

Working Without Respect: Working Class Aspirations in a Postindustrial Economy

Faculty Member: [Gerald Jaynes](#)

This book project uses a *behavioral economic* framework to explain the transformations in Labor force participation, marriage, and living arrangements of children primarily among white working class men and women since 1970. Behavioral economics as applied here conjoins a theoretical construct of social psychology, *self-verification*, with methods of economic analysis to explain economic behaviors. Self-verification refers to a basic human need to receive social affirmation that one's beliefs about one's self (our identity) are true. Thesis: Postindustrial inequality's systemic deterioration in working class men's wages below a "living wage," estranges segments of the white working class outside the nation's "middle class" identity, an estrangement historically reserved for minorities of color; working class white men and women respond to cultural estrangement similar to minorities effecting a restructuring of cultural institutions. Similar working class responses to similar macrosocial conditions, imply objective markers of class position primarily determine life chances; race/ethnicity assumes a codependent causal role in the emergence of *within class differences*. Within class behavioral similarities strongly challenge culture of poverty claims.

An important part of the project requires locating original data for a variety of national surveys since 1950 (Roper, Gallup, General Social Survey) and setting up data base in order to pursue econometric analysis concerning "working class" beliefs and attitudes on certain issues. RA should have had an introduction to statistics and/or econometrics. I will teach everything else needed.

Award: Lillian Hua

Brian Cho

Tobin Application Link: [Tobin Application](#)

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