and practices they have historically engaged to occupy this middle ground" (p. 6). Social workers negotiated their identity in the context of two contesting nodal class identities, between that of being a bourgeois working class and that of being a proletarian middle class. Walkowitz's historical approach allows him to probe the contradictory processes in social workers' struggle for attaining their professional status. It also gives him the opportunity to look into how race and gender divisions have played their parts in shaping the class identity of the social workers.

Walkowitz's class analysis reminds me of what Luc Boltanski has done in his 1987, *The Making of a Class: Cadres in French Society.* Both Walkowitz and Boltanski are not happy with the idea of bracketing the process of class identity construction and class formation from the historical context wherein different social classes interact. Indeed, they see the social construction of class identity, not as an outcome of objective class determinism or that of an internal psychological process within the class itself (such as growing class awareness), but rather as a consequence of interactions between classes. In other words, class identity is not a matter of subjective class awareness as such. It is the result of the processes of negotiation, accommodation and contest that a class has gone through in finding its place in a particular historical and political conjuncture.

Walkowitz has forcefully demonstrated the strength of his framework in analyzing the politics of social workers' construction of their class identity. The merit of his approach lies in the emphasis on the interactive, interclass construction of class identity. This is far more convincing than the survey-based analysis of class identity as class identification (answer to the question about which class the respondent would locate himself or herself). However, that said, it is not very clear how a case study of the social workers (as one among many occupational groups that can be classified as middle class) would throw light on the much broader question concerning the formation of the middle class. Would another case study help take us further along the way of advancing our understanding of how a middle-class identity is constructed by the members of that class? Or, rather that Walkowitz's study is more of an analysis of the professionalization of the American social workers in the light of a class perspective, than a study of the formation of the middle class as such. Actually, Walkowitz has not told us a lot about the American middle class in general. After reading the book, one would know more about how the social workers negotiate their middle-class identity in the course of their occupational professionalization. But one would continue to wonder how the middle-class managers, administrators and professionals (that is, including occupational groups other than social workers) work out their identity as a class.

Working with Class is a well-written book that adds to our store of knowledge about class and class formation. In particular, it contributes to the development of a more sophisticated discussion of the concept of class identity. It should be of interest to graduate students and sociologists in the fields of work and occupation, and class analysis.

INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS, FAMILY, AND LIFE COURSE

The Ties That Bind: Perspectives on Marriage and Cohabitation, edited by **Linda J. Waite, Christine Bachrach, Michelle Hindin, Elizabeth Thomson,** and **Arland Thornton.** Hawthorne, NY: Aldine de Gruyter, 2000. 404 pp. $25.95 paper. ISBN: 0-202-30636-4.

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Marriage and cohabitation may be seen as assets, in some ways like wealth. Like wealth, there are aspects of choice and constraint in the determination of who gets these relationships. Who enters and stays in marriage or cohabitation, and the relative gains or losses that result, are structured by gender in ways that differ across racial/ethnic and other groupings. For better or for worse, married and cohabitating people have things that others do not. Understanding what those things are and how they are changing is crucial to figuring out why there have been such dramatic devel-

opments in recent decades in the rates of nonmarital cohabitation, later marriage timing and more people not married, and the disassociation of childbirth and childrearing from married relationships.

The Ties That Bind describes, explains, and theorizes these trends, mostly for the United States. The collection is clearly conceptualized and motivated, and many of the pieces are quite useful. Not many students will be assigned every chapter, and even specialists will pick and choose from the somewhat uneven papers here, but both will benefit from the depth and breadth of what they read. As an introduction to the field and some of its leading scholars, and as an overview of the state of current research, the volume deserves attention.

Waite argues that critical feminist comparisons between the well-being of married men and women miss the point that both are better off when they are married. Kelly Raley calculates that 60 percent of white women marry by age 25, compared to just 30 percent of black women, while by age 50 the rates reach 92 percent and just 66 percent respectively (p. 36). Not only have marriage rates collapsed for black women compared to white women, but as Catherine Fitch and Steven Ruggles explain, the widely recognized marriage boom after World War II, in which age at first marriage plummeted, did not extend to black men or women. These differentials—more white marriages in economic good times, fewer black marriages during a period of economic crisis for blacks—have helped propel a shift toward a view of marriage as at least a relative asset, rather than a prison of patriarchy.

This development represents an uneasy alliance between the seemingly conservative, promarriage analysts such as Waite, and the radical critics of white feminism, who correctly point out the narrowness of some feminist criticisms of marriage. That being the case, it is unfortunate that this volume does not bring in more from this critical perspective. It does include empirical work on racial/ethnic differences, including an interesting piece on ethnicity, immigration, and normative views of marriage by R. S. Oropesa and Bridget Gorman, and a useful examination by Valerie Kincade Oppenheimer of how difficulties in men's career-entry process contribute to black-white differences in marriage timing. But there is little theorizing on how inequality shapes the context for patterns of marriage and cohabitation. One important exception is Paula England's essay on marriage, gender inequality, and the costs of children.

Waite's chapter presents an essentially Durkheimian view of marriage: Married people are happier than unmarried people because people are depending on them, giving meaning to their lives (p. 373). However, her results, based on General Social Survey data, show that married women are less happy within their marriages than married men are, although this difference is smaller than the married-single differences. In such cross-sectional analysis the question of causality is open, of course. Waite addresses this issue, but also slips, as in, "marriage improves happiness" (p. 375).

While for Waite the crucial comparison is between married and unmarried people, England argues that we need to ask both how marriage is good (or not) for women and how marriage may be better for men than it is for women. Only then can we understand how marriage is related to gender inequality. As is often the case, the undertheorized choice of reference group is critical in determining inequality outcomes. For the question of marriage, the comparison group may be unmarried women, married men, or women in some hypothetical or real alternative situation. England paraphrases a quip about another tie that binds—capitalism—when she says, "The only thing worse than being dominated by a husband is not being dominated by a husband." Given that women in the United States still have children, and are still largely responsible for their care, and given that men still dominate economically, married mothers and their children are advantaged. This is much different from a broad stance in support of marriage. It also does not preclude consideration of another problem of gender inequality—that marriage still provides greater advantages for men than it does for women.