

***Cut Adrift: Families in Insecure Times.* By Marianne Cooper. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2014, 296 pp., \$60.00 (cloth); \$29.95 (paper).**

The questions Marianne Cooper asks are relevant beyond the context of the Great Recession – the event that headlines her analysis – but the crisis of the moment underscores their importance: How do people (women, men, families) increasingly charged with managing their own economic security experience and handle that task, emotionally? And further, what do the social class differences in that process tell us about life in an era of ballooning economic inequality?

Cooper observed and conducted some 100 interviews with members of 50 families in Silicon Valley, California, ranging in class status from a single-mother with an annual income of \$21,000 to a two-income dual-degree couple with an income of \$11 million. She started her fieldwork before the 2000s recession, then followed up afterwards, allowing her to sharpen her focus on the experience of insecurity.

The sample skews wealthy, with most of the families at least middle income by national standards. It's an expensive region, and they almost all feel financial squeezes of one degree or another, but it's not a study of the desperately poor. Further, about 80 percent of the sample is in two-parent families with children; just over half are non-Latino Whites. Cooper has chosen to focus on social class rather than race, ethnicity, nationality, or sexuality. With these limitations, the descriptions in the book are far from comprehensive, as she acknowledges. However, she uses the diversity in her sample to find themes and categories of experience that will be useful beyond the boundaries of her study.

People feel economic inequality not just in terms of income and wealth, but also through divergent levels and types of risk and insecurity. Some families (more often the affluent) seek to tamp down their worries and fears, others (usually the more affluent) pump them up and confront them, largely by aggressively managing their children's human capital portfolios (private schools, travel, camps, activities, tutors). These different ways of "doing security" are clues to the emotional worlds that separate people by social class. And Cooper makes a compelling case that we can't understand the implications of rising inequality without mapping these patterns in subjective perception and feeling. To build the idea of doing security, she draws from the tradition in gender scholarship that puts "doing" at the center of identity and uses "emotion work" to de-

scribe the process of enacting subjective states within structural constraints.

The quantity and quality of anxiety people feel, and how they express it emotionally and economically – that is, how they enact their "security projects" – reflect their subjective perception of insecurity in the context of the relative standards they impose or experience as benchmarks for their social class position. For example, before knowing how much to worry about paying for her children's college, a parent must not only decide the children should go to college and that their parents should plan to pay for it, but the price of the college they are aiming for, and the likelihood that the family's future income and savings will be sufficient to make that possible. Additionally, the practices they engage in as part of the security project are a mix of intentional and unintentional, planned and unplanned, wise and unwise – depending on the resources and information they have available. And the elements of the security project evolve with circumstances and under negotiation within families.

The study navigates a complex matrix made of different families' problems, resources, worries, and strategies. In the face of insecurity, Cooper sees some families that downscale for survival, some that upscale for competitive advantage, a group in the merely holds on. In additional chapters she pursues the role of religion, and the crucial issue of debt and its consequences (some trust in God, others fall on the mercy of the banks).

The stratification of risk has produced a stratification of feelings. In the end she offers a "hard look in the mirror," at the economic, policy, and cultural shifts that have exacerbated these inequalities. In the debates over the relationship between individuals and government, and between workers and employers, Cooper's is a call for attention to the emotional consequences of our actions, large and small.

Cooper's analysis is nuanced and incisive, her writing is clear and engaging, her reasoning is logical, and her conclusions are well justified. This book helps establish security in the suite of outcomes that concern those conducting research and teaching in the area of social inequality. In addition to its appeal for researchers, it is written at a level suitable for graduate students or undergraduates with basic exposure to sociological concepts.

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