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Time's Up! Shorter Hours, Public Policy, and Time Flexibility as an Antidote to Youth Unemployment

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INTRODUCTION

In 2015, Jeb Bush lost the Republican nomination for president with a simple gaff. In a meandering lesson about how to right the floundering US economy, he laid the responsibility at the feet of those already suffering: "People need to work longer hours" (Trudo 2015). Bush's remark sounded like a rehashed culture-of-poverty framework, positing that laziness and indolence explain why certain people are rich and others not. The Democrats and numerous journalists responded that Bush was "out of touch"; soon thereafter, he was out of the race. Yet Democrats had also proposed legislation that would allow workers to avoid the expected demotion to part-time status when certain requirements of Obamacare provided employers with an incentive to cut back their full-time staff. In other words, there was bipartisan support for the longer hours position (see Ponnuru 2015).

Some voters, too, agreed. Part of the reason involves many people wanting/needing to work longer hours. Hours of labor across the US economy rose by 9 percent between 1979–2013 (Golden 2016) and, according to a recent study by Project: Time Off (2016), Americans worked during more than 650 million of their earned vacation days last year. Over 6 million workers are today categorized as involuntarily part-time, meaning they would prefer to work full-time but cannot find employers to hire them. Researchers at the Federal Reserve feel that this seismic shift, one that has not returned to pre–Great Recession levels, is likely to persist (Valetta and van der List 2015).

In many ways, the controversy surrounding Bush's off-handed yet impactful remark is central to understanding the dilemma at the heart of this

chapter: What is the relationship between the hours of work and unemployment? How does this relationship impact workers more generally, and how does it shape young workers' challenges and possibilities in the labor market? On the one hand, responses to Bush's comment suggest significant resentment and indignation that average workers are not struggling—a sentiment that could fuel interest in a movement to actually reduce the overall hours of labor, or at least stop them from rising. On the other hand, the dismal state of affairs for many workers means that any extra time in paid work translates into useful income, a powerful argument against reduction. With this tension in mind, we explore links between the youth unemployment crisis in the United States and the possibility of a movement to reduce the hours of labor. To the best of our knowledge, no such attempt exists.

Part of the way we approach these links is to take the struggle over time as central to our chapter; as Weeks (2011, 153) and others have pointed out, how time is organized has been central to the development of capital. We look at this struggle over and against time in two interrelated ways. First, we examine a policy called "work sharing" in which employers reduce hours of staff in order to avoid layoffs and save jobs, a policy that disproportionately benefits younger workers. Second, we explore the inchoate rumblings of resistance in the gig economy[1] and low-wage retail workplaces, where younger workers are channeling their anger toward digital labor platforms and unfair scheduling. Not content with simply winning shorter hours, they are exploring political and industrial solutions that will allow for greater control over their own time in general. We conclude by speculating on the implications of these policy prescriptions and resistance efforts that imagine innovative ways to bring about a more equitable and just world of work.

Overall, we find no evidence of the re-emergence of a coherent shorter hours movement. However, by looking at the content of recent policy measures and of varied protests, we note a renewed focus on time—albeit in small bursts, here and there—as a terrain of struggle for young workers that may increase as the character of work continues to shift through the twenty-first century.

Our chapter is *investigative* of several policy prescriptions that are worth exploring. It is also *speculative* about the possibilities for a shorter hours movement, broadly conceived, to address new problems of precarity and job losses that affect young people. And, finally, it is *suspicious* about the continued reproduction of the gig economy and low-wage sector as a work regime with potentially disastrous consequences for workers.

Research for this chapter was conducted through an analysis of current social science literature on precarious work, youth unemployment, and gig economy platform employment data. Additionally, we drew from recent

journalistic pieces, news reports, policy briefs, and legislative transcripts. We begin by contextualizing our chapter in past struggles to control labor time.

HISTORICIZING STRUGGLES AGAINST LABOR TIME

When it comes to time spent working in the United States at present, two problems immediately come to light. First, an asymmetrical distribution of working time persists, with some people overworked and others underemployed. This makes perfect sense as overtime lowers demand for other workers (Boushey and Ansel 2016). Second, hours are increasingly unstable; precarious on-call work scheduling and gig economy–style employment relationships are the canaries in the coal mine of a labor market that producers fewer stable jobs. We believe it is possible that some kind of shorter hours movement, especially one that places an emphasis on young workers, has the potential to address these problems.

Looking back, American workers took an interest in decreasing the length of the working day as early as the late nineteenth century, both to reduce toil and to "spread the work" so as to reduce unemployment. In 1879, members of the Working Women's Union in Chicago brought together two important concerns of their membership: the 8-hour working day and the right to vote, as more than 300 seamstresses walked from shop to shop, protesting across the city to demand a shorter working day (Roediger and Foner 1989, 166).

The years following the turn of the century until World War I marked the greatest decrease in working hours in American history. While concerns over leisure remained relevant to workers, the movement for reduced work hours began to focus greater attention on worker safety (Hunnicut 1988). Concerns about overwork leading not only to injuries but also to diminished productivity enabled labor to gain the support of more liberal firm owners open to reform (Hunnicut 1988). Particular US states also utilized various schemas to determine which categories of workers should, or should not, be "allowed" to shorten their hours. In 1906, for instance, states as diverse geographically and ideologically as New York, Massachusetts, Indiana, and Nebraska prohibited women from working at night (Van Raaphorst 1988, 68–9).

However, in this state-issued, top-down forced shortening of working hours, domestic workers—consisting of nearly all women and often immigrants and women of color—were excluded (Van Raaphorst 1988, 68–9). During this period, however, women overall were participating in wage work at higher rates than previously, propelled by the depression-born trend to cut the workday from 10 hours to 8 (Kessler-Harris 1981, 53).

Yet it was not until unions were able to successfully pressure Roosevelt to pass the 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act that most workers were guaranteed a 40-hour workweek and safeguards from "starvation wages and intolerable hours" (Mayer, Collins, and Bradley 2013). The popular bumper sticker in union parking lots across the country is just one small testament to this history: "The Labor Movement: The Folks Who Brought You the Weekend." However, since that period, declines in hours of labor more or less stopped, even as increased productivity and more labor-saving technology rendered further declines possible. This may have happened because the comparably high wages in the post-war economy rendered increased hours more desirable for workers, and workers' increased consumption staved off overproduction and economic stagnation (Hunnicut 1988).

Does this same dynamic explain the stubbornness of long hours today? Arguably the incentive to work more to consume more does not analogously exist presently. According to Aguiar et al. (2017), workers are already delaying entering the workforce by remaining in education later. The labor force participation rate of American workers continues to remain stubbornly low by historical standards, and some young men are already showing a preference for video games and "leisure technology" over employment (Aguiar et al. 2017). The possibility of employment's reduced marginal utility, in turn, suggests an opportunity to criticize the de facto valorization of employment in the first place. As the following analysis of work-sharing programs suggests, now may be a perfect time to resurrect a movement for shorter hours and to "spread the work."

WORK-SHARING PROGRAMS

Work-sharing programs constitute the most robust policy instrument with which to spread work around, to maintain or elevate workers' incomes, and to reduce unemployment. The idea is simple enough. During economic downturns, employers and employees agree to reduce the labor hours of a firm's workers as opposed to laying off a select few. Such programs essentially spread the income losses that occur during recessions or downturns across a wider group of people, preventing more damaging consequences, like job losses, from occurring. However, as usual, it is the details that matter. We examine different work-sharing models and discuss the viability of various programs to reduce unemployment and increase leisure time.

German economist Axel Börsch-Supan has conducted research on work-sharing programs that rose to prominence in much of central and northern Europe during the 1980s and 1990s. In a study of German programs, Börsch-Supan (1999) finds that if workers' wages are not increased to compensate

for lost work hours, less work for some does in fact make more for others. In other scenarios, however, the same study suggests that wage hikes concurrent with work-sharing programs caused some employers to seek out permanent replacements for workers in the form of automated technologies, leading to the very job losses work sharing sought to avoid. Consequently, work sharing presents a dilemma: during downturns, workers will have to either risk temporary unemployment with the hope of gaining a full-time job later or accept an indefinite pay cut until the economy recovers, something many cannot afford to do (Börsch-Supan 1999).

However, later research conducted in the immediate aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis suggests quite a different picture. An International Labour Office report on the German work-sharing program *Kurzarbeit* found that "work sharing has enabled German establishments to avoid layoffs and to practice flexibility by hours instead of flexibility by numbers as a human resource strategy" (Crimmann, Wieβner, and Bellmann 2010, 35). This might have something to do with what Vroman and Brusentsev (2009) have identified as the role of short time compensation (STC) schemes that complemented work-sharing programs. STCs act as government-issued payments, a bridge between the full earnings of a worker and his or her income after the loss of wages that comes with reduced hours. In their study, the STC payment was 10 percent of a worker's wage so that an employee working 80 percent of his or her standard hours would be remunerated at 90 percent of his or her standard income (Vroman and Brusentsev 2009).

By reducing the amount of income workers lose when reducing their hours, this bridge increases the viability of work-sharing programs. If applied broadly, reduced labor hours should lower the production of firms while the STC payment raises consumer demand. Theoretically, this means consumer demand, fueled by the STC stimulus, would rise to meet and eventually outstrip supply, stimulating growth and hiring.

Work-sharing programs in the United States that include many of these features have existed since California inaugurated its own scheme in 1978 under then (as well as now) Governor Jerry Brown. The 1973 recession was the catalyst for Brown's program, designed to prevent additional layoffs generated by crises in the auto and energy sectors (Nemirow 1984). The program allowed employers to participate so long as they maintained employee health and fringe benefits for participating workers (State of California Employment Development Department 2017). The employee who had her or his hours reduced was then compensated by the state of California, which paid a portion of the standard level of unemployment insurance equal to the fraction of income lost by the hours reduction. Other states soon followed suit, and in 1983 the federal government passed its own program with amendments installed to guarantee union consent and the maintenance

of proper health and pension benefits for affected workers (Stark n.d.). By 1992, 17 states across the country had passed their own work-sharing programs (Wentworth, McKenna, and Minick 2014).

As the Great Recession struck, work-sharing claims increased 10-fold in states with preexisting programs, and between 2010 and 2014 11 states created new programs (Wentworth, McKenna, and Minick 2014). A federal work-sharing scheme passed in 2012 by the Obama administration sought to increase the take-up of these programs by offering full federal compensation for the unemployment insurance payments paid out as part of the reduced hours compensation. The new national law also set national guidelines for how the programs should be implemented so as to receive federal funding; importantly, this was the first national bill that did not explicitly prohibit employees working fewer than 40 hours a week from participating (Wentworth, McKenna, and Minick 2014).

An STC scheme like the one described above would benefit young workers in particular. As Vroman and Brusentsev (2009) put it, it would help to "preserve the diversity of a company's workforce" by retaining the employees who are usually the first to be laid off—youth, women, and people of color. Others concur, claiming this is true of work-sharing programs more broadly. According to George Wentworth, interviewed for this research, "They [youth] are often the ones laid off first due to their lack of experience or their lack of seniority status in a union contract . . . work sharing could offer a way to keep them employed longer." Likewise, as Baker (2010b) notes, work sharing is especially useful in order to "target communities especially hard hit by chronic unemployment." A Brookings Institute report (Parilla and Berube 2014) argues that the German city of Munich, which experimented extensively with work sharing in the wake of the Great Recession and has a shockingly low youth unemployment rate, has "lessons . . . for America's youth employment crisis." A *Nation* article (Chen 2014) suggests that job-sharing programs, typically thought of as a way to avoid layoffs in manufacturing plants, are also very applicable in industries such as retail, with high percentages of young workers.

The National Employment Law Project's analysis of American work-sharing programs has revealed that take-up has been notably lower in the United States than in Europe during corresponding periods of economic distress. For workers, a major disincentive for participating in work sharing is that unemployment insurance paid out by the state counts against one's total entitlement claims cap (Wentworth, McKenna, and Minick 2014). Consequently, even though the payments are a fraction of what full unemployment claims would amount to, many workers are reticent to accept partial payments of unemployment insurance given the possibility that they could in the future become unemployed and with a

smaller pool of insurance payments to count on (Wentworth, McKenna, and Minick 2014). Rectifying this problem will be a significant first step if expanding work sharing is to become an important part of a labor movement.

It is possible that the deficiencies of the careful legislation studied by Börsch-Supan can be remedied through a more radical bill that promises to both reduce unemployment and increase wages through a government payment issued to all citizens. A reduction in hours that occurred alongside a universal basic income (UBI) payment would have the effect of tightening the labor market and bidding up wages substantially (see Chapter 11). Such a labor market would fundamentally alter the terrain within which workers and employers currently negotiate and work. Potentially, workers would enjoy increased ability to report abuses at work and a greater voice on the shop floor if they do not fear the threat of unemployment. A UBI paid in conjunction with a radical work-sharing program thus has the capacity to greatly transform contemporary conditions of work.

Other potentially interesting policy proposals also aim to redress problems related to the time people spend at work. One such idea, promoted by progressive economist Dean Baker (2010a), is to offer tax breaks to employers who offer paid time off to workers and other family-friendly policies. Another would be to legally limit the ability of employers to use mandatory overtime (Golden and Jorgensen 2002). Early retirement schemes might also be a way to shorten the time a worker is at work over the life course of his or her job, if not the hours in a day. Does cutting the working life span of older workers necessarily make room for younger cohorts? The idea of a "lump of labor"—a fixed number of jobs in any given economic system—is often considered a fallacy by US economists, even though it may hold up in a very short time or during a relatively contained event, such as during the Great Recession (Munnell and Wu 2013). Yet, most studies find that young workers cannot simply replace older ones. Nor are they crowded out. In their research drawing on Current Population Survey (CPS) data between 1977 and 2011 in the United States and on available data in China, Munnell and Wu (2013) found "no evidence that increasing the employment of older persons reduces either the job opportunities or wage rates of young persons in the U.S. or China" (4).

The history of "sharing the work" and policy proposals to execute it offer some cautious hope that a reduction in hours would benefit young workers. Yet, most of these changes require government and employer cooperation to execute properly. In the next section, we examine how grass-roots worker resistance in the gig economy and low-wage retail sector embodies another dimension of a renewed focus on labor hours.

RESISTANCE IN THE GIG ECONOMY AND PRECARIOUS WORK

According to one view, the "sharing" or "gig" economy—think Uber, TaskRabbit, and Airbnb as examples—offers a convenient solution to young people without a job: rent yourself out. Since 2008 pundits, journalists, and scholars have proclaimed these Silicon Valley upstarts as the bright lights in an otherwise dreary economic sky. But that common-sense logic does not appear to hold up under scrutiny. By and large, the point of sharing economy companies is to create work tasks, not jobs. Also, a perceived race to the bottom in wages and conditions is causing more and more people to leave the labor market—or to challenge it (Griswold 2016). For these reasons, rather than argue that the make-work mentality of the gig economy will also make jobs, we argue that it is resistance to the basic fundamental principles underlining the gig economy that could be a driver of better employment—especially for youth.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the gig economy currently depends on young, healthy workers, on those who are willing to push, hustle, and continue working without healthcare or benefits; in many cases, young workers are often knitting together several jobs so as to eke out a living. Based on an extensive, six-country study of online gig platforms and their workers, Mark Graham of the Oxford Internet Center notes,

> It is hard for us to say who is benefitting most and who is benefit[t]ing least. But I think some of the people who benefit most are those with good levels of education, those with good language skills, and of course those who are in good health, which is key to all of this. Those who benefit least are those with poor education, poor language skills, and sadly, if they're in poor health. (Lowrey 2017)

Graham's study is fairly unique as reliable data on the gig economy are generally difficult to attain. To this point, Bernhardt and Thompson (2017) note that part of the difficulty in understanding, theorizing, and potentially finding solutions to what gig work leaves wanting arises from the confusing character of definitions which evade easy categorizing and are continually (like the work itself) evolving. But how does gig work relate specifically to young workers and their various modes of organizing?

We focus our attention on youth since they comprise a significant proportion of gig workers: young workers between the ages of 18 and 29 years are five times more likely to have earned money from technology-enabled gig work than those 50 years and older (Smith 2016). The numbers increase drastically when looking specifically at online platforms: here, one finds that 18- to 29-year-olds have a rate of participation that is 12 times higher than those in the 50 years and older worker category (Smith 2016). This younger

group is often comprised of workers of color as black workers participate in platform work three times as much as white workers; in 2016, Latino workers doubled the participation rate of white workers (Smith 2016). Thus, young workers, especially low-income workers of color, are those who increasingly are supplying the labor that is fueling the growing world of online platforms.

"The gig is up," some have declared (Van Grove 2016a), while other commentators wonder if the gig economy is a "fleeting fad or enduring legacy" (Storey, Steadman, and Davis 2016). However, recent work by Juliet Schor (2014) shows that levels of worker satisfaction were lower for those employed full-time in the gig economy than for those who were employed and had benefits (and, in the latter case, who only occasionally turned to "gigging" as a side job) (Heller 2017). In her 2015 qualitative study interviewing hosts, workers, chefs, and drivers involved with Airbnb, Taskrabbit, Kitchensurfing, and Uber, respectively, Alexandra Ravenelle (2017) also finds that workers are seduced by the "romance of entrepreneurialism to the masses" promised by the gig economy, often leaving them feeling vulnerable rather than independent (281). As a result, Schor (2017) reminds us that we cannot separate, either analytically or empirically, the gig economy from the "labour market context in which it operates" (277).

With this in mind, we turn in the last part of this chapter to a deeper look at the gig economy in relationship to current literature on precarious work and contemporary labor movement struggles. In so doing, we shift focus to examine a new terrain of resistance and pushback that uses the tools of the gig economy itself. Due to the relative newness of these platforms and their tendency to frequently change, a lack of data exists; consequently, commentators gloss over workers' experiences and celebrate the apparently ubiquitous character of the best-known online platform giants. This currently creates a steep power imbalance that shrouds most conversations around growing precarity and workers' involvement in the gig economy.[2]

As Standing (2011) and others have elaborated, the "sirens of labor flexibility" are still singing their sweet tune, though this time through an app that we believe needs an update (31). Recent examples of pushback against the gig economy and its consistent array of low-wage job options highlight the gig economy's failure to deliver quality jobs or offer a solid alternative to youth unemployment. Workers are taking control in order to "better manage their lives" (Elejalde-Ruiz 2017), and some Millennial workers have shown support for movement-oriented solutions to do just this. We see this phenomenon playing out through three trends: workers vying for more control over their schedules and their hours through fair workweek initiatives, worker-owned labor platforms, and nontraditional unions and collective bargaining strategies. We examine each in turn.

Controlling Schedules, Controlling Time

Chicago is one of many cities where a fair workweek ordinance is currently on the table as a result of worker support and the backing of the United Food and Commercial Workers Local 881. Alderman Scott Waguespack introduced legislation to amend the city's current municipal code by adding a chapter that details specific attempts to alleviate some of the most pressing difficulties around time for hourly workers. The ordinance specifically focuses on routinizing and clarifying workers' schedules that previously entailed uncertain schedules and erratic working hours. If passed, the ordinance would obligate employers to give workers 2 weeks' notice about their schedules; if employers later decide to change said schedules, they must then pay their workers extra wages and potentially other penalties. For instance, if an employer decides to change a covered employee's schedule less than 14 days but more than 24 hours before the worker's shift begins, the employer owes that worker 1 hour of "predictability pay" (City of Chicago 2017, 4).

Also notable about the Chicago ordinance is its introduction of a set of constraints and limitations on employers' abilities to contract out should there be extra work to distribute. This clause states that "Before hiring new Employees or Contract Employees, including hiring through the use of temporary services or staffing agencies, an Employer shall first offer additional hours of work to existing Employee(s)" (City of Chicago 2017, 5) Of course, when and how employers have to follow this rule entails subjective elements; yet, under the premise of predictability, the ordinance grants workers both more control over their time and the chance to pick up extra hours.

In the case of retail, salesclerks are not technically gig workers: at the heart of the distinction between them is scheduling. Retail workers have employers who leverage their power to prevent workers from controlling when they are able to work. Many gig workers, wrongly categorized as independent contractors, are compelled to work all the time because they are poor or in debt rather than because they have been scheduled to do so. However, we would argue that the two are more analytically similar than usually acknowledged for several reasons.

Major retailers who hire salesclerks are already considering using gig economy workers instead, and platforms are dedicated to facilitating this goal. One such platform, WeGoLook, advises the retail industry to not only replace its retail staff with gig workers but also hire gig workers as "secret shoppers" to report on the performance of the in-house sales force (WeGoLook 2017). Both giggers and retail workers have a shared interest in gaining greater control over their time. In this sense we see these two groups of workers as having sufficient overlapping interests in gaining

control over their conditions of labor and their working time and have thus chosen to examine them in tandem.

As a case in point of that affinity, the Fair Workweek Initiative (FWI) began in 2012 as a response to increasing variability in on-demand scheduling practices in low-wage retail work (see Chapter 3). Take, for example, Aisha Meadows McLaurin, who works between 19 and 22 hours a week making $9.50 an hour at a fast-food restaurant in Chicago (Spielman 2017). She is a college student, a mother, and a worker simultaneously. Regarding time, she explains, "If I have to work on a day that I have school, something's got to give . . . I can't go to school that day. I choose work over school because I need money for things for my family. This bill is what we need to survive" (Spielman 2017). The first fair workweek protections, passed in 2014, are in place in San Francisco and Santa Clara County in California; 2 years later, a further wave of policies passed in Seattle, Washington; Emeryville and San Jose, California; Washington, DC; and New Hampshire. Then in 2017, Oregon and New York also won workweek protections (Fair Workweek Initiative 2017). Consequently, while the precise impact of the FWI movements taking place across these major cities remains to be seen, they set an important precedent for establishing state-supported worker control over the constantly shifting whims of employers.

Building a Better Platform

Another way that workers have pushed back is by wresting the central technological mechanism—the online platform—out of (solely) the gig economy's hands to create their own platform cooperatives. These platforms are dispersed through a number of different industries and generally move away from the traditional profit-based, top-down models of "Death Star platforms" like Airbnb and Uber (Gorenflo 2015).

Alternative cooperative platforms take a different approach. For instance, on their "About Us" page, the British Columbia-based Stocksy (2017) boasts elegant, black-and-white photographs of their youthful staff who cooperatively own and run this thriving photography and videography platform. After declaring themselves a cooperative, they hasten to add, "Think more artist respect and support, less patchouli. We believe in creative integrity, fair profit sharing, and co-ownership, with every voice being heard." Peerby, developed in The Netherlands and now existing in a number of other countries as well, allows people to borrow a range of items from one another for purposes of sharing. Then, too, several car-sharing cooperative platforms have popped up including Tapazz in Belgium and Modo in Vancouver, Canada. A platform has even been created to engender more cooperative

platforms: this is Backfeed, which exists to produce further decentralization of cooperation in a host of different industries.

Up & Go is yet another type of platform: it connects clients to cleaning companies throughout New York City that are collectively owned by their workers. There are currently eight Up & Gos in New York City, and it has received widespread media coverage for its role in replacing the problematic franchise cleaning chain model (for example, Merry Maids) with a pro-worker platform model. Presently, workers earn an average of $22.25 when contracted through Up & Go compared to the industry average in New York City of $17.27 per hour (Rosenblum 2017). Thus, new platforms themselves have grown exponentially, creating their own demand for further platforms (Heller 2017).

Reinventing Bargaining and Strikes

Resistance is also taking shape through collective bargaining efforts that involve amending labor law to allow for gig workers—infamously understood as "independent contractors"—in contested battles over categorical definitions of employees to attain a status more akin to "real" workers as already defined in labor and employment law. It should be emphasized that the number of workers in this economy is large and growing: in 2015, at least 1 percent of the US working population was classified as gig economy workers, with large numbers concentrated in major metropolitan areas. For instance, in California, approximately 10 percent of the entire working population (comprising 1–2 million people) work in the gig economy. In San Diego alone, more than 12,000 people work as Uber drivers (Van Grove 2016a). Not surprisingly given these numbers, in 2016 Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez introduced the 1099 Self-Organizing Act to allow 10 or more independent contractors to collectively bargain with their employers. This involved the "hosting platforms" that are mainstays of the gig economy, encompassing Uber and Lyft drivers, Amazon Flex workers, and DoorDash and Postmates delivery drivers (Van Grove 2016a). If enacted, this legislation would change labor law such that these workers would newly be classified as part of a "minority"—rather than a majority—collective bargaining unit, a categorization that does not currently exist in the private sector in the United States.

Outside the United States, gig workers have recently taken more militant action. Since 2016, couriers at Deliveroo in the United Kingdom, a platform-based delivery service, and at Foodora, a similar service in Italy, have both waged successful strikes to win higher wages and more standardized working conditions (see Walker and Kaine 2016; Tassinari and Maccaronne 2017). In the United Kingdom, the couriers made common cause with an

upstart union, the Independent Workers of Great Britain, that had ties to more traditional labor organizations and even crowd-funded its own strike support (Walker and Kaine 2016). Many of these examples suggest that workers are protesting and organizing through "union-like groups" and adapting "unionesque" tactics (Van Grove 2016b).

Is this necessarily a good thing, or might this indicate that workers are falling into institutional traps that resemble the often stereotypically bureaucratic, patriarchal, and exclusionary unions of the past? As labor leader Ed Ott (2014) remarks in his conclusion to *New Labor in New York*, "The old labor movement missed a lot, especially as the world changed around it" (291). Ott's point reminds us that todays' precarious workers are responding in ways quite similar to tried-and-true union methods. Harkening back to labor regulation in early twentieth-century America, we note with interest the continuities evident as workers either employ long-standing tactics of the labor movement itself (like collective bargaining as recognized workers rather than independent contractors) or align with organized labor and community organizations to demand more control and security over their working hours. Ott continues to say that *flexibility* is key—not the flexibility of labor, as most online platforms would have it, but the labor movement's flexibility in thinking through forms, tactics, strategies, and the very conception of what it means to be a union (2014, 291).

New York City's Freelancers Union, founded in 1995, echoes that notion in its slogan "Reexamine, Rethink, Reinvest. Join the Revolution" (King 2014, 150). Noting that more than a third of American employees (roughly 55 million) are "independent workers," the union is premised on combating the precarious nature of independent work and the expansion of the "precariat." Yet companies themselves are even borrowing labor and community organizing methods to campaign more effectively. Lyft, typically framed as the pro-worker protagonist platform compared to its monolithic competitor Uber, hired a community manager who draws on "traditional community-organizing models" in citywide campaigns against regulation (Heller 2017). Lyft has also significantly changed its mission as it has grown (Ravenelle 2017). Originally, the company touted itself as "your friend with a car," even going so far as to offer riders a fist bump; currently, they charge prices akin to those of Uber and dispatch field organizers across the country to identify up-and-coming political leaders who may be influential as allies in the coming years (Ravenelle 2017, 293; Heller 2017). For-profit, non-cooperative platforms, then, are also trying to recuperate the political aesthetics of grassroots organizing while they employ approaches similar to organizers.

Stepping back, we take these three particular moves as an indication that, indeed, simply saying that the "gig is up"—as does Van Grove (2016a)—may not sufficiently tell the entire story. All word plays aside, the simplistic

term "gig economy" belies how seriously imbricated it has become in transforming the wider economy. In fact, research recognizes gig work as part of a larger trend toward informalization of the more "traditional" employment relations regime (De Stefano 2015). The mere range of serious contestation from several actors in various spheres including workers—mostly young, who were themselves contracted through a host of large companies, labor allies, and pro-worker legislative measures—attests to this. Young people are collectively standing up to combat the most inflexible and troubling parts of the gig economy.

Efforts to collectively bargain and consider gig workers "real" workers may not be straightforward in the future, nor will it be easy to regulate at a citywide scale workers' control over and knowledge of their own hours. But what we have just detailed shows two ways in which the (in)flexibility of the gig economy is being exposed and seriously criticized. Or perhaps capitalism, in its seemingly endless ability to innovate, will simply adapt to these new schemas and continue to employ a growing number of workers who are drawn to the seductive notions of controlling one's time and availability, as Scholz (2013) and others detail in their work on the "darker" aspects of digital labor and its effects on changing the working landscape for young workers.

At a minimum, though, we see significant and exciting possibilities in these three kinds of resistance—especially in the development of cooperatively owned platforms. The gig economy has seemingly changed the "rules of the game" for the growing sea of smart phone owners poised to hire someone to help with a random task or to sell their own labor in some creative manner. But we see even more potential for workers themselves to harness the best parts of digital capitalism—flexibility and part-time options that fit into their complex lives—as potentially changing the rules and the very outcome of the game going forward.

CONCLUSION

This chapter is the first attempt of which we are aware to theorize that a shorter hours movement might be a partial solution to youth unemployment. We have conceived of a "shorter hours movement" as part of a larger range of potential policy- and movement-based strategies aimed at offering workers, particularly but not exclusively young workers, greater control over how much and when they work. We also see such a movement offering the ability to design a work life that preserves "time off." Other contributors in this volume have proposed both full employment and a guaranteed basic income as other possible avenues. We feel the approach proposed here is a

useful complement to these other positions. Via work sharing, policies and processes are already in place to transition into a shorter hours economy right now. Moreover, work sharing is likely to have the benefit of assisting young workers first since—again—they are usually the ones let go first when companies decide they need to shed employees. This said, though, it seems unlikely that the current level and intensity of work-sharing programs are actually robust enough to significantly impact the youth unemployment crisis. Currently, only half of US states have programs in place to offer employers a subsidy to retain workers at shorter hours, a crucial part of the equation.

However, the popular reaction against the Jeb Bush quote opening this chapter suggests a growing awareness of a "disconnect" between the kinds of work lives many Americans have and the kinds that elites often present workers as having. It remains to be seen if resentment at this disconnect can be transformed into a coherent labor movement focused on shorter hours. But the FWI, driven as it is by social desires to control labor time, offers a glimpse into what such a movement could look like. Campaigns for fairer scheduling are only a few years old, yet there are already a handful of states with actualized policies to help workers secure better working hours. This movement continues to grow.

There is no one unified "future of work" (Scholz 2014). But the gig economy is probably the paradigmatic example of what happens when employers find themselves awash in an economy of un- or underemployed youth and take advantage of this "opportunity." Resistance and pushback in the forms this chapter describes, often enacted by organizations of young workers, have sought to thwart the growing trends of the gig economy in order to prevent the tendencies of precarity from spreading too pervasively and altering the terrain of more "traditional" labor and employment relations.

We see no clear signs that a shorter hours movement, one that would be recognizable to the early pioneers of hours reduction in the nineteenth century—and led by youth—is on the horizon. But while there may be a dearth of youth committed to renewing an old tradition, certainly a core exists in the form of young cohorts interested in reinventing new ones. David Rolff and Carmen Rojas are leading a movement jumpstarted from their Workers' Lab to bring young people into union circles that utilize app-based organizing platforms and other schemes targeting younger groups. This is in addition to other platforms like Coworker and UnionBase, pioneered by Millennials, which are encouraging unions to organize online.

While a robust shorter hours movement might not be close at hand, we nonetheless view such a prospect as being a useful antidote to long-term structural youth unemployment should this come to fruition or grow. Such a movement offers a path forward that is geared toward recognizing and

redressing the contradictory character of a contemporary economy that increasingly offers longer hours for some and unemployment for others. By contrast, a shorter hours movement could share the work, allowing greater numbers of employees to have a job without being worked to death. The formal political arena may be neither amenable to nor advocating such a shift presently, but changes that brought about the weekend were hardly top-down gifts of an earlier age. Rather, improvements in the quality and length of working conditions of labor have been and will remain products of struggle, making us hopeful that the present conjuncture will force similar movements to the fore again.

NOTES

1. The "gig economy" is just one of a number of terms used to describe the growing percentage of work performed via online platforms or digital apps. Some prefer the "sharing economy" or "platform capitalism" or "app-based labor."

2. Newlands, Lutz, and Fieseler's (2017) recent article is a noted exception.

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