Movin' On Up? The Role of Growing Up Rural in Shaping Why Working-Class Men Do—and Don't—Seek to Improve Their Labor-Market Prospects

ROBERT D. FRANCIS

Based on interviews with sixty-one working-class men in rural Pennsylvania, this article explores the ways in which rural, working-class men do—and do not—seek to improve their labor-market positions by getting additional education or training, moving, or taking gender-atypical jobs. The evidence presented shows that men are making many efforts to improve their labor-market position, but there are misunderstandings about why they adopt the strategies they do. In particular, deep identification with rural place provides meaning and attachment but also constrains how they seek to improve their labor-market prospects.

Keywords: rural, masculinity, working-class men, employment, education, mobility

The growth of "bad jobs" for men without a college degree has been well documented (Autor 2010; Autor and Dorn 2009; Chen 2015; Howell and Kalleberg 2019; Kalleberg 2009, 2011; Newman 2009; Silva 2013). The challenge facing working-class men is particularly acute in rural places, where employment opportunities have generally been worse than in urban America (Slack 2007) and where wage growth continues to be slower (Cromartie 2017). Given these headwinds, researchers and policymakers have stressed three primary ways for less-educated men to improve their labor-market positions: *upskilling,* getting additional education or training; *geographic mobility*, a tactic especially applicable for men living in rural areas with limited opportunities; and *occupational flexibility*, primarily by taking jobs not traditionally done by men, such as in female-dominated occupations like care work. However, available evidence suggests that men have largely been resistant to these avenues of social mobility (Austin, Glaeser, and Summers 2018; Bound and Holzer 2000; Doar, Holzer, and Orrell 2017; Ganong and Shoag 2017), although the reasons are less understood.

Based on life history interviews with sixty-one working-class men in rural Pennsylvania, this article explores the ways in which rural, working-class men do—and do not—seek to improve their labor-market positions by upskilling, geographic mobility, and occupational flexibility. The evidence presented in this article shows that men are often doing more to improve their labor-market positions than outcome-based accounts allow. Regarding up-

Robert D. Francis is an assistant professor of sociology at Whitworth University, United States.

 Francis, Robert D. 2022. "Movin' On Up? The Role of Growing Up Rural in Shaping Why Working-Class Men Do—and Don't—Seek to Improve Their Labor-Market Prospects." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(4): 68–86. DOI: 10.7758/RSF.2022.8.4.03. Direct correspondence to: Robert D. Francis, at rfrancis@whitworth.edu, 300 W. Hawthorne Road, Spokane, WA 99251, United States.

skilling, most men in this study have pursued some sort of postsecondary education or training. However, rather than using education to escape rural place or working-class life, these men use it to reinforce their identities as rural, working-class men. Further, evidence from these interviews suggests that higher education is less valuable in rural places where personal reputation and ability to do the job are more important than paper credentials. Regarding geographic mobility, despite evidence that Americans are moving less, about one-third of the men in this study have moved out of state for work. These forays across state lines often took the form of *prospecting trips*, where men would move without a job in search of better opportunities but often fail to find anything and then return. Further, a focus on out-of-state moves alone misses other *mobility measures* taken by these men, such as taking a job that requires extensive travel or enlisting in the military. Finally, regarding occupational flexibility, although few men have worked nontraditional jobs, many more have considered such jobs and even taken preliminary steps toward such work. However, the few men in this study who are in female-dominated occupations testify to resistance from family and peers, indicating that certain cultural barriers—perhaps more pronounced in rural place—remain formidable.

A thread that unifies men's actions in these three domains—education, mobility, and occupation—is rural masculinities. Renewed attention is being paid to rural masculinities given the toxic and hypermasculinity associated with white nationalists and hate groups in many rural areas (Gahman 2020; Harrington 2021; Kelly 2017). Feminist critiques have long pointed to patriarchal gender relations in rural communities and ways in which conceptions of rurality have limited opportunities for women (see Little and Panelli 2002). Evidence suggests that, as labor-market changes have disrupted sources of working-class masculinity, some rural men have been less resilient than their urban counterparts (Kenway, Kraack, and Hickey-Moody 2006). However, uniform depictions of rural men as rootless, angry, and even dangerous belies the fact that no single "rural masculinity" in fact exists (Campbell and Bell 2000). Although some men have not adjusted well to recent economic and cultural changes (*The Economist* 2015), others have. For example, in their study of the logging industry, Berit Brandth and Marit Haugen (2005) find that some rural men recast their "masculine rural knowledge" of logging to outdoor tourism in ways that introduce elements of femininity and urbanity. Jennifer Sherman, whose work appears in the companion issue to this one, has found in her previous work that some rural men showed flexibility regarding gender norms in ways previously underemphasized (Sherman 2009).

A central focus of this article is the way identification with rural place, which is intertwined with the "rural masculine" (Campbell and Bell 2000), affects men's decisions in the domains of upskilling, mobility, and occupational flexibility. Most men in this study see themselves as "country boys" (Campbell, Bell, and Finney 2006), which is a quintessential form of masculinity (Lobao 2006). As respondent Randy, an electrician, describes it, "I mean, I don't see myself going anywhere, it's where I've been all my life. And I like it, I like being in the country." Casey, who works at a steel mill, echoes Randy: "nowhere can I find more peace than driving down a backroad." Although deep identification with rural place provides meaning and attachment, it also constrains how men seek to improve their labor-market prospects. For example, an aversion to working for a boss in supervised, indoor setting limits occupational opportunities. A love for rural place, combined with seeing urban spaces as unsafe, make cities largely nonstarters for relocation. Further, working-class masculinity—as expressed in practical, hands-on skill—can evoke a distrust of classroom-based, formal education.

The arena where rural masculinity is most pronounced in affecting mobility strategies regards the movement into female-typed jobs. Research shows that low- and middle-skill men are reluctant to enter female-dominated industries because of lower pay and prestige (England 2005; Gatta and Roos 2005; Simpson 2005); also, leading gender theorists argue that men's resistance to entering occupations staffed largely by women reflects the persistent devaluation of roles and activities that are seen as feminine (Peters and Dush 2010; Ridgeway

and England 2007). A cultural script within masculinity focuses on the types of work "real men" do (Williams 2010), which makes adaptation to a changed labor market not just a case of sheer economics (Cherlin 2014). Additionally, one tendency is for displaced workers to look for jobs like those they used to have, not ones currently available (Kroft et al. 2015). This is in keeping with the idea that many men—especially white, working-class men—compare their labor-market prospects with those of their fathers and grandfathers rather than that of the current employment landscape (Cherlin 2018). Among men who work in traditionally female-dominated jobs, research has found not only evidence of role strain (Simpson 2005) but also strategies for reestablishing masculinity in those gender-atypical employment situations (Simpson 2004). As will be explored, some men are redefining masculinity to incorporate these types of jobs traditionally done by women but face barriers to doing so. Across all three domains—upskilling, geographic mobility, and occupational flexibility—this article studies the role that being from a rural place plays in shaping the labor-market choices and trajectories of working-class men. Rural place is not an inert backdrop against which gender scripts are enacted, but an active and integral character to this gendered story of work and family (Little and Panelli 2002).

DATA AND METHODS

The setting of this study is a largely rural, five-county region of northwestern Pennsylvania. The counties of this area exemplify many of the challenges facing rural America, yet important for this study's focus on labor-force trajectories, this area is not economically destitute. Relative to Pennsylvania as a whole, this five-county area has lower median household income ($48,872 to $60,891); a slightly higher poverty rate (14 percent to 12.2 percent); and a higher rate of disability among the working-age population (14.7 percent to 11.3 percent).[1] From 2010 to 2019, the area lost almost 6 percent of its population whereas the state experienced a population gain of about 1 percent. However, in 2018 the five-county unemployment rate was under 5 percent and only slightly higher than the state average (4.6 percent versus 4.2 percent). Based on the Economic Research Service 2015 county typology codes, two of these counties are manufacturing dependent and three are nonspecialized.[2] The most prevalent North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) descriptions in these counties are manufacturing, health care and social assistance, and retail trade, all of which represent at least a 10 percent employment share in each of the five counties.[3] Per the ERS 2015 county typology codes, none of these five counties qualify as low education, low employment, persistent poverty, or persistent child poverty counties.

Data for this article come from in-depth, semistructured interviews conducted between July 2016 and May 2018 with sixty-one working-class men. This five-county area contains the town where I was born and raised, which allowed a degree of access and familiarity during fieldwork that aided in gaining trust among key informants, recruitment sites, and research participants. Research participants were identified through a mixture of personal networks, snowball sampling, and venue-based recruitment.[4] The three screening criteria for inclusion in the sample were as follows: men; generally under forty years old; and working class,

1. All data are for 2018 and drawn from the author's calculations of data compiled by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania (see https://www.rural.palegislature.us, accessed November 5, 2021).

2. See Economic Research Service, "Description and Maps," last updated October 23, 2019, https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/county-typology-codes/descriptions-and-maps (accessed November 5, 2021).

3. NAICS is the standard used by federal statistical agencies in classifying business establishments (https://www.census.gov/naics, accessed November 5, 2021). Percentage is based on county profiles compiled by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry (https://www.workstats.dli.pa.gov/Products/CountyProfiles/Pages/default.aspx, accessed November 5, 2021).

4. Publicly posted recruitment materials generated virtually no interest, even when noting the $25 payment for participation, evidence that the field site was relatively closed to outsiders.

Table 1. Demographics of Cases

	Total (N = 61)	Percentage of Cases
Mean respondent age	35	n/a
Gender		
Male	61	100
Female	0	0
Race		
White	58	95
American Indian	2	3
Asian American	1	2
Highest educational attainment		
Less than high school	1	2
High school diploma or equivalent (GED)	20	33
Completed postsecondary credential (CDL)	11	18
Some college, no degree	15	25
Associate degree	7	11
Bachelor's degree	7	11
Work status (at time of interview)		
Full time	35	57
Part time	11	18
Unemployed	5	8
Not in labor force	10	16
Effective hourly rate of working men (N=44)		
Less than $10	9	20
$10.00 to $14.99	19	43
$15.00 to $19.99	4	9
$20.00 to $24.99	2	5
$25.00 and above	12	27

Source: Author's tabulation.
Note: May not total to one hundred due to rounding.

defined as having less than a four-year college degree, working in a blue-collar occupation, or both.[5] The demographics of the cases are displayed in table 1. The average age of the participants is thirty-five. All participants are men, and virtually all are white, which mirrors the fact that the five-county field site is about 94 percent white. The modal highest educational attainment is a high school diploma or GED, although a plurality of the men had attempted or completed some type of postsecondary education or training. About three-quarters of the men had a job at the time of the interview, while 10 percent were unemployed but looking for work. Ten men were not in the labor force. Within the screening frame, I sought to maximize the heterogeneity of occupations.

Once research participants were identified and successfully recruited for the study, I conducted semistructured, in-depth qualitative interviews with each respondent using narrative interviewing (DeLuca, Clampet-Lundquist, and Edin 2016). Narrative interviews are conducted according to a preset interview guide guided by

5. Although I did not use parental education as a marker of working class, virtually all men in this study had parents with less than a college degree.

the research's aims and memorized by the researcher. Emphasis is placed on natural conversation that elicits respondent narratives. Each interview begins with the invitation for the respondent to tell the story of his life. From there, participants were asked about their life histories, including origins, education, employment, relationships, and current situation. Special attention was given to participants' employment histories, including job duties, duration, hours, wages and benefits, reasons for leaving, views toward work and the labor market, and current work status and means of support. Interviews took place in a variety of places: homes, apartments, front yards, back yards, offices, coffee shops, restaurants, and even a police station. Men came from a total of seventeen towns across the five-county area. Interviews were digitally recorded, and I took field notes about the setting and substance of each interview as soon as possible after the interview was completed. Respondents were offered $25 for their participation, though in some cases, men refused payment. Although this is not an ethnography in the strict sense, I attended churches; ate or drank at numerous restaurants, bars, and coffee shops; and attended community events, including a candlelight vigil, a talent show, an Eagle Scout ceremony, a community theater production, and even a funeral. I also lived the first eighteen years of my life in this area, still have family there, and visit regularly.

In this study, 85 percent of the men interviewed were born and raised in northwestern Pennsylvania and another 8 percent moved to the area as children or youth, meaning only four of the sixty-one men moved to the area as adults. Although migration patterns in rural America are not uniform (Smith, Winkler, and Johnson 2016), rural areas have generally experienced depopulation over the last century (Johnson and Lichter 2019). Nativity to the study area was not a requirement for inclusion in the study, but it is not surprising that virtually all men who were recruited to participate are from the area originally. This creates a selection problem given that the sample is almost exclusively composed of those from this area, which misses those who grew up in the area but left and have not returned. We know from previous work about the differences and distinctions among these groups (Carr and Kefalas 2009; von Reichert, Cromartie, and Arthun 2011). However, despite the inability of this study to speak about those who have left, examining the behaviors and attitudes of working-class men who grew up and stayed in rural America still has value. Understanding these stayers and returners (Carr and Kefalas 2009) is vital because they are those who—by definition—live in rural America now.

The recorded interviews were transcribed, assigned a case number and pseudonym, and uploaded into NVivo 12 Plus, a software program for qualitative data analysis. Following a "flexible coding" protocol (Deterding and Waters 2018), I began analysis by creating a set of index codes, which are broad categories based on the topics covered in the interview protocol. Concurrent with index coding, I populated a spreadsheet with what Nicole Deterding and Mary Waters (2018) call attributive codes, which are categorical or numeric data connected to each case, such as number of biological children, highest educational attainment, and current hourly wage. Also concurrent with the index coding, I took notes on each case, which formed the basis for a respondent memo associated with each case. These four documents—interview transcript, respondent memo, interview field notes, and spreadsheet of attributive codes—make up the core data for each case. Additionally, during coding I also created a cross-case memo, which identified common themes across cases for exploration and verification using the case files. Once possible themes and patterns were identified, they were compared against all cases for validity.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

I examine the degree to which—and why—the men in this study have adopted the strategies of upskilling, geographic mobility, and occupational flexibility to improve their labor-market positions, each of which I examine in turn. For clarity, discussion of previous literature is embedded in each subsection. In all three sections, I pay particular attention to the ways in which rurality—particularly rural masculinities—matters for the decisions men make about their labor-force pathways.

Upskilling

The well-documented "college for all" push in recent decades (Reynolds and Baird 2010; Rosenbaum 2001) has been so pervasive that the aspiration to attend college persists well into adulthood, even among low-income students who have failed to make progress toward a degree (Alexander, Entwisle, and Olson 2014; Deterding 2015). This pressure is also present among working-class families. In recent work, Jennifer Silva and Kaisa Snellman (2018) argue that working-class young adults and their parents cast the decision to go to college in terms of their "salvation," a way out of the grim realities of working-class life and a tool that allows them to generate efficacy and optimism about the future. This is despite the fact that most do not have the knowledge or practical guidance to successfully navigate the landscape of higher education. Rural youth aspire to college at the same rate as nonrural youth (Howley 2006), though they lag in enrollment and completion (Byun, Meece, and Irvin 2012; Clark, Harper, and Weber 2022, this issue). The lack of economic opportunities in rural places is thought to be a primary driver of outmigration (McLaughlin, Shoff, and Demi 2014; Petrin, Schafft, and Meece 2014), leading to rural population loss (Hamilton et al. 2008; Johnson and Lichter 2019) and the well-publicized rural brain drain (Carr and Kefalas 2009; Sherman and Sage 2011). In this issue, Ashley Niccolai, Sarah Damaske, and Jason Park (2022) find that rural women from working-class families report more pressure to go to college than rural men, though these rural, working-class men still sometimes report feeling pressure from family to secure a middle-class life, which often involves education beyond high school. Ryan Parsons's ethnography of the Central Delta in the companion issue to this one illustrates—perhaps unwittingly—the intimate connection between the aspirations for upward mobility and higher education in the imaginations of rural youth, even when that pathway is fraught with obstacles (2022).

In keeping with the ubiquitous societal emphasis on postsecondary education, the most common labor-market advancement strategy among the men in this study is upskilling, or any training or credentialing beyond a high school diploma or equivalent.[6] As shown in table 1, a plurality of the men in the study have attempted or completed postsecondary education or training: about one-fifth earned a credential; another one-fifth attended some college but failed to earn a degree; and another one-fifth earned an associate or bachelor's degree. Among those who earned credentials, the most common was a commercial driver's license (CDL), earned by five men. Three of the five acquired their CDL to do long-haul trucking; the other two drive locally, which is defined as routes that do not require an overnight stay, even if sometimes they require travel to other states. Several men earned a credential in auto mechanics; two men became emergency medical technicians (EMTs); and two completed training at the police academy. For those who earned an associate degree, most were for vocational or technical training, and most were earned from for-profit entities. Most of the bachelor's degrees were from nonprofit schools, all within the state of Pennsylvania.

The emphasis in this analysis is not on the fact that many men pursued higher education, but instead on why they did. On its face, it seems in keeping with the college-for-all literature, as well as Silva and Snellman's (2018) recent findings that working-class young adults see education as a way to "save themselves" from working-class futures. However, I argue that the prevalence of higher education among the men in this study is evidence—not of college for all or working-class escape—but as a way of reinforcing rural, working-class masculinity. This interpretation suggests a unique instrumentality of education for men who grew up and stayed in rural America.

The first evidence for this interpretation is in the substance of the men's postsecondary choices. These men pursued credentials to be truck drivers, medical technicians, auto and bicycle mechanics, and police officers. They sought associate degrees in electrical technology, welding and fabrication, X-ray technol-

6. Not included as upskilling for the purposes of this study is any on-the-job training, which imparts job skills but is not independently sought by the employee.

ogy, and wildlife management. Two men in the study pursued higher education in art, yet both use that training primarily as tattoo artists. For many of the men, these interests can be traced to high school, when many were part of vocational-technical programs, pursuing everything from computer-aided drafting to culinary arts to automotive technology. Although the local plant or mill no longer exists as the inevitable place to live into a working-class destiny, these men still see themselves as working class, enacting that identity in a much broader and more fragmented milieu than their fathers. These men continue to want working-class jobs, and they value the "masculine" nature of such work: working with their hands, often outside, sometimes autonomously. For these men, postsecondary education is a way to strengthen—not create distance from—a traditional vision of rural, working-class masculinity.

Additionally, men were quick to abandon education if they felt it was not serving the practical end of helping them secure working-class work. Derek and Mark are examples of men who left their postsecondary pursuits before finishing because they received job offers in the fields they were training to enter. Derek did a semester at a technical college, and besides not feeling suited for more classroom schooling, he was convinced to leave school when he got a job offer: "when I got that phone call that really made my mind up that I was definitely done because I can go learn as an apprentice. In that industry, they'd rather see an apprenticeship than a degree. You know, this is hands-on, this guy knows what he's doing, so that's another reason I took the job."

Mark was involved in firefighting as far back as high school and enrolled in a community college across the state to study firefighting. However, just two months into the program, he was recruited to be a paid firefighter, so he left school for work. Christian was also impatient with higher education. After high school, he enrolled to get an associate degree in electrical technology, but he said he was tired of being broke, "got impatient," and returned home to work in a factory before earning his degree. As he said, "I wanted money; I'd work, instead of be broke and be in school."

A second unique feature in the approach to higher education among these men is that paper credentials matter less than a demonstrated ability to do the job, a mark of rural place where reputation and relationships are valued above formal education. Randy came from a long line of electricians and was poised to join them in the family business, but his family wanted him to earn his associate degree before taking over. He enrolled at a local technical school but struggled because he was not learning anything new: "When you have teachers instructing you and you feel that you know more than they do, it's just a little awkward to be there, but I had an unfair advantage." Randy said he often found himself wandering the halls because he was "so bored." However, he stuck with the program because his family wanted him to have the credential. He made the best of it, bonding with another student: "And I got lucky," Randy said, "there was another kid in the class that had been around construction and wired his grandparents' whole house, and I mean, he had some good knowledge and we kind of palled around together." When Randy earned his degree, he went back home to work in the family business, which thrived off reputation, not educational credentials:

> I do very little advertising because most the time the bang for the buck is just not there. So, I don't do a lot of that and the people coming in, it's just nice to see where they heard from you. And a lot of it's just word of mouth reputation in town; I can't take credit for all that cause between granddad and my dad and uncle it's a strong name through town, so I'm living off of that. I think I've improved it. . . . I've only had one person ever ask for the certificate. . . . they just needed somebody's creds to have on file.

Jeremiah, whose father was a contractor, also struggled with the limitations of school. After completing the architecture and design concentration in his high school Vo-Tech program, he enrolled in a local technical college. He thought he would be permitted to place out of some entry-level courses, so he was frustrated to learn after arriving on campus that

was not an option. He tried to make the best of it, but he lost interest after crossing the instructor:

> So, I just kind of went with it and I went to the class and I thought, "Well, maybe they'll, maybe there will be something different that I'll learn, and I'll learn a better way of doing something." But they were teaching on an older, outdated version of CAD and they were teaching an older, outdated way of doing things. And, so, like, we got a drawing packet at the beginning of the semester with, like, fifty drawings in it, and we had to have them all done by the end of the semester. And by the end of the second week, I had all of my drawings done and I was showing the other kids in the class the shortcuts and the keystrokes to get through the program. The teacher was not happy with me telling everybody how to get around the involved process of doing things. I kind of, I just stopped going to class. So, since participation and being there was so much of the grade, like, I kind of . . . I did all right, I think I got Cs and maybe a couple Bs, but I was not in it to go to class. So, I stopped going to class and started partying and hanging out with my friends and, you know, doing other things, so yeah.

Jeremiah stayed one more semester but dropped his major "because I knew all of that stuff and I didn't want to do it again." He took mostly general education requirements, and then left the school after a year with no degree.

As we saw with Randy, small businesses in the area rely on the strength of the business' reputation. This dynamic also applies to employers when they seek prospective employees, at least when it comes to jobs that have some technical requirement. Brett, who runs a towing company, talked at some length about the challenges of staffing. For drivers, simply having a CDL is not enough. He said they have gone to having a trial period with prospective drivers: "what we started doing with drivers, we bring them in for three days if possible. And we do a trial with them for three days. And I can tell you whether or not they're going to be able to run a truck after those three days." Thomas and Cameron, both self-employed contractors who are responsible for assembling their work crews, also spoke of the importance of reputation and reliability in their workers.

GEOGRAPHIC MOBILITY

Evidence shows that both intra-county and inter-county migration rates have dropped significantly in recent decades (Austin, Glaeser, and Summers 2018) to the point that Americans are moving less than at any point on record (Tavernise 2019). Reasons for this slowdown are myriad, but include the high cost of housing in some areas (Glaeser and Saiz 2003), land-use restrictions (Herkenhoff, Ohanian, and Prescott 2018), and a reduction in the wage premium for less-educated workers in dense urban centers (Autor 2020).[7] Yet despite these barriers to mobility, a sense among policymakers prevails that less-educated men living in areas with limited employment opportunities should move (Yglesias 2013). Evidence indicates that college-educated workers (Cadena and Kovak 2016; Wozniak 2010) and immigrants (Cadena and Kovak 2016) are much more willing to move for economic opportunities than nongraduates and non-immigrants. Niccolai, Damaske, and Park (2022, this issue) find that rural men (and women) were often unwilling to leave the area or commute long distances for work opportunities. However, a sense in much of the literature on rural aspirations is that those with skills and aspirations need to leave rural places if they are to succeed (Carr and Kefalas 2009; Schafft and Jackson 2010).

Contrary to national trends and existing academic literature, almost one-third of the men in this study have moved out of state for work. However, these moves are far from the strategic ventures hoped for by policymakers. The most common approach was to move away for brief periods on *prospecting trips*, where men move without a job in search of better opportunities. In most cases, the men were single at the time of the move, and the move was accompanied by little plan. Men often moved to a place where they had family or friends but no concrete job prospects. Sometimes they managed

7. For a full discussion, see Austin, Glaeser, and Summers 2018; Tavernise 2019.

to find a job, but other times, they did not and returned home. In virtually all cases, the episode was relatively short-lived, and the men eventually ended up back in northwestern Pennsylvania. Of course, given the nature of these cases, I cannot know whether some men took similar measures but found work elsewhere and stayed. It is the case that among those in this sample who moved away but returned, the men both had trouble making it work elsewhere and expressed a longing for home.

William is a good example of these prospecting trips. He served in the navy after high school, and after he was discharged, he moved into an already crowded house in Ohio with his Dad, his uncle and his wife, and grandmother. William worked a few jobs, none of which led to advancement, and then he also found himself the primary caregiver for his aging grandmother, which was too much: "I, as a twenty-one or so year old kid, like I couldn't handle like watching my grandmother deteriorate, let alone be in charge of her care." He returned home to northwestern Pennsylvania, but after having no luck finding meaningful work, he decided to try his luck in North Carolina, where he had been stationed in the service: "And then I went down to North Carolina, um tried to get work down there. Ended up working, uh, painting houses. Did that for a little while. Worked in the food service industry on base for a while. And then wrecked my car, got a DUI. And then from there, uh, spent the ten days in jail and then hitchhiked back home [to Pennsylvania]."

For Zach and Scott, their moves out of state were attempts to make clean breaks, at least for a season. For Zach, who had a bout with cancer not long after high school, his move was a chance to get away. He moved in with his sister in Kentucky and stocked shelves at a grocery store at night: "I just wanted to get away for a while, everything had been so crazy with chemo and everything, and I was just kind of over being in the area and was just ready to try something else." He thought it would be a long-term move, but he was not making enough to pay his bills, plus a nascent relationship with a woman back home started to get more serious over the miles. For Scott, his move was a chance to break bad habits: "I moved to Florida. Um, I tried to set myself straight once. Um, I kind of got stuck in the alcohol world, um, and I had a, a relative that um, lived in Florida at the time, so I um, I moved down there, kind of got my life a little more sober, I guess. Um, I moved back, and I don't know what could've been, because I wasn't there long enough, so."

He moved in with a cousin and his cousin's grandparents, but failed to find work, so moved back after just a couple months. He missed his friends and, like Zach, he "was talking to somebody" before he left, which also made it hard to stay away.

Although some men were escaping things when they moved, others moved to pursue concrete opportunities elsewhere. Thomas learned masonry from his father and grandfather and carpentry from a man he worked for in high school. He worked a few carpentry and contracting jobs during and after high school, but he was lured to the western United States to work for a cousin. He lived with a couple friends, worked hard, and played harder: "We flipped houses. The economy there was great. . . . [W]e made bank, but I drank a lot, and a lot of that bank was going straight to the bar." After a while, he moved back to northwestern Pennsylvania and took a job with another friend. Thomas described life out west as "fast-paced" and the people of northwestern Pennsylvania as "more genuine." In the end, he said that he "couldn't imagine living anywhere else [than northwestern Pennsylvania]."

The move out of state also worked out—for a time—for men like Sean and Doug. Sean, the EMT later turned law enforcement officer, also had a stint working in North Carolina: "Then I, and eventually I went to North Carolina 'cause I was just frustrated with not being able to find something around here." He had an aunt and uncle near Charlotte, and although they did not have a close relationship, he reached out and they invited him to stay there until he got on his feet. Sean initially lived with his family and took a job at the "steel manufacturing place" where his uncle worked while he put in other applications. He eventually got a job at a utility company and made relatively good money. He enjoyed the weather, but he also said he always looked forward to his annual hunting trip with his father back in Pennsylva-

nia. After living in North Carolina for a time and without much explanation, he said he just moved back to northwestern Pennsylvania and has been back ever since: "it's nice to live here."

When examining geographic mobility, a narrow focus on out-of-state residential moves misses other *mobility measures*, such as taking jobs that require travel or enlisting in the military. These decisions show a willingness to spend time away from home and family for economic opportunity. About 10 percent of the men in this study at one point took jobs that required extensive travel, such as joining itinerant work crews or long-haul truck driving. For most who did itinerant work, the job was usually taken when they were young and unmarried; it was a chance to make money and see a bit more of the state or country. Brad worked locally after high school, but "then came an opportunity and that's when I started traveling through the United States doing like rubber roofing. And that's what really started me going elsewhere throughout like the United States. Just going places that normally people don't get to go to, let alone me going twenty plus places every year."

Similarly, Jeff worked for a time as part of a traveling crew that repaired kilns. He stayed relatively close to home—Ohio, West Virginia, and other parts of Pennsylvania—but he found it a nice diversion from home:

> We didn't know what was going to be next, when the job was going to be. You know, I was just dating. . . . at the time. It was kind of a nice getaway. It kind of got boring [at home] 'cause, you know, I had a girlfriend that couldn't go and do anything, you know. But, but it was, it was different. You got to see some different places. Um, uh, you know, just the thrill of working on the road and the hotel. At least you get that experience. It's not; it's not all it's psyched up to be, you know. It's pretty boring, but also made good money.

Several of the men tried long-haul trucking, which tended to pay better than jobs available locally but also took a toll on relationships. In fact, all but one of the men doing this type of long-distance travel for work eventually moved on. Dan took a voluntary layoff from a warehouse to get his CDL and start long-haul driving, but he lasted only about six months, finding he missed home too much. With a newborn at home, Nick knew he needed more employment certainty than his work at the local factory provided, which had started rolling layoffs: "I came across an ad in the paper to, uh, go driving and learn to become a CDL driver." The company paid all the training costs if the driver stayed with them for six months, so Nick gave them seven months, then moved to what he saw as a better company. However, he still did not like being away, so he eventually began alternating between long-haul and local driving: "There wasn't enough money in this area to make . . . to provide for the things that was going on here, but I always wanted to be back here because I wanted to see my child, you know? I missed out on a lot of things while I was out driving. So, I kind of bounced back and forth like trying to save up some money and do the on the road thing and come back here and get a job until I just couldn't take it anymore 'cause we weren't making ends meet."

When his marriage ended, in part because of his infidelity, Nick went back to long-haul driving, although he was frustrated with the larger trucking companies because they had no regard for his scheduling requests, such as when he wanted to be home for weekends when he had his daughter. He eventually moved exclusively to local driving, which he has been doing for almost ten years.

Jared also paid a high price for his time over the road. He had already earned his CDL for a previous job—although it had lapsed—and he found himself in a period of job transition. Like Nick, an advertisement caught his attention. Jared took a three-and-a-half-day bus trip to Phoenix to take his road test, which he passed. But Jared minced no words about the long-term outcome of driving: "And I said, yeah, and I climbed in a truck, started driving, got married like seven months later, drive for seven more years over the road, got a divorce—job killed my marriage." He learned his wife had been cheating while he was away on runs, and the marriage ended soon after.

An overlooked mobility measure, especially among minority, working-class, and rural men, is joining the military (Butler and Moskos 1996;

Kleykamp 2006; Silva 2013; Sykes and Bailey 2020; Woodward 2000). The role of military service as a geographic mobility strategy deserves particular attention in rural context, given that rural youth enroll in military service at higher rates than their urban counterparts (Kane 2005; O'Hare and Bishop 2006), and past work has highlighted how rural and military masculinities overlap and reinforce one another (Woodward 2000). Rural men pay a price for their service: rural soldiers are at a greater risk for suicide (McCarthy et al. 2012) and were a disproportionate share of the casualties during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (O'Hare and Bishop 2006). In this study, nearly one-fifth of the men enlisted in the military and were trained, stationed, or deployed out of state or overseas. In many cases, the men enlisted with plans of a military career, but none fulfilled those plans once exposed to the rigors of military life and the trauma of combat. The main line of argument here is not whether the military yielded a stable career, but simply that the decision to enlist meant leaving the confines of home.

Many of these geographic mobility decisions have a gendered component. In some cases, the lack of a romantic partner lowered the stakes for taking a prospecting trip or joining the military. In others, it was the connection to a girlfriend that drew the men back to the area when out-of-state moves did not pay immediate dividends. For others, their mobility in search of opportunity put such a strain on their relationships that several ended in divorce. This status as "tied movers" also applies to the connection of men with their children. In a few cases, custody arrangements and a desire to be near noncustodial children kept men local when they might have otherwise moved. For some men, the fact that family is often a motivator for men to get serious about work echoes the process found among urban families (Edin and Kefalas 2007). Those in marriages and partnerships most often had a household-level livelihood strategy, marking a return to a previous mode of family life that predates the male breadwinner model (Cherlin 2014). Although this does not represent a total breakdown of traditional gender roles around tasks like caregiving, a sense in some of these partnerships is that the rigidity of certain roles has eroded.

OCCUPATIONAL FLEXIBILITY

Although many studies indicate that men who enter female-dominant occupations are rewarded with job security and wage growth (Budig 2002; Cognard-Black 2004; Dill, Price-Glynn, and Rakovski 2016; Williams 1992, 2013), men have still been slow to enter female-dominated fields (England 2010; Wootton 1997). Consistent with existing evidence, only a few of the men in this study have worked in gender-atypical occupations. Justin used his GI Bill to get a degree in elementary education and is currently the only male teacher or staff in his entire elementary school, which is private: "I'm the only guy in the building really most days." Paul, who worked in manual labor for more than a decade, found himself in need of work and used a connection to get a job working the front desk at a drug and alcohol treatment facility. Two men in the study left the formal labor force completely for a time, in consultation with their wives or partners, to stay at home and be the primary caregiver for their children. Alex and Gary work in direct care, and Phil works as a registered nurse (RN). Yet these examples were relatively rare. How does rural masculinity show up in the narratives of these men regarding their occupational choices, especially for men who have worked in or considered gender-atypical employment?

Health care is one field in particular where observers have expected working-class men to enter in greater numbers (Miller 2017) given projections of robust demand and higher wages (Cottingham 2013; Dill, Price-Glynn, and Rakovski 2016). The message that employment in health care is potentially lucrative has gotten through to the men in this study. Jerry, among the youngest in the study at age twenty-one, enrolled in the local branch campus initially as a pre-nursing major: "I went to pre-nursing . . . because I've heard a lot of good stuff about nursing industry or the health-care industry just they're being in demand. It's a wide variety of possible jobs for nurses. And so like, 'What the hell? Let's get money.'" A few other men considered health care and even started school in nursing. William, who had

field medical service support school training while in the navy, tried to use that training to get a job as a medical assistant after discharge, but "none of that counts, you still have to go back and get re-trained on whatever." He opted for a job at a car dealership that was immediately available and never pursued health care. Jeff, who went on to become a master carpenter, initially enrolled in school to start a nursing degree. Scott, a military veteran who has worked mostly in fast food, took steps to work at a nursing home, thinking it would open the door to other opportunities: "I thought maybe if I started there, then I could become the next step in the nursing, the nursing neighborhood, and actually get into like, a hospital." Brad—who is a recovering opioid addict and currently receives Social Security Disability benefits—said he would like to go back to school for nursing because "I like helping people." Gary got the closest to a health-care career, enrolling in an eighteen-month course to become a licensed practical nurse (LPN). Having been laid off, he began LPN training but was only partway through the program when his unemployment insurance (UI) ran out. Without the support of UI, Gary had to leave the training to return to work. But he explained his hopes of a career change because "I'm getting too broken to do a lot of construction anymore." The fact that so many men in this study explored health care as a possible career suggests that some of the gendered barriers to this type of work might be weakening.

This is also true in the rhetoric men used about so-called pink-collar jobs. When the issue of being willing to work in a pink-collar job was raised in the interview, the only objections concerned the duties required of the position, not the nature of the job. For example, Zach—who dropped out of art school and works as a graphic designer and tattoo artist—said he "wouldn't have anything against that [working in a female-typed job]" but he doesn't see himself as "really good with hands-on health-care stuff." Jordan replied, "a couple of my best friends are guys that are nurses and it gets, gets to a point where, uh, acclimated in that, um, so yeah." At the suggestion of working in a female-dominated occupation, Corey grounded his response in his own masculinity, which he said was secure enough to handle such work: "I wouldn't think twice [about working in a female-dominated job]; I don't care. I know I'm a man, you know." Overall, there are indications—both in men's actions and rhetoric—that the gendered barriers to certain types of historically female-dominated work are weakening.

Yet despite evidence among the men in this study of an openness to traditionally female-dominated jobs, these experiences of men in this study reveal at least two remaining barriers: remnants of a traditional rural masculinity and the formal education required to obtain middle-skill, gender-atypical occupations. The former barrier is seen in the experiences of two men from the study who work in female-dominated roles: Paul, who worked for years in manual labor and now works the front desk for a drug and alcohol rehab facility, and Phil, an RN. Although Paul spoke forcefully against those who diminish his work, it is also clear that he faces gendered resistance in his work that might create role strain for him over time:

> In a way, really what I do now, I answer phones all day. I . . . I get, I answer the phones so much, and like I said, I don't think this way, but for somebody else you know, you know, some of the older men that I work with, the drivers, they're kind of rough around the edges. And one guy in particular, you know, "Where's your skirt at?," you know? "Listen, buddy, I'll show you where my skirt's at," you know? You know, but let me tell you, what if I ever, you know, you're . . . that thinking, they . . . I don't pull any punches with anybody. That thinking, I'll put it in place every time. And there's no place for it anymore. There was never a place for it period. Um . . . and as I said, I'm not gonna let you get away with it and me, I don't care, but it's that type of thinking that takes women that could probably do your job better than you, feeling uncomfortable, demoralizes them and I ain't gonna let you do it. You have daughters, you have mothers, you have aunt, grandmother, how'd you like it if you watched somebody do that to them? And I have four daughters, and my youngest one will put you in your place, too. So, I'm not gonna let it happen.

Phil has also experienced gendered resistance in his work as a nurse. He describes the culture as offering only two options for men: "It's kind of funny because northwestern Pennsylvania is such a strange area in terms of human sexuality and gender views and everything like that. It's like, you either wear camo or you're gay. That's essentially the mindset of the people around here." Phil describes himself as not being attracted to the hunting culture, instead seeing himself as "an artsy, music, and poetry and literature type of person." He did not listen to country music, preferring rock-n-roll and following pop culture. Influenced musically and in fashion by some of the guitarists he liked, he would wear pink shirts or skinny jeans and be questioned by peers and his family: "That's gay" or "You look like a girl." Although not gay himself, he says he sometimes got covert requests to meet up from closeted men in the area.

Because of his experience navigating gender, Phil said nursing school did not bother him, but he still called it "an extreme experience." Of the thirty-six people who started in his class, three were men: two straight, one gay. Fourteen of the thirty-six original students graduated: twelve women, two men. This gender disparity has carried forward into his work as a nurse: "So, like my peers throughout college were so strange because here I am, a seventeen-, eighteen-year-old kid, sitting with these thirty-year-old women. It's just bizarre. It's a very strange mix. Then the same thing in the workplace for me today. I work with late-twenties to sixty-year-old women. There's two other male nurses at the hospital."

Phil says his coworkers "have never made a deal about me being a male nurse," but that gendered expectations crop up at work. Some concern patient expectations, such as how he is often mistaken for a doctor even after he explains he's a nurse. Conversely, he sees patients, especially older ones, often surprised when the doctor is a woman. When he is carrying out his duties, sometimes female patients who require toileting prefer a female nurse. But he also describes unwritten rules about who treats which case: "It's kind of funny, like in the ER, like if there's a male gender urinary problem that comes in, like it's just kind of understood like that's my patient. Female genital or urinary problem that comes in, that's, you know, one of the other nurses' patients." In reflecting on how gender might play out at work, he also realized—in the act of speaking—that he is not sure the legality of one of the hospital's rules: "I was told when I got hired there—I don't even know if this is legal, but I was told when I got hired there that I wasn't allowed to work in OB because I was a male. They didn't let males work in OB there. I don't know. I was like nineteen at the time, I had no interest in working in OB anyway, so I was like, "Okay. That's fine." But come to think of it now, I don't know if that's really even . . . if that's legal."

The second barrier to men entering female-dominated among the men in this study is the need for formal education to get the more lucrative, middle-skill health-care jobs—schooling that many of these men do not desire or are not suited to complete. Phil took the most direct path to a nursing credential (an associate degree), but it still required five semesters of college that left him $20,000 in debt, despite grants and scholarships, working part time, and living at home. Although Phil makes almost $30 an hour—wages that place him among the top-fifth of men in this study—he does not make more than other men in the study who work in male-typed occupations that require virtually no postsecondary education. Table 2 shows the men in the study who make at least $15 an hour with their current occupation or industry. Most jobs in this list are traditionally male-typed and do not require as much formal education as Phil completed.

Short of earning at least an associate degree, the options for entry-level health-care jobs are less appealing. For example, Alex, who works as a direct care assistant at a nursing home, makes just $8.25 an hour after five years on the job. Although Alex's pay and rate of promotion are perhaps unusually low, Gary—whose effort to earn his LPN credential was cut short—makes just $12.50 an hour working third shift as a personal care aide for a man with disabilities. Gary's wage, the equivalent of about $26,000 per year, does not distinguish itself from most male-typed manual work available in the area. Paul, the front desk attendant who defended his work against the harassment of male col-

Table 2. Men with Effective Hourly Rates of at Least $15 an Hour (N = 18)

Name	Age at Interview	Current Occupation or Industry	Effective Hourly Wage
Jeremiah	38	manufacturing	$15.00
Derek	40	commercial driver	$16.75
Cameron	33	self-employed contractor	$17.31
Wes	34	operations	$19.95
Seth*	40	manufacturing	$21.65
Phil*	26	nurse	$24.00
Thomas	32	self-employed contractor	$25.00
Sean	39	law enforcement	$26.00
Jacob*	38	law enforcement	$27.11
Don	43	oil and gas	$29.00
Jeff*	25	master carpenter	$29.61
Sam	37	manufacturing management	$30.29
Dustin*	46	hospital administration	$31.00
Vince	39	higher education	$36.06
Dennis*	33	utilities	$37.50
Austin*	46	federal government	$44.62
Todd	46	self-employed	$72.11
Larry	35	oil and gas	$96.00

Source: Author's tabulation.
*Indicates union member

leagues, makes just $13 an hour after six years on the job, which is still more than three dollars an hour less than he made doing maintenance for a local municipality, his first job after high school. Overall, despite the apparent openness of these men to traditionally female-dominated occupations and the steps that some of them took toward these jobs, barriers remain: the cultural cost for some men to switch into female-typed occupations; the availability of at least some traditionally male-typed work that pays comparably or better; and the educational requirements to access the better-paying, female-typed jobs. Therefore, even if cultural barriers to nontraditional work continue to diminish, it may take the further erosion of traditionally male-dominated occupations to push more men into female-typed jobs.

CONCLUSION

Over the past few decades, economic and technological changes have extracted a large cost for many workers, including less-educated men. Real male earnings today are lower than in the 1970s (Greenstone and Looney 2011; Mishel et al. 2012). Among full-time, full-year male workers, all but college-educated men have experienced double-digit decreases in inflation-adjusted mean earnings since 1969 (Greenstone and Looney 2011). Job quality for has also declined: the adequacy of employer-sponsored health insurance benefits has decreased (Collins, Gunja, and Doty 2017; Martin et al. 2011); job stability for men is lower (Hollister 2011); and involuntary part-time jobs and irregular work hours have increased (Finnigan 2018; Glauber 2017); and the share of men working full-time has decreased substantially, (Greenstone and Looney 2011) as has that of those looking for work at all (Abraham and Kearney 2018). These seismic changes have led policymakers and other observers to wonder why less-educated men have not been doing more to improve their labor-market positions (Semuels 2017; Strain 2014; Williams 2017; Yglesias 2013).

Based on life history interviews with sixty-one working-class men living in rural Pennsyl-

vania, this article explored the ways in which rural, working-class men do—and do not—seek to improve their labor-market positions. The evidence presented in this article shows that men are making many efforts to improve their labor-market position, but there are misunderstandings about why working-class men adopt the strategies they do. First, a majority of men in this study have pursued some sort of postsecondary education or training. However, these men view postsecondary education as a way to strengthen—not escape from—their identities as rural, working-class men. Additionally, men are quick to abandon education if they are offered a job. Moreover, formal educational credentials are less valued in a rural setting where personal reputation and a demonstrated ability to do the job mean more than certificates or degrees.

Second, despite evidence that Americans in general are moving less for work, one-third of the men in this study have moved out of state for work. But rather than move with a job offer in hand or choose a location strategically based on the availability of good, working-class jobs, most often the men go on *prospecting trips* where they move without a job or a plan, usually to a place where they have a personal connection, in hopes of a fresh start. These moves sometimes result in employment and a change of residence, but in other cases, men are unsuccessful in developing attachments and return home. Further, looking at interstate moves alone misses other *mobility measures* men use to improve their labor-market prospects, such as taking jobs that require extensive travel or enlisting in the military.

Finally, although only a few men have worked in gender-atypical occupations, several more have considered it and almost none of them express hostility to the idea. Yet the few in this study who are in female-dominated jobs testify to resistance from family and peers, indicating that certain cultural barriers remain entrenched, perhaps particularly in rural America. Moreover, the most lucrative jobs in female-dominated fields require at least some formal education, a barrier for most of these men, especially when comparably paying, male-typed jobs remain. Given the cultural cost for some men to switch careers, the low pay of much female-typed work, and the availability of at least some traditional work that pays well, it will likely take the further decimation of less-skilled, male-dominated occupations to push more men into female-dominated jobs.

This study contributes to our knowledge of the intersection between identity and work. We have long known of the interaction between gender and work, particularly how masculinity plays a role in the labor-market choices and experiences of men. This article builds on this foundation by extending and updating the inquiry to include rural, working-class men. For the men in this study, attachment to rural place and their identities as rural, working-class men exert great influence over their educational, economic, and labor-force decisions in ways that make them look different from other working-class men.

This article has several limitations. One is the narrow focus on white, working-class men. Future explorations of work among working-class men in rural America should explore the ways in which other racial or ethnic identities affect labor-market strategies. Another limitation is the use of a single field site, which leaves open the possibility that dynamics may be different in other rural places, not to mention urban and suburban places. Further, this study captures only men who lived in the field site at the time of recruitment, which misses those who were born in the study site but have moved away and not returned. It is possible that out-migrants are qualitatively different from those who returned or remained, although it is also possible that some of those who left went to other rural areas. Future work could attend to both those who stay and those who leave—and why. Finally, these interviews were conducted before the COVID-19 pandemic, which has roiled the labor market for many groups (Cajner et al. 2020; Kesler and Bash 2021; Schieman et al. 2021). Early evidence has shown a white male labor-market advantage during COVID (Dias 2021), although not all analyses are sensitive to the effects of education or rurality. It is too early to say how the pandemic affected these men's employment and how their labor-market strategies did—or did not—change. Even when the pre-COVID American economy was in an extended period of low unemploy-

ment, many workers—especially those with less education—struggled to find adequate employment and livable wages. It should be a continued priority for social scientists and policymakers to better understand the reasons why workers do—and do not—seek to improve their prospects, in rural places and beyond.

REFERENCES

Abraham, Katharine G., and Melissa S. Kearney. 2018. "Explaining the Decline in the US Employment-to-Population Ratio: A Review of the Evidence." *NBER* working paper no. 24333. Cambridge, Mass.: National Bureau of Economic Research.

Alexander, Karl, Doris Entwisle, and Linda Olson. 2014. *The Long Shadow: Family Background, Disadvantaged Urban Youth, and the Transition to Adulthood*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Austin, Benjamin A., Edward L. Glaeser, and Lawrence H. Summers. 2018. "Jobs for the Heartland: Place-Based Policies in 21st Century America." *NBER* working paper no. w24548. Cambridge, Mass.: National Bureau of Economic Research.

Autor, David. 2010. "The Polarization of Job Opportunities in the US Labor Market: Implications for Employment and Earnings." *Community Investments* 23(2): 11–41.

———. 2020. "The Faltering Escalator of Urban Opportunity." In *Securing Our Economic Future*, edited by Melissa S. Kearney and Amy Ganz. Washington, D.C.: The Aspen Institute.

Autor, David H., and David Dorn. 2009. "Inequality and Specialization: The Growth of Low-Skill Service Jobs in the United States." *NBER* working paper no. 15150. Cambridge, Mass.: National Bureau of Economic Research.

Bound, John, and Harry J. Holzer. 2000. "Demand Shifts, Population Adjustments, and Labor Market Outcomes During the 1980s." *Journal of Labor Economics* 18(1): 20–54.

Brandth, Berit, and Marit S. Haugen. 2005. "Doing Rural Masculinity—from Logging to Outfield Tourism." *Journal of Gender Studies* 14(1): 13–22.

Budig, Michelle J. 2002. "Male Advantage and the Gender Composition of Jobs: Who Rides the Glass Escalator?" *Social Problems* 49(2): 258–77.

Butler, John Sibley, and Charles C. Moskos. 1996. *All That We Can Be: Black Leadership and Racial Integration the Army Way.* New York: Perseus Book Group.

Byun, Soo-yong, Judith L. Meece, and Matthew J. Irvin. 2012. "Rural-Nonrural Disparities in Postsecondary Educational Attainment Revisited." *American Educational Research Journal* 49(3): 412–37.

Cadena, Brian C., and Brian K. Kovak. 2016. "Immigrants Equilibrate Local Labor Markets: Evidence from the Great Recession." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 8(1): 257–90.

Cajner, Tomaz, Leland Dod Crane, Ryan Decker, Adrian Hamins-Puertolas, and Christopher Johann Kurz. 2020. "Tracking Labor Market Developments During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Preliminary Assessment." SSRN Scholarly Paper no. 3601298. Rochester, N.Y.: Social Science Research Network.

Campbell, Hugh, and Michael Mayerfeld Bell. 2000. "The Question of Rural Masculinities." *Rural Sociology* 65(4): 532–46.

Campbell, Hugh, Michael Bell, and Margaret Finney. 2006. *Country Boys: Masculinity and Rural Life*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Carr, Patrick J., and Maria J. Kefalas. 2009. *Hollowing out the Middle: The Rural Brain Drain and What It Means for America*. Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press.

Chen, Victor Tan. 2015. *Cut Loose: Jobless and Hopeless in an Unfair Economy*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Cherlin, Andrew J. 2014. *Labor's Love Lost: The Rise and Fall of the Working-Class Family in America*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

———. 2018. "Why Are White Death Rates Rising?" *New York Times*, January 19.

Clark, Shelley, Sam Harper, and Bruce Weber. 2022. "Growing Up in Rural America." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(3): 1–47. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.3.01.

Cognard-Black, Andrew J. 2004. "Will They Stay, or Will They Go? Sex-Atypical Work among Token Men Who Teach." *Sociological Quarterly* 45(1): 113–39.

Collins, Sara R., Munira Z. Gunja, and Michelle M. Doty. 2017. "How Well Does Insurance Coverage Protect Consumers from Health Care Costs? Findings from the Commonwealth Fund Biennial Health Insurance Survey, 2016." Washington, D.C.: The Commonwealth Fund.

Cottingham, Marci D. 2013. "Recruiting Men, Constructing Manhood: How Health Care Organiza-

tions Mobilize Masculinities as Nursing Recruitment Strategy." *Gender & Society* 28(1): 133–56.

Cromartie, John. 2017. "Rural America at a Glance, 2017 Edition." *Economic Information Bulletin* no. EIB-182. Washington: U.S. Department of Agriculture.

DeLuca, Stefanie, Susan Clampet-Lundquist, and Kathryn Edin. 2016. *Coming of Age in the Other America*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Deterding, Nicole M. 2015. "Instrumental and Expressive Education: College Planning in the Face of Poverty." *Sociology of Education* 88(4): 284–301.

Deterding, Nicole M., and Mary C. Waters. 2018. "Flexible Coding of In-Depth Interviews: A Twenty-First-Century Approach." *Sociological Methods & Research*. First published online: October 1, 2018. DOI: 10.1177/0049124118799377.

Dias, Felipe A. 2021. "The Racial Gap in Employment and Layoffs During COVID-19 in the United States: A Visualization." *Socius* 7. First published online: January 19, 2021. DOI: 10.1177/23780 23120988397.

Dill, Janette S., Kim Price-Glynn, and Carter Rakovski. 2016. "Does the 'Glass Escalator' Compensate for the Devaluation of Care Work Occupations? The Careers of Men in Low- and Middle-Skill Health Care Jobs." *Gender & Society* 30(2): 334–60.

Doar, Robert, Harry J. Holzer, and Brent Orrell. 2017. "Getting Men Back to Work: Solutions from the Right and Left." Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute. Accessed November 5, 2021. https://www.aei.org/research-products/report/getting-men-back-to-work-solutions-from-the-right-and-left.

The Economist. 2015. "Men Adrift." May 28. Accessed November 5, 2021. https://www.economist.com/essay/2015/05/28/men-adrift.

Edin, Kathryn, and Maria Kefalas. 2007. *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood Before Marriage*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

England, Paula. 2005. "Emerging Theories of Care Work." *Annual Review of Sociology* 31(1): 381–99.

———. 2010. "The Gender Revolution: Uneven and Stalled." *Gender & Society* 24(2): 149–66.

Finnigan, Ryan. 2018. "Varying Weekly Work Hours and Earnings Instability in the Great Recession." *Social Science Research* 74 (August): 96–107

Gahman, Levi. 2020. *Land, God, and Guns: Settler Colonialism and Masculinity in the American Heartland*. London: Zed Books.

Ganong, Peter, and Daniel Shoag. 2017. "Why Has Regional Income Convergence in the US Declined?" *Journal of Urban Economics* 102(November): 76–90.

Gatta, Mary L., and Patricia A. Roos. 2005. "Rethinking Occupational Integration." *Sociological Forum* 20(September): 369–402.

Glaeser, Edward L., and Albert Saiz. 2003. "The Rise of the Skilled City." *NBER* working paper no. w10191. Cambridge, Mass.: National Bureau of Economic Research.

Glauber, Rebecca K. 2017. "Involuntary Part-Time Employment: A Slow and Uneven Economic Recovery." *National Issue Brief* no. 116. Durham: University of New Hampshire, Carsey School of Public Policy.

Greenstone, Michael, and Adam Looney. 2011. "Trends: Reduced Earnings for Men in America." *Hamilton Project* (blog), July 15, 2011. Accessed November 5, 2021. https://www.hamiltonproject.org/assets/files/milken_reduced_earnings_for_men_america.pdf.

Hamilton, Lawrence C., Leslie R. Hamilton, Cynthia M. Duncan, and Chris R. Colocousis. 2008. "Place Matters: Challenges and Opportunities in Four Rural Americas." Durham: University of New Hampshire, Carsey School of Public Policy.

Harrington, Carol. 2021. "What Is 'Toxic Masculinity' and Why Does It Matter?" *Men and Masculinities* 24(2): 345–52.

Herkenhoff, Kyle F., Lee E. Ohanian, and Edward C. Prescott. 2018. "Tarnishing the Golden and Empire States: Land-Use Restrictions and the US Economic Slowdown." *Journal of Monetary Economics* 93(January): 89–109.

Hollister, Matissa. 2011. "Employment Stability in the US Labor Market: Rhetoric versus Reality." *Annual Review of Sociology* 37(1): 305–24.

Howell, David R., and Arne L. Kalleberg. 2019. "Declining Job Quality in the United States: Explanations and Evidence." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 5(4): 1–53. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2019.5.4.01.

Howley, Caitlin W. 2006. "Remote Possibilities: Rural Children's Educational Aspirations." *Peabody Journal of Education* 81(2): 62–80.

Johnson, Kenneth M., and Daniel T. Lichter. 2019. "Rural Depopulation: Growth and Decline Processes over the Past Century." *Rural Sociology* 84(1): 3–27.

Kalleberg, Arne L. 2009. "Precarious Work, Insecure

Workers: Employment Relations in Transition." *American Sociological Review* 74(1): 1–22.

———. 2011. *Good Jobs, Bad Jobs: The Rise of Polarized and Precarious Employment Systems in the United States, 1970s-2000s*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Kane, Tim. 2005. *Who Are the Recruits? The Demographic Characteristics of U.S. Military Enlistment, 2003–2005*. Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation.

Kelly, Annie. 2017. "The Alt-Right: Reactionary Rehabilitation for White Masculinity." *Soundings* 66 (Summer): 68–78. DOI: 10.3898/136266217821733688.

Kenway, Jane, Anna Kraack, and Anna Hickey-Moody. 2006. *Masculinity beyond the Metropolis*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kesler, Christel, and Sarah Bash. 2021. "A Growing Educational Divide in the COVID-19 Economy Is Especially Pronounced Among Parents." *Socius* 7. First published online: January 15, 2021. DOI: 10.1177/2378023120979804.

Kleykamp, Meredith A. 2006. "College, Jobs, or the Military? Enlistment during a Time of War." *Social Science Quarterly* 87(2): 272–90.

Kroft, Kory, Fabian Lange, Matthew J. Notowidigdo, and Lawrence F. Katz. 2015. "Long-Term Unemployment and the Great Recession: The Role of Composition, Duration Dependence, and Nonparticipation." *Journal of Labor Economics* 34(S1): S7–54.

Little, Jo, and Ruth Panelli. 2002. "Rural Geography: Rural Gender Identity and the Performance of Masculinity and Femininity in the Countryside." *Progress in Human Geography* 26(5): 665–70.

Lobao, Linda. 2006. "Gendered Places and Place-Based Gender Identities: Reflections and Refractions." In *Country Boys: Masculinity and Rural Life*, edited by Hugh Campbell, Michael Bell, and Margaret Finney. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Martin, Anne, David Lassman, Lekha Whittle, Aaron Catlin, and the National Health Expenditure Accounts Team. 2011. "Recession Contributes to Slowest Annual Rate of Increase in Health Spending in Five Decades." *Health Affairs* 30(1): 11–22.

McCarthy, John F., Frederic C. Blow, Rosalinda V. Ignacio, Mark A. Ilgen, Karen L. Austin, and Marcia Valenstein. 2012. "Suicide Among Patients in the Veterans Affairs Health System: Rural–Urban Differences in Rates, Risks, and Methods." *American Journal of Public Health* 102(S1): S111–17.

McLaughlin, Diane K., Carla M. Shoff, and Mary Ann Demi. 2014. "Influence of Perceptions of Current and Future Community on Residential Aspirations of Rural Youth." *Rural Sociology* 79(4): 453–77.

Miller, Claire Cain. 2017. "Why Men Don't Want the Jobs Done Mostly by Women." *New York Times*, January 4.

Mishel, Lawrence, Josh Bivens, Elise Gould, and Heidi Shierholz. 2012. *The State of Working America*, 12th ed. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Newman, Katherine S. 2009. *No Shame in My Game: The Working Poor in the Inner City*. New York: Vintage.

Niccolai, Ashley R., Sarah Damaske, and Jason Park. 2022. "We Won't Be Able to Find Jobs Here: How Growing Up in Rural America Shapes Decisions About Work" *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(4): 87–104. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.4.03.

O'Hare, William, and Bill Bishop. 2006. "U.S. Rural Soldiers Account for a Disproportionately High Share of Casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan." Fact Sheet no. 9. Durham: University of New Hampshire, Carsey School of Public Policy.

Parsons, Ryan. 2022. "Moving Out to Move Up: Higher Education as a Mobility Pathway in the Rural South." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(3): 208–29. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.3.09.

Peters, H. Elizabeth, and Claire Kamp M. Dush. 2010. *Marriage and Family: Perspectives and Complexities*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Petrin, Robert A., Kai A. Schafft, and Judith L. Meece. 2014. "Educational Sorting and Residential Aspirations among Rural High School Students: What Are the Contributions of Schools and Educators to Rural Brain Drain?" *American Educational Research Journal* 51(2): 294–326.

von Reichert, Christiane, John B. Cromartie, and Ryan O. Arthun. 2011. "Returning Home and Making a Living: Employment Strategies of Return Migrants to Rural US Communities." *Journal of Rural and Community Development* 6(2): 35–52.

Reynolds, John R., and Chardie L. Baird. 2010. "Is There a Downside to Shooting for the Stars? Unrealized Educational Expectations and Symptoms of Depression." *American Sociological Review* 75(1): 151–72.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L., and Paula England. 2007. "Sociological Approaches to Sex Discrimination in Employment." In *Sex Discrimination in the Workplace: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, edited by Faye J. Crosby, Margaret S. Stockdale, and S. Ann Ropp. Oxford: Blackwell.

Rosenbaum, James E. 2001. *Beyond College for All: Career Paths for the Forgotten Half*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Schafft, Kai A., and Alecia Youngblood Jackson. 2010. *Rural Education for the Twenty-First Century: Identity, Place, and Community in a Globalizing World*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Schieman, Scott, Philip J. Badawy, Melissa A. Milkie, and Alex Bierman. 2021. "Work-Life Conflict During the COVID-19 Pandemic." *Socius* 7. First published online: January 5, 2021. DOI: 10.1177/2378023120982856.

Semuels, Alana. 2017. "The Barriers Stopping Poor People From Moving to Better Jobs." *The Atlantic*, October 12. Accessed November 5, 2021. https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2017/10/geographic-mobility-and-housing/542439.

Sherman, Jennifer. 2009. "Bend to Avoid Breaking: Job Loss, Gender Norms, and Family Stability in Rural America." *Social Problems* 56(4): 599–620.

Sherman, Jennifer, and Rayna Sage. 2011. "Sending off All Your Good Treasures: Rural Schools, Brain-Drain, and Community Survival in the Wake of Economic Collapse." *Journal of Research in Rural Education* 26(11): 1–14.

Silva, Jennifer M. 2013. *Coming Up Short: Working-Class Adulthood in an Age of Uncertainty*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Silva, Jennifer M., and Kaisa Snellman. 2018. "Salvation or Safety Net? Meanings of 'College' Among Working- and Middle-Class Young Adults in Narratives of the Future." *Social Forces* 97(2): 559–82.

Simpson, Ruth. 2004. "Masculinity at Work: The Experiences of Men in Female Dominated Occupations." *Work, Employment and Society* 18(2): 349–68.

———. 2005. "Men in Non-traditional Occupations: Career Entry, Career Orientation and Experience of Role Strain." *Gender, Work & Organization* 12(4): 363–80.

Slack, Tim. 2007. "Work, Welfare, and the Informal Economy: Toward an Understanding of Household Livelihood Strategies." *Community Development* 38(1): 26–42.

Smith, Miranda N., Richelle L. Winkler, and Kenneth M. Johnson. 2016. "How Migration Impacts Rural America." *Population Trends in Post-Recession Rural America* brief no. 03–16. Ann Arbor: University of Wisconsin, Applied Population Library.

Strain, Michael R. 2014. "A Jobs Agenda for the Right." *National Affairs* 49(Winter). Accessed November 5, 2021. https://www.nationalaffairs.com/publications/detail/a-jobs-agenda-for-the-right.

Sykes, Bryan L., and Amy Kate Bailey. 2020. "Institutional Castling: Military Enlistment and Mass Incarceration in the United States." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 6(1): 30–54. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2020.6.1.02.

Tavernise, Sabrina. 2019. "Frozen in Place: Americans Are Moving at the Lowest Rate on Record." *New York Times*, November 20.

Williams, Christine L. 1992. "The Glass Escalator: Hidden Advantages for Men in the 'Female' Professions." *Social Problems* 39(3): 253–67.

———. 2013. "The Glass Escalator, Revisited: Gender Inequality in Neoliberal Times, SWS Feminist Lecturer." *Gender & Society* 27(5): 609–29.

Williams, Joan C. 2010. *Reshaping the Work-Family Debate*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

———. 2017. "Why Doesn't More of the Working Class Move for Jobs?" *HBR Ideacast*, episode 577. Accessed November 5, 2021. https://hbr.org/podcast/2017/05/why-doesnt-more-of-the-working-class-move-for-jobs.

Woodward, Rachel. 2000. "Warrior Heroes and Little Green Men: Soldiers, Military Training, and the Construction of Rural Masculinities." *Rural Sociology* 65(4): 640–57.

Wootton, Barbara H. 1997. "Gender Differences in Occupational Employment." *Monthly Labor Review* 120(4): 15–24.

Wozniak, Abigail. 2010. "Are College Graduates More Responsive to Distant Labor Market Opportunities?" *Journal of Human Resources* 45(4): 944–70.

Yglesias, Matthew. 2013. "Why Don't People Move to Where the Jobs Are?" *Slate Magazine*, August 23. Accessed November 5. 2021. https://slate.com/business/2013/08/unemployment-is-very-low-in-some-cities-so-why-dont-people-move-there.html.