchic content. Lawley (1999) in

detailing the influence of punk on comics has articulated a desire to subvert while

entertaining and cultivate a DIY (do-it-yourself) "subversive creative space" (109) as

inherent to zines.

While some thought punk "abdicated it's responsibility to be politicized" zines and

comics picked up the torch (Lawley, 1999:109). The cyberpunk genre as well, which as

suggesting earlier might be better suited than conventional sociological theory to

understanding the use and social impact of the 'net' (Loader, 1997), also "appropriated

punk's confrontational style, it's anarchist energies, it's crystal-meth pacings, and it's

central motif of the alienated victim defiantly using technology to blow everyone's fuses"

(Kadrey and McCaffrey, 1991 in Lawley, 1999:56).

A residual "punk sensibility lends an ironic detachment" (114) to zines which

resonates on sites like tempslave, and temp24-7 and is likely intensified by a certain

degree of distance and black humour necessary to cope with workplace frustrations.

Moreover the motif of the resolute malcontent using technology to resist domination, and

regain autonomy and agency to navigate the precariousness of their circumstances, is

recognizable in the both the intentions of site developers -former and current temps

"shaming" (Mieszkowski, 1998) corporate America into more responsible practices in temping- and in the corporate opposition evident in site's discourse.

A number of features of the tempsites are characteristic of the zine genre: a dark, subversive approach, scatological jokes, swearing, "lots of violence," use of pseudonyms, and Situationist-flavoured content and tactics, and anti-authoritarianism (Lawley, 1999:112). Appropriately the punk sensibility that influenced the comics and zine genres has since it's inceptions shared a strong relationship with 'un' and underemployment and subsequent dissatisfaction (109) which identified (at least symbolically-the'A' for anarchy-an obvious punk link" (113).) with certain, ill-defined anarchist principles. In aim of understanding the critique of late stage capitalism prevalent to these sites but absence of a proposed alternative vision (with the exception of debug) perhaps Peter Bagge's, editor of *Weirdo*, observation that the "post-punk generation defined itself more by what it hated than by what it liked' (in Lawley, 1999) offers pertinent insight.

The implications of the resistance and resurgent anarchism being enacted by various online efforts to advance temp rights are hardly limited to the issue of inequitable contingent employment alone, but rather reflect inclusion in a larger effort that is being mounted against a plethora of contested issues brought about by sweeping corporately-driven global change. For example, most young college graduates who find themselves in the unfortunate predicament of temping are also no strangers to cuts to education, augmenting student loan debts, and youth underemployment (Appendix 8). Winter's (1997) blending of temping, sabotage and activism, demonstrated in the following passage, exemplifies the proactive resistance which pervades the postings and anecdotes of zine contributors:

> For the next month, for eight hours a day, I'll be entering address changes into the computer so they can track down people who owe on their student loan. I may not enter the addresses accurately, especially if they belong to people I know, but the Suits won't know that until I'm long gone (74).

Winter's (1997) politicized use of sabotage combined with the latent mutual aid, and collectivism, demonstrated in her actions and intent which transcend simple opportunism, reflect an anarchist sensibility and logic repeatedly encountered on websites like temp24-7, tempzine, as well as in the original zine *Best of Tempslave*.

The anarchic/punk roots of the zine and comic book tradition, and the resurgence of an anarchist sensibility in anti-globalization campaigns, are palpable influences on sites like tempslave and temp24-7. The sites evoke considerable counter rhetoric in opposition to corporate culture and temp agency "mantra's of attitude" and team playing (Peck & Theodore, 1998:662). While likely effective in efforts to mobilize, raise consciousness and "inspire a rage to action" (debug), the prevalence of rhetoric brings up issues of accuracy and misinformation active online, a significant issue theoretically explored in chapter two and discussed in application to the sites and alliances next.

Rhetoric & Accuracy

Given the ambiguity around the classification of temp workers which was discussed in the first chapter, controversy surrounds the reliability of American statistics of temp work and the temp industry. This thesis understands the temp discourse contained in on and offline media texts and forums as representing 'little narratives' (Lyotard in Loader, 1997) which through a focus on the discourse contained in the postings, forums, mission

statements and cultural products developed by temps themselves, may offer a more reflective picture than quantitative measures alone. As stated in the preceding chapter on methodology, a concept of web discourse as 'little narratives' (Lyotard in Loader, 1997) influences the 'accuracy' of the representation in a similar manner which oral histories. interview material and editorial letters may be coloured by the subjective perspective they reflect. This thesis recognizes the subjectivity of temp discourse as 'little narratives' and makes no claims to scientific validity, but rather suggests the dimensions these narratives reveal are critical to understanding the networks, sensibilities and recurring concerns influencing the temp movement. and may be useful for researchers and organizers in approaching reform and developing affective networks and organizing strategies.

When examining the content and discussion forums of the temp sites emerging out of the zine tradition, a considerable amount of flamboyant rhetoric generated out of a strong anti-corporate ethos and salient traces of anarchist dogma are evident. As discussed in chapter two, ethos and rhetorical features have been prominent in online campaigns (Gurak, 1998). While the discussion forum and postings of most temps sites allows for a certain interactivity, and broadened participation, the risk of relying on the assumed authority of certain mobilizers who frame or dominate discussions, instigate the spread of postings, and potentially "flame' or verbally offend participants who may question the accuracy of labeling certain personalities 'opportunistic, back-stabbing bastards" (tempzine) (Appendix 9) could indeed lead to limited voices. and misinformation being spread at a frequency prevented by the limitations to diffusion of other technologies.

It is certainly difficult to assess the accuracy of the statement 'Work is Bullshit' being attributed to Noam Chomsky, and equally hard to know if Einstein really did have

frustrating temps jobs prior to developing his theory of relativity (both on Tempzine).

The tempzine site, like the zine Tempslave which inspired it, employs a great deal of

rhetorical features, and does so quite effectively, to evoke a particular ethos in opposition

to the heavy attitudinal conditioning and public relations mythology characteristic of the

temp industry. The use of rhetoric on sites likes tempzine, debug, temp24-7, and in the

zine Best of Tempslave 'inspire a rage to action' (svdebug) effective both as a

consciousness-raising device, and in building a sense of solidarity and oppositional

politics within the temp movement. The benefits and limitations of rhetoric on these sites,

will be similar to rhetorical usage in more traditional political discussion forums and

public arenas, and speaks to the merits and constraints of rhetorical usage in social action

more broadly. The limitation in online rhetoric on these sites are aggravated by the

infrequent maintenance of the sites, which could discourage sustained participation and

interest as the effectiveness and humour of old postings may 'get stale,' and lead to

boredom and frustration with the site much more rapidly than in verbal exchanges.

It is reasonable to assume that the sites that deals least in rhetoric, like Working

Partnerships and Washtech, and operate offline organizations would rank highest in terms

of accuracy, lending to them a certain credibility and legitimacy the other sites may lack.

Washtech's discussion forum presents a clear, centrally located statement emphasizing

that the union does not vouch for the accuracy or reliability of any information that may

be posted.

As the politics they pursue are more mainstream, perhaps the use of rhetorical features

is less necessitated. It would be interesting to see how anarchism's growing appeal might

influence, alter or 'contain' the discourse of some sites. As has been documented here

flamboyant, dark, subversive language is somewhat inherent to the sensibilities which

have embraced anarchism philosophy and practices. As anarchism for some offers "a

radicalism of last resort" (Rosenberg, 2002:31), a certain amount of edginess, venting and

frustration will likely sustain in the discourse, given the marginality of the doctrine and

those identifying with it.

When reviewing the temp-relevant sites selected here, it would seem that the "certain

peril" which Gurak (1998) describes as encouraging a "kind of insularity and the spread

of inaccurate information" (244), may taint the potential of the technology with no

safeguards, aside from a desire to seem credible, in place on these sites to prevent such an

occurrence. However there does exists the alternate view of a possibility for greater

accuracy online than in verbal, and word-of-mouth exchanges given the chance to verify,

check and edit remarks and contributions (Whittle, 997). As sites like Working

Partnerships, Washtech, and debug feature journalistic pieces published elsewhere in both

the mainstream and alternative press, it is arguable that their accuracy is at least equal to

that found in other media sources. Given the risk of litigation in America, and the

movement's desire to promote awareness and appear credible, the accuracy of reprinted

texts is likely fairly high. The discussion forums as spaces of 'open dialogue' would

seemingly be the features where accuracy may be lowest but anticipated as such.

Conversely, the discussion forums can be useful in *clarifying* the inaccuracies and

confusions surrounding the triangular employment arrangement which was examined in

chapter one, as well as shedding light on other practices which are left intentionally

vague by temp agencies. Advice appearing in the advice column of the temp24-7 site

entitled "Why the receptionist must get paid less" illustrates how the sites can serve to demystify the ambiguities of temping and promote an awareness which could empower temps (Appendix 10).

Evaluating the accuracy of anecdotes and stories appearing on sites like tempslave and temp24-7 pose the same problems as trying to evaluate the factuality of oral histories, or letters and submissions to other media sources in many ways. Arguably those visiting the site recognize the hyberbolic discourse for what it is, and given that the career advice is from individual temps, it's accuracy is limited by the same subjectivity of personal experience as editorial opinion. The accuracy of agency rankings and professional advice which links to www.contingent.com offer appear fairly high given that website is operated by a consulting company aimed at "improving the blending workforce through training and research." (Appendix 11).

Accessibility

Access has remained central to any discussion suggesting new technologies as a possible vehicle for advancing the status of marginalized groups, as was discussed in chapter two. When considering temp worker's access to online technologies, certain benefits and obstacles remain. One of the advantages of the abundance of clerical sector temp employment could translate into greater access to computers, photocopying, and office supplies; the appropriated use of which sites and zines like tempslave! ,temp24-7, and tempnyc, are quick to promote. However, given the high surveillance active in temping environments which was discussed in chapter one, the potential of 'appropriated access' may be somewhat constrained, yet given the legions of anecdotes, stories and

postings delighting in "pilfering" (Temp X. 1997), this avenue to online access remains a plausible option for some temps.

A significant barrier to accessibility remains in light-industrial and assembly work, the area composed of the highest concentration of 'minorities,' immigrants, and women, as was established in the previous chapters. Both cultural specificities, as well as economic inequities, may limit the accessibility of online technologies to these, already excluded, groups. Such obstacles to access could sustain barriers to obtaining information, engaging in forums, and organizing, and may replicate the disparities existing within broader society, which are exploited in the practices of the temp industry, where the lowest paid and most marginalized temps have limited access to resources about rights, organizing, participation and dialogue. Arguably these are the voices that are most needed in cultivating leadership, and generating understanding of cultural, class and gender-based realities affecting the conditions of temp work, as well as reflexively understanding the barriers to political participation, in their multiple dimensions.

Sites like debug, through it's zine distribution at the San Jose public library, public workshops, and seminar series, have attended to some of these concerns by utilizing other, more accessible media for information diffusion, and conducting 'outreach' promotions and initiatives. Working Partnerships as well, has been very active in contacting the regional community through local events, and seminars, such as a recent public lecture at the University of San Francisco instructing participants on uses of media, and information technologies to organize (wpmember.org).

The offline existence of Working Partnerships and debug, as regionally-based coalitions, enables their organization and 'non-virtual' basis in the community to foster

the cultivation of networks and political education. in a 'grassroots' manner which

exclusive dependence on net technology would restrict. Working Partnerships and

debug's success with combining 'real' local-level initiatives and web networks, supports

both Castells (1997) affirmation of the importance of merging grassroots politics and

online technologies. to achieve success as a contemporary movement, as well as Wellman

and Gulia's (1997) analysis, which suggests the importance of examining online social

action and groups. in relation to their existing offline characteristics.

Media Ecology and Public Awareness

Where the limitations to accessing online resources remain an issue. the coverage the

sites and alliances have engendered in more accessible media sources could provide at

least a beacon alerting temps to the existence of these temp networks and resources. and

promote an awareness of the movement. Taken collectively the sites. alliances and

activists under study in this research have been featured or published in the *San*

Francisco Chronicle. Wired. Fast Company. New York Times. The Economist.

Alternet.org, *Wall Street Journal. US News and World Report. USA Today. CBS News.*

and NPR (National Public Radio). Media coverage in more accessible and mainstream

sources could serve to acquaint temps who do not use web technologies, as well as alert

those who do have internet access. to the availability and web addresses of these sites,

and organizations. and their respective resources. Particularly in 'hip' urban American

centers, as well as regions immersed in digital culture. such as the west coast areas where

many of the websites and coalitions of this analysis are situated, acquaintance with

magazines like *Wired* and *Fast Company*, which have featured multiple stories on both

the benefits of a flexible labour force. or 'free agent nation', as well as chronicling the

travails of temping and temp's uses of web technologies and zines to improve the equity of their workplace (Appendix 12).

Moreover, recent 'indie' films and journalism have contributed to a certain 'media ecology' in promoting the temp cause. McLuhan (1996) describes media ecology as the ability for technologies and media to act collectively, to enhance one another, wherein one media can 'fill in the gaps' unmet by another media. McLuhan's (1996) notion of media ecology is well-demonstrated by the exposure and consciousness-raising achieved by critiques of temping appearing in popular films, documentaries, journalism, and zines.

The recent film *The Haikou Tunnel* (2001) which premiered at last year's Sundance Film Festival, captures hilariously the liminal 'betwixt and between' status of temping Garsten (1999) has described. The protagonist in *The Haikou Tunnel* employed through the fictional "Uniforce" temp agency, expresses the difficulty of temp isolation, highlighting a barrier to traditional organizing, eloquently when pondering "I was beginning to think I was the 'uni' in 'Uniforce'" (Kornblum et al, 2001). The film *Clockwatchers* (1997) was referred to in chapter one's analysis of the heightened surveillance of temping. The film was written and directed by Jill Sprecher, a project she conceived through years of temping to support herself during film school. Sprecher's biography of 'temp turned cultural producer' demonstrates the potential for an increasing appearance of media texts dealing with temping, given it's growing prevalence as an employment reality, particularly in entertainment centers like California and New York.

A recent item on tempnyc.com, linked to the fairjobs.org site, demonstrates such an occurrence with Riley Ray Chiorando's screenplay *Timesheet*- "based on temping

experience at over 40 different companies." Exploring the interactivity of the net.

Chiorando's screenplay is featured alongside his email address which encourages

interested temp's to send feedback. Gathering from Chiorando's remark that he "would

sooner tear out my armpits with a shrimp fork than ever temp again" (tempnyc), the film

will likely continue in the tradition of irreverent critique initiated in other temp films and

zines.

Reflective of the influence of Jeff Kelly's *Tempslave* zine, which has led to sites like

tempzine and temp24-7, Temp Slave, the Musical ("whose strikingly original musical

score includes….the temps' call to arms, "Sabotage") has been produced by a local

theatre troupe in Kelly's hometown of Madison, Wisconsin

(www.madstage.com/Shows/tempslave). Similarly, *Temp Avengers*-the band, have

expressed temp discontent in still yet another medium.

Also available for order online is a new documentary chronicling Raj Jayadev's

(2000) activities in exposing hazardous temping conditions, in the assembly lines of

Silicon Valley.

These texts serve to not only draw attention to the predicament of temping but also

counter the hegemonic and detrimental imagery of temps, which have appeared

elsewhere. The media is rampant with images equating clerical temps with sexually

available social climbers ie. Lara Flynn Boyle in *The Temp*, *General Hospital* were a

temp agency was used as a front for a brothel, and David Mamet's *Speed-the-Plow*

where Madonna played a young temp subject to the innuedos and assaults of two movie

executives competing to see who can get her to treat him in "any other than a professional

way" (Rogers & Henson, 1997). Arguably media representations promoting stereotypical

imagery of temp workers as sexually and morally wanton, creates a hostile environment for workers, one in which the control mechanism of harassment is latently encouraged (Rogers & Henson, 1997).

In countering these negative hegemonic representations and critiquing the conditions of temping, these alternate media products redefine and recast temps in a position of autonomy and solidarity. Understood in collaboration with the websites and coalitions analyzed in this thesis, these texts serve to further diffuse awareness of collective temp angst, and foster empowerment.

Temps, Social Networks, and Web Technologies: Assessing the Impact

As this thesis has sought to determine the influence of both network building and cybertechnologies in building a temporary worker's movement which is guided by a desire to achieve more equitable conditions in temp work, one central question requires addressing: What networks are temp websites and organizations cultivating and how has the internet factored into these efforts?

Determining the networks being forged through the previously discussed coalitions is in some cases readily apparent, and in other instances more challenging given their eclecticism. For instance, the wpmember.org's temp forum operated by the Working Partnerships/South Bay Labour Council very clearly states the building of coalitions with other social groups as an important strategy for improving working conditions. Befitting a labour organization, the political motivations and networks being cultivated are presented with clarity and organization. Through the umbrella non-profit organization

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Working Partnerships. alliances to the temp cause are being forged with feminist groups, environmentalists, religious and community leaders and student groups. It is clear that Amy Dean and the other organizers of Working Partnerships are very savvy to the benefits of aligning multiple social change organizations, so in that sense, their use of this strategy is quite clear and effective as is demonstrated in certain, successful campaigns . Some of their principle successes have been the development of health care benefits for temps who become members of the union the coalition is forging, as well as active involvement in the successful 'Justice for Janitors' campaign seeking to unionize underpaid, largely Latino, contingent janitors in Silicon Valley. This site is quite vast and has generated quite an extensive network, such as church and Latino alliances in the janitor campaign, alliances which also demonstrate the social justice orientation of Working Partnerships. with the focus on community participation, church leadership and labour organizing (wp.member.org). In considering their limitations, the ideological and tactical links to the social justice and labour movement, could circumscribe membership somewhat to temps and social organizations which identify favourably with community, church and union leadership. Given the plurality of temps and overrepresentation of women, alliances to a greater diversity of feminist and ethnically-organized organizations could strengthen networks, and reflexively increase the participation and membership from temps this might attract.

The South Bay Labour Council is affiliated through the American Federation of Labour with Washtech and the North American Alliance for Fair Employment/Campaign on Contingent Work. These sites pursue similar strategies in forging alliances around specific issue-oriented campaigns like Washtech's notable legal 'watershed' victory

against Microsoft. as well as NAFFE's ongoing Campaign on Contingent Work aimed at promoting awareness of the Workfare connections existing between private temp industries and welfare tax dollars. Promoting public awareness is achieved through an 'information strategy' which channels a bimonthly contingent labour monitor and a collection of news articles on contingent work through a 'datacenter' and website indexed to networks operating at the local, state and national level (www.datacenter.org). NAFFE"s stated aim is to unite the contingent work movement through linking networks across a broad-range of constituencies affected by the problems associated with nonstandard work. These "action groups" which cover areas ranging from labour, law and policy, welfare and workfare, and campus-based organizing, concentrate on issues which could prove strategic in encouraging the inclusion of the issue of temp networks in the broader networks of the anti-globalization movement.

Working Partnerships, Washtech, and NAFFE's labour affiliations. and unionizing strategies, have achieved tangible results and the challenge of temp work has seemed to revitalize American labour politics. Demonstrating that the axis of class, and the labour movement, when updated through a plurality of poststructuralist alliances, are not nearly as 'dead' as it has been declared by many social critics, and notably Castells (1997).

Assessing how the prevalence and media coverage of more youth-oriented, anarchic sites, as well as sites which facilitate dissent, "rage" and "critical thinking" through the vehicle of culture (svdebug.org), have contributed to generating support, membership and awareness for these labour victories remains highly speculative. While there are obvious ideological, and tactical similarities amongst the labour and non-profit organizations like Working Partnerships, Washtech, NAFFE/Fairjobs.org, and even svdebug, due to their

emphasis on discussion forums, membership and organizing, the relation to, and between, tempslave and temp24-7 is less clear, as the *raison d'etre* of the latter sites do not offer such a clear, organized commitment to improving temping conditions as labour organizations obviously would. However this is not intended to minimize the significant consciousness-raising, dialogue, opposition, and politicization of temp work, that the discourse and forums these websites, and zines have facilitated. Quite the contrary. This analysis has found the use of websites, and cultural texts, in the temp movement as strategies encouraging both proactive, and resistant practices by temps. A strategic intention well-expressed in the desires of temp24-7 producers to "shame companies into better behavior by associating their names with the offenses they commit against temps" (Mieszkowski, 1998). Editor and ex-temp Paul Fairchild, who, along with a group of other former temps, runs Flypaper press, the small publishing company that produces temp24-7, affirms the conscious oppositional use of websites as public forums, in explaining the public 'whistleblowing' of exploitive temp companies and client firms: "Remember the permanent record you always heard about in school?".."well, this is it" (Mieszkowski, 1998).

When looking at temp24-7 and tempzine, the limitation of the internet's temporality, which has rendered both these sites either non or barely operative now, is highlighted. Most of the site's of this analysis have in the past, or persist to maintain (inactive) links to temp24-7, and make reference or recommendation of Kelly's *Best of Tempslave* zine. The disappearance of temp24-7 which operated solely as a website/webzine, compared with the fledgling persistence of Tempslave the zine, which prior to going online had

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approximately 3000 subscribers (Kelly, 1997), indicates the weaknesses of exclusive

'virtual' presence. However given temp24-7's popular recognition (the site was called the

"web site of choice by Yahoo in 1998"in Mieszkowski, 1998) and connection to Flypaper

press, the potential for a reappearance of the site or a similar temp-empowerment themed

initiative is likely. While the infrequent maintenance and distribution of certain temp

websites, and zines, indicates the temporal limitations of the internet serving as a

strategic forum for advancing the temp movement, it also points to the broader issue of

lack of funding, for both alternative publishing and creative texts, as well as non-profit

organizations organized around the issue of building solidarity between temp workers in

America. The work of NAFFE, Working Partnerships, Washtech and svdebug has, it is

assumed, largely relied on funding from the American Federation of Labour, grants and

endowments whereas temp24-7, tempslave, tempzine and new sites like tempnyc.com,

and netslave.com are published and maintained through, again it is assumed but based on

comments suggested by Kelly (1997), personal financing, arts endowments and in some

cases limited amounts of advertising which the 'dotcom' implies. If the temporary

worker's movement is to grow, and ultimately achieve it's objective of realizing better

conditions in temping, there is a need for the sustained and increased presence of

organizations and cultural texts politicizing, and diffusing awareness, to the issue of

inequitable temping practices. Given the creativity and resourcefulness both

demonstrated, and advocated, in many of these sites and projects, DIY temp texts will

undoubtedly find continued expression in one media or another. However sustaining

forums which could solidify the movement, and truly gain strength from the diffusion and

interactivity of web technologies will likely remain hindered by the temporality of the web and limited funding.

Moreover, this analysis has indicated the possibilities for realizing improved temping conditions through cultivating connections and 'information strategies' with, and between, labour and non-profit organizations and alternative publishing and creative initiatives. Creative initiatives such as those featured in the earlier discussion of temp forums, and texts, cited as potentially strategic practices of 'media ecology' (McLuhan, 1996). The interactive feedback occurring around Chiorando's temp-themed screenplay *Timesheet*, is a compelling example of how multiple media can interact to raise consciousness by interactively constructing a text of heightened, and thus more resonant, accuracy. What is needed is increased mention and articulation of the emergent temp movement, and it's existing networks, in the content and discourse of temp zines, and cultural texts. As well a greater maintenance of web linkages on the temp websites to one another, could foster an increased sense of collective action and solidarity, and more fully utilize, and explore the broad diffusion capabilities of the net than is currently realized. The svdebug site's 'suggest a link' option presents a simple and effective strategy for increasing networks, a strategy however which must be followed through with frequent site maintenance which svdebug.org is unique in achieving.

The frequent maintenance required by websites is another limitation of using online technologies for social action. Web maintenance requires funding, staff, time and dedication which simply is not possible for all sites. Kelly (In *Best of Tempzine*) has voiced this concern and expressed his lack of interest in personally maintaining a *Tempslave* site, precisely due to the maintenance commitment it requires. Just as website

rhetoric may act as a barrier to participation in boring and discouraging certain web participants, similarly infrequently updated, stagnant sites could diminish the interactive possibility of sustained participation online.

The inherent 'cheapness' of web affiliations (Burris, 2000) may prove a merit of online technologies in permitting loosely-affiliated temp networks to arise which blend labour organizations, alternative publishing and media texts to create a stronger forum for temp resistance. As online relationships are inherently fragmented, bonds can occur which would be discouraged in more traditional forums on the basis of divergent ideologies, cultural barriers, age, lifestyle, and values. Also as the church groups, for example, involved in Working Partnerships network may be alarmed or put off by the anarchic sensibility of sites like temp24-7 and tempzine, web linkages facilitate the building of a loosely-affiliated network of temp sites, zines, coalitions and texts, which may not be tenable nor realistic offline. Moreover, American reaction to anything remotely resembling anarchism has typically been quite negatively received, with the 'left' critiquing it's vagueness and 'moral absolutism' (Rosenberg, 2001) as impractical and overly utopian, while more conservative currents condemning anarchism 'flat out' and typically misrepresenting the philosophy as violent and chaotic. While anarchism may be experiencing a resurgence, particularly with disenchanted youth and within the anti-globalization movement, it remains fairly marginalized on the political spectrum in America. Accordingly, the notion of an open embrace of anarchism by labour groups offline is likely a little premature, and the cultivation of more subtle links online all the more important.

In terms of reflecting a method and political orientation which comes closest to blending both the union politics which have proved the strongest foundation of the temp worker's movement, and the anarchic appeal of cultural expression and impassioned dissent of the more anarchic sites, the siliconvalleydebug initiative and website, offers an integration of what this analysis would suggest are both necessary, and indispensable political currents in the efforts to improve temping, and anti-globalization struggles more broadly. Demonstrating an acumen for social justice and cultural critique, svdebug offers the site for the 'young and temporary' which best bridges the gaps between austere labour alliances on the one hand, and visually and discursively colourful DIY anarchic temp sites on the other. Given the appeal of the anti-globalization movement amongst young workers, who, as this analysis has documented, are disproportionately represented in temp work, the appeal and attraction to the temp movement may very well be aided through appealing to creative energies, and offering enticing cultural elements like graphic art, and irreverent 'ziney' discourse. As well as inclusion of 'proactive' anarchist principles such as volunteerism, and mutual aid, which svdebug encourages, may increase participation in the temping movement. Moreover as svdebug is an initiative influenced by a kind of Gramscian and Debordian sense of culture as the site of protest, collaborators and net participants are encouraged to develop, and contribute creative talents. These talents range from journalism to computer coding, skills which in application could be used to further diffuse the temp movement online.

Likely none of the sites or coalitions, taken in isolation, are adequate to advance a movement, but in linking diverse groups online, the temp movement may be able to avoid

past historic mistakes of divisive politics on the left which have facilitated the global spread of capitalism. New and creative approaches to organizing and bargaining which would further the status of temp workers need to be cultivated based around the advancement and commonality of certain objectives, irrespective of rigid dogmatic positioning. In any either case, ideological rigidities tend to get fragmented when mediated through web technologies, an information and communication medium which will likely play an increased role in collective organizing in the future.

As this analysis has demonstrated, when it comes to strategies like cultivating social networks to organize, and mobilize political involvement, this tends to work best when initiated at a local-level which can then be integrated to ever-widening networks, from the grassroots level on up to national coalitions, a strategy Castells (1997) has indicated as significantly responsible for the environmental movement's success Once coalitions and campaigns to improve equity in temping are initiated locally, than more broadly networked benefits of online communication can be reaped through the greater diffusion, and participation possible in transcending the barriers to on-site organizing. Going online allows for an immeasurable level of exposure, a heightened public audience and participation, and the potential evolution into something more dynamic, and interactive than print media. However the limitations of relying on web media alone, given it's temporality and limited accessibility, is not adequately effective to build, and sustain a movement. Rather the integration, and increased mutual recognition, of temp-relevant media texts and forums is required to 'ecologically' (McLuhan, 1996) cultivate a critique, raise consciousness, and lead to greater public awareness to the conditions of temping, and a heightened feeling of solidarity amongst temps themselves.

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In this sense, the discourse of selected sites and zines primarily, as well as other media created by temps (films, documentaries, plays, etc) can be understood as illuminating 'little narratives' (Lyotard in Loader, 1997) which reveal qualitative dimensions of temping critical to understanding the lived experience of temping and this analysis would suggest useful in developing strategies and reform which best addresses the existing inequities in temp work being contested by the emergent temp movement.

In American temp work even the humblest efforts at dialogue, let alone unionizing, are institutionally hampered and prohibited through surveillance, intense regulation, and the institutional and geographical separation of "places of work for sites where temps sell their labour" (Sparke, 1994.318). In considering these specific obstacles an understanding of how Internet websites, linkages and the on and offline networks of the embryonic temporary worker's movement can begin to "articulate the heterogeneity of temporary work" and "provide a model for new, less rigid, and more open forms of labour organization in the twenty-first century" (Sparke, 1994:318) has been developed. For critics who may suggest this analysis overly optimistic, it is important to recognize the necessity for a measured degree of utopian vision in constructing and imagining social action and change. The possibilities opened by websites, creative initiatives, linkages, and on and offline networks for fostering an emergent movement could be increasingly realized as strategies, and networks, as well as the possibilities of cyberspace expand. Through features intrinsic to the medium such as the transcendence of spatial restrictions, anonymity, and linkages, the web possesses the ability to inform, reduce isolation, breed a collective feeling and encourage more organized proactive advances as this analysis of selected websites, coalitions and media texts have demonstrated.

Conclusion

In discussing the efficacy of social networks, and the internet's role in the temporary worker's movement, this chapter has examined selected coalitions and websites. Concern over the possibility of reproducing the marginalization of temps who work in assembly, and light-industrial sectors, the temps who typically endure the greatest exploitation, through the cultural and material inaccessibility of Internet usage was raised.

Issues of rhetoric and accuracy were addressed and found particularly salient in the anarchic, anti-corporate zine influenced sites. The subjectivity of temp discourse as reflecting 'little narratives' (Lyotard in Loader, 1997) was suggested as encouraging an understanding of the networks, sensibilities, and recurring concerns influencing the temp movement, illuminating dimensions which may aid researchers and organizers in approaching reform and developing affective networks and organizing strategies. In evaluating the impact of network-building and the use of new technologies, it was suggested that these strategies hold the potential to presents a more inclusive form of politics which may allow for a new method of organizing, and consciousness-raising, which could overcome some of the central barriers to traditional organizing inherent in temp work.

Conclusion

In this thesis the expansion of the billion-dollar temporary help industry, increased by

the shift to 'labour flexibility' and latemodern social and economic restructuring, has

been discussed. To date, the possibility of genuine flexibility benefiting both

corporations, agencies *and* temp workers has remained largely elusive. The

precariousness of temp work which has developed in America has been outlined in the

preceding chapters. demonstrating how, as Klein (2000) has stated, "temping puts the

most vulnerable workforce further at risk. and no matter what *Details* says, it doesn't

rock" (255). With barriers to traditional workplace dialogue and collective organizing

restricted by the separation of work sites from agencies where temps sell their labour

(Sparke. 1994). as well as the isolation. inherent transience, and surveillance

characteristic of much temp work. an alternate forum of organizing and protest is

demanded. Establishing social networks with a diversity of groups effected by temping,

as well as the use of online technologies has been argued as an innovative response to

overcome these barriers and improve temping conditions. Specifically selected coalitions,

networks and websites which have cultivated a space for temp's to meet, express

grievances. educate themselves, organize and resist were analyzed to evaluate the merits

and limitations of these strategies. Network-building is beneficial for creating increased

participation, awareness. and an overall strengthened, embryonic movement. The strength

of this strategy is based in it's ability to integrate and navigate the cultural and

ideological diversity of temp activists, guided by the objective of realizing greater

workplace equity in *all* temp placements. In integrating labour, poststructuralist. and

anarchic. anti-globalization influences with it's networks and online links, the temp

movement has remained fluid enough to merge 'old-school' labour politics with 'new' social movements.

Websites and weblinks as virtual pathways connecting the temp movement have been explored in this analysis. The strength of this method of resistance lies in the diffusion of vital information and opportunity for dialogue. building a collective awareness, not bound by space and time. Taken in combination these strategies can also work effectively in promoting traditional mobilizational techniques such as broad-scale rallies. like the kind we see occurring in the anti-globalization movement..

At present, social networks and online strategies are still somewhat circumscribed in their organizing efficacy and by the presence or absence of 'real', often regionally-based, organizations to 'ground' and cultivate initiatives. This is likely an important factor in understanding why the coalitions of Silicon-Valley, and Washtech, with their celebrated legal victory against Microsoft. have realized significant success.

Methodologically approaching the subjectivity of temp discourse as reflecting 'little narratives' (Lyotard in Loader, 1997, was suggested as encouraging an understanding of the networks, sensibilities, and recurring concerns influencing the temp movement, and was used in this analysis. An approach which may aid researchers and organizers in approaching reform and developing affective networks and organizing strategies.

The growth of contingent staffing and spread of corporate agencies globally has made the issue and possibilities of an emergent temporary worker's movement acutely relevant and timely sociologically. The temporary worker's movement serves as a prism of wider

dialectic tensions and illustrates the contemporary resurgence of both anarchist

sensibilities and labour politics. The composition of the temporary worker's movement

demonstrates a collective activism also evident in the anti-globalization manifestations in

Seattle, Quebec City, Genoa and Prague wherein diverse groups and coalitions can act

together to attempt to realize common objectives. By relaxing demands for ideological

and tactical unity (Melucci, in Nash, 2000), the prospect of collective opposition is

heightened.

In developing strategic networks and coalitions which recognize and address both the

'isms' of postructuralist concerns and structural roots of power, the embryonic temporary

worker's movement is able to address the 'bivalent nature' of social and economic

inequity (Fraser, 1997) active in temporary work given the overrepresentation of all-too-

often mutually inclusive categories of women, 'minorities'and the poor. Where theorists,

such as Castells (1997) have tended to argue for either 'class' *or* 'identity' as an

organizing platform, as if they were somehow mutually exclusive in movements, the

temporary worker's movements approach has demonstrated Melucci's (in Nash, 2000)

point that movements can be grounded in multiple axis of protest which need not

minimize or discredit the other. Moreover May's (1994) argument illustrating the

political-philosophical parallels between poststructuralism and anarchism, has also

demonstrated how cultural politics can coexist, and even be complemented by a

recognition and rejection of the structural basis of domination-a position anarchism has

traditionally assumed.

Through initiating and organizing resistance to the disadvantages of temp work, by

forging social networks across a spectrum of groups sharing the unifying objective of

realizing more equitable conditions for all temps, the temporary workers movement may

be able to avoid the kind of divisiveness which has historically diminished the cohesion

of progressive politics which Klein (2000) has articulated:

> in our crusades against the trio of 'isms, somebody would bring up
> "classism", and being out P.C.ed, we would dutifully add "classism" to
> the hit list in question. But our criticism was focused on the representation
> of women and minorities within the structures of power, not on the
> economics behind those power structures. "Discrimination against
> poverty" (our understanding of injustice was generally constructed as
> discrimination against something) couldn't be solved by changing
> perceptions or language or even, strictly speaking, individual behavior
> (121).

Forging coalitions, zines, websites and other media which combines both corporate,

economic critique with the connected cultural dimensions of identity, allows for a

flexibility and integration in the emerging temporary worker's movement. This flexibility

and inclusivity of the movement will likely cultivate an openness and adaptability

responsive to the heterogeneity of temp workers, leading to increased awareness,

involvement, and heightened politicization of temps, as well as those empathic to their

campaign for social and economic justice.

In arguing for the merging of interests and networks for strengthened resistance on the

one hand, and against traditional, rigid notions of collective unity on the other hand, this

thesis has crisscrossed many aspects and terrains of the temp movement. This breadth has

perhaps circumscribed the depth of analysis into the integration and composition of each

particular coalition or initiative, as well as restricted the level of complexity when

discussing poststructuralism and Foucauldian concepts of power, control and surveillance

in relation to temping, and temp's resistant practices. Such a discussion could be fascinating but. as not the intended focus of this thesis, it was beyond the scope of this analysis.

However, in considering the limitations of this thesis, indications of possible future research become apparent. If time and space permitted a widened analysis, a greater discussion of the role of the temporary work movement in revitalizing the American labour movement could be pursued. Along with future research into labour's resurgence, the influence of anarchic, anti-corporate sites, and zines, such as those discussed in this research, giving rise to new projects and websites could prove both compelling and timely. The potential appearance of new zines, webzines and websites, as both temp work in America and web technologies spread. could give rise to an exciting expansion of the brand of anarchic contestation that was discussed in the preceding chapter both online and off.

Given the relationship between temp work growth in the 'IT ' (information technology) and information processing jobs-from clerical work to programming and software design-it will be interesting to monitor the possible flourish of anti-corporate media texts by those with both access, and in many cases advanced technological savvy. With the texts of Bakunin, opposition to centralized power, and notions of mutual aid winning increasing embrace with young activists, anarchism has come to replace Marxism, given it's negative association with failed and fledgling social experiments, as the alternate social organization to aspire towards nowadays (Epstein, 2002). Another reason explaining anarchism's current appeal is found in new technologies themselves. Cybertechnologies present a medium well-suited to anarchism given that they are

decentralized, non-hierarchical, fairly anonymous or at least pseudonymous, spaces conducive to autonomous actions running the gamut from hacking, to promoting the workplace subversion techniques documented here. One particularly interesting tension, or tensions, is presented in conflicting 'anarcho' tendencies which could develop with increased anarchic cyber uses. Anarchism is far from a unitary political philosophy but rather runs the gamut. Anarchocommunism with it's rejection of work and "everything according to need" ideal, is distinct from anarchosyndicalism's "everything according to deed" doctrine. Moreover, the anarcho-libertarianism epitomized by Apple founder Steve Jobs and embraced by many a digital entrepreneur (Boorsook, 1999), while not reflective of the philosophy nor orientation of the anarchist tradition, has nonetheless an importance salience in cyberspace. Exploring how anarchism in it's pure and adultered forms are applied online, could be a fascinating comparative study contributing to both increased understanding of tensions within contemporary anarchism, as well as the 'radical' uses of cyberspace.

One final aspect underexamined here which offers further possibilities for pertinent research, surrounds the study of the obstacles to online access and participation by 'temps' whose social, and economic exclusion has been reproduced both in temping, and in the barriers to technological access restricting their involvement. Research seeking to understand how online technologies could aid the social organizing of disadvantaged groups is still so recent, and the implications as yet unclear (Mele, 1999), that I feel the briefness of my discussion of the issue was not necessarily a weakness of this thesis, but rather circumscribed by the scarcity and inconclusiveness of study in the area as a whole.

As empirical research and methodological techniques examining online social action expand, increased light can be shed upon our understanding of how access to technology may be effected by both material, as well cultural and educational particularities. Through increased understanding of the restrictions to access, the cultivation of solutions can follow. From there, the full potential of online technologies to break the sequence of systemic exclusion and marginalization reproduced in poor and discriminatory temp work may be realized, through online dialogue and access which includes, and reflects, the vitally required voices and contributions of all temps, so that participation may grow.

This thesis research has been difficult to conduct given the temporality of the Internet and conceptual limitations of theorizing about it (Poster, 1997). As well, attempting to merge discussions of anarchy, poststructuralism, fragmentation, and labour is tricky. However, I am satisfied that in pursuing the non-linear trajectory which became apparent in unraveling the strategies of this movement, this work most accurately reflects the plurality of temp workers themselves, while demonstrating the complexities, strengths and weaknesses of the both the emerging temporary worker's movement and online social action.

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www.fairjobs.org North American Alliance for Fair Employment

www.geocities.com/Eureka/Office/1621 Tempzine/ *Best of Tempzine*

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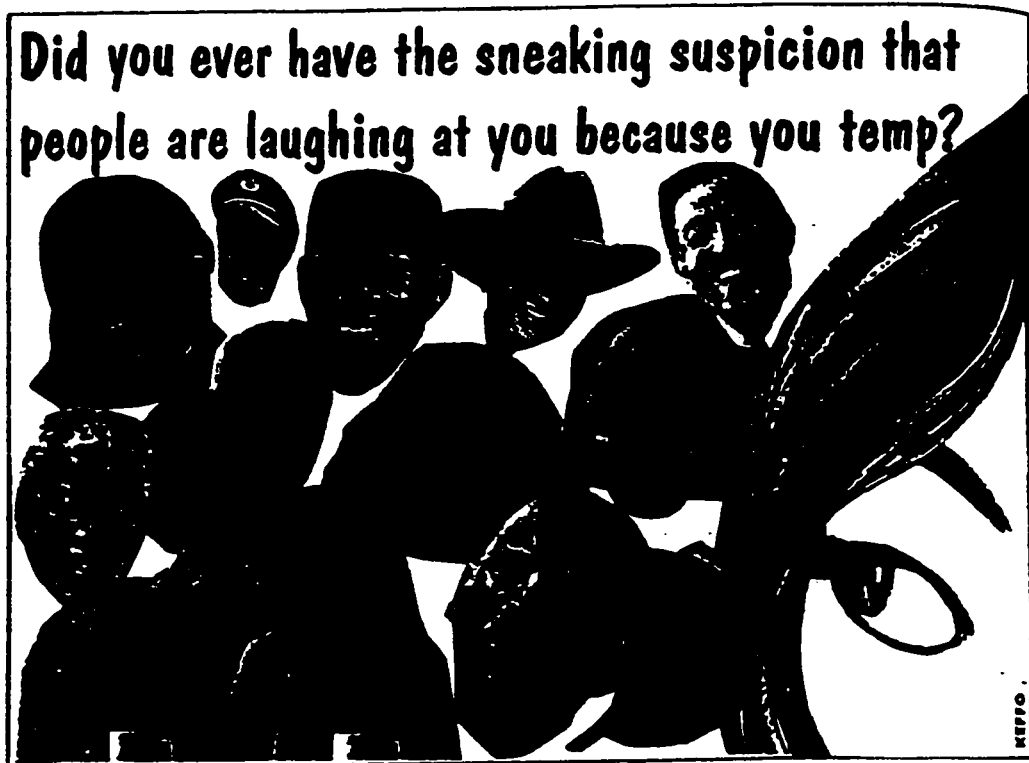www.tempnyc.com

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www.wpmembers.org Working Partnerships Membership Association
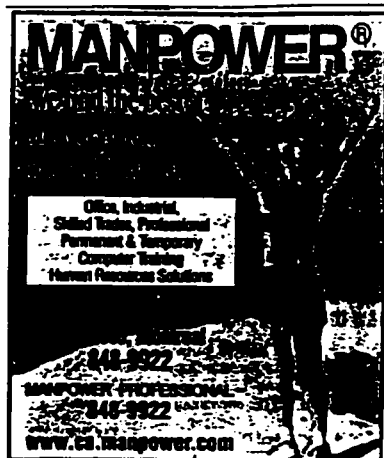
Appendices

Appendix 1

'Did you ever have the sneaking suspicion that people are laughing at you because you temp?": The heightened surveillance, sense of alienation, and marginal status active in being 'just a temp' can increase barriers to more conventional forms of dialogue and collective action by temps at their sites of work. Temp zines, webzines and websites provide spaces for temps to commiserate and collaborate about temping, which can diminish feelings of isolation and counter the discipline of the temp environment, by providing an anonymous space for expression and exchange.

Appendix 2:

Expanding possibilities that put you to work': Economic restructuring in America in recent years has encouraged increasingly long-term contracting relationships between the billion dollar temp industry and multinational companies.

In Silicon Valley, California, where some of the coalitions and websites in this analysis are situated, ongoing relationships between Manpower and Hewlett Packard have been implicated in encouraging inequitable conditions in high-tech temp work. Hewlett Packard contracts temps from Manpower for jobs ranging from assembly work and data processing to computer programming and development

Appendix 3

Many of the websites and coalitions in this study initiated efforts to integrate temp networks and resources 'online' beginning in the late 1990's. The networks and websites seek to use the internet as a collective space to promote awareness, and empower temps through the diffusion of information and sense of solidarity the website's foster.

send

Enter your email!

home | messages | links | info

Links for Temporary Workers

tempworkers.net

tempslave! TempZine
tempslave!

TEMP 24-7
www.temp24-7.com

Consumer's Guide to "Best Practices" Temp Agencies
Temp Workers Alliance New Jersey

Self-reliance and Security for Contract Employees
Contract Employee's Handbook

*The Red Guide to Temp Agencies*
New York

The San Francisco Living Wage Coalition
sflivingwage.org

Working Partnerships
AtWork.Org

Washington Alliance of Technology Workers
washtech.org

tempworkers.net
The Temporary Workers Coalition
info@tempworkers.net
2940 Mission Street, Suite 216
San Francisco, CA 94104

The Temporary Workers Coalition is for temps, independent contractors, contingent labor, and other workers who work through an agency, independently, or have other non-standard employment. TempWorkers.Net wants to be a place where we can find out about jobs, wages, our rights, and news that affects our work.

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Appendix 4

'Community Outreach and Building Coalitions': the atwork.org website (now wpmember.org) is organized and maintained by the South Bay Labour Council and brings together various social organizations under the non-profit coalition Working Partnerships. By integrating the issue of temp work within a broader network of social justice aimed at redressing multiple instances of social, and political inequity, wpmember/Working Partnerships seeks to strengthen and diversify the movement for improved temping conditions through widening participation and strategic alliances.

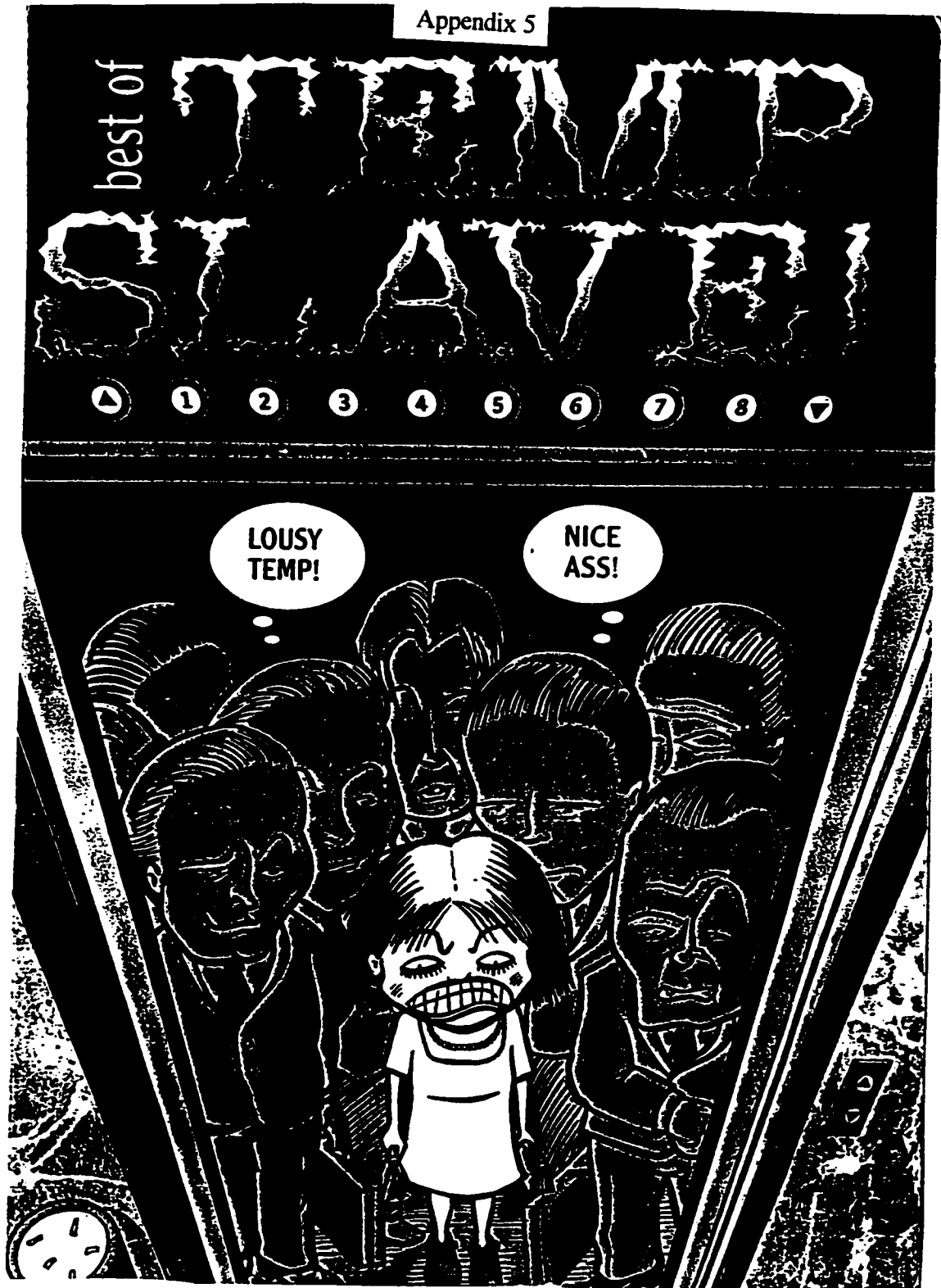| ▪HOME | WHO | NEWS | WHERE | LINKS | CONTACT |

Organizing for Justice in our Community
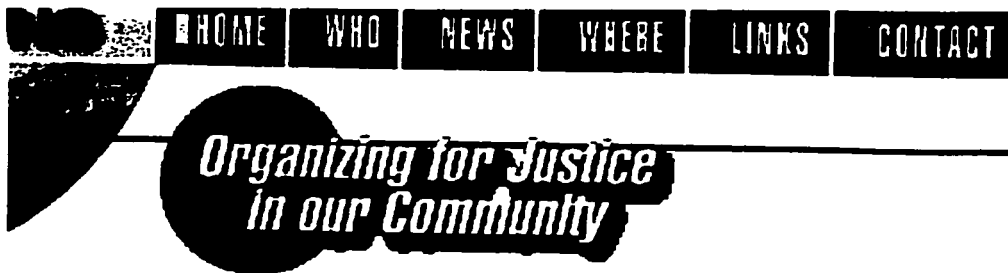
Creating and sustaining a broad coalition of interests fighting for economic and social justice is a core strategy to building the political will for reform. Iɪ collaboration with community leaders, clergy, students groups, women's organizations, housing activists and environmentalists, the South Bay Labo Council acts as an advocacy organization for all working people in the workplace and in the community.

Community Outreach & Building Coalitions

The Labor Council seeks to align with other organizations that are both membership-based and working on issues of economic equity and social justice. The labor movement works in collaboration with dozens of community organizations on a regular and consistent basis by providing technical assistance and financial and in-kind donations.

The Interfaith Council: a coalition foɪ social and economic justice.

Founded in April 1997, the

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'Lousy temp, Nice ass': Zines and websites like *Best of Tempslave*, address multiple poststructuralist concerns active in temping with an irreverent style, and anarchic sensibility, characteristic of both zines, and many of the anti-corporate web sites featured in this analysis.

Appendix 6

"Temps vs. Suits': sites like temp24-7.com use both humourous text, and graphic elements, to voice disdain and vengeful contempt for corporate America and the temp industry. As well temp24-7, like some other temp websites and zines, advocates tactics like theft, sabotage and mutual aid. Through online forums these 'by-temps-for-temps' initiatives, serve to diffuse and maintain counterhegemonic anarchic sensibilities and practices within the environments of temping.

```
Take a deep breath and relax -
you've made it to temp asylum. No
one's gonna ask you to make
copies on three-hole, staple, or
file anything in reverse
alphabetical order. There are no
time clocks here, and if you
drink the last of the coffee, no
office manager is gonna bug you
to make another pot. So kick back
and prepare to exact revenge on
your co-workers.
```

Temps vs. Suits

Shockwave game

Click here for AOL version

Blow off some steam by blowing away your boss! Ordinary office equipment turns into deadly anti-managerial weapons as the executive suite becomes a corporate battle ground. Make it to the boardroom and you'll have to fight a gang of marauding CEOs. This "Doom" inspired first-person-perspective combat game gives new meaning to the term "Hostile Takeover."
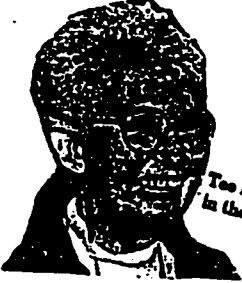
SHOCKWAVE

Game Design and Development by Venu Interactive

Sabotage is Fun':Temp websites and zines have advocated anarchic practices of resistance to empower temps, and recast them in a position of autonomy and solidarity, working in opposition to the inequities of temping and capitalism more widely Through online indexing and shared weblinks, the networks existing between anarchism and temping are cultivated demonstrating the strategic benefits of web technologies for connecting fragmented groups sharing similar objectives.

Temp of the Month!

Minerva Monera has worked 55 hours a week for 11 straight months at $5 an hour in a pretzel factory. Minerva does the very important job of dipping pretzels in chocolate. She loves her work and her bosses!
WAY TO GO MINERVA!

HAPPY TEMP INC.

"Your slavery is our luxury"

HEY, TEMP SLAVES! REMEMBER MINERVA MONERA FROM ISSUE 2? SABOTAGE IS FUN!

"EAT UP THE PRETZELS YOU ROTTEN BOSSES!"
—*MINERVA*

Appendix 8

'5 years later': Tempzines and websites have provided a forum for young temps, over represented in temping, to express frustration with underemployment and the monotony of many temp jobs. The rise in youth unemployment & underemployment has been linked to the growth in temping (Jorgensen & Reimer, 2001) and many of the discussion forums, website discourse, and zine contributions, express dismay at the menial quality of temp assignments. The temp forums diminish the isolation of temping, foster dissent and build a sense of solidarity in opposition to corporate culture and global capitalism

Appendix 9

Rhetoric has figured prominently in temp websites and zines, acting as a means to counter act the attitudinal conditioning, and temp agency mantras, which are prevalent in the coercive practices of the American temp industry. While rhetoric may prove affective in raising consciousness and strengthening opposition, it's use online could encourage the diffusion of inaccurate information and discourage sustained participation, accentuated by the infrequency of site maintenance, with site visitors growing disinterested with stagnant rhetorical devices.

The new TempSlave online! From the tempstaff of TempSlave!:

Plenty of responsibility, no promotions !!!
I'm beginning to think that today's Corporate Temp Agency is nothing but a group of lazy, opportunistic, backstabbing bastards....

Appendix 10

'Why the receptionist must get paid less': advice columns and discussion forums offer places for temps to voice grievances, ask questions, and express dissatisfaction with the undervaluing of their skills. These practices are discouraged in the temp environment by spatial separation and restrictive industry practices but enabled by the interactive and spatial transcendence permitted by web technologies.

📝 **General - Why the Receptionist Must be Paid Less**   ✉ <u>Subscribe</u>

From: **SEANS4**   10/5/99 7:47 pm
To: **ALL**   (1 of 6)
                                                        <u>25.1</u>

Hi all - I'm a typical almost-thirty who can read Plato in Greek and solve differential equations but can't get paid ten dollars an hour unless I'm lucky because I majored in fields with content instead of those nonsense ticket-to-the-middle-class degrees people get today. If I couldn't type 80 I might well be at minimum wage.

In any case, the following reasoning occured to me as I sat, trying to smile, at my one-week receptionist's position at a factory, while the alarm rang steadily throughout the morning due to equipment testing:

WHY THE RECEPTIONIST IN A FACTORY MUST RECEIVE SLIGHTLY LOWER PAY THAN THE FLOOR WORKERS: A curious conundrum occurs in the payment rate for white-collar support staff in a predominantly blue-collar environment. The receptionist, who is not skilled labor, cannot be paid a decent wage, and as such might be expected to identify with labor and against management. If the receptionist was paid the same or more than the workers on the factory floor, she or he would nonetheless still remain the lowest paid worker on the management "team," and still would be likely to be sympathetic to the floor workers. But insofar as the receptionist has a certain degree of access to sensitive documents and information, being located, as she or he is, in the center of the 'management' part of the factory, such identification would be a source of potential danger to management, especially in those areas of the country where some shred of working-class consciousness can still be found. The market furthermore precludes paying the receptionist at the same level at which other management employees are paid, which is normally how loyalty to management is secured.

However, by paying the receptionist slightly less than the floor workers, an emotion which, while not loyalty, is just as useful for management as loyalty, can be inculcated in her or him. That emotion is resentment. The receptionist, seeing that the

'Improving the blended workforce through training and research': Sites like www.contingent.com are a helpful link from the temp 24-7 website. As is stated on the home page, the aim of this consulting company is to improve the standards of temporary work through training and research. Web links such as contingent.com provide pathways for temps to access relevant information pertaining to rights, agency rankings and offer spaces for temps to share their stories. The interactive contributions and research being pursued by organizations like Shupe and coalitions like NAFFE, Washtech and Working Partnerships can improve the accuracy and efficacy of online temping information

"Improving the blended workforce through training and research"

SITE NAVIGATION   CONTACT US   E-MAIL US
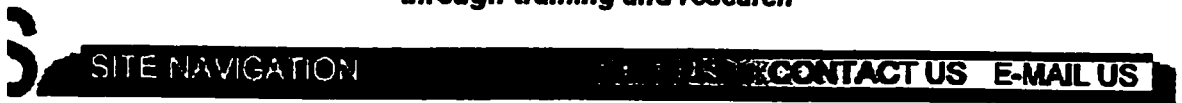
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ı Directory
e Link Directory

ıletter

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Services ,

Temps: *Do you find it hard to get a placement rep to help you? Do you need help on career development?*

Students and Researchers: *Do you need information resources on topic/s directly related to the temp industry or temporary employment, or insights from those that have been short or long term temps?*

Management professionals: *Are you prepared to deal with issues that arise with improper temp agency selection and poor temp labor management? Do you know if you are getting qualified workers or results for your cost?*

TempSource Databa
· *Members Login*

Username

Password

☐ Remember
Username & pas:

Login

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THE FAST TAKE
THE FAST COMPANY

▲ MAGAZINE
▲ ARCHIVES
▲ WEB EXCLUSIVES
▲ THEMES

Dont Wanna Be Your (Temp) Slave

In a corporate world where temp workers are being solicited on increasing basis, workers have united to announce their scorn fc various mistreatments in the workplace.

by Katharine Mieszkowski
illustrations by Steve Wacksman
from FC issue 17, page 40

☒ SEND THIS PAGE

'Don't wanna be your (temp) slave': Coverage in both on and offline media sources can promote greater awareness of the objectives and networks of the temp movement, and may serve as beacons alerting temps to temp resources, and awareness of the collective objectives of the broader temp movement. This story appearing in *FastCompany* was accessible as both an online magazine, and in print distribution, thus increasing it's diffusion, and reflecting a 'media ecology' (McLuhan, 1996) which could increase public consciousness to the inequities of temping, and precipitate improvements in temp work.