Business Citizenship at Work: Cultural Transposition and Class Formation in Cincinnati, 1870–1910[1]

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This article links class analysis and institutionalism through a case study of late-19th-century employers. Class analysis extends institutionalism by highlighting an additional source of cultural transposition—a generalized identity summarized here as "business citizenship." Institutionalism, in turn, shows how civic associations worked to unify employers and foster an overarching class consciousness. The case study provides an overview of class formation among Cincinnati employers and illustrates how business citizenship carried over from the realms of political reform and high culture to personnel management and industrial training. Some comparative observations suggest this pattern of class formation and cultural transposition was typical.

INTRODUCTION

On October 21, 1898, Cincinnati society mourned the death of Julius Dexter. Like many members of the local elite, Dexter had been successful in business, generous in support of cultural institutions and charities, and prominent in political reform movements. His activities on these different fronts are reflected in a long list of organizational affiliations: secretary of the Committee of One Hundred, founding shareholder of the city's art museum and Music Hall Association, treasurer of the exclusive Queen

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City Club, active member of the Commercial Club of Cincinnati (Zimmerman 1981, p. 34; Greve 1904, vol. 1, p. 926; Queen City Club, Year Book, 1916). In its memorial to Dexter, the Commercial Club of Cincinnati (CCC) praised him as "first and before else the Citizen," one who "did not have one conscience for private matters and another for public or corporate affairs" (CCC, Minutes, Nov. 10, 1898).

For historians of late-19th-century urban elites, Dexter is an easily recognizable character. Like many of his personal friends, he occupied the top rungs on the ladders of class, status, and party in Cincinnati. For sociologists, Dexter offers an opportunity to bring together two literatures: one fashionable and the other undeservedly passé. The new institutionalists, seeing Dexter carry the same "conscience" with him from one institutional hierarchy to another, may suspect a case of cultural transposition. They would be right. Dexter and his counterparts, I will argue, applied a distinctive cultural script across domains. Champions of class analysis will find Dexter of interest for a different reason. He illustrates the importance of civic roles in late-19th-century employer class formation.

This article focuses on where these two literatures intersect and complement one another. On one side, class analysis can enhance institutionalists' understanding of cultural transposition. The collective actors produced by class formation are particularly effective agents of transposition because they apply consistent measures of social worth and identity across the hierarchies of politics, status, and work. Institutionalism, for its part, points to the organizational settings in which fractious employers may come together and develop an overarching class consciousness. Among late-19th-century employers, the key to both transposition and class consciousness was a generalized identity, which I will summarize as "business citizenship." This identity was "generalized" in two important ways. First, it incorporated individual employers whose economic interests left them indifferent to—or at odds with—one another. Business citizenship thus helped overcome familiar problems of capitalist collective action. It was a generalized identity in the further sense that it subsumed multiple roles played by these individuals. By providing a transposable narrative of social distinctions and identities, business citizenship made class actors effective vehicles for carrying scripts across institutional boundaries.

The second section of this article, "Theories of Class Formation and Institutionalism," will expand on these theoretical themes. The section entitled "Class Re-Formation: The Development of a Business Community" examines class formation among late-19th-century Cincinnati employers. "Transposition: Business Citizenship at Work" then shows how these class-conscious actors transposed scripts from civic affairs to an arena where one might least expect employers to use the language of citizenship, work. Finally, “Toward a Comparative Perspective” reinforces the argument by briefly comparing Cincinnati with other cases.

THEORIES OF CLASS FORMATION AND INSTITUTIONALISM

Class analysis helps institutionalists account for cultural transposition by highlighting the channeling role of class-conscious actors, and institutionalism enriches our understanding of the organizational setting for capitalist class formation. Both transposition and class formation are problematic. An encompassing and multifaceted identity is the key to the transposing role of class consciousness, and it is through this identity that certain institutionalized social networks lead to class formation.

Class Analysis and the Problem of Institutional Transposition

Cultural transposition is no minor matter for the new institutionalists. It is an important alternative to “efficiency” in explaining isomorphism. It balances the theory’s emphasis on structural constraints by reintroducing social actors as innovative users of cultural routines. For a theory developed in part to explain persistence and path dependency, transposition is an important adjunct because it helps account for change. Identities and legitimations rooted in one sphere become resources to advance group interests in another (Powell and DiMaggio 1991; Thelen and Steinmo 1992; Sewell 1992; Clemens and Cook 1999).

Such transposition can hardly be taken for granted, perhaps least of all among American employers. Collective identities and cultural schemas may be domain specific rather than consistent and pervasive across institutions. Rather than exercising the same conscience in private and in public or in politics and in business, Julius Dexter might have just as easily switched hats at the border. Indeed, this is what most sociologists would expect. Role theory reminds us that the different institutions through which we pass—family, school, work, church—follow different cultural scripts. As we move from one to another, we select from our repertoire the appropriate rules and masks (Wiley and Alexander 1987; Goffman 1959). Businessmen in the 19th century could have compartmentalized the norms governing politics or cultural refinement from those suitable for work. They might even have done so quite consciously, in the fashion of railroad president A. B. Strickley. On withdrawing from a pooling agreement in 1896, Strickley assured fellow railroad presidents that “your integrity, honor and fine character as individuals is well known and unquestioned and as individuals I would trust you with my entire personal fortune. But gentlemen, as railroad presidents, I would not trust any of you with my watch" (Berk 1994, p. 135). Another sociological argument leads to the same conclusion. This is the well-known principle of honor among thieves, or its more esteemed counterpart, "bounded solidarity" (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1998). The fact that businessmen praised selflessness, civic duty, and good character among themselves does not mean they applied the same standards to outsiders. As businessmen erected status boundaries between themselves and manual workers, they might have become even less likely to apply the logic of citizenship to relations with employees.

Still, transposition does happen sometimes. Why? The usual answers begin from opposite sides. Some start with the characteristics of institutions and add social actors as transposing agents, while others highlight cognitive processes and then nest them within social networks. According to the first approach, how widely particular scripts are deployed is governed by the cultural logics that structure different social domains. Douglas (1986, p. 65) suggests that scripts (e.g., defining gender roles) that comport well with a society's overarching principles of legitimation (such as the generic principle of a "division of labor") are likely to be particularly potent. DiMaggio (1997, p. 281) notes how institutional isomorphism (e.g., a common organizational structure) makes transposition between spheres more likely, and Clemens (1997) invokes "logics of appropriateness" that facilitate or constrain transposition of cultural frames across boundaries. For example, in some eras, "self-interest," however suitable in the marketplace, is not deemed proper for politics. These arguments first highlight characteristics of institutions that define the applicability of a script and then introduce social actors as the actual agents of transposition. Men and women manipulate cultural logics to achieve their goals; if logics of appropriateness allow, the outcome may be institutional change (Powell and DiMaggio 1991, p. 30; Friedland and Alford 1991, p. 232; Clemens 1997).

Proponents of a more cognitive approach arrive at similar conclusions from the opposite direction. Theorists in this camp begin with individual psychology and ask how social networks shape schematic priorities. Stryker (1987), for example, makes no assumption that different institutions embody more or less similar cultural logics, much less that they enact only *one* basic script. He starts, instead, with individuals applying different schema in different roles, and he asks why some schema might trump others. His answer is that our psychological investments set our schematic hierarchy. Those role schema that, if violated, would incur the greatest loss of social relations are the ones that we are most likely to invoke. Occupational identities in which we are heavily invested, for example, may trump family roles if the two come into conflict. In his review of the literature on culture and cognition, DiMaggio (1997, p. 282) notes similar social-psychological mechanisms. Frames with the most emotional resonance are also the most likely to be transposed across domains. As with institutionalist accounts, however, social actors are ultimately the carriers of scripts.

It is here that institutionalism can profit from class analysis. By noting that some actors make better porters than others, we gain additional leverage for explaining cultural transposition. Groups whose solidarities span institutional boundaries and whose identities provide a master narrative for interpreting varied social experiences are particularly potent agents of transposition. The most familiar example of such a development is class formation,[2] and the richest treatments of class formation focus on labor.

In keeping with constructivist trends, theories of working-class formation have come to treat class cultures as collective narratives (Steinberg 1991; Steinmetz 1992; Somers 1997). Workers piece together stories of who they are, what sets them apart from others, and how they fit in society. To the extent that they tell a common story and link their personal biographies to this collective narrative, we can speak of a distinctive class culture. Among contemporary U.S. workers, Lamont (2000) finds such narratives centering on the "dignity" of working men. Somers (1997) argues that the rights of freeborn Englishmen formed the dominant theme among 19th-century English workers. The general point is as applicable to capitalists as to labor. The class narratives of late-19th-century Cincinnati employers center on businessmen as leading citizens of the community. One link back to institutionalism should be clear: class narratives include the frames and scripts that figure prominently in institutionalism. Thus Somers (1997, p. 83) speaks of the "evaluative criteria" that workers deploy to judge rights and wrongs; Voss (1996) discusses the ways in which class narratives frame success and failure; and Lamont (2000) analyzes the codes of moral worth workers use to make social distinctions.

Much as institutional scripts may be domain specific, however, so too with class cultures. Class narratives may be rooted in particular worker roles (Rose 1997) or "relational settings" (Somers 1997) rather than generalized across them. Identities and cultural practices based on class sometimes prevail in the workplace, for example, but are crowded out of other arenas by different ways of categorizing actors and stakes (Katznelson 1985; Halle 1984). "Class consciousness," by contrast, may be thought of as a more pervasive narrative, one that provides a single diagnostic key for constructing identities and explaining inequalities in multiple arenas of social life. Studies of class formation, then, incorporate the same question that institutionalists pose about transposition: How do narratives come to be generalized across "relational settings"? To answer that question, students of class analysis should return the favor and look to institutionalist accounts of social networks and collective identities.

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[2] I emphasize *class* formation because it fits my case study. The argument here could be generalized to make expansive group solidarities and master identities along other lines the crucial carriers of scripts across institutional boundaries. That more general model might resemble Bourdieu's use of "habitus," but it would put far greater stress than does Bourdieu on how collective identities are contingent on historical processes of group formation.

Institutions and Generalized Identities among Businessmen

Institutional influences on collective identities have been most fully explored in revisionist accounts of working-class formation. Three themes in this literature are particularly important for understanding employers. First, solidarity and class consciousness among workers is more the exception than the rule, and institutionalized social networks can explain the exceptions. It is through historically contingent institutions that workers from different trades, residential areas, or workplaces come to be linked (see, e.g., Gould [1995] on military organization and Haydu [1988] on shop committee systems). Such linkages, in turn, favor a more generalized identity, in the sense of more encompassing solidarities. Relationships *among* institutions, moreover, sometimes align social cleavages—economic and political powerlessness, for example—and thus favor a more generalized identity in another sense, an identity which is consistent across institutional settings. Such overlapping cleavages are commonly seen as an important cause of working-class radicalism (Giddens 1973; Katznelson 1986). Second, revisionist accounts do not prejudge *which* institutions most powerfully guide working-class narratives. In Stedman Jones's (1982) early interpretation, for example, English workers' class identities were forged in political rather than economic struggles. Somers's (1997) more recent treatment gives primacy to English legal relations. Third, the organizational settings within which workers mobilize have ideological effects. In Sewell's (1980) classic study of the 1848 French revolution, for example, the system of trade representation through the Luxembourg Commission helped politicize and radicalize workers' corporate traditions, and Voss (1993) shows how, under the influence of organizational practices in the Knights of Labor, republicanism became an ideological warrant for class solidarity and an ideological weapon against capitalist exploitation. Both examples make the same general point: institutional contexts shape the ways in which workers select and adapt political traditions to meet current challenges.

Each of these themes reappears when we turn to class formation among employers. Here too, solidarity and class consciousness hardly come naturally. Capitalists organizing production in different ways and operating in different markets share few immediate interests. Similarly, executives of large firms and small proprietors have little in common. Direct competitors, moreover, see short-term gain in undercutting rivals, whether in their prices or in their dealings with unions (Block 1977; Bowman 1998; Roy and Parker-Gwin 1999; Haydu 1999*b*). Unlike workers, individual employers are not brought together by "socialized production." Class formation among capitalists, as among laborers, thus occurs only under unusual institutional conditions.

These conditions are most likely to be met in noneconomic institutions, the second parallel to revisionist accounts of working-class formation. In the case study presented in the next section, I will emphasize the importance of civic organizations. The commercial clubs and "good government" associations that proliferated in cities like Cincinnati were well suited to overcoming collective action problems and fostering a more generalized class identity among businessmen. These organizations lowered barriers to collective action in several ways. They brought together businessmen from different physical locations and economic sectors. They also diluted competitive rivalries, both because most clubmen were not direct market rivals and because they dealt with issues—smoke abatement, street cleaning, civil service reform—that were less divisive. More, these civic associations fostered among their members a vision of themselves as public-spirited citizens, an identity that gave even bitter economic foes common cause for self-congratulation.

The collective identities instilled by civic associations were also "generalized" in the sense of subsuming multiple roles. At the individual level, organizational affiliations overlapped. Many of those who belonged to civic bodies *also* had ties to cultural institutions, social clubs, and trade associations. At the institutional level, civic clubs actively involved their members on multiple fronts: sponsoring industrial expositions, boosting the art museum, lobbying for municipal reform. This coincidence of capitalists' economic, cultural, and civic roles favored an inclusive and powerful identity as "business citizens." Stinchcombe (1965) makes a related point. A pervasive "communal" identity is more likely to develop where large-scale institutions (such as political parties) are closely linked in personnel and activities with smaller groups and more specialized organizations. Such a general identity, with its roots in manifold social roles and networks, is also likely to have the emotional resonance that cognitive accounts of cultural transposition highlight.

The role of civic associations in shaping employer identities parallels a third theme from studies of working-class formation. Much as the Knights of Labor adapted older republican traditions to labor's new needs, so with business institutions devoted to political reform and civic uplift. Owing to those institutions, Cincinnati businessmen's updated republicanism defies the conventional wisdom. According to one familiar narrative of 19th-century social conflict, workers and capitalists forged different versions of republicanism into weapons of class struggle. Bourgeois republicanism, in this view, erected an impermeable barrier between political and economic relations. For the former, elites affirmed the virtues of popular participation, equality, and the rule of law. For markets and workplaces, by contrast, the authority and privileges of private property trumped equality and democratic governance (Watts 1991; Hattam 1993; Foner 1996; Friedman 1998).[3] Cincinnati proprietors do resemble this picture of Gilded Age capitalists in some respects. They celebrated self-reliant individuals, and they denied the legitimacy of "class" as a basis for political policy or industrial relations. Yet the commercial clubs that mobilized large numbers of Cincinnati employers continued to call for civic engagement in order to preserve a virtuous republic. Far from segregating economic from political affairs, it was above all the businessman who played a leading role in community governance.

This blurring of the boundaries between economic and political leadership underscores the value of applying an institutional logic of cultural transposition to employer class formation. Much of the empirical account that follows pushes this logic further, documenting ways in which Cincinnati employers' generalized identity carried over to their views of work. There are both historiographical and theoretical payoffs to making this link from civic roles to work. Historical accounts of managerial discourse in this period privilege the actors who would soon dominate economic life: corporate elites and management professionals (Barley and Kunda 1992; Watts 1991; Abrahamson 1997; Shenhav 1999). Yet the more typical employer was still a proprietor or partner, owning and managing a small- or medium-size firm. These men were still the leading figures in local class relations, including the open shop drive that would get underway after 1900 (Bonnett 1922; Fine 1995; Harris 2000).[4] It is particularly for capitalists of this type that it makes sense to analyze workplace ideology in terms of class formation and cultural transposition. Obstacles to collective action are likely to be greater in this case, because class resources are not pooled by the concentration of capital in large firms (Offe and Wiesenthal 1980). For these actors, accordingly, the development of a generalized identity is of particular importance. It is among these proprietors that class formation, in turn, is a key influence on workplace ideology. Unlike "modern" capitalists, those who owned and operated small manufacturing firms did not derive their ideas about work from management professionals. Nor did such ideas arise by spontaneous generation from capitalist relations of production—a simplified view still found in some studies of the labor process (for a survey, see Haydu 2001). As labor historians have long since recognized for workers, so for capitalists: class interests and ideologies are shaped by experiences outside the factory gates. The case study that follows examines one such influence—civic associations—and the means by which that influence carries over to work.

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[3] The story of the rise of high culture has a similar lesson. DiMaggio (1992), for example, has argued that in constructing cannons of good taste, institutional purveyors of music, theater, and dance sharply divided art from commerce and artistic sensibilities from the crass instrumentalism of business (see also Levine 1988; Kasson 1990).

[4] The importance of proprietary capital in this period makes Cincinnati an apt case study, given the modest size and local ownership of most manufacturing establishments in the city.

These historiographical considerations complement the larger argument for bringing together institutionalism and class analysis. To summarize the argument, class-conscious actors play a key role in cultural transposition. Cincinnati's business community illustrates how particular organizational settings—namely, institutionalized social networks that are both encompassing and multiplex—can foster a generalized identity. This identity functioned as a master frame, an all-purpose script applicable to multiple institutional spheres. Therein lies the transposable character of class consciousness. The same understanding of social distinctions and public identities employers developed in civic affairs reappears where one might least expect it—in the world of work.

CLASS RE-FORMATION: THE DEVELOPMENT OF A BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Business class formation in Cincinnati is a story of challenges to employers' political and economic positions and their mobilization to meet those challenges.[5] Following my institutionalist agenda, I will emphasize how the organizations developed in the course of mobilization extended ties among capitalists, underscored distinctions between them and lower classes, and fostered a generalized identity as "business citizens."

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[5] In discussing the Cincinnati case, I sometimes refer to "capitalists," but more often to "businessmen," "employers," or "manufacturers." This terminological sleight of hand represents a compromise between my interests and the labels used by actors at the time. On the one hand, my interest is in the transposition of civic scripts to work and labor relations. Thus I examine most closely those who employed manual labor. This is a larger and more diverse group than "the economic elite," but it is also narrower than all those who live off property rather than wages. On the other hand, proprietary employers came to refer to themselves as "businessmen." I use this more inclusive label partly out of deference to my historical subjects and partly because that development of a common identity as "businessmen" is a crucial part of class formation.

Challenges

Between 1870 and 1900, Cincinnati's businessmen suffered economic setbacks, labor insurgency, and occasional political attacks. On the economic front, the depressions that began in 1873 and 1893 highlighted the usual dilemmas of capitalist markets: how to expand them (e.g., by improving trade policies and transportation facilities) and how to tame them (such as by regulating prices and output; Steigerwald 1952). More important, and more distinctive to Cincinnati, was the city's *relative* economic decline. Compared to the glory years before 1870, the pace of growth slowed in the last three decades of the 19th century.[6] Worse still, the city lost its edge over rival cities. Prior to the Civil War, Cincinnati had been the region's leading transportation hub and manufacturing center. That position gradually eroded. With railroads replacing river transport, Chicago displaced Cincinnati as the Midwest's trade and transportation center. Other cities took the lead in key industries that had helped fuel Cincinnati's growth—for example, Chicago in meat packing, Pittsburgh in steel, and Milwaukee in beer.[7]

Much like the cycle of economic boom and bust, the arc of labor militancy in Cincinnati differed only in degree from other cities. Union membership and strike activity rose sharply as the economy pulled out of the 1873 panic, and both dropped off after the 1893 depression. Ross (1985, p. 252) estimates that Cincinnati workers formed 100 new unions between 1878 and 1884, with membership shooting up from 1,000 to 12,000. As compared to the two–five strikes annually in 1873–76, Cincinnati averaged 14 a year between the 1877 railroad uprising and the 1894 Pullman strike (calculated from U.S. Bureau of Labor, third and tenth annual reports [1888, 1894]). Labor mobilized on the electoral as well as the economic front. Building from the 1886 May Day strikes, leaders of the Knights of Labor and Central Labor Union in Cincinnati joined middle-class reformers to launch a local branch of the United Labor Party (ULP). The party championed Henry George's single tax, government control of

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[6] In the 22 years before the economic slump of 1873, Cincinnati manufacturing output shot up 211%. Over the 20 years between 1873 and the onset of the next major depression, local output increased only 66% (calculated from Ohio State Bureau of Labor Statistics 1894, p. 112). The 66% figure exaggerates growth slightly because the 1893 data includes firms in additional areas around Cincinnati.

[7] In 1850, the value of manufactured goods produced in Hamilton County (Cincinnati) totaled over $20 million, compared to $16.7 million in Allegheny County (Pittsburgh), $2.6 million in Cook County (Chicago), and $.9 million in Cuyahoga County (Cleveland). Cook and Allegheny pulled ahead of Hamilton by the 1870 census, and Cuyahoga neared parity in 1900 (U.S. Department of Interior, various years). Because city data is unavailable in the earlier census reports, I use county data throughout the time period for consistency.

"natural" monopolies, and enforcement of Ohio's eight hour law. The campaign also exposed and attacked the unequal benefits of economic growth in Cincinnati. All this was anathema to business leaders, who then had the additional shock of seeing the ULP come within 600 votes of winning the city election in April of 1887, despite the Democrats throwing their support to the Republican mayoral candidate (Miller 1968, pp. 62–63, 76; Ansell and Burris 1997, pp. 19–21).

When elites warned of threats to the social fabric in late-19th-century Cincinnati, however, they usually did not use the labor revolts of 1877, 1886, or 1894 to illustrate their homilies. They invoked instead the 1884 Court House riot as proof that popular disorder and political corruption would make the city ungovernable unless leading citizens took charge. Although sparked by the lenient sentence meted out for a murder, the riot had deeper roots. Like residents of other large cities, Cincinnatians felt besieged by urban social ills, from intemperance and prostitution to violent crime, and they criticized city officials for being too corrupt or incompetent to maintain order. The jury's conviction of a callous murderer on the lesser grounds of manslaughter occurred in the context of these more general fears of immorality and misgovernment. In response to what the presiding judge himself condemned as a "damned outrage," prominent businessmen and professionals called a public meeting for March 28 to denounce the verdict and demand reform. After a packed meeting in the city's Music Hall, however, a lynch mob went to get the villain from jail. Two days of confrontation with police and national guardsmen followed, leaving 54 dead, hundreds injured, and the Court House in ashes. Most rioters were manual workers, but Cincinnati newspapers and businessmen did not depict the riot as pitting labor against the forces of order.[8] Instead, both Democratic and Republican newspapers portrayed the mob as made up of decent men who had lost their heads in reaction to a genuine moral outrage, combined with a smaller contingent of criminals, opportunists, and drunkards. "The men active and earnest in the movement were not, as a rule, of the vicious classes. They were largely workingmen—a good example of the plain people" (*Commercial Gazette*, March 30, 1884). The Court House riot thus dramatized problems of moral order and civil unrest in Cincinnati. For businessmen who took the lead in protesting the sentence, it also sharpened the ideological distinction between leading citizens and "plain people" prey to demagogues and irrational action.

Business confronted a final problem in Cincinnati's machine-ridden municipal government. As one local historian of Cincinnati's elite recalled, city elections in the 1870s and 1880s could "flush an honest voter's cheek with shame," with multiple voting, selective distribution and counting of ballots, and outright bribery of election judges (Goss 1912, pp. 254–55; Wright 1905). In 1886, the state's Republican governor gained control of Cincinnati's key Board of Public Affairs, and he put George Cox in charge. Cox, a saloon keeper and party hack, proved a skillful boss. With judicious use of kickbacks, patronage, and careful coalition-building, Cox built a political machine that would dominate city government until 1911 (Miller 1968, pp. 62–63, 76; Ansell and Burris 1997, pp. 19–21). For some businessmen, the predictability of municipal government under Cox overcame personal scruples. But particularly against the backdrop of union mobilization and civic disturbances, many leading citizens found the disadvantages of Cox's regime to far outweigh its benefits. For one, Cox's power rested in some small part on Cincinnati's building trades unions, giving labor a political voice that businessmen preferred to silence (Musselman 1975, pp. 39, 129; Central Labor Council, Minutes, March 1, 1892). While municipal government under Cox may have been more orderly than under his predecessors, moreover, the machine's reliance on patronage and political appointments seemed to be a recipe for high taxes and poor performance—a source of particular concern to affluent residents settling into new suburbs and demanding prompt attention to city services. At the very least, reformers argued, Cincinnati deserved "a dollar's worth of government for every dollar's worth of taxes" (Warner 1964, p. 188; Miller 1968, pp. 113–15; Lakes 1988, p. 95).

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[8] I rely on the Democratic *Cincinnati Enquirer* and the Republican *Commercial Gazette* for newspaper accounts.

Employer Organization

The history of employer organization after the Civil War follows Brecht's dictum: grub first, then morals. Manufacturers first rallied in defense of immediate economic interests. Only later did they concern themselves collectively with political reform or civic improvement. Not coincidentally, this trajectory is paralleled by a shift from trade-based to more inclusive business organization.

Trade associations.—The main preoccupations of manufacturers' associations after 1865 were with "ruinous competition" and unruly workers. Spurred in part by economic slowdown after 1867 and by growing conflict with unions over wage reductions, Cincinnati manufacturers formed trade associations at a rapid pace over the next decade. Iron producers came first, in 1867, followed by manufacturers of tobacco (1868), cigars (1869), horseshoes (1872), leather (1873), boots and shoes (1873), beer (1874), and furniture (1877). Like the unions they often fought, these were unstable organizations. Some disappeared as labor unrest died down or economic pressures eased, reappearing when conditions warranted.[9] Others persisted in form but changed in purpose. Cincinnati iron manufacturers first formed a local association in 1867, posting notices that they would cut molders' wages and ignore their work rules (Morris 1969, pp. 135–38). Less than a year later, the same body turned its attention to the "ruinously low" price of iron (*Cincinnati Commercial*, March 12, Sept. 9, 1868). Other associations seem to have focused specifically on labor relations, but they were no more consistent in their policies. Depending on union strength and market conditions, the same group of employers might move back and forth between belligerent antiunionism and more or less grudging acceptance of collective bargaining (Ohio State Bureau of Labor Statistics 1880, pp. 105–7; Morris 1969, pp. 143, 188–90).

Driven by immediate economic interests and constructed on the basis of industry affiliation, these institutions rarely brought employers together across trade lines or united manufacturers with merchants. Particularly in the area of industrial relations, it would not be until the founding of the Employers' Association in 1904 that a wider coalition of businessmen organized, *as employers*, under one roof. More inclusive organization among businessmen developed to address needs quite different from sectional economic interests. Two arenas for more encompassing employer group formation—cultural enrichment and civic improvement—were particularly important.

Cultural institutions.—The formation of trade associations in Cincinnati followed the rhythm of economic cycles and worker mobilization, with much of the organizational work beginning in the late 1860s. Five years later, another wave of institution-building began on the cultural front. Between 1873 and 1882, prominent businessmen took the lead in planning and financing an annual musical festival, an art museum, a spacious music hall, an academy for training artists, and a college of music (Goss 1912, pp. 455–56; Zimmerman 1981; Spraul 1976; Greve 1904, pp. 923–26).

These institutions fit a familiar pattern in Gilded Age urban centers: the elaboration of cultural hierarchy as an emerging upper middle class—the exact boundaries of which vary from one historical study to another—set themselves apart from the urban rabble in residence, manners, and education, as well as in taste (Couvares 1984; Levine 1988; Kasson 1990; Archer and Blau 1993). Two motives for cultural institution-building reflected post-Civil War challenges to urban upper classes. One concerned moral order. Studies of late-19th-century refinement often note that it involved a disciplinary response to an increasingly foreign and unruly urban population (Boyer 1978; Beisel 1997). The same standards that erected distinctions between social groups served the purposes of education, uplift, and discipline. America, after all, was a democracy. Even the humble clerk could learn to practice good manners and appreciate Beethoven. The same commitment to cultural uplift appears in Cincinnati. The College of Music, for example, would not only train performers, but also inculcate a broader "taste for music" through instruction and public performances. The college's backers supported the institution out of both "a love of art and a fine sense of public good" (Ford and Ford 1881, pp. 253, 254). The second motive was to combat economic rather than moral decay. At a time when leading citizens lamented Cincinnati's fading fortunes relative to industrial rivals, building the city's reputation for cultural excellence had great appeal. It provided one area in which Cincinnati could still claim superiority to upstarts like Chicago or Cleveland. More constructively, it might attract new capital. As the business-oriented *Cincinnati Daily Gazette* editorialized shortly after the organization of the Cincinnati Musical Festival, "intelligent lovers of music and all who are interested in the encouragement of musical taste and advancement will be glad of the opportunity to place the Cincinnati orchestra on a permanent basis. The advantages to the city and its citizens, flowing from such an act, are easily perceived" (*Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, Jan. 10, 1874). Planning for the city's Music Hall underscored the link between cultural and industrial betterment. The building was designed to serve as the home for both the annual musical festival and the yearly industrial exposition.

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[9] It is usually impossible to tell if, like some social movements, employer associations in this period simply went underground, sustained by informal networks among proprietors, who then gave their continuing relationship an official form as needed.

Civic improvement associations.—Trade associations in Cincinnati were organized by members of an industry to meet particular economic needs. Art museums and symphonies had wider constituencies but fairly narrow purposes. Civic improvement associations were especially important responses to challenges facing Cincinnati businessmen, both because they enlisted a cross-section of the city's proprietors and because they pursued a broad agenda. Of the three types of organization, they were also the last on the scene, with foundings clustering in the 1880s and early 1890s.

Among the city's important civic associations, the Commercial Club of Cincinnati came first in time and rank. The club's founding in 1880 was sparked by concerns over trade with the South and excessive freight rates out of the city (CCC, Minutes, July 27, 1880; *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Sept. 28, 1880), but it soon diversified to address questions of economic infrastructure, civic amenities, and municipal governance. It also combined the functions of a social club and a political lobby. Like a social club, it was exclusive. The roster was limited to 50, and admission required nomination by a current member, screening by a special committee, and a nearly unanimous vote of approval. *Within* the city's economic elite, however, the Commercial Club strove to be broadly representative. No more than two members could come from any one company. Like a social club, finally, the Commercial Club provided a center for fellowship and gentlemanly indulgence. At monthly dinner meetings, members and their guests gathered (often at the Queen City Club) for gourmet meals, wine and cigars, and casual conversation.

The Commercial Club was also a political organization, however. In the time between lavish dinners, much of the club's activity devolved on specialized committees. Their names indicate the organization's typical concerns: Municipal Legislation, State Legislation, City Charter, Water Supply, Taxation, City Park, Street Improvements, Terminal Facilities, Labor, Transportation, Technical School, Public Finance, Smoke Prevention, and Sanitation. These working committees (organized and disbanded as topics of the day changed) made recommendations to the membership, sometimes hired lawyers to draft legislation, lobbied on behalf of the club, and reported on progress at the monthly dinners (CCC, Minutes, Dec. 24, 1884; *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Feb. 13, 1891). By combining features of an exclusive social club with those of a political lobby, the Commercial Club gave its members a civic education and a potent voice in local government.

Compared to the Commercial Club, Cincinnati's Committee of One Hundred (COH) was an ad hoc and short-lived body, but in its heyday from 1885 to the early 1890s, it played an important role in rallying businessmen for political reform and in popularizing the gospel of nonpartisanship. The committee seems to have coalesced from an informal network of "concerned citizens" protesting the notorious 1884 murder verdict and egregious violations of electoral laws in 1885.[10] Much of the committee's work in the first few years continued this preoccupation with "law and order." With funds contributed by its wealthy members, the committee hired detectives to gather evidence of electoral fraud and retained lawyers to prosecute the offenders. In several public meetings over 1886, committee members sought to persuade a larger public of the evils of partisanship and the need for civil service reform (COH 1886*a*, 1886*b*, 1886*c*).

The Young Men's Business Club (BMC), finally, roughly followed the model of the Commercial Club but built a much wider base within the business community. The club debuted in 1892, with 60 "prominent young businessmen" agreeing to regular monthly dinners "for the purpose of becoming better acquainted by frequent association" (BMC, Organizational Papers, "Inaugurated. The Young Men's Business Club"). Along with good meals and camaraderie at the club went public service. The organization quickly established itself as a prominent critic of the Cox regime. More constructively, it became the leading champion of a wide range of civic projects, such as a Fall Festival to showcase the city's manufactures, a new train depot, and a Bureau of Industrial Research to improve efficiency in municipal governance (*Cincinnati Enquirer*, April 26, 1900; Dec. 31, 1904; BMC, Annual Report, 1907–08). Where the Business Men's Club (as the Young Men's Business Club became known in 1899) differed from the Commercial Club was in its social base. The club's members were generally younger and less prominent than those in the Commercial Club. They were also far more numerous, with the roster growing from 100 in 1892 (already double the Commercial Club) to 1,000 by 1904 and 1,600 in 1912, making it by far the most popular of Cincinnati's business organizations (*Cincinnati Enquirer*, Dec. 11, 1892; BMC, Annual Report, 1904–05; BMC, Roster and Classified Business Directory, Nov. 1, 1911, p. 159; BMC, Committee Minutes, Feb. 10, 1912, address by William Redfield).

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[10] Many of the same individuals who called the "indignation meeting" after Berner's verdict reappear as members of the COH (*Cincinnati Enquirer*, March 27, 28, 1884; Anderson 1979, p. 454. See also McDougall 1896 and Wright 1905, pp. 28–30). The core membership of the committee consisted largely of local merchants and manufacturers, with smaller numbers of lawyers and a sprinkling of other professionals. Here too, the range was broad, from manufacturers of cigars, hardware, beer, and wigs to real estate moguls, utility company executives, and clothing dealers.

Class Codes

Employer mobilization proceeded in rough sequence through institutions of economic defense, cultural refinement, and civic uplift. In each arena of social conflict, businessmen constructed distinctions of social worth and leading roles for themselves. Ultimately these distinctions of cultural refinement, civic competence, and business virtue coincided, supporting a more general identity for employers as business citizens.

Distinctions.—Consider, first, cultural hierarchy. In building specialized cultural institutions, Cincinnati's elite was also elaborating social distinctions based on taste. Contrasts between refined and popular sensibilities are clearest in Cincinnati's music scene. The choice of Theodore Thomas as director of the Cincinnati Musical Festival (and later of the College of Music) is itself telling. Thomas was well known as a champion of high standards. In matters of repertoire, he drew sharp distinctions between serious and "light" (but still tasteful) classical music, insisting that only the first was suitable for the festival's evening performances (CMFA, Feb. 7, 1873, letter from Thomas to George Ward Nichols). High standards should also apply to performance practices. The focus should be on the art, not on the performer, with no pandering to unrefined audience tastes. Preparing for the first festival, Thomas instructed board members to "be sure that a good contralto is engaged . . . one who will not try to cover up her bad singing by shaking her body and smiling at young America" (CMFA, Jan. 20, 1873, Thomas to Nichols). High standards applied, finally, to the consumption as well as the production of art. As Kasson documents, Thomas insisted on strict decorum at performances. However some might behave at minstrel shows, those privileged to attend his concerts must concentrate on the music, appreciate it in silence, and eschew demands to repeat popular pieces—demands that were "greedy and in bad taste" (Kasson 1990, p. 237).

As Thomas recognized, artistic and popular music corresponded to different types of people. Some had the sensibility to appreciate orchestral performances of the classical canon, while others took pleasure in lowbrow entertainment. The two should not be mixed. Samuel Covington, vice president of a local insurance company, was appalled to learn that Cincinnati's Park Commission planned to allow a circus to use the Music Hall. Registering his complaint with the Festival Association president, he expressed his "regret to see the buildings so occupied (I had almost written disgraced) as they have been of late, and as it is proposed to occupy them, for the sake of the Musical Festival. . . . At the rate they are moving, respectable people will soon decline to enter them for any purpose. Can't you . . . have this abasement of the buildings stopped?" (CMFA, Feb. 22, 1873, Covington to Nichols). Local business observers also emphasized how cultural refinement coincided with economic privilege. The secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, in a series of newspaper articles on the city's suburbs, underscored the links between class, residence, and sensibility. Having described in lavish detail the architectural excellence and artistic decoration of houses in Glendale and Avondale—communities "largely of the families of business men"—Sidney Maxwell listed the advantages of living in these distant neighborhoods. "It saves the inhabitants from visitors that would otherwise, on the Sabbath, as well as at other times, swarm in the streets." In contrast to such riffraff, "the inhabitants are generally intelligent and refined," with "a common cement in similar education and tastes" (Maxwell 1974, pp. 26, 96, 99).

Another set of invidious distinctions was tied to civic rather than cultural institutions and gauged worthiness in public life rather than in the arts. Here, censure fell not on the unrefined, but on the unreasonable. A focal point for elite concerns was the city's Court House burning, when "the mob [ran] riot, with torch and bloody hand triumphant" (COH 1886*a*, p. 19). As already noted, commentaries on the riot from both business-oriented and more populist newspapers attributed the riot to "the plain people" (*Commercial Gazette*, March 30, 1884). Consistent with popular sociologies of the “madding crowd” (Le Bon 1982; McPhail 1991), elites argued that these *normally* decent working men were easily swept away, both by their own inner passions and by the contagious influence of mobs. Without suitable reforms, the *Commercial Gazette* (April 1, 1884) warned, the judicial system could once more fail and decent men’s “impulse may be again unloosed and passions again rage.” The loosening reins were both psychological and civil, as passions escaped control by individual conscience and by public authority. By contrast, the respectable community leader retained calm judgment and steady nerves. He could, and should, step in during a crisis. In the longer run, he should devise appropriate institutional bulwarks against popular passions. Gas company president Andrew Hickenlooper saw himself in just this role, advising the mayor on how to deal with the riot and offering to pay the costs of hiring additional police. The lessons he drew from the riot were regularly echoed by businessmen in the 1880s and 1890s. “It is dangerous to arouse the passions of the populace, or enlist agencies that cannot be governed and controlled by conservative wisdom and intelligence. The ignorant, vicious and depraved, misinterpreting the purpose, unbridle their passions, the servant becomes the master, and their latent—but always existing—antipathy to the restraints of law and order, finds expression in excesses” (Hickenlooper Papers, Personal Reminiscences, vol. 2, 519). The Court House riot, then, helped define social unrest not as pitting capital against labor but respectable against irresponsible citizens. A similar invidious contrast appears in business commentaries on the irrational voter. The same men who could be swept up in a mob could be gulled by political demagogues. Leading citizens, accordingly, carried a special burden, affirmed for Commercial Club members by a visiting cleric’s dinner speech on “The Responsibility of the Upper Half.” After dividing the body politic into reason (located in the head), brave energies (heart and lungs), and those appetites “which by their lower position confess their natural servitude and liability to shame,” Bishop Greer urged the head to “govern and control” the rest. This was the duty of “the ‘upper half’ in our American society” (CCC, Minutes, Oct. 15, 1910).

A second categorical distinction between the civic elect and unworthy contrasts selflessness with partisanship. This was a familiar trope in mugwump politics (Hofstadter 1955; Thelen 1972), and for Cincinnati elites the main focus was on municipal misgovernment. City politics, in this view, was corrupt and inefficient because most politicians, many voters, and even some craven businessmen were unable or unwilling to put self-interest aside and pursue the good of Cincinnati. Partisanship might mean thinking only of one’s party rather than the commonweal. For the retired dry goods merchant Charles Reemelin, speaking at a public meeting of the Committee of One Hundred, “no one has any capacity to judge public questions, who argues them from the party stand-point. He must rise or sink in your estimation just according to the degree to which he rises to the highest ideals of true citizenship, or sinks to the cess-pools of partisanship" (COH 1886*c*, p. 4). To be "partisan" also meant thinking first of one's personal or business interests, as when utility companies in search of favors "corrupt men who are in office" (COH 1886*c*, p. 16). The outcome in either case, according to Commercial Club members, was misgovernment. Public officials came to treat their jobs "as a reward for partisan work" rather than discharging their duty "to do [the] best public service" (CCC, Minutes, June 25, 1887).

The good citizen, of course, had little in common with these self-interested partisans. In contrast to the scheming Boss Cox, bribe-paying corporations or toadying political appointees stood the disinterested citizen, putting aside his personal interests for the betterment of the city. Politically, this meant eschewing partisanship. Organizers of the Committee of One Hundred carefully balanced the number of Democratic and Republican members to demonstrate their commitment to public over party interests (COH 1886*b*, p. 3), and speakers at the committee's public meetings insisted that nonpartisanship was the cure for what ailed Cincinnati. The city, committee members argued, was like a business. "Are we going to ask when we are electing directors to a bank . . . are you a Democrat or Republican? Not at all. We ask is he honest, is he capable," and, raising the bar higher, "is he a man of pure life, is he . . . the center of a good family" (COH 1886*b*, p. 24). As these qualifications suggest, the good citizen put his personal as well as his party's interests aside in public life. It was clearly recognized that success in business required a tight fist and a hard nose, but the good businessman had responsibilities beyond his own firm and personal wealth. Members of the Commercial Club commemorated William Breed in 1908 because, while "he was born to wealth and to a place in the community," he "shirked none of the responsibilities that were thus put upon him" (CCC, Scrapbooks, box 64, folder 51).

As with hierarchies in reason and judgment, so differences in selflessness overlapped with class rank. Studies of Gilded Age reform suggest that the ideal of disinterested citizenship was tied to the "best men" of the community, who by their upbringing and education felt more attuned to public needs and public service (Sproat 1968; Thelen 1972). The link between good citizens and good breeding appears in Cincinnati as well. In Maxwell's account of the suburbs, the character of "the intelligent and refined" was what ensured that "their influence is expended on such objects as promote the public good," and that explained why the suburbs enjoyed such blessings as "excellent schools" and "wholesome government" (Maxwell 1974, p. 99).

Identities.—These distinctions of social worth—in refinement and in civic competence—were elaborated in the context of cultural and civic institutions built by businessmen. However imperfectly, distinctions in refinement and public virtue also coincided with differences in social status. But they not only erected boundaries between businessmen and lower classes. Refinement and civic mindedness were also important parts of late-19th-century employer identities (on boundary work and collective identities, see Lamont [2000]). It was their self-conception as citizen-businessmen that both distanced employers from mere mechanics and helped bring capitalists together, despite their rivalries, as the responsible civic, cultural, *and* business leaders of Cincinnati.

In thinking about what it means to be a good businessman, leading Cincinnati employers of the 1890s voice a secularized version of Puritan calling, one with which they bridge rather than separate the economy and the public sphere. This updated sense of calling is most clearly expressed in a characteristic locution used in profiles of local merchants and manufacturers, that they have "an identity with" their business. In the course of his career, says a memorial to John Swasey, he "became thoroughly identified with many interests" (Chamber of Commerce, Records, March 27, 1888). "The business career of Mr. Kuerze includes identity with the drug trade," meaning, we may presume, pharmaceuticals (Chamber of Commerce, Records, July 7, 1903). Henry Innenhort gained prominence in the coal trade, "with which his identity began in 1872" (Chamber of Commerce, Records, Dec. 15, 1904). The phrase conveys both a personal identity and an equivalence of interest—the manufacturer's sense of self was, or should be, bound up with his business. Employers honoring their colleagues also use the phrase to link business identities and wider civic interests. Theodore Marsh, for example, "was identified not only with [Cincinnati's] prosperity by his [business] interests, but as well with the general welfare of his fellow citizens" (Chambers of Commerce, Records, Oct. 16, 1889). For the good citizen, moreover, these economic and political identities should not conflict.

This exemplary businessman was surely an individualist, and in this sense, the preferred identity of employers is consistent with the narrative of liberalism displacing republicanism among America's bourgeoisie. Yet Cincinnati proprietors around the turn of the century retained republicanism's insistence on active participation in civic affairs. Civic action, they still believed, was an essential antidote to corruption and unchecked power in municipal government. Businessmen, by virtue of their prominence, their resources, and their "business-like" nonpartisanship, had a special obligation to serve the public good in this way. "Every business man in Cincinnati," the Business Men's Club admonished its members, "owes it to himself, his family and to his city to devote a reasonable portion of his time to public affairs. Good citizenship demands this sacrifice on the part of every man. . . . Republics require such service from their citizens in order to exist and our municipalities are but miniature republics made possible by law-abiding and liberty-loving people" (BMC, 1904–05 Annual Report, p. 13). It was through his civic, charitable, and political contributions that the businessman, in another favored turn of phrase, lived a "life of usefulness."[11] And here too, far from separating economic from political relations, the employer's usefulness and merit as a good citizen demanded active service to the city, as well as to his business.

With the proper Cincinnatian expected to contribute to the city's cultural and political improvement, as well as to its prosperity, and with many of the same individuals and organizations working in all three domains, it comes as no surprise to find businessmen treating cultural uplift, political reform, and industrial progress as perfectly complementary. A reputation for cultural excellence, many argued, served as a good advertisement for new business, and they seem to have viewed cultural and economic betterment as two sides of the same coin. For the wealthy citizens who supported the Music Hall, a great virtue of the facility was that it would serve as a home for *both* musical festivals and industrial expositions. Both advanced the interests of the city, in part by showcasing the "artistry" of its manufactured products as well as its singers and painters (Centennial Exposition of the Ohio Valley and Central States, 1888).

Civic betterment as well as cultural refinement contributed to material progress. Business leaders committed to municipal reform stressed its economic payoffs. A local government free from mismanagement, corruption, and inefficiency would help the city compete with its rivals for new investment. It was not just that progress on the civic front benefited industry, and vice versa. The very categories merged. An insistent theme in meetings of the Committee of One Hundred likened city government to a business and demanded that the business be run more efficiently. "It would amaze you to know," one committee member warned a public meeting, "how little business sense is manifested in the running of the corporation known as the city of Cincinnati" (COH 1886*b*, p. 19). And businessmen had an obligation *as citizens* to promote local industry. In soliciting support for an 1895 meeting of manufacturers and employer associations from around the country, the Manufacturers' Association called on all "public-spirited, liberal, and patriotic citizens of Cincinnati" to lend a hand (*Cincinnati Enquirer*, Dec. 14, 1894). The Chamber of Commerce, for its part, recognized the blending of civic and economic betterment in the very name of its “Civic and Industrial Department” (Hebble and Goodwin 1916, pp. 185, 188).

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[11] The phrase, with its republican and religious roots, regularly appears in memorials, such as for the paper manufacturer Frederick Diem (Chamber of Commerce, Records, May 10, 1907) and businessman and philanthropist Reuben Springer (*Cincinnati Enquirer*, Dec. 11, 1884).

Completing the virtuous circle of high culture, economic progress, and civic reform, leading Cincinnati businessmen shared the mugwump’s belief that good government required refined character on the part of political leaders. Chamber of Commerce Secretary Sidney Maxwell elaborated the argument for political refinement in 1890. “Until the men of character and of property can be aroused to suitably take care of their own affairs there appears little to be derived from a change in method[s]” of government (*Cincinnati Enquirer*, Nov. 22, 1890). Purifying government could mean curbing popular democracy, as well as purging unsavory bosses. In its campaign to free Cincinnati’s school board from political deadlock, for example, the Business Men’s Club pushed for a smaller board chosen in citywide elections. The system diluted the influence of the Cox political machine, and it also undercut direct, ward-based representation (Lakes 1988, p. 95).

TRANSPOSITION: BUSINESS CITIZENSHIP AT WORK

In contrast to the situation in the 1870s, Cincinnati employers by the 1890s commonly belonged to organizations and subscribed to ideologies that bridged divisions among themselves and set them apart from most workers. My account of this process parallels much of the standard narrative of working-class formation and is consistent with histories of urban upper classes in other cases. That narrative can be enriched, however, by showing how class formation creates an effective vehicle for cultural transposition. Three characteristics of business mobilization are particularly important for generalizing scripts across domains. First, there is a widening of solidarities, not only across economic sectors, but also beyond particularistic economic issues. Organization in the years immediately after the war was largely trade-based and oriented to industry matters. By the turn of the century, more inclusive associations, addressing a broader range of civic issues, assumed greater importance. Later forms of organization did not supersede earlier ones. Businessmen continued to belong to trade associations, and for such important purposes as dealing with unions, they continued to rely on them. But over time many employers *also* became involved in more inclusive bodies, and this move toward broader solidarities occurred first in the arena of civic uplift, not industrial relations. Table 1 depicts the patterns of organization over time.[12]

Second, as employers organized on behalf of economic interests, cultural amenities, and civic betterment, multiple social distinctions coincided. The same industrialists appear, *together*, as reformers, patrons of the arts, *and* manufacturers, as members of political clubs, museum boards, *and* trade associations. This overlapping network can be traced for the Commercial Club, which alone among the important civic associations of businessmen had continuity (unlike the Committee of One Hundred) *and* left a complete membership roster (unlike the Business Men's Club). Of the 140 members who joined between 1880 and 1907, 69% *also* belonged to the leading social club, the Queen City Club; at least 29% belonged to organizations devoted more strictly to manufacturing and trade interests (e.g., the Merchants' and Manufacturers' Association or the Manufacturers' Club), and at least 20% belonged to one of the major cultural institutions of the city (e.g., the art museum or the Musical Festival Association).[13] This overlap helped them define their several efforts as part of a common enterprise of community betterment and paint their opponents in each area with a common brush.

Third, the institutional character of the major business organizations was peculiarly well-suited to fostering a generalizeable class consciousness. Civic associations in which businessmen are a minority among many other groups may help cultivate civic identities and (as shown by Molotch, Freudenburg, and Paulsen 2000) help reproduce them over time. But they may weaken the link between civic and economic virtue and lessen the prospects that civic discourse will be transposed to economic relationships. On the other hand, business organizations that bring together entrepreneurs from the same industry (such as trade associations) may do little to promote a wider class formation. By mingling potential competitors in close quarters, associations of this kind raise the risks of defection. And by highlighting industrial interests, managerial roles, and "shop talk," they may diminish the potential for generalizing a broad civic identity among participants. The Commercial Club and Business Men's Club fell in be-

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[12] The Board of Trade is not the exception that it appears to be. It was formed for the narrow purpose of attracting business after the Civil War, and far from uniting capital, founding members were manufacturers motivated by a sense that their interests were neglected by the venerable Chamber of Commerce (*Cincinnati Enquirer*, Feb. 12, 17, 26, April 1, 1869).

[13] There are no exhaustive lists of members of these business and cultural organizations. I rely instead on biographical information (which may be incomplete), lists of officers, recorded attendance at meetings, etc. The actual proportions of Commercial Club members who also belonged to common social, business, and cultural institutions is probably significantly higher than my conservative estimates.

TABLE 1

Trends in Cincinnati Employers' Organizational Activity, 1865–1909

	Single Industry Trade	Cultural	Civic	Multi Industry Trade
1865–69 . . .	Iron Tobacco Cigars			Board of Trade
1870–74 . . .	Horseshoes Leather Boots/Shoes Beer	Musical Festival Association		
1875–79 . . .	Furniture	Art Museum College of Music Music Hall		
1880–84 . . .		Philharmonic Orchestra	Commercial Club Civil Service Reform Association	
1885–89 . . .		Art Academy	Committee of 100 Taxpayers' Association	Merchants' and Manufacturers' Association
1890–94 . . .			Business Men's Club	Manufacturers' Association
1895–99 . . .			Good Government Club	Manufacturers' Club
1900–04 . . .	Metal trades			Employers' Association
1905–09 . . .			Cincinnati Association of Organizations	

tween these two extremes, combining businessmen from many different economic sectors but relatively few representatives of other social groups. Of 138 Commercial Club members who could be traced in city directories, 70 were associated with manufacturing firms, 26 with commercial enterprises (dry goods stores, commission merchants), 12 with financial capital (banks, insurance, real estate), and 10 with railroads. Twenty others were professionals, most of them lawyers. From each of these categories, in turn, came businessmen from different sectors. Among manufacturers, for example, can be found representatives from at least 32 different industries. Yet by emphasizing businessmen's civic roles and simultaneously diluting competitive interests, these clubs could act as hothouses for a generalized class identity of wide applicability to other social roles and spheres.

It remains to show that the distinctions and identities of business citizens also appear where one might least expect them: when employers turned from civic betterment to the workplace. Making a persuasive case for transposition involves marshalling evidence on three points. First, parallels between business citizenship and employer treatment of work-related issues—parallels in language, in underlying assumptions, and in categories of analysis—must be identified. Because this comparative analysis of rhetoric is hardly an exact science, the overall case becomes more persuasive if *multiple* correspondence can be established. In effect, the methodological strategy is to trace parallels between business citizenship and one work arena after another (industrial fairs, personnel policies, employee training programs, worker representation) until the reader "cries uncle." Second, evidence must be presented of employers actually *responding* to workplace dilemmas in accordance with principles of business citizenship. Such evidence comes closer to revealing transposition in action, as employers actually interpret problems and choose solutions from a wider menu along lines laid down by their class script (compare Molotch et al. [2000] on diagnosing "city character"). Third, the approach employers took to various workplace issues must be documented as having *changed* over time in tandem with class formation. If employers redefined the goals of industrial training or solutions for labor unrest at the same time that they shed older identities in favor of business citizenship, we can be more confident that scripts in these different domains are tied together.

Fully meeting these standards is a book-length task. Here, I will provide brief illustrations of each point. An examination of how employers understood and sought to cultivate the "good" employee exemplifies the rhetorical parallels between business citizenship and work and shows how their responses to workplace dilemmas were shaped by their civic identities. The story of industrial training reinforces these points, but it *also* illustrates changes in employers' thinking about work issues—changes that parallel class formation. I summarize similar changes over time in representations of work at industrial expositions.[14] It will be obvious that particular personnel policies, educational programs, and ways of marketing local industry served economic interests. My goal is not to unmask employers' "real" agenda, however, but to study the masks they chose to wear.

Cultivating the Good Employee

One of the standard laments of late-19th-century employers was the increasing difficulty of maintaining "the personal touch" with their employees as factories grew and proprietors left the shop floor (Nelson 1975; Brody 1980). The resulting dilemmas included one familiar today in the management of "high tech" employees (Kunda 1992): How can an employer get workers to devote their efforts and skills to the company? "One man cannot watch it all and that is the reason he has to have the cooperation of the men," a Baldwin Piano vice president argued. His plant manager agreed. "You have to get every man to feel a personal interest in the work" (Wulsin Family Papers, box 242, Executive Manufacturing Committee (EMC) Reports, 1913, p. 11).

The available evidence suggests that Cincinnati employers approached this problem much as they did the dilemma of republican virtue. The good employee, first of all, looks very much like the good citizen. On one side, employers recognized that the ideal workman had strong *personal* ambitions and drive. Indeed, employment ads often called for "take charge" individuals, and it was to be expected that a good mechanic would seek to "improve himself." Thwarting those ambitions would, at best, lead energetic and skillful employees to quit. At worst, it created openings for union organizers (Wulsin Family Papers, EMC reports, memo from Macy, Dec. 12, 1910). On the other side, that drive and skill had to be put in harness and exercised on behalf of the company. One general goal, accordingly, was the same as in the civic arena. The ideal employee served the business as the good citizen served the community. Baldwin's treasurer commended one employee as "a first class man" because "he considers himself as . . . looking after the interests" of the firm (Wulsin Family Papers, EMC Minutes, May 7, 1913). Baldwin's president, Lucien Wulsin, in recruiting a skilled woodworker, uses the same phrase that his fellow Commercial Club members applied to politics. Wulsin expresses his satisfaction that the man was "ready to identify [him]self with us," adding that he would be expected to devote his "entire time and best talents" to the firm. In this the employee was no different from an entrepreneur. No one should start a business, Wulsin advised a colleague, without "entire devotion to that one idea" (Wulsin Family Papers, Wulsin to Bullard, August 4, 1892, Wulsin to Decker, Nov. 12, 1902).

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[14] Elsewhere (Haydu 1999*a*), I have presented the case for transposition in a third area, employer perceptions of unionism.

A similar image of the good employee appears during strikes. Good employees, of course, *never* strike, so the characteristics of those who stayed and those who quit are measures of a worker's worth. Almost by definition, worthy employees, by remaining on the job, demonstrated their loyalty, and late-19th-century Cincinnati employers were hardly unusual in preferring loyal workers. In the praise of stalwarts and denunciations of renegades, however, two other virtues emerge as closely associated with loyalty, virtues that also reflect the assumptions of business citizenship. First, loyalty and skill go hand in hand. In publicizing how little need they had to settle with strikers, Cincinnati brewers emphasized that most of the work could be done with the few "good men" still employed, directing the work of green hands (*Cincinnati Enquirer*, Dec. 16, 1879). One garment trade proprietor made the point explicit during an 1896 strike by cutters. It is "not the best artisans [who] are in this agitation, but only men of mediocre ability" (*Cincinnati Enquirer*, March 13, 1896). Second, loyalty reflects the calm and reasoned judgment of the good citizen. Cincinnati stove manufacturers, hoping to lure strikers back to work during an 1884 dispute, sent a letter to every molder in the city, making an invidious comparison that paralleled the distinction made between responsible citizen and partisan mob. The employers claimed to have spoken "with our most intelligent and thoughtful workers," who were willing to deal with the companies in a "just and business-like manner." Many of these good men, alas, were "compelled to lose a great portion of [their] valuable working time" on account of strikers "who are blinded by prejudice, controlled by impulse" (*Cincinnati Enquirer*, May 4, 1884). Proprietors acknowledged that employees, like ordinary voters, could be swept up in the emotions of a strike. A return to work was a return to reason. According to another clothing manufacturer during the 1896 dispute, "our men are not Anarchists, but mainly German, frugal, high principled and industrious, who will come to their senses soon enough" (*Cincinnati Enquirer*, March 13, 1896).

In some ways this framework for understanding labor relations resembles the reassuring employer doctrine of a harmony of interests between labor and capital. But as in the civic arena, few are called to the kingdom of virtue: it is mainly skilled workers, and only those of them with the proper character, who qualify as good employees. Lesser men, lacking enterprise, loyalty, and self-discipline, are no more welcome participants than their counterparts among the urban rabble. During the World War I boom years, LeBlond Machine Tool supervisors, in consultation with LeBlond, kept records tracking employee departures. One category included "undesirables" who engaged in strikes or were incompetent. A separate category identified those who left in hopes of "bettering" themselves (LeBlond Machine Tool Company, Entrance/Exit Journal, 1916). Even the Cincinnati Metal Trades Association's (CMTA) blacklist implies a view of employee loyalty as a matter of personal commitment and character rather than natural harmony between labor and capital. The list included, of course, those considered "dangerous agitators or disturbers." The undesirables also included men who had "broken faith" with their employer, and some were allowed to work again after making the proper apologies. Others remained shut out "until they remove[d] the stain from their character" (CMTA, March 18, 1903). While the assumption of harmony makes common interests a natural state of affairs, Cincinnati employers hardly took for granted that workers would identify with their bosses. Some of their practices seem designed to create that identity.

Consider employment contracts. Skilled craftsmen at local firms like Strobridge Lithographing and Baldwin Piano were offered detailed contracts spelling out mutual rights and obligations. The importance of these arrangements (and these workers) is suggested by the personal involvement of the firms' principals in setting terms. The contracts also present a peculiar mix of "modern" management and republican language. On one side, they are of course formal legal instruments, but they also emphasize that the employee will do more than simply perform a job. He should "promote the interests of [Strobridge] as far as he can," giving them "the best of his talent." Other provisions acknowledge that no *external* supervision can ensure this. Contracts at Strobridge set wages on the assumption that the engraver would have a full week's work. If not, a clause made it the employee's responsibility to tell the bookkeeper so that wages could be adjusted (Strobridge Lithographing Company, Employment Contracts).

The dilemma of self-interest and service to the company also appears in debates among Baldwin managers over the introduction of piecework. Vice President Macy, who had himself come up from the ranks of skilled Baldwin piano makers, argued that payment by results could indeed stimulate output, but that it was better to stick with day wages. The latter, he emphasized, presupposed honesty and loyalty to the firm but could also create resentment among the most skillful workers if all employees received the same compensation. Piecework, by contrast, rewarded industry, but it also appealed to a narrower self-interest and undercut cooperation among workers of differing ability and initiative. Macy's solution was to establish a hierarchy of day rates to reward skill and "habits of industry" without stimulating self-interest and competition among the men (Wulsin Family Papers, EMC reports, May 30, 1906, report attached to Minutes, May 7, 1913; Minutes, Dec. 12, 1910). Here again, the ideal employee resembles the responsible citizen in putting collective needs ahead of narrow personal interests. Macy's payment scheme, by marrying self-improvement with cooperation on behalf of the firm, sought to cultivate this good industrial citizen.

Consistent with the assumption that an ideal employee has an identity with the firm, a quid pro quo seems to have existed, summed up as "steady work for a good man," a standard phrase in employment ads for craftsmen. In 1899, Frederick Burckhardt won posthumous praise from the Chamber of Commerce for his policy "that satisfactory service rendered, assured an employee a life position" (Chamber of Commerce, Annual Report 1899, p. 317). While business necessities probably outweighed obligations to valued employees, leading firms might go to considerable lengths to retain their best men. Colleagues commended Joseph Hall for procuring orders for different products in order to keep his skilled workers employed during hard times (Chamber of Commerce, Records, March 15, 1899); and when the Moslers moved their safe manufacturing business to a new plant in another town in 1891, "they built housing and facilities to enable them to take their craftsmen along" (Mosler Safe Company, "History 1846–1978"). Some employers did more than reward loyalty with security. Consistent with the principle that the good employee was committed to both self-improvement and the interests of the company, Baldwin Piano and Strobridge Lithographing gave selected employees paid leave to tour other factories and learn the best manufacturing practices (Wulsin Family Papers, EMC Minutes, Report for Period Ending June 30, 1909; Strobridge Lithographing Company, Employment Contracts). A more important device for producing good employees, however, was industrial education.

Industrial Education

Beginning in the late 1880s, Cincinnati manufacturers joined what would become a national crusade for "industrial education" (U.S. Commissioner of Labor 1902; Bennett 1937; Barlow 1967; Dawson 1999). The immediate concern was a perceived crisis in the traditional system of training for manual occupations. Apprenticeship, reformers argued, was in decline, requiring new mechanisms to produce skilled workers. Among the solutions were general purpose classes in drawing and shop work (suitable for a wide range of jobs), vocational programs (to equip men and women with trade-specific skills), and technical education (giving high school students a mix of practical and theoretical knowledge appropriate for lower-level managers). The Commercial Club took the lead in organizing and financing a private Technical School in 1886. The school served relatively few students at a fairly high cost, but its graduates helped fill the need for engineers, draftsmen, and supervisors in local industry (Lakes 1988, pp. 73–75, 81–88; U.S. Commissioner of Labor 1893, pp. 64–65). With the support of the Chamber of Commerce and Business Men's Club, Cincinnati's Metal Trades Association launched several new programs catering to the rank and file. To enhance the "theoretical" competence of current employees, the CMTA worked with the University of Cincinnati to introduce an innovative cooperative education scheme in 1906. Under the plan, employees spent half their time (paid at their usual wages) taking courses at the University of Cincinnati in math, mechanical design, and metallurgy (Schneider 1907; Gingrich 1907; Wing 1964, pp. 186–89). Three years later, CMTA officials persuaded the school board to introduce trade education in the public schools, with local firms contributing instructors and equipment for shop training and advising the board on curriculum (U.S. Commissioner of Labor 1911, pp. 200–204; Lakes 1988).

Industrial Education as an Expression of Business Citizenship

In this mix of private and public programs, local employers showed no particular respect for the boundaries between markets and government, economy and polity. And in their understanding of the functions of industrial education, employers can be heard speaking the updated language of republican virtue and good citizenship that they used in political reform circles. Industrial education, in their view, both served the municipal community and produced better industrial citizens.

Businessmen closely connected the industrial and the community benefits of vocational training. A well-developed system of industrial education was itself a source of considerable civic pride and competitive advantage for the "home" economy. By fueling industrial growth, it also boosted the fortunes of Cincinnati as a whole. Less obviously, industrial education was linked to the ideal of disinterested public service. Advocates of new training programs in the early 1900s saw the existing school board as another example of machine politics in Cincinnati, with partisanship and patronage making efficient school administration impossible. Business proponents of curricular change, accordingly, also sought to revamp procedures for electing and running the school board. Improving industrial education and reforming political governance went hand in hand (BMC, Annual Reports, 1907–08, p. 74; 1909, p. 46; Lakes 1988, pp. 95, 149–50). There were also high hopes for students' civic virtues. One backer of the Commercial Club's Technical School, for example, predicted that "the effect of education would be to prevent riots" (CCC, Minutes, April 19, 1884), and in 1893, the school's director claimed to have instilled "greater self-reliance and steadiness to [the] pupil's character" (U.S. Commissioner of Labor 1893, p. 613). The Metal Trades Association's 1909 appeal to the school board for industrial training, similarly, emphasized the need to include civics in the curriculum, "training the boy to be an intelligent voter" (U.S. Commissioner of Labor 1911, p. 203).

The products of industrial education envisioned by Cincinnati businessmen also shared certain virtues with the good citizens of the community. Industrial education helped cultivate the "take charge" workers employers so applauded. General programs of manual training enhanced the average skills of Cincinnati's industrial labor force, while also imprinting habits of self-discipline and hard work. Vocational training and cooperative education went further. They were geared toward the more ambitious young man, the one who had the potential to play a leading role on the shop floor and perhaps make his way into management. A local carriage manufacturer commended the Ohio Mechanics' Institute (OMI) for its course in carriage drafting because it not only met his basic labor needs but also supplied "educated intelligent men [ready] to come to the front and take charge of our factories" (OMI, Board of Director Minutes, v. 6, July 5, 1892). Employers also emphasized the contribution of industrial education to the worker's independence. In part, independence meant having the requisite skills and credentials to earn a living, but this independence was also relevant to workplace governance. Industrial education, in substituting for traditional apprenticeships, protected impressionable young men from union influences. With their enhanced human capital, workers would have the ability to "earn a living independent of the support of any trade organization and mentally indifferent to" those unions (CMTA, July 29, 1908). Here an updated republican ideal of personal independence justified industrial education as a pillar of the open shop.

Changes over Time

The assumptions that guided employers' approach to industrial education in the late 19th century differed from those underlying the ideal of the citizen-mechanic in the 1830s, and the differences correspond to class formation. New understandings of industrial training parallel the development of business citizenship in two important ways. First, key goals change. The OMI before the Civil War and the CMTA after 1900 both stressed the civic contributions of industrial education. For the CMTA, though, serving the civic community is more narrowly construed as a business proposition. Proper education turned out efficient employees, not equal political citizens, and the primary contribution was to the local economy, not to the republic. Second, the curriculum and tracks of early–20th–century vocational training reflected and helped reproduce the social hierarchies of business citizenship.

From republican citizen to human capital.—The well-trained worker in early OMI programs was a republican producer, a man who combined artisanal skill, economic independence, and equal citizenship. The OMI, its founder promised, would let "our ingenious artisans and mechanics see that the practice of their respective arts is capable of being derived from the great and immutable laws of nature: a knowledge of which will enable them to extend and improve their respective arts beyond any known limits, and raise those who practice them to that rank in society to which their utility entitles them" (quoted in OMI, Memorabilia, box 72, folder 1, "Sketch of the History of the Ohio Mechanics' Institute" by George Kendall, 1853, p. 6). By enlightening mechanics, moreover, the OMI served the larger goal of social equality. Echoes of this mechanics' ideal can still be found after the Civil War. A tepid commitment to social leveling reappears in the manual training movement, which criticized the standard curriculum as impractical (who needs Greek?) and elitist, advocating instead a mix of scholastic and practical training for all (Barlow 1967, pp. 32–33). Similarly, Cincinnati businessman and civic leader George Ward Nichols urged that drawing and design be made part of a universal curriculum benefiting equally three groups that, in 1877, he still placed in a single continuum: skilled "workingmen," "master workmen" who served as the "practical directors in the various establishments," and "capitalists" (Nichols 1877, pp. 24–26).

By the 1890s, however, these republican virtues had taken a decidedly utilitarian turn. Industrial education still built character, but more important was its development of technical skills. The products of new training programs, one machine tool executive wrote the OMI, "develop into first class mechanics." Employees who had the benefit of "theoretical training" at the OMI, another proprietor opined, "are becoming more and more appreciated by manufacturers." The educated worker gets "greater return for his work," the CMTA added, while "raising the entire craft to a higher plane" (OMI, box 20, folder 21, April, 1910, letters from A. Guest and from James Hooker; CMTA, July 29, 1908). The graduates of turn-of-the-century industrial education, like their counterparts in the 1830s, were still an important resource for the city, but now primarily in their capacity as a pool of skilled labor. After persuading the OMI to offer classes in carriage drafting in 1892, the secretary of the manufacturers' Carriage Club framed his thanks in terms of the industry's manpower needs. "As an old carriage builder you know our difficulty in finding skilled workers to put to the front" (OMI, Board of Directors Minutes, vol. 6, July 5, 1892, letter from Reynolds to Miller; CCC, Minutes, Feb. 13, 1909). Business advocates of industrial education, then, continued to stress its virtues for the employee and the community, as well as for the proprietor. But since the heyday of republicanism, there had been both a narrowing in what constituted an educated worker and a redefinition of the community good in terms of business needs.

Hierarchies of mental and manual training.—As Cincinnati employers recast industrial education, they incorporated the business citizen's distinctions of class and social worth. Their new conceptions of educational reform correspond to changes in class identities. In contrast to the ideal of the republican mechanic, employers frankly acknowledged a fixed division between manual and mental workers and a need for specialized training appropriate to these social tiers. In the 1870s and early 1880s, Cincinnati schools still sought to combine liberal education with all-purpose manual training. By the 1890s, businessmen advocated instead a sharp split between academic and practical education and a clear differentiation of each along specific vocational lines.

At a National Association of Manufacturers' meeting in 1906, Cincinnati machine tool proprietor Ernst DuBrul boasted of developments back home. The city, he reported, was well on its way to integrating into a single system the various levels of industrial training. These he identified as all-purpose manual training, trade schools for turning out skilled workers, continuation schools to upgrade some craftsmen into foremen, technical schools to produce superintendents, and university-level technical training for "our managers and business men" (National Association of Manufacturers, *Proceedings*, 1906, p. 61). DuBrul might have added one more tier. As in other industrial cities (Ingham 1978; Roy 1991), prominent Cincinnati manufacturers increasingly followed the time-honored strategy of converting wealth to culture, sending their sons to join older elites in private schools and eastern colleges (Greve 1904).

On the bottom rungs, DuBrul's hierarchy properly distinguishes *general* manual training from vocational education. First added to the public school curriculum in the 1870s, manual training was believed to be a useful pedagogical tool for *all* children, regardless of background or prospects. The institution of vocational training, however, marked an important change. These classes taught specific occupational skills to future blacksmiths, machinists, carpenters, and the like. They also acquainted pupils with the realities of workplace authority. Staff at the public school's Manual Training Center were designated superintendents, general managers, foremen, and time keepers; practice work earned grades measured in wages; and students could be docked their "wages" for lateness or misbehavior (Lakes 1988, p. 104). This type of training, then, differed both in curriculum and pedagogy from the liberal arts track suitable for future businessmen and professionals. It provided merely the specific skills and general discipline required by the mass of industrial workers.

Most students consigned to this lower ring of education were not expected to have (or need) more advanced training. Among all those in the vocational track, however, employers made further distinctions. Much as there were still some few "good employees," so a minority of workers merited additional education. Employers identified certain apprentices as having the requisite intelligence and drive to serve as gang bosses or foremen. The continuation schools gave such promising youth training suitable for their new responsibilities (U.S. Commissioner of Labor 1911, p. 204). For machinists, who accounted for most continuation school pupils, the curriculum included shop arithmetic, the physics of metal working ("not the ordinary high-school course in physics dealing with abstract subjects, but physics with reference to the practical problems of the shop"), and instruction in such shop conventions as how to answer questions submitted to the foreman's suggestion box (U.S. Commissioner of Labor 1911, p. 202). By the early 1900s, the University of Cincinnati was also clearly ranking the citizens of industry. It ran separate programs for ambitious mechanics (under the cooperative program), prospective midlevel managers (through an alliance with the Technical School), and future businessmen and professionals (completing a college-level curriculum). Dean Schneider, the University of Cincinnati professor and Business Men's Club member most involved in the cooperative program, reassured suspicious unionists from local foundries that they had nothing to fear from cooperative education. It had the higher goal, he said, of producing engineers, not molders (Schneider 1907, p. 409).

These changes in curriculum correspond to a larger shift in conceptions of work and social worth. Even in the golden age of Cincinnati republicanism, there were pronounced inequalities in the amount and character of education enjoyed by local youth. As in other manufacturing centers, however, the dividing lines were quite different in the 1830s and 1840s than in the 1890s and 1900s. Despite some doubts as to the mental content of manual labor (Glickstein 1991, pp. 71–81), middle-class commentators before the Civil War contrasted "practical" training, which *combined* science, art, and skilled mechanical labor, with the classical education of the leisured gentleman, useful mainly for social display. In Cincinnati, this division separated the OMI, catering to "mechanics and manufacturers," from the high school and especially the college classes of the city's gentry (Aaron 1992; Lakes 1988, p. 17). In Cincinnati, at least, this distinction was still being drawn shortly after the Civil War. It was in the *south*, a contemptuous *Cincinnati Commercial* editorial claimed (Dec. 29, 1865), where manual labor was stigmatized and "to be a mechanic was to be degraded . . . filthy, greasy, a mudsill." The distinction appears as well in criticisms of high school course work as "impractical" and in the ideal of a universal curriculum balancing scholastic and manual training. One would expect no less among employers who still valued themselves as "practical men" (Barlow 1967, pp. 32–33; Kirkland 1956).

Views had changed by the 1890s. Much as businessmen came to distinguish good citizens from the rabble on the basis of their capacity for reason and steady judgment, so in education for work. An increasingly sharp distinction between mental and manual labor distinguished the worth and set the curriculum of different educational tracks (*Commercial Tribune*, May 12, 1901; Hamel 1962, p. 56). The more competent the student and the loftier the occupational destiny, the greater the need for general and theoretical course work. Merely practical training sufficed for manual workers. As for social worth, the message was clear to one Cincinnati craftsman, who complained to the Ohio State Bureau of Labor Statistics that even the poorly paid service worker, doing no manual labor, had higher status than he did. “Socially in this town, a mechanic earning fifteen dollars a week is looked down on by many of what we call society people, while a counter-hopper, earning one half as much, is regarded as a very much better man, not because he knows any more, but because the former is a ‘greasy mechanic” (Ohio State Bureau of Labor Statistics 1884, p. 293).

Industrial Expositions

Changing approaches to industrial education strengthen the case for employers’ transposition of class codes from the civic arena to work. Not only do the goals and hierarchies of industrial training parallel business citizenship; in addition, the redefinition of these goals and hierarchies over time follows in the historical track of class formation. Cincinnati’s industrial expositions offer further illustration of parallel changes that occurred in class identities and representations of work.

The city held industrial expositions almost every year from 1838 until the Civil War and from 1870 to 1888, and it did so less frequently through 1909. These proud displays of local manufacturing changed dramatically over time. For one thing, the pre-Civil War expos had been the handiwork of the OMI. By 1895, the initiative came from the Business Men’s Club and other business associations. More telling, the early expos acted out republican ideals of work. They showcased the producer-citizen, the independent artisan who fused mental and manual labor by applying art and science to his craft. A central activity of these expos, accordingly, was to exhibit the “choicest specimens of the craftsman’s skill” and thus help educate the city’s mechanics (OMI, Annual Reports of the Board of Directors, 1858 report, p. 12). Even in the 1870s, moreover, floats in the expositions’ opening parades still included demonstrations of an industry’s manufacturing methods (*Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, Sept. 8, 1875). A decade later, such displays of craft work were rare. In their place was a franker advertising of Cincinnati products and, increasingly, popular entertainment.

In assessing the prospects for a fall festival in 1900, Business Men's Club organizers envisioned something "not on [the] heavy, ponderous lines" of the old expos, but rather a demonstration of local wares combined with "side features" to attract a broader audience. The overriding goals should be to "spread the fame of the city's manufactories and widen the market for her wares" while showcasing Cincinnati as "the most gracious municipal host" (*Cincinnati Enquirer*, April 26, 1900). The industrial parade that kicked off the 1900 festival fit the bill. Manufacturers continued to be the main sponsors, but their contributions no longer had much reference to productive labor. Some offered amusements unrelated to their trade (such as an "Egypt" display put on by jewelry firms), while others advertised their products (such as kegs of Lackman's beer). And businesses' contributions to Cincinnati now seem far removed from work and flesh and blood workers. The 1901 lithographers' procession, for example, included a lavish imitation of a Japanese Cherry Blossom carnival and marchers bearing a banner with the industry's vital statistics: capital invested, wages paid, presses operated, employees on the payroll (*Cincinnati Enquirer*, April 26, 1900, Sept. 21, 1901; Spiess 1970, p. 186).

The images of work and manufacturing offered up by Cincinnati employers correspond to changes in their own identities. The mechanic cedes place to the businessman as Cincinnati's useful citizen; craftsmanship gives way to the products of industry as the objects of public praise; and instructional displays of manufacturing techniques yield to economic boosterism. Much as with industrial education, as employers developed a general identity as business citizens, they applied new scripts to work.

TOWARD A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Is this story generalizeable to other times and places? The specific pattern of class formation, civic identity, and transposition to work is probably limited in time to late-19th-century proprietary employers. These were men still directly involved in managing their businesses while also claiming the mantle of "leading citizens" of the community. There may be comparable cases in some smaller manufacturing centers today, but in most industries, the link from class to work broke as day-to-day management passed to professionals and as economic leadership passed to corporate officials and nonlocal capital. Within this period, however, Cincinnati probably resembled other U.S. cities with a substantial base of small and midsized manufacturing firms. Certainly there is evidence for the development of wider solidarities and civic identities among proprietary capitalists in other cases, including Pittsburgh (Ingham 1978), Wilmington (Hoffecker 1974), Providence (Gilkeson 1986), and Harrisburg (Eggert 1993). The harder question remains open: Did employers' civic scripts carry over to work? The answer would require closer scrutiny of employer culture than historians have undertaken. There are hints from recent case studies of Minneapolis (Millikan 2001) and Philadelphia (Harris 2000), however, that business citizenship does reappear in attitudes toward technical education and labor unions.

Perhaps the best evidence for Cincinnati being representative of a more general dynamic of class formation and transposition comes from one of the rare negative cases. San Francisco stands out among U.S. cities for the disunity of its employers, particularly in the area of labor relations. Some of the larger firms, particularly affiliates of national capital, tried repeatedly to rally local manufacturers to break union power. Before World War I, they always failed (Knight 1960; Kazin 1987). San Francisco also differed from Cincinnati in employer discourse. Cincinnati businessmen, as we saw, presented themselves as citizens, not capitalists, and repudiated class—whether capital or labor—as a legitimate basis for public action. Their San Francisco counterparts took those same social categories for granted. They did so in labor relations, where collective bargaining was the norm, and in municipal politics, where business leaders generally conceded that classes were entitled to formal representation (Erie 1975; Ethington 1994). Following the 1906 earthquake, for example, committees to plan reconstruction routinely included delegates from organized labor.

In this negative case, then, there is neither class solidarity nor an ideology of "above class" citizenship developing in municipal politics or spreading to labor relations. Two characteristics of civic associations in San Francisco may explain these features of employer identity—and confirm the lessons from Cincinnati. First, San Francisco manufacturers were much less likely to participate in civic reform organizations. The city's leading reform group at the turn of the century was the Merchants' Association, whose activities closely parallel those of Cincinnati's Commercial Club. Out of 332 members of the association in 1896, however, only 45 appear to be manufacturers (Merchants' Association 1896), as compared to 75 out of 138 Commercial Club members around the same time.[15] Second, San Francisco and Cincinnati differed in the timing and sequence of employer organization. In Cincinnati, the earliest and most important institutions bringing employers together were civic clubs and political reform associations. In San Francisco, the early strength of labor favored different organizational vehicles for employer mobilization. Manufacturers formed cross-trade organizations early on. Their purpose, though, was to deal with workers, sometimes fighting unions (for the most part unsuccessfully) and sometimes making the best of a bad situation by cooperating with them (Tygiel 1977; Issel and Cherny 1986). In either case, pragmatic class interests, not civic virtue, topped organized businessmen's common agenda. That agenda, in turn, did more than shape employer discourse. It also made defections from collective action more likely than in cases where capitalists rallied around the ideology and practice of good citizenship.

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[15] I say "appear" to be, because the labels used in city directories are sometimes ambiguous. When in doubt, I classified an individual as a manufacturer. The large differences between Cincinnati and San Francisco cannot be attributed to industrial structure, which was roughly similar in the two cities.

CONCLUSIONS

These brief comparisons are hardly conclusive. Yet even if Cincinnati's pattern of class formation, generalized civic identity, and cultural transposition is not typical, there remains much of general interest in the case. We tend to think of late-19th-century capitalists as social Darwinian Neanderthals—single-minded in pursuit of profit, deaf to civic virtues, and ruthless in dealing with their workers. A substantial portion of Cincinnati's businessmen, however, participated in civic associations, professed high ideals of their public responsibilities, and viewed the world of work through these same ideological lenses. It would be easy to argue that such professions and representations are merely a thin veneer for personal interests and class power. But they are a *different* veneer than we usually attribute to capitalists of the era. Even this more flattering portrait, however, comes with a cautionary note. Community associations and public involvement are much celebrated today as cures for various social ills. We should recall that business citizenship endorsed these values and yet also ratified social hierarchy and justified harsh repression of civic associations deemed "partisan" and demagogic—notably unions.

The more theoretical lesson from Cincinnati is the way class analysis and institutionalism converge in accounting for cultural transposition. As employers met various challenges, they built institutions—trade associations, cultural organizations, and above all, business clubs—which fostered class solidarity and a particular form of class consciousness. These institutions did so in part by synchronizing social boundaries. From trade to art to municipal reform, the same collective identities and codes of social worth divided businessmen from lesser folk. They did so, as well, through the character of civic associations. Business clubs brought together a wide variety of capitalists and put them to work for economic, cultural, and political improvement. This combination of broad representation within the class and multipurpose activities favored the generalized identity I have summarized as business citizenship. The nature of class solidarities and consciousness among Cincinnati employers, in turn, made business citizenship transposable even to the domain of work. Here, class actors, the products of particular institutional settings, served as agents of transposition across borders. They carried the assumptions and distinctions that they cultivated "outside" work into their assessments of employees and their approach to dilemmas of management. To the extent that comparably generalized identities develop in other settings, cultural transposition should be similarly favored.

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