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Blue-Collar Working Mothers:

The Effects of the 2009/2010 MTA/NYCT Budget Cuts on Female TWU Local 100 Members

By

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the

Department of Urban Studies at Fordham University

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Abstract

Vita

Chapter 1: Introduction

The battle for work-life balance that many United States women face is not a new struggle. Today, women can have a share of the male bread-winner model by leaving the home and seeking paid employment. But this comes at a cost. When women seek employment outside of the home they also have to learn to balance employment with their domestic roles such as childrearing, housekeeping, or care of the elderly and sick. As more women enter the workforce, their distinct needs become more pronounced, and so do the needs of working women. For instance, women as mothers continue to be saddled with care-taking responsibilities that are not equally shared with their spouse in spite of equal hours spent at work or similar earnings.1 Often, conversations around the needs of working mothers focus on the needs of upper and middle class women who live in the suburbs and work traditional hours (9 a.m. - 5 p.m.). Due to the socioeconomic status of upper and middle class suburban working mothers, they are able to secure childcare services, which allow them to easily balance employment outside the home and household responsibilities.

But the needs of blue-collar working mothers have not been adequately addressed. Women's labor is vital to a city's ability to operate efficiently and productively, which is why overlooking the needs of working mothers is a serious oversight. The better working mothers can balance work and home life, the more profitable a city becomes because these women can contribute their labor more fully. Successfully managing the

[1] For further discussion of this, see Deborah J. Anderson, Melissa Binder, and Kate Krause, "The Motherhood Wage Penalty Revisited: Experience, Heterogeneity, Work Effort, and Work-Schedule Flexibility," *Industrial & Labor Relations Review* 56, no. 2 (January 2003): 273-274, accessed April 1, 2012.

work/life balance is a particular challenge for blue-collar working mothers because the family structure tends towards single-motherhood and the unsecured nature of their jobs makes them easily expendable. There is a higher propensity of blue-collar working mothers in urban areas making this a concern for dense urban areas like New York City. Blue-collar working mothers tend to be the primary care givers of their households while simultaneously balancing full-time work outside the home.2 Additionally, the working class family structure leans towards single-mother households where the mother is the primary breadwinner.3 The jobs many of these mothers take are strongly influenced by the extensive responsibilities from managing a household with children and the limited flexibility offered in traditional 9 am – 5 pm jobs.

Given this backdrop, my research focused on the growing burdens placed on blue-collar working women. Specifically, my research looks at how budget cuts affect blue-collar women who are mothers in urban areas working for public authorities *Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA)/New York City Transit (NYCT)*. I used the 2009/2010 MTA/NYCT budget cuts for my case study. In my research, I sought to investigate why there existed a large concentration of women in certain blue-collar job titles where massive layoffs were enacted due to the 2009/2010 MTA/NYCT fiscal crisis. My research focused on female members of *Transport Workers Union Local 100 (TWU Local 100)* affected by the layoffs. Research questions that developed over the course of my study were 1) Why did the layoffs concentrate mainly on job titles held by blue-collar

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[2] Ellen Israel Rosen, *Bitter Choices, Blue-Collar Women in and out of Work* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

[3] Julia Kirk Blackwelder, *Now Hiring: The Feminization of Work in the United States, 1900-1995* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 215-216.

women? and 2) What can the MTA/NYCT do to meet the needs of their blue-collar female employees, especially those who are mothers working nontraditional hours?

To answer these questions, my thesis uses original interview data and NYCT new hire reports. I begin with orienting the reader to the urban perspective of this thesis in Chapter 2, *An Urban Studies Framework*. Next, Chapter 3 grounds the topic in the social justice theory by explaining the theory, contrasting it to competing theories, and ultimately showing how it proves superior when considering my research question that explores the intersection of public sector work, blue-collar women, economic needs, urban geography and social justice.

Chapter 4, and 5 give context of blue-collar work and urban geographies per the transit system to make clear the importance of this research. Chapter 4 covers the function of blue-collar work and traces its history before looking specifically to the working class in New York. It closes with an explanation of the historical and sociological reasoning behind the centrality of blue-collar women for urban areas. Chapter 5 covers the growth of the New York City public transportation system and factors in two important pieces: the role of women within this history and the role of the *Transportation Workers Union (TWU)* within this industry. My data relies on interviews from female members of the TWU Local 100 so the moving parts of gender, public sector work, and urban geographies come together here.

Chapter 6 is where the specifics of my research take roots. This chapter covers the nuts and bolts of the MTA/NYCT and the steps leading to the budget cuts, which paves the way for my case study in Chapter 7. Within Chapter 7, I dig deeper into the lived

experience of blue-collar working women in the MTA/NYCT transit system. These are all women who are mothers and who have lost their jobs. Importantly, the jobs they held were highly feminized by gender composition, low pay scale and expendability. Moreover, the answers to my chief research question – why did the layoffs target women so heavily- becomes apparent here. The needs of mothers are not factored into the work structures and this places undue burden on blue-collar working women who have caretaking responsibilities. The dichotomy of flexible schedules/inflexible schedules influences wages and career growth much more than I had thought possible.

Chapter 8 offers insight into the other aim of my research- What can the MTA/NYCT do to meet the needs of their blue-collar female employees, especially those who are mothers working nontraditional hours? I cover what has been done already by the MTA/NYCT before offering my own insights. The ultimate aim is to bolster research on blue-collar working women, specifically mothers in urban areas working for public authorities.

Chapter 2: Urban Studies Framework

In examining the 2009/2010 MTA/NYCT budget cuts, it becomes apparent that a majority of the blue-collar positions terminated within TWU Local 100 had a large female concentration. For example, the station agent title has a large number of cuts and the majority of station agents are women. For my research, I utilized official notifications such as MTA press releases and reports from the MTA regarding the 2009/2010 budget cuts and subsequent layoffs to study the demographics of females affected by these actions. To better understand the representation of female employees in the MTA/NYCT, I compared new hire reports that provided a ratio of how job titles were split between men and women. I also utilized New York City Transit new hire reports from 2005-2010 to understand the hiring trends in female dominated job titles and job categories. I then analyzed the MTA/NYCT's perspective in respect to feminism and urban studies through feminist theory and social justice theory. In addition, to capture the voices of blue-collar female MTA/NYCT employees I conducted structured interviews guided by an interview template.

The purpose of my study is to better understand how budget cuts in New York City have impacted women. More specifically, I sought to examine how budget cuts to the MTA affected female blue-collar workers, with a particular emphasis on mothers. To reiterate, the 2009/2010 MTA/NYCT budget cuts primarily affected TWU Local 100 female members as evidenced by the 500 station agents that were laid off.

The small case study of MTA/NYCT layoffs in an urban setting is reflective of a wider trend that began in the 1980's and has been continuing since. Public jobs in city centers were terminated en masse under the Reagan administration from public sector

budget cuts. African American women held many of these posts and found themselves unemployed. Consequently, the economies in these urban centers degenerated as evidenced in Cleveland, Ohio and Baltimore, Maryland. The unemployment of women who are the heads of the households naturally has negative effects for families. Thus my research is important for urban studies and in finding ameliorative steps to a persistent problem. Tijen Harcar writes that "businesses and governments…need to be more socially responsible with their policies and women might need to be more specific with their life and career choices" for society to improve.[4]

My research intention is also to shed light on the lived experience and struggles of blue-collar female TWU Local 100 members who were laid off in a global financial crisis and economic downturn. As my research progressed, the employment decisions of the female members of TWU Local 100 became clearer, and so did the consequences of their decisions. These women were at the front of the line, meaning they were the first ones to be laid off. The research I conducted reveals that female TWU Local 100 members do consider their domestic needs of their family when choosing job titles for the MTA/NYCT. The job related considerations have influenced women to take on less challenging positions, and these were the positions that were targeted by the MTA/NYCT with the 2009/2010 budget deficit. Research shows that men accounted for three out of every four jobs lost (73.6%) with the Second Great Recession[5].[6] But with the MTA's cost cutting strategies, it was women who were affected most. My research is significant

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[4] Tijen Harcar, "Consequences of Work-Family Conflict for Working Women and Possible Solutions: A Conceptual Model," *Journal of Global Strategic Management* 2 (October 2007): 60.

[5] The global financial crisis that began in December 2007

[6] Heather Boushey and Ann O'Leary, eds., *The Shriver Report: A Woman's Nation Changes Everything*, report (Washington: Maria Shriver and the Center for American Progress, 2009), 33.

because there has been little engagement with how MTA's budget cuts have affected women. There is little data that focuses specifically on the intersection of women, budget cuts, and transportation in metropolitan areas in the United States. My work hopes to fill a void in urban studies research.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

3.1 Social Justice as a Theoretical Framework

The MTA 2009/2010 budget cuts have affected a great number of blue-collar women workers, especially TWU Local 100 workers, where 500 station agents were laid off, one of the highest percentages during the budget crisis. This issue is not only an urban issue because blue-collar women workers are a vital thread in the fabric of New York City, but also a social justice issue since it affected a vulnerable working population. Blue-collar women are a vulnerable working population because their employment has little job security, generates low income, and can easily be impacted by broad economic changes. Readings from social justice literature, in particular the interconnection between social justice and changes in women's employment in the labor market, reveals that social scientists and social justice theorists seldom explore the extent to which changes in women's employment is a matter of social justice, especially blue-collar women workers. Thus, they neglect a vital element in the urban fabric, in this case, the City of New York.

A social justice perspective is emphasized throughout my thesis because it provides a necessary lens for blue-collar women's work to be considered. Taking their situation beyond economics is necessary to bring lasting structural changes via policy and formal decision-making routes. For this reason, the case study I selected—the MTA/NYCT 2009/2010 budget cuts—will be analyzed through this theoretical framework. The literature review evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the social justice theory as it compares to neoclassical economics and socialist feminist theory in

order to establish why this theory is elemental in exploring changes to blue-collar women's employment.

To begin, let us consider the problem blue-collar women in the city face before delving into the theoretical framework best fitted to analyzing their situation. Looking at the built environment through the lens of David Harvey from his writing in *Social Justice, Postmodernism and the City*, one can deduct that the city and urban environments discriminate against women. The discrimination against women in urban environments is important to examine because their experiences have bearing on society as a whole. When women's voices are not heard, gender imbalances manifest themselves in other areas of a women's life, which reverberates to other minority groups and ultimately, greater society. Using the specific example of my case study, the TWU Local 100 females work in less challenging positions because they have heavy domestic burdens. While New York City's need for a 24/7 operating transportation system presents working blue-collar mothers with flexible work, it is not sustainable work due to the low pay and non-existent forms of career growth. The reality is, many women are both the main breadwinner and household head, therefore, the lack of work arrangements to grow their career and family presents insurmountable hurdles.

The women I interviewed are not impoverished, however due to their hourly pay and with the high cost of living in New York City, their living arrangements make them geographically and socially isolated. This isolation yields a lower quality of life such as limited access to public amenities such as good schools. Geographer David Harvey argues that geography cannot remain objective in the face of urban poverty. In addition, Harvey believes that we need to be concerned with the fair distribution of resources in

urban environments.[7] When work and politico-legal environments assume all working families consist of two parents, single working mothers are unfairly burdened. Harvey adds that social justice should be an important issue for urban planners because of the subjective nature of the theory. Furthermore, Harvey believes we should not aim to obliterate differences and homogenize situations. Instead we should interact and engage with aesthetics that embraces or stimulates "spontaneous self-diversification".[8]

Harvey believes we should follow urban scholar Jane Jacobs' advice from *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* and we should both respect and provide for "spontaneous self-diversification" among urban population' in the formulation of our policies and plans.[9] Jane Jacobs, a noted urban planning author, argues that due to a trend of cities catering to the needs of wealthy residents, urban areas have become less attentive to the needs of those in lower socioeconomic classes. In turn, this lack of diversity creates a greater spatial divide between place of work and places of residence for workers. Jacobs argues that working-class individuals are vital to the fabric of the city, and need to be "a stabilizing force in the form of a self-diversified population".[10] In addition, Jacobs argues when urban spaces become less diverse, support systems erode.

David Harvey's work in *Social Justice, Postmodernism and the City* speaks closely to my research. His key argument is how public space in New York City needs to be more inclusive. Harvey makes apparent how it is important to understand the link

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[7] David Harvey, "Social Justice, Postmodernism and the City," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 16, no. 4 (December 1992), accessed October 25, 2009, Wiley.

[8] Harvey, "Social Justice, Postmodernism and the City," 590.

[9] Harvey, "Social Justice, Postmodernism and the City," 590.

[10] Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 282.

between social justice to women and the built environment. For instance, looking at the built environment means examining how women interact in public spaces. Female employees of the MTA/NYCT live and work in the space being New York City but are geographically isolated to the outer boroughs. And yet, though it may seem as if their domestic lives occur only in private spheres, their lives are actually intertwined in New York City public spaces. For example, it is a station agent's job to interact with the public and ensure riders safely navigate the subway system. The station agent who is a mother is directly involved in public space due to her choice of job title. Therefore, the lives of TWU Local 100 station agents are very much a part of the space that they work in. The women of the MTA navigate the urban space by living in New York City and by having their personal lives intersect their working lives by simply being in the same space.

Jane Jacob's work in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* corroborates Harvey's arguments regarding the unfavorable geographic location where blue-collar working women live. The geographically isolated neighborhoods can be attributed to the erosion of formal support systems, which greatly impact blue-collar workers who rely on them.

A contrasting argument of how urban space limits blue-collar mothers in their work/life options can be seen through the work of Elizabeth Wilson in *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life*. Wilson argues that "the 'disorder' of urban life does not so much disturb women", rather the imposed order and boundaries in patriarchal society is what confines women.[11] Wilson believes the city has actually allowed women to thrive and

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[11] Elizabeth Wilson, *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the Control Disorder and Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 8.

engage in both industrial and public life.[12] Whereas Harvey and Jacobs speak to each other and reinforce how urban space limits blue-collar women as mothers with their work/life options, Wilson's argument is that urban space liberates women.

3.1.1 Assessment of Existing Theories

Before I move forward, in explaining the effects of budget cuts on blue-collar women workers, particularly TWU Local 100 women workers, it is of importance to assess existing theories as to how these theories explain changes and effects in working women's lives and what the implications are for the urban, social, and economic fabric of a city – in this case, New York City. In the paragraphs that follow, I will assess the neoclassical economics and socialist feminist theories to this effect.

When considering the literature of employment and social justice, particularly blue-collar women's employment in the urban context, social scientists fail to fully explain how business decisions such as budget cuts affect women as a vital segment of the workforce. The implication is that the effects on the larger urban fabric have been neglected. Theories put forth hardly address the monumental changes budget cuts result in for women through the social justice lens. A social justice perspective recognizes women as human beings who are deserving of equal human rights and equality. Although many theories do not look specifically into blue-collar women workers, some theories can be used to explain changes impacting this segment of the workforce, namely the neoclassical economic theories and feminist theories.

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[12] Wilson, *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the Control Disorder and Women*, 8.

The neoclassical economics theory views,

> … Expected income is defined as the probability of unemployment (one minus the unemployment rate) times the mean income in whatever economic sector a rational actor contemplates working.[13]

The theory presumes all people are rational actors with full information. But a reality of work is that people do not have full information and they are acting not to maximize their profits, but their well being. And this includes family consideration. Thus the neoclassical economics theory is insufficient in explaining changes and effects of business decisions such as budget cuts on blue-collar women workers within the urban context. While it can offer insight into the decision-making for a slice of the population, for women who have "irrational" motives, the theory cannot serve to explain their choice of work nor policies that would serve their needs.

A line of thought that highlights the needs of working mothers is socialist feminist theory. This theory contends that,

> …[Society] [as] an institutionalized system of oppression based on the domination of men over women… [Socialist feminist theory] focuses on how power has been denied women because of their class position.[14]

By examining the experiences of TWU Local 100 female members through a second wave feminist framework, it is apparent that women are burdened by domestic work. Betty Friedan laments in *The Feminine Mystique* on how housework oppresses women. Though her book focuses on the experiences of housewives in the 1950's and 1960's, blue-collar working women today can connect to Friedan's sentiments. Friedan

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[13] Douglas S. Massey et al., "An Evaluation of International Migration Theory: The North American Case," *Population and Development Review* 20, no. 4 (1994): 701.

[14] Chicago Women's Liberation Union, *Socialist Feminism: A Strategy for the Women's Movement* (Chicago: Chicago Women's Liberation Union, 1972), 3-8.

explores a "problem that has no name", that problem being the lack of fulfillment due to women's burden of domestic responsibilities. Unlike the women Friedan wrote about, female TWU Local 100 members are women who work outside the home and take on the same responsibilities of a housewife. Friedan writes about how housewives during World War II were given the opportunity to work outside the home and society changed to accommodate the needs of working women whose husbands were off at war. In the 1950's, Friedan explains that working mothers "worked out unconventional domestic arrangements to keep their professional commitments".[15] Friedan notes that women shared child-rearing and domestic responsibilities with each other, and day-care centers accommodated the hours of working mothers.[16] Yet there is little space for this form of accommodation in the work sphere for blue-collar mothers.

Socialist feminist theory provides a partial view to analyze my research that integrates issues of class and gender. Looking at the experience of TWU Local 100 female members through an industrial capitalist lens is helpful as well. In "Is Capitalism Gendered and Racialized?" socialist feminist Joan Acker writes how industrial capitalism within the United States has led to a "gender-and race-segregated labor force, laced with wage inequalities".[17] This in turn has led to the creation of gendered substructures within capitalism where paid work is valued and unpaid work such as domestic and caring activities are not.[18] Capitalists are able to exploit the unpaid labor of blue-collar female

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[15] Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), 184.

[16] Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 185.

[17] Joan Acker, "Is Capitalism Gendered and Racialized?," in *Race, Class, & Gender*, 7th ed. (Belmont: Wadsworth, 2010), 137.

[18] Acker, "Is Capitalism Gendered and Racialized?," 138.

workers when they do not allow for job flexibility. Socialist feminist theory appropriately frames the bind blue-collar female workers are in regarding gender segregation in the workplace and wage inequalities.

The two theories mentioned above do not look at changes and effects of budget cuts on blue-collar women workers in its entirety, however. One is relevant for the economic calculus of budget cuts while the other is relevant for the gendered realm of household labor. The two theories fail to take into consideration the urban context and cannot, for that matter, explain changes and effects on the female blue-collar segment of the workforce who live in the urban space. These theories fail to take into consideration the family aspect that plays a vital role in shaping these women's choice of career.

The social justice theory best explains the issue because it factors in the urban element, the economic necessities, and the realities of women. It serves well to make vivid the plight of women undergoing the harsh realities of public sector spending. While the aforementioned theories may have some merit for explaining changes and effects of business decisions such as budget cuts on blue-collar women workers, they fail to take into consideration the urban context and thus cannot explain changes and effects on blue-collar women workers whose lives are centered in the urban space. Moreover, those two theories fail to take into consideration the family aspect that plays a vital role in shaping these women's choice of career. So far, social justice theory is the only theory that orients one through all these moving parts.

3.2 Understanding Budget Cuts on Blue-Collar Women Workers

Having considered existing theories for explaining the effects of budget cuts on blue-collar women workers, I will argue that social justice theory, considering its

emphasis on justice and issues of built environments such as cities like New York City, will provide a more nuanced understanding of budget cuts on blue-collar women workers, particularly TWU Local 100 working women. As explained at the outset of this chapter, social justice theory "refers to the overall fairness of a society in its divisions and distributions of rewards and burdens".[19]

It is of importance to understand the historical context in which the term social justice has been used. Social justice was first used by Luigi Taparelli d'Azeglio, a Sicilian priest, in 1840. The meaning of the term as we know today is due to John Stuart Mills, a British philosopher and political economist. In his book, *Utilitarianism, Liberty and Representative Government*, Mills gave an anthropomorphic approach to social justice. He wrote, "we should treat all equally well…who have deserved equally well of us, and that society should treat all equally well who have deserved equally well of it, that is, who have deserved equally well absolutely. This is the highest abstract standard of social and distributive justice; towards which all institutions, and the efforts of all virtuous citizens, should be made in the utmost degree to converge''.[20]

Joseph I. Zajda, in his book*, Education and Social Justice*, writes, "most conceptions of social justice refer to an egalitarian society that is based on the principles of equality and solidarity, that understands and values human rights, and that recognizes the dignity of every human being''.[21]

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[19] Joseph I. Zajda, *Education And Social Justice* (New York: Springer, 2006), 1.

[20] Zaida, *Education And Social Justice, 1.*

[21] Zaida, *Education And Social Justice, 1.*

The social justice theory views,

> Social justice refers to the overall fairness of a society in its divisions and distributions of rewards and burdens.[22]

I argue that social justice, as a theory, emerges out of an existing need that was social in nature to redress social wrongs done unto one segment of a society. Given my focus on blue-collar women, this is a population that is doubly discriminated against due to class and gender. As affirmed in the *Constitution of the International Labor Organization*, "the universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice.'' For society to be fair and equal, to its fullest extent, it has to redress social and economic wrongs done unto working women, remove constraints preventing women to fully provide and ensure a decent livelihoods for their families, and create viable options for working women to thrive and reach their full potential.[23]

Social justice theory considers the economic and the social aspects of working women's lives. It is especially suited for blue-collar women workers because allows domestic responsibilities to be factored in. Social justice theory not only recognizes that working women are affected, it also looks at social factors and constraints that play a major role in the decision-making process and career choices of working women.

Referring to Harvey again, his work emphasizes how the spatial structure of the city perpetuates existing inequalities and this line of thought greatly influenced my interpretation of the MTA 2009/2010 budget cuts. With this additional layer on the

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[22] Zaida, *Education And Social Justice, 1.*

[23] Switzerland, International Labour Office, *Constitution of the International Labour Organisation and Selected Texts*, by International Labour Organisation (International Labour Organisation, 2010), 5.

problem, social justice theory ultimately proves most adept at handling these diverse sets of drivers and inequalities.

Chapter 4: Working Class

4.1 Blue-Collar Work: Function

Blue-collar employment is the original American dream. More relevantly, it is as much a part of a city's backbone as a suburban's. Tellingly, 61% of the United States workforce holds blue-collar positions and blue-collar work is integral to urban, suburban and rural communities.[24] Pertinent to my research, suburban communities whose economies are comprised of white-collar jobs still rely on industry in cities.[25] Thus, there is an indelible interconnection between white and blue-collar type work. The majority of blue-collar jobs tend to be manual jobs that allow for white-collar positions to exist. Some examples of blue-collar work are construction, mining, or more service-oriented jobs considered "pink-collar" work. While many of these blue-collar jobs are low-skilled and seem insignificant in the grand scheme of things, they are truly necessary for cities to operate. Because of the current demands, the workforce is heading towards more service related work in equally precarious work conditions (health care and customer service). Pink-collar work is a very large part of the U.S. economy now and is considered blue-collar work. This shift can be attributed to factory jobs being skilled up. Many factory jobs now require vocational skills and at least a two-year degree with specific training manning a certain machine, such as programmable logic controller (PLC). Because of deindustrialization, which occurred in the 1980's, well-paying blue-collar jobs that

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[24] Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, "Blue and White Collar Workers," Kaiser State Health Facts, 2011, section goes here, accessed March 30, 2012, http://www.statehealthfacts.org/comparemaptable.jsp?ind=748.

[25] Sharlene Naggy Hesse-Biber and Gregg Lee Carter, *Working Women in America: Split Dreams*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 141.

afforded middle-class existence are scant. Unfortunately deindustrialization and outsourcing continue to chip away at traditional blue-collar work and leave in its wake low-wage jobs with few benefits or securities in the fields of manufacturing and services.

Despite this, there are aspects of blue-collar work that are mainstays. Blue-collar jobs are less coveted than white-collar jobs because the pay is lower, the benefits are slim, and there is little job security. Blue-collar jobs require less education than is required for white-collar work. [26] However, these jobs are still vital for societal functionality. For example, a white-collar position such as a real estate developer relies on the labor of a construction worker to build the property. Or a white-collar position, such as a waste management supervisor relies on the blue-collar labor of a dumpster truck driver.

With respect to the MTA, it is operated by both white and blue-collar workers, and transports all workers who fuel the economy in New York City. It is an ideal example of how interlinked blue-collar work is to societal functioning. Clifton Hood, a prominent historian of mass transit in New York City, writes about the impact of the subway in his book *722 Miles: The Building of The Subways and How They Transformed New York*, Hood believes that "no other American city depends as much on mass transit" than New York City.[27] Hood acknowledges that many associate grand skyscrapers as a symbol of New York City, however his research has led him to believe the subway is the true symbol of New York. Hood writes, "Without the subway, the offices on Wall Street

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[26] Hesse-Biber and Carter, *Working Women in America: Split Dreams*, 141.

[27] Clifton Hood, *722 Miles: The Building of the Subways and How They Transformed New York* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 12.

and in midtown Manhattan would grind to a halt."[28] While the MTA almost never shuts down, on the few occasions it has, New York City comes to an impasse. A vivid example is when Hurricane Irene hit New York City in late August 2011. During this weather disaster, New York City's transportation system closed completely through a mandated system-wide shutdown commissioned by New York State Governor Michael Cuomo. Not only did it mean that large sectors of the city, both private and public were inaccessible, it also caused widely felt disruptions. People could not get to work, which disrupted small and large business and other vital public services such as policing and hospital care. While the sidewalks were accessible, the size of New York City made it impossible to traverse, especially since many people live in the outer rings of the city and work in the central city.

Yet in such a dense city highly dependent on public transportation, closing the transit system does not just impact commuters. It also impacts those who work there. Given the size of the MTA, and that it transports over 10 million daily riders, this is an enormous amount of people. The effects of the hurricane on the employees of the MTA elucidate the effects of the state transportation budget cuts and layoffs that I will be explaining in later chapters. While both white and blue-collar workers are employed at the MTA, a majority are blue-collar workers, as represented by the 38,000 members of TWU Local 100. These workers do tasks such as operate trains, maintain the trains and tracks, staff the token booths, clean platforms and subway cars, and service and repair mechanical equipment such as elevators and escalators. These functions are central to the

[28] Hood, *722 Miles: The Building of the Subways and How They Transformed New York*, 12.

operation of the transit system, and as Hurricane Irene made apparent, the transit system is central to the very functioning of New York City.

4.2 History of Blue-Collar Work

The United States has always had a high concentration of blue-collar workers[29]. In the early 20th century, the majority was from eastern and southern Europe and these laborers worked in the manufacturing and construction fields. In urban areas such as Chicago, New York City, and Philadelphia, small manufacturing operations occurred in rented loft space and tenements.[30] Large numbers of unmarried daughters of farmers and rural workers worked in textile mills in New England during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[31] Between 1890 and 1910, the number of women in the labor force tripled. During this time period, it was uncommon for white women to work, but not for African American and immigrant women who worked as domestic help.[32] Due to an influx of immigrant workers from southern and eastern Europe, a diverse population of blue-collar workers entered the fabric of American life.

As the process of industrialization expanded, women found employment in more varied sectors. Though there were not large numbers of women in the workforce at the start of the 20th century, the number of women who entered the work force jumped by 300% between 1890 and 1910. By 1900, about one in every five women or girls over the age of ten had become a paid employee with 40% working in domestic and personal

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[29] A working-class person historically defined by hourly rates of pay and manual labor.

[30] Brian Greenberg and Linda S. Watts, *Social History of the United States*, 1st ed., 10 vols. (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 56.

[31] Rosen, *Bitter Choices, Blue-Collar Women in and out of Work*, 18.

[32] Greenberg and Watts, *Social History of the United States*, 56.

service.[33] Women were well represented in this sector because many working-class men relied on their wives to supplement the families' income by taking in extra work such as washing clothes or maintaining a boarding house.[34] Meanwhile, nearly 25% of employed women worked in manufacturing industries. Additionally, by 1910, over a third of all clerical positions were held by women.[35] However, the number of women employed in trade and transportation industries was small. Some studies indicate that by 1910 men comprised 96% of transportation jobs while females only comprised 4%.[36] Across the board though, when women did enter blue-collar positions, they had a more difficult time than their male counterparts. Women were discriminated against and steered towards positions that did not require much manual labor nor did they pay as well or offer pathways to more leadership-type roles. Men were more likely to work as craftsmen or skilled workers in capital-intensive industries that did offer such outlets.[37]

With the outbreak of World War I, there was a shortage of male industrial workers, and women were asked to make up for this labor shortage. Across the United States, women replaced men in factories and business offices while maintaining their domestic responsibilities in the household. When the men came home from war, women who decided to remain working were re-assigned to low-paying positions that they had always occupied, and that were deemed appropriate for women.[38] Due to the Great

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[33] Hesse-Biber and Carter, *Working Women in America: Split Dreams*, 34.

[34] Greenberg and Watts, *Social History of the United States*, 57.

[35] Greenberg and Watts, *Social History of the United States*, 65.

[36] Greenberg and Watts, *Social History of the United States*, 57.

[37] Rosen, *Bitter Choices, Blue-Collar Women in and out of Work*, 19.

[38] Hesse-Biber and Carter, *Working Women in America: Split Dreams*, 39.

Depression of the 1930s, unemployment spread across the nation, with 25% of the American labor force unemployed in 1933 compared to about 3% in 1929. To secure employment opportunities for men, women were encouraged to stay out of the workplace.[39] For those women who sought employment during the Great Depression, they only found jobs that were considered "female jobs" and that paid considerably less than "male jobs".[40]

World War II also led to more women entering the workforce due to a shortage of male labor. World War II allowed for many women to obtain higher-skilled and higher-paying industrial sector jobs that were previously considered "male jobs".[41] The large number of women who entered the workforce during this time period helped to break the stigma that women should only be relegated to staying home and keeping house. These women demonstrated to America that women could manage the demands of family and work.[42] After World War II, women were again re-assigned to "female jobs" with lower pay and prestige. This trend led to the normalization of sex-segregation in the labor market beginning in the late 1940s and 1950s. Women were expected to return to their homes and tend housekeeping and their children.

For blue-collar women who had to supplement their families' income, this situation was extremely difficult, but they persevered.[43] According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, by 1940, approximately 22% of all women were in the labor force, with the

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[39] Hesse-Biber and Carter, *Working Women in America: Split Dreams*, 40.

[40] Hesse-Biber and Carter, *Working Women in America: Split Dreams*, 41.

[41] Hesse-Biber and Carter, *Working Women in America: Split Dreams*, 42.

[42] Hesse-Biber and Carter, *Working Women in America: Split Dreams*, 43.

[43] Hesse-Biber and Carter, *Working Women in America: Split Dreams*, 45.

percentage rising to about 35% in 1950, and in the late 1960s, approximately 40% of American women were in the labor force.[44] In the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, it became more common for mothers to enter the labor force once their children were of preschool or school age.[45]

In the 1960s, clerical work for women blossomed as well as manufacturing due to growth within the electronics industry.[46] The 1960s led to the growth of the phenomenon of "pink-collar" jobs[47].[48] Pink-collar jobs in the 1960s provided a distinction from the low-paying white-collar jobs and the better-paying service jobs. According to Julia Kirk Blackwelder, pink-collar jobs are "nonmanual and typically housed in office environments" and require very little higher education training with little opportunity for advancement. In the 1960s, approximately one third of employed women held clerical jobs.[49]

During the 1970s, the American economy changed drastically. In the 1970's, 43% of women were in the labor force.[50] More service-related jobs[51] in fields such as sales and finance were offered. It is to be noted that in the 1970s for every one manufacturing

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[44] Hesse-Biber and Carter, *Working Women in America: Split Dreams*, 45.

[45] Hesse-Biber and Carter, *Working Women in America: Split Dreams*, 46.

[46] Blackwelder, *Now Hiring: The Feminization of Work in the United States, 1900-1995*, 177.

[47] A class of jobs, such as typist or telephone operator, once traditionally filled by women.

[48] Blackwelder, *Now Hiring: The Feminization of Work in the United States, 1900-1995*, 177.

[49] Blackwelder, *Now Hiring: The Feminization of Work in the United States, 1900-1995*, 177.

[50] Mitra Toosi, "A Century of Change: The U.S. Labor Force, 1950-2050," *Monthly Labor Review* 125, no. 2 (May 2002): 18, accessed April 1, 2012.

[51] Jobs in sectors that produce services rather than goods.

job about 7.5 service-related jobs entered the market.[52] In the 1970s, deindustrialization occurred and many companies outsourced their labor overseas. This was the first time since the 1930s that large differences occurred between the wages of high and low-income earners.[53] Blue-collar women suffered in the 1970s due to the demand for highly trained and educated workers. In the 1970s, the blue-collar work that remained was very competitive and required specialized training. Women were no longer needed to work in textile factories as companies shifted their manufacturing overseas. The blue-collar women who were able to transition into secretarial jobs discovered the pay was lacking, and that they were not educationally prepared for such office jobs.

In the 1980's 52% of women were in the labor force.[54] The 1980s brought even wider gaps in wages. Approximately 80% of Americans wages decreased or remained the same while the wealthiest Americans increased their fortune.[55] Also in the 1980s union membership levels decreased to levels not seen since the early 1900's.[56] The landscape of the United States changed drastically in the 1980s. No longer were American cities vibrant hubs of manufacturing. Towns became dormant and lacked production activity. During the 1980s, it was difficult for both men and women to secure well-paying production jobs; now they found themselves accepting jobs to meet the demand for unskilled service workers.[57]

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[52] Greenberg and Watts, *Social History of the United States*, 266.

[53] Greenberg and Watts, *Social History of the United States*, 277.

[54] Toosi, "A Century of Change: The U.S. Labor Force, 1950-2050," 18.

[55] Greenberg and Watts, *Social History of the United States*, 130.

[56]Greenberg and Watts, *Social History of the United States*, 130.

[57] Blackwelder, *Now Hiring: The Feminization of Work in the United States, 1900-1995*, 204.

In the 1990's, 58% of women were in the labor force.[58] The 1990s was an era of expanded globalization. More American jobs were shipped overseas and technology sectors became popular for employment. Over 3 million manufacturing jobs were lost.[59] It seemed as if blue-collar America was slowly disappearing as the 21st century approached. Women in the 1990s continued to dominate "pink-collar" jobs with 40% of female wage earners holding jobs in clerical, sales, or low-skilled technical areas. Additionally, in the 1990's 15% of women held jobs in the service sector.[60]

4.3 Working Class New York

Post World War II, New York City was a thriving working-class cosmopolitan city. Joshua B. Freeman notes in his book, *Working-Class New York*, that in 1946 while 3.3 million New Yorkers were employed, less than 700,000 were business owners, managers, officials, professionals, or semiprofessionals. The remaining 2.6 million employees were blue-collar workers.[61] In 1946, 41% of the labor force was comprised of blue-collar workers and another 12% were service workers.[62] It should be noted that in 1947, New York City had more manufacturing jobs than Philadelphia, Detroit, Los Angeles, and Boston combined. [63] 70% of New York City's manufacturing workers made non-durable goods in 1950. The apparel, printing and publishing, and food industries

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[58] Toosi, "A Century of Change: The U.S. Labor Force, 1950-2050," 18.

[59] Greenberg and Watts, *Social History of the United States*, 16.

[60] Blackwelder, *Now Hiring: The Feminization of Work in the United States, 1900-1995*, 217.

[61] Joshua B. Freeman, *Working-Class New York: Life and Labor Since World War II* (New York: New Press, 2001), 6-7.

[62] Freeman, *Working-Class New York: Life and Labor Since World War II*, 7.

[63] Freeman, *Working-Class New York: Life and Labor Since World War II*, 8.

comprised over 50% of the manufacturing employment in New York City.[64] Because New York City has always faced a shortage of land, it was rare to see large factories. The majority of manufacturing businesses employed only about 20 production workers. If a product needed to be mass produced, the production would be moved out of New York City.[65]

As time progressed, the number of blue-collar/manufacturing jobs in New York City decreased. Due to the financial crisis in the 1970's the number of jobs in the manufacturing sector decreased from 538,600 in 1977, to 360,600 in 1989. Between 1977 and 1989 there was a large influx of 178,000 professional services jobs in New York City. 68,000 tourism jobs were created as well as 110,000 health and social services jobs.[66] In the 1980s, New York City transitioned into a metropolitan city that housed multinational corporations yet outsourced production overseas to lower wage manufacturing facilities. At this time, the boom of professional sector jobs in New York City led to extreme income inequality. According to Freeman, in 1986, the top 10 percent of earners in New York City had incomes that were twenty times as much as the bottom 10 percent.[67]

Inequality in pay was prevalent among many blue-collar workers, especially with women. In 1947, women comprised 38% of the manufacturing production workers in New York City.[68] During this time, men earned a weekly average of $67.58 while women

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[64] Freeman, *Working-Class New York: Life and Labor Since World War II*, 9.

[65] Freeman, *Working-Class New York: Life and Labor Since World War II*, 14.

[66] Freeman, *Working-Class New York: Life and Labor Since World War II*, 293.

[67] Freeman, *Working-Class New York: Life and Labor Since World War II*, 294.

[68] Freeman, *Working-Class New York: Life and Labor Since World War II*, 17.

earned an average of $42.92.[69] The majority of literature with regards to women and blue-collar work within New York City relates to female garment workers. There is not much coverage on the history of women and the MTA. However, in *Subway City: Riding the Trains, Reading New York*, by Michael W. Brooks, he dedicated a section of a chapter to the impact of gender (women) and the subway. Brooks writes of "The Feminine Subway". Brooks argues World War I liberated women because they were called upon to perform the same occupation tasks as men. The subway companies relied on women as cashiers, ticket choppers, and guards.[70] As the MTA evolved, these various positions evolved into the modern station agent position.

4.4 Why Blue-Collar Women?

The layoffs of female blue-collar workers is an urban studies issue because the MTA/NYCT is a city agency with predominately blue-collar employees. The effects of the layoffs of female blue-collar workers have not caught national attention, even though they are a national issue. Similar instances have taken place throughout the country, albeit in different industries. Yet, on a national level, attention has been given to employment sectors that drive the local economy of major cities. A blue-collar example of this can be seen through the collapse of the automobile industry in Detroit. However, in terms of New York City, much attention has been given to male dominated sectors where massive layoffs occurred (e.g. the financial services industry). Very little light has

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[69] Freeman, *Working-Class New York: Life and Labor Since World War II*, 17.

[70] Michael W. Brooks, *Subway City: Riding the Trains, Reading New York* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 173.

been shed on the impact of the collapse of Wall Street on a "sub industry"/blue collar industry that is city specific, such as my research with the MTA/NYCT.

Women carry more of the domestic burden than men, while still having to contribute to household finances. Because of this, women's career choices are based on this burden. For example, women take into consideration things like job flexibility for child-rearing while weighing their career choices. While women are making these decisions, men are able to have the luxury to consider salary when looking for employment. An effect of this is that women are more willing and often are forced to take on less challenging and lower paying jobs due to their need for job flexibility.

The blue-collar women of the MTA are not exempt from the situation of mandatory work/life balance. Throughout the course of my research, I have come to discover that job flexibility is the number one reason why women dominate the less challenging, lowering paying and more vulnerable position of station agent. As previously stated, New York City relies on a 24-hour operating transportation system. Because of this, it is one of the only cities in the world that relies on employees to staff a transit system around the clock. Particularly as it applies to blue-collar positions, jobs are not bound by regular hours. This has additional impacts on women.

Data from NYCT new hire reports demonstrates that the station agent position is the most female dominated position in the MTA/NYCT. The station agent position is also the most flexible and stable blue-collar job title in terms of meeting the needs of working mothers, which will be explained later. Because the station agent position is an hourly position, station agents have the opportunity to earn extra money outside of their set schedule by picking up extra hours and acquiring overtime, thus increasing their

income on a selective basis. These women are women whose lives are in the here and now and do not have the privilege to live in the future. Their employment decisions are based on immediate concerns for earnings, and given their extensive home obligations, they do not have the ability take on activities that can yield better earnings in the future. . Over time, salaried (managerial/supervisor) positions may provide the women with more money, but a probationary period is necessary to go through- and this period can last for years. During the probation period, women in the salaried positions would initially make less money than if they had stayed in an hourly position, like that of a station agent. However, the hourly station agent position provides more on the job flexibility, which is especially attractive to working mothers.

The women my research focuses on are women who cannot afford to wait up to five years to see an increase in income. They are mothers and many of them single mothers. Mothering is a life-stage cycle that most women enter; yet it takes on a different form for blue-collar women. Especially since many family units are single parent households with less available money for childcare, mothering for blue-collar women is truly the equivalent of an additional job. Mothers are often forced by circumstance to take positions that give them the most upfront but the least in the long-term. The jobs these women rely on are the most vulnerable, expendable jobs. The experiences of the women in my case study validate the notion that blue-collar female workers do not have the option to consider career growth when accepting job titles/positions with the MTA/NYCT due to their domestic responsibilities. Yet they are also those with the most at risk because they are the heads of the households too.

Chapter 5: Transportation and New York City: The Subway

The building of the transportation system of New York City is extremely intricate. Its longstanding history is detailed with many moving parts. Despite this rich history and despite NYCT public transportation being a highly transformative addition for both the infrastructure of New York City and its social and economic development, recorded history on women's influences on the NYCT transportation system is barely visible. It is only of late that their influences are being excavated, and that too once the boom of transit construction has passed.

The issue of gender and women's impact on the building of the subway system is extremely rare and is not touched upon much in literature. To uncover women's voices in New York City transit, one must acknowledge that the construction of the subways is extremely male dominated. Part of this is due to the epoch of the subway construction. When the subway system was being planned, women were not enfranchised, which had natural spillover effects in their ability to influence business decisions and city planning. It appears that women's voices and narratives were woven into mass transit literature soon after they obtained the right to vote in 1920. However, by the time women were enfranchised, the majority of the subway planning and expansion had already occurred.

Michael W. Brooks writes in his book *Subway City: Riding the Trains, Reading New York* on how riding the subway is a common experience.[71] Brooks believes that "the subway is a vital part of the physical city which can easily be made to represent the urban whole".[72] Brooks writes that the "subways are a protean symbol" in that they add

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[71] Brooks, *Subway City: Riding the Trains, Reading New York*, 1.

[72] Brooks, *Subway City: Riding the Trains, Reading New York*, 2-3.

versatility to the ever-changing transportation methods of the City.[73] Brooks believes the nature of cities changed as transportation options expanded. Where before, a city was a more compact area where one would walk from home to work, the invention of the subway completely changed the physical and spatial landscape of the city. Brooks believes rapid transit arranged New York's "spaces, structure[d] its movement, and define[d] its textures".[74] As Clifton Hood mentioned in *722 Miles: The Building of The Subways and How They Transformed New York*, the subway is also responsible for geographically integrating and joining four of New York's five boroughs.[75]

5.1 Spatial Layout

Prior to the building of the subway system, New York City lacked organization with spatial organization and development. In the late 1800's, envisioning a subway system first meant that the spatial layout of New York City had to be mapped. This took a lot of resources in terms of time and public finances. Progress truly began when the first subway line opened on October 27th, 1904.

New York City's spatial landscape completely transformed due to the subway. New York City became organized with paved streets where cars could safely navigate the streets. The expansion of the subway system also impacted housing choices in New York City. People no longer had to live in cramped substandard housing in close proximity to their place of work. The creation of the subway led city-dwellers to venture out into more spacious areas to live. In *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*,

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[73] Brooks, *Subway City: Riding the Trains, Reading New York*, 3.

[74] Brooks, *Subway City: Riding the Trains, Reading New York*, 3.

[75] Hood, *722 Miles: The Building of the Subways and How They Transformed New York*, 12.

Kenneth T. Jackson writes about the expansion of the transportation alternatives and how it led to the growth of the suburbs. Jackson provides an example with the history of Brooklyn. Before subway service expanded to Brooklyn, it was considered a "suburb" of Manhattan. In 1908, when Brooklyn became connected to Manhattan with the subway service, wealthy and middle-class families were able to move to neighborhoods in Brooklyn "with its tree-shaded streets [and] pleasant homes" and still have access to Manhattan.[76] Not only did the expansion of the subway system allow for the settlement of new neighborhoods, but also it changed the accessibility of New York City. Brooks believes that the subway system completely changed the dynamics of New York City, and this led to the surge in subway ridership.

Previously, many neighborhoods in New York City were inaccessible due to a lack of transportation options. When the subway expanded to these areas, population growth occurred which, in turn, led to increased subway ridership. Hood too believes "the subway stimulated ridership by encouraging New Yorkers to travel more frequently".[77] The expansion of the subway allowed for people to explore new areas of New York City. Hood writes, "Between 1904 and 1914 the average number of rides that each New Yorker took on public transport per year jumped from 274 to 343".[78] Additionally, New York's total mass transit patronage rose more than 60% to 1.75 billion. The subway was not designed to handle the demand.

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[76] Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*, 1st ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 27.

[77] Hood, *722 Miles: The Building of the Subways and How They Transformed New York*, 114.

[78] Hood, *722 Miles: The Building of the Subways and How They Transformed New York*, 114.

5.1.1 Women's Experiences

The increased number of subway riders in the early 1900's was too great for the subway system to handle. From its inception, Hood argues, the subway was not built to accommodate the demand of the actual number of riders. Rush hour, for example, had severe overcrowding. In 1908 one-third of the IRT's daily ridership was concentrated in the two-hour peak periods of 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.[79]

Women's experiences with the expansion of the subway are initially only captured with accounts of crowded trains. The severe overcrowding ignited much of the sexual harassment that women and girls encountered. Hood notes many men exploited the overcrowded subways and lack of space during peak periods and oftentimes "fondled women almost at will".[80] Hood notes that "women accounted for only about a quarter of all rush hour passengers, and many of them seemed to be been 'jostled' or 'insulted', as unwelcome sexual contact was often called".[81] During this time period, more attention was given to the molestation by working-class men of young middle-class girls. In 1909, in order to combat this, Julia D. Longfellow, the wife of an attorney and leader of the *Women's Municipal League* recommended that the last car of every IRT train be of the exclusive use for women during rush hour. Because this was during the time of the suffragist movement, some women opposed this recommendation. On April 1st, 1909 the *Hudson and Manhattan Railroad* (H&M) reserved the last car of its trains for women between 7:30 and 9:00 in the morning, and between 4:30 and 7:00 in the evening. Hood acknowledges that initially female shoppers were attracted to the H&M's ladies cars,

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[79] Hood, *722 Miles: The Building of the Subways and How They Transformed New York*, 114.

[80] Hood, *722 Miles: The Building of the Subways and How They Transformed New York*, 118.

[81] Hood, *722 Miles: The Building of the Subways and How They Transformed New York*, 118.

however many women fought to have this privilege eliminated. The women who were against this special car, feared that "such so-called special privileges might erode their existing limited rights".[82] This issue was debated at length and on July 1st, 1909 the ladies' car was discontinued. Brooks too mentions this incident in a section titled "The Feminine Subway".

Women did not only have negative experiences with the subway. The expansion of subway service liberated women and allowed them to leave the home and work in a "white-collar workforce" in the newly constructed skyscrapers. Brooks notes the number of women working as typists, stenographers, and salespeople grew from 171,000 to 2,000,000 between 1890 and 1920.[83]

The access the expansion of the subway came at a price. While the subway provided greater access to navigate around the city, many comforts were lacking. Heller writes of August Belmont's 1905 purchase of the *Manhattan Railway* and how he turned its four elevated lines into a division of the IRT. Later on in 1905 Belmont also took over the *Metropolitan Street Railway* and dominated street railways, elevated railways, and subways.[84] Belmont profited greatly from the IRT despite customer dissatisfaction with the riding conditions. Hood argues that August Belmont is to blame for the overcrowded and congested subways. Belmont opposed expansion of the subway because his company, IRT, profited with overcrowding. The IRT earning's rose 20% during the

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[82] Hood, *722 Miles: The Building of the Subways and How They Transformed New York*, 119.

[83] Brooks, *Subway City: Riding the Trains, Reading New York*, 174.

[84] New York Transit Museum and Vivian Heller, *The City Beneath Us: Building the New York Subway* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004), 27.

prewar period and "its dividends soared from 2% in 1904, to 9% in 1907, and to 15% in 1915".[85]

August Belmont soon had a battle to fight in terms of expansion. Manhattan's soaring population was one of the impetuses to spur subway expansion. Hood notes that in 1910, when Manhattan peaked at a population of 2,331,542 people, the subway was the most congested it had ever been.[86]The government knew that something had to be done and created the *Public Service Commission* (PSC) to complete plans for a Triborough subway system. Hood argues the goal of the PSC was to destroy the Interborough contract monopoly system and move poor Manhattanites to the outskirts.[87] Edward M. Bassett was the public service commissioner who spearheaded this initiative. Bassett pushed for more subway stations to be opened between Brooklyn and Manhattan. Bassett wanted to spur growth in remote areas of Brooklyn such as Bay Ridge, Flatbush, and Canarsie.[88] Additionally, Bassett recognized the IRT's impact on neighborhood growth. Hood notes that land prices skyrocketed in neighborhoods such as the Upper West Side, Harlem, and the Bronx.

The expansion of the subway fed the demand for more living space, and such neighborhoods expanded with only multistory apartments or tenements due to the demand. Originally these neighborhoods were intended to have only one-and two-family homes, but the demand crushed these goals.[89]The expansion of the subway made way for

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[85] Hood, *722 Miles: The Building of the Subways and How They Transformed New York*, 123.

[86] Hood, *722 Miles: The Building of the Subways and How They Transformed New York*, 135.

[87] Hood, *722 Miles: The Building of the Subways and How They Transformed New York*, 136.

[88] Hood, *722 Miles: The Building of the Subways and How They Transformed New York*, 138.

[89] Hood, *722 Miles: The Building of the Subways and How They Transformed New York*, 138.

population growth in New York City in large part due to transportation access to new neighborhoods. These demographic changes greatly impacted the lives of those in the City.

While many of the women living in New York City were able to obtain career growth due to the expansion of transportation alternatives, many suffered at the same time. When middle and upper class families began to move to the suburbs, women were taken away from the bustle of city life. Families now could purchase single-family homes on their own land instead of sharing an apartment building, a norm in the city center. The suburbs were attractive because a family could spend the money previously spent on rent in the city on a mortgage in the suburbs where families could have more space for less money. There was high appeal to come home from the chaos of the City and spend quality time in suburban tranquil with one's family.

As the suburbs expanded, the walking city reduced in size. Previously women who stayed at home could walk to visit neighbors or to the grocery store or city center. But due to suburban sprawl, automobiles became necessary to navigate the suburbs. The commuter rail lines provided access to the city, but often times one needed a car to first access the commuter rail line. Because middle and upper class families could afford to move to the suburbs with the husband's income, it was the husband who took the car in the morning to the commuter rail station, leaving the woman abandoned and carless at home.[90] The movement of women to the suburbs was isolating and it introduced work-life balance issues for suburban women, especially for those who worked.

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[90] Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*.

5.2 Financing and Growth

The majority of the subway system was built between 1900 and 1940. During this time period it was financed entirely by the City of New York and two private subway companies. Basically New York City's rapid transit system was financed with all of its own money. Only in recent decades did the subway receive federal assistance, notes Hood.[91] Hood believes the federal government's disrespect for cities makes building such an intricate system to be almost impossible today.[92] Heller writes of the neglect of the subways in the 1960s and 1970s. The lack of attention given to the subway system can be attributed to Robert Moses' influence. Heller argues that Moses left his mark on the city by turning it into a city where car culture dominated.[93] Kenneth T. Jackson adds to the conversation by noting that the federal involvement came on the suburban level with the *Federal Highway Act of 1916* and the *Interstate Highway act of 1956*. These two Acts are examples of the federal government moving towards "a transportation policy emphasizing and benefiting the road, the truck, and the private motorcar".[94] However, Heller notes, that in 1981, Richard Ravitch, chairman of the MTA took charge of the situation and focused on rehabilitating the subway system. Ravitch declared the subway to be in a state of emergency, propositioned the state legislature for funding and proposed a *Five-Year Capital Improvement Program*, through the financing of the sale of a $6.3

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[91] Hood, *722 Miles: The Building of the Subways and How They Transformed New York*, 12.

[92] Hood, *722 Miles: The Building of the Subways and How They Transformed New York*, 12.

[93] New York Transit Museum and Heller, *The City Beneath Us: Building the New York Subway*, 64.

[94] Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*, 191.

billion bond.[95] This act was the first instance of government intervention with New York's subway system.

5.3 TWU Local 100

Transport Workers Union Local 100 (TWU Local 100) is a local affiliate of the *Transport Workers Union of America*, which represents transportation workers in bus and subway lines, as well as many airlines nationwide.[96] In terms of New York City, TWU Local 100 represents nearly all employees "who operate trains, maintain the trains and tracks, staff the token booths, clean platforms and subway cars, and service and repair mechanical equipment such as elevators and escalators".[97] TWU Local 100 also represents nearly all the men and women who operate and maintain public buses in New York City.[98] Additionally, TWU Local 100 represents workers in some private transportation firms such as *Liberty Lines, Waterways, First Transit*, and various paratransit service and school bus companies.[99] TWU Local 100 is comprised of over 38,000 active members and 26,000 retirees.[100]

In 1934, *New York's Interborough Rapid Transit Company (IRT)* transit workers began unionizing efforts. Soon after, other private transit companies, such as the *Brooklyn-Manhattan Transit Co. (BMT),* and the *Independent Subway* System (ISS/IND)

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[95] New York Transit Museum and Heller, *The City Beneath Us: Building the New York Subway*, 72.

[96] TWU Local 100, "New York's Public Transit Union," TWULocal100.org, February 29, 2012, History, accessed April 1, 2012, http://www.twulocal100.org/new-yorks-public-transit-union.

[97] TWU Local 100, "New York's Public Transit Union".

[98]TWU Local 100, "New York's Public Transit Union".

[99] TWU Local 100, "New York's Public Transit Union".

[100] TWU Local 100, "New York's Public Transit Union".

joined the organizing efforts with the founding of Transport Workers Union of America (TWU) in New York City.[101] The history of the founding of TWU is heavily male dominated. Additionally very little has been written on the history of female workers' roles within TWU Local 100. However, Joshua B. Freeman writes in his book *In Transit, The Transport Workers Union in New York City, 1933-1966* on the role women played on TWU union organizing. Freeman notes that when TWU was organizing, the union had to cater to the distinct needs of female members, with the majority of them being station agents. During this time period, the station agent position was not classified a union job-title under BMT. TWU relied on the station agents' votes to incorporate the job title into TWU. Freeman notes that during this time the majority of the station agents were widowed and the sole financial providers for their families. Also, the women feared losing their jobs due to being involved in the process to join TWU. When BMT station agents joined TWU, the women saw a wage increase that led to an equalization of their wages with male rates.[102]

Today, given the hostile union environment, station agents have moved their sights from wages to earning more parity in the workplace with regard to flexible work and hours.

5.4 Joining the MTA/NYCT

It is essential to understand the process of obtaining a job with the MTA/NYCT to understand the decision making process of women who chose to be station agents.

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[101] New York University, "Guide to the Transport Workers Union of America: Records of Locals WAG 234," The Tamiment Library & Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, August 16, 2011, Archivists' Toolkit, accessed April 1, 2012, http://dlib.nyu.edu/findingaids/html/tamwag/twua_locals_content.html.

[102] Joshua B. Freeman, *In Transit: The Transport Workers Union in New York City, 1933-1966* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 107.

The process of obtaining a job with the MTA is a standard process where approximately 85% of the staff is selected through an examination process. According to the MTA, "applicants must apply, take, and pass an examination".[103] Applications can be requested during the filing period by going to the *NYC Department of Citywide Administrative Services (*DCAS) in person or by going to the DCAS website. A filing fee is paid when requesting the exam. However according to the DCAS a fee waiver is allowed for those on certain federal assistance programs.[104]

After the exam has been scored, the applicant is informed by DCAS regarding their score for the Transit Examination (which is usually several months after the test has been administered). If the applicant has passed the test, then they are notified of their list number. With the list number, priority for employment openings are based on the score received on the test. The higher one scores compared to others who have taken the test, the better chance one has to obtain a position sooner.

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[103] MTA, "Frequently Asked Employment Questions," MTA Employment Opportunities, March 20, 2012, accessed March 29, 2012, http://www.mta.info/nyct/hr/faqs.htm

[104] MTA, "Frequently Asked Employment Questions".

Chapter 6: MTA/NYCT

New York City Transit (NYCT) is a division of the Metropolitan Transit Administration (MTA). Currently the NYCT operates 26 subway lines, 243 bus routes; the Staten Island Railway and Para transit service across New York City.[105] The New York City subway system has 468 stations—the largest number of public transit stations of any system in the world. As of 2009 the MTA had an annual bus ridership of 726 million riders. The MTA is the largest U.S. mass transit agency with about 10 million daily riders.[106]

6.1 Structure of the MTA

The MTA is governed by a 23-member board of directors comprised of 17 voting and 6 non-voting members. 6 of the 17 voting members are appointed by the Governor of New York, 4 on the recommendation of New York City's Mayor and 1 each on the advice of the County Executives of Nassau, Suffolk, Westchester, Putnam, Duchess, Orange and Rockland Counties. Directors from Putnam, Duchess, Orange and Rockland Counties cast one collective vote. The 6 non-voting seats rotate between stakeholder groups.[107] The financial streams of income for the MTA are generated through system-generated revenues (47%) and government subsidies (53%).

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[105] MTA, "Facts and Figures," Subway and Bus Ridership, 2009, Subway and Bus Ridership, accessed April 4, 2011, http://www.mta.info/nyct/facts/ridership/index.htm#intro_s.

[106] MTA, "Facts and Figures".

[107] MTA, "Facts and Figures".

6.2 Fiscal Crisis

In April 2009, the MTA faced a two-year budget gap of $5 billion, largely due to spending at a rate higher than the inflation rate related to health insurance, pensions, and debt service.[108] Simultaneously, the tax revenues and ridership fell due to the recession. In May 2009, New York State raised taxes and fees, such as the payroll mobility tax to assist with the MTA's budget deficit.

The MTA's $1.2 billion budget deficit occurred for many reasons. First, there were not enough resources to support the *2010-2014 MTA Capital Program*. The economic climate of New York ravaged the MTA. Decisions made early in 2000 for the 2000-2004 capital program were implemented with the intention of paying for the capital improvements with future budgets with the *2000-2014 Capital Program*. The MTA used future budgets like credit and paid for improvements this way. However, a weak financial climate was not forecasted when the improvements and spending were made. The MTA suffered when the economy collapse. It took in less revenue from transactional taxes, which is dependent on the economy.[109] In 2007, the MTA carried a surplus in its budget, but due to the debt from the 2000-2004 capital program, the MTA soon discovered that it was in the red.

To alleviate its debt, the MTA implemented a series of administrative personnel cuts, but even these cuts could not close the $1.2 billion deficit. Only 7% of the MTA's $11 billion budget is dedicated to administration ($770 million). In 2008, the MTA

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[108] Thomas P. DiNapoli and Kenneth B. Bleiwas, *Financial Outlook for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority--September 2011*, report (Albany: New York State Comptroller, 2011), 2.

[109] MTA, MTA Press Office, "MTA Board Approves Service Reductions and Fare/Toll Increases," news release, March 25, 2009, MTA, accessed April 11, 2011, http://www.mta.info/mta/news/releases/?en=090325-HQ9.

continued to suffer due to a loss of $120 million in real estate tax revenue with the bursting of the real estate bubble.

In order to close a $383 million gap, the MTA approved massive service cuts in 2009 for the 2010 year.[110] The cuts in 2009 were some of the initial cuts implemented which are attributed to the New York State fiscal crisis.

6.2.1 Subway Cuts

The MTA eliminated the V and W lines. They also eliminated G service along Queens Blvd. by opening a G terminal at Long Island City-Court Square. Additionally, in order to close its budget gap, the MTA has implemented other cost-saving measures. For example, on the D,F,G,J,M,N,Q, and R trains, the train intervals increased to 10 minutes on Saturdays. On the A,D,E,F,G,N,Q, and R trains, the train intervals increase to 10 minutes on Sundays. Additionally, for late night service (2 a.m. to 5 a.m.) the train intervals increased to 30 minutes from 20 minutes on all lines.[111] An adverse effect has been that, subway cars have become more crowded. The change in the maximum loading guideline has gone from 10 standees per car to 18 and from a 100% seated load to a 125% seated load. This leads to a net annual savings of $3.1 million.

6.2.2 Reduction of Service on Bus Routes

The MTA eliminated low performing weekend express bus service and general express bus service.[112] The MTA also discontinued and restructured local bus service on

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[110]Michael M. Grynbaum, "M.T.A. Approves Big Service Cuts in Mass Transit," *The New York Times*, December 16, 2009, A1 sec.

[111] Grynbaum, *The New York Times*, A1 sec

[112] Service was also eliminated on the X6, X13 QM22, QM23, BxM4A, and BxM7B, however there is no data on the savings from the service cuts and maps of these specific routes.

low-performing routes. An example of the savings from the cuts is as follows: the Bx20 was discontinued on weekday off-peak and Saturday service. This led to a net annual savings of $600,000. This cut reduced public transportation services for community members in Riverdale, Spuyten Duyvil, Kingsbridge, and Inwood—communities that heavily rely on bus service.[113] The discontinuation of the weekend bus service on the Bx34 affected the neighborhoods of Fordham, Bedford Park, Norwood, and Woodlawn, communities also very dependent upon bus service. This cut led to a net annual savings of $600,000.[114] Seasonal bus service to the Barretto Pont Park Pool was discontinued and led to a net annual savings of $100,000. Approximately 120 weekday customers and 340 weekend customers during the summer months are impacted by this cut and now must use the Bx6, which adds a 10-minute walk for their trip.[115]

6.2.3 Human Aspect

In 2009, the MTA's audit committee initially decided on cutting 1,100 duplicative jobs[116] but instead, to close its budget gap in 2009, the MTA, which then employed about 70,000 people, decided that its managers would take a 10% pay cut and 700 unionized

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[113]New York City Transit, *NYC Transit: Service Reductions--Revised*, publication (New York: New York City Transit, 2010), 49.

[114] New York City Transit, *NYC Transit: Service Reductions—Revised*, 50.

[115] New York City Transit, *NYC Transit: Service Reductions—Revised*, 51.

[116] Adrienne Haywood-James, "TWU Local 100 Protests Looming: Layoffs At MTA," *The Chief-Leader*, May 1, 2009, Shop Talk, accessed January 2, 2012, http://thechiefleader.com/news/news_of_the_week/twu-local-protests-looming-layoffs-at-mta/article_a87e3d6f-036d-5d4a-8bc5-1646d45478e7.html.

workers would be laid off under this plan.[117] The MTA specifically noted in its February 23rd, 2010 press release that approximately 500 station agents would be laid off.[118]

Some MTA board members, such as trucking company executive Nancy Shevell, blame unionized workers, outdated work rules, and the expensive 11% raises for transit workers as the reason why the MTA has a budget gap.[119] Research shows that Nancy Shevell's comment is not valid. The MTA's *July Fiscal Plan 2011-2014* points out that station agent layoffs only led to an annual $11 million in savings.[120] TWU Local 100 discovered the MTA/NYCT enacted Station Agent layoffs with the hope of forcing TWU Local 100 into an open contract as well as to receive long-term givebacks.[121]

In 2008, there were 69,756 employees at the MTA, but due to job cuts, the number declined by 6 percent by the end of 2010 as more than 1,000 service, maintenance and administration employees were laid off.[122] Between December 2008 and December 2010, the number of hourly operation and maintenance employees fell by 2,885.[123]

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[117] Joan Gralla, "Update 2-MTA Passes Huge NYC Service Cuts to Shut Deficit," *Reuters*, December 16, 2009, accessed January 2, 2011, http://www.reuters.com/article/2009/12/17/newyork-transitidUSN1611539320091217.

[118] MTA, MTA Press Office, "MTA to Eliminate More than 1,000 Positions," news release, February 23, 2010, MTA, accessed January 2, 2011, http://www.mta.info/mta/news/releases/?agency=hq&en=100223-HQ9.

[119] Gralla, *Reuters*.

[120] Metropolitan Transit Authority, *July Financial Plan 2011-2014*, July 28, 2010, Presentation, New York.

[121] TWU Local 100 Communications, "Members Turn Out for Friday the 13th Layoffs," *TWU Local 100 News-Station Division*, August 2010, 1.

[122] DiNapoli and Bleiwas, *Financial Outlook for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority--September 2011*, 6.

[123] DiNapoli and Bleiwas, *Financial Outlook for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority--September 2011*, 6.

Chapter 7: How the Budget Deficit Affected Female TWU Local 100 Members

Bell Hooks writes in *Sisters of the Yam: Black Women and Self-Recovery* on the topic of women and work. Hooks discusses how many Black women "did not enter the workforce thinking of work in terms of finding a 'calling' or a vocation. Instead [Black women] thought of work as a way to make money".[124] This sentiment is the same with female blue-collar workers with the MTA/NYCT. Not all of TWU Local 100's female members are Black women, however over 90 percent of female new hires between 2005-2010 were women of color[125].[126] The station agent position does not have the highest hourly rate of pay with the MTA/NYCT, however it is a position that allows for some flexibility in terms of a work schedule. Pay and flexibility are the twin priorities for a blue-collar working mother.

According to the New York State Department of Labor, the mean average salary in 2011 was $24,950 for transportation attendants in New York City with a median salary of $24,730, entry-level salary of $19,110, and experienced salary of $27,970. For all other transportation workers the mean salary for 2011 was $35,630, with a median salary of $39,510, entry-level salary of $23,340, and experienced salary of $41,780. For bus drivers, transit and intercity the mean salary in 2011 was $49,650, with a median salary

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[124] Bell Hooks, *Sisters of the Yam: Black Women and Self-Recovery* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2005), 30.

[125] Women who identify as Black, Hispanic, Asian, American Indian, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, Other

[126] New York City Transit, *New Hire Reporting 2005-2010*, report (New York: MTA, 2005-2010).

of $56,290, entry-level salary of $30,410, and experienced salary of $59,280.[127] Though these numbers represent transportation workers statewide for New York State, the salary levels are comparable for the hourly rate of pay for TWU Local 100 members. In terms of the 2009/2010 MTA/NYCT budget deficits, the majority of blue-collar positions where layoffs occurred within TWU Local 100 were job titles with a large female concentration. The job title where the most jobs were cut was the station agent title, with 500 positions cut. According to the collective bargaining agreement with TWU Local 100, Station Agents employed on or after 5/15/1992 , the hourly rate of pay after 12/16/2004 for the first year is $15.9250, $16.9850 for the second year, $19.1075 for the third year, and $22.2925 for the fourth year.[128]

Throughout my research, I wanted to better understand why so many women entered into the low paying positions that were cut due to the 2009/2010 fiscal crisis. It became apparent that women were searching for flexible positions in an industry where nonstandard hours and schedules are the norm. They needed a position that would allow them to attend to their domestic responsibilities at home, too. Through research conducted by Almquist (1987), it was discovered that within socioeconomic groups "men and women tend to share equally the goods and resources necessary to ensure basic survival".[129] If men and women are both capable to care of themselves, then why does

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[127] New York State Department of Labor Labor Statistics, "Occupational Wages," Occupational Wages, February 21, 2012, accessed April 30, 2012, http://www.labor.ny.gov/stats/lswage2.asp.

[128] *Collective Bargaining Agreement Between NYCT, MaBSTOA, and TWU Local 100*, report (New York: TWU Local 100, 2005), A71.

[129] Elizabeth M. Almquist, "Labor Market Gender Inequality in Minority Groups," *Gender and Society*, 4th ser., 1 (1987): 402, accessed November 19, 2011, JSTOR.

the majority of domestic responsibility still fall on women? The female members of TWU Local 100 that I interviewed are exemplars of this inequality.

Bell Hooks writes in her book *Ain't I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism*, on Black women wanting to satisfy the role as homemaker and financial provider. In tandem with this, the women in my study voiced that these lower-paying positions gave them the flexibility to arrange their schedules so that they could be both a "homemaker" and "provider". They took a gamble with these riskier jobs that are easily expendable for the sake of meeting their domestic responsibilities.

One participant Mary is a mother of 6 children and has been an employee of the MTA for 7 years. She grew up with a middle-class background and even attended a private university in New York City studying accounting until she got pregnant her sophomore year and dropped out of college. After dropping out of college she worked in retail. Before Mary started college, her grandfather, a retired MTA employee encouraged her and other members of the family to take the MTA exam. Mary took the MTA employment exam and did well, but it took two years for her to receive notification from the MTA that she was hired. The position she was hired for was as a station agent. Mary expressed satisfaction with the station agent position because it allowed for a schedule that made it possible to work while her kids attended school. A common issue expressed amongst the women I interviewed was the need for reliable and affordable childcare.

Another woman I interviewed, Nicole said that while being on the job as a station agent for 23 years, she had been offered the supervisor position many times. Though the position came with a salary, Nicole realized that the position had odd hours. She said it was common for supervisors to receive phone calls in the middle of the night, and

immediately report to work. Nicole is a single mother and this lack of scheduling stability would not allow her to secure affordable and reliable childcare with so many last minute situations. Nicole remained as a station agent with hourly pay. Nicole believes that with the overtime she is able to make she is better off than being a salaried supervisor who does not see a salary increase for many years and who is also unable to make overtime.

Through the women I interviewed, the issue of gender segregation among job titles became apparent and I believe it is the main reason why there is an earnings gap between TWU Local 100 female and male members. The earnings gap women experience is attributable to their decision making process when selecting a job title. The lack of gender diversity within the job titles is a consequence of the multiple "hats" women must wear- that of an employee, and that as a provider of domestic responsibilities. Research conducted by Cotter, DeFiore, Hermsen, Marsteller Kowalewski, and Vanneman (1997) brings attention to this issue. Cotter et al (1997) found that occupational segregation by gender does account for the majority of the gender gap in earnings.[130] This remains true with the MTA/NYCT. The highest paid hourly jobs with the MTA/NYCT are for job titles where males dominate and are also not flexible for those responsible for child-caring. The Road Car Inspector job title commands an hourly rate of pay of $27.6725.[131] The Road Car Inspector job title falls in the MTA/NYCT technician job category. Between 2005-2010 females only accounted for

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[130] David A. Cotter et al., "All Women Benefit: The Macro-Level Effect of Occupational Integration on Gender Earnings Equality," *American Sociological Review* 62 (1997): 715, accessed September 25, 2011.

[131] *Collective Bargaining Agreement Between NYCT, MaBSTOA, and TWU Local 100*, A67.

approximately 14% of these jobs in the technician job category, presumably because this position limited their ability to care for the household too.[132]

The budget cuts enacted due to the 2009/2010 fiscal crisis, and the reassignment of laid off station agents to other job titles, exposed the needs of blue-collar women working for the MTA/NYCT. The women I interviewed were complacent working as station agents due to the flexibility the position provided. They did not have the luxury of considering higher paying job titles due to their domestic responsibilities at home. Wage differentials existed in part because of their own agency. For the women who were reassigned to other positions they were unhappy with the work because these new position had inflexible scheduling which did not allow them to meet the needs of their family. The budget cuts impacted laid off station agents because they were put in disadvantageous situations where they had to choose between not working at all and remaining laid off, or entering into a new job title that inherently lacked flexibility. The women understood the station agent position provides the most job flexibility for their domestic responsibilities while still providing a reliable source of income. The reassignment of job titles due to the budget cuts put women in a difficult position where they had to decide between providing financially for their families while neglecting their domestic responsibilities, or attending to their domestic responsibilities but foregoing their ability to provide financially. The research I conducted demonstrates that this negotiation process occurred ubiquitously and is extremely difficult. Deciding between work and caretaking is an unfair burden for a single mother. Supports are necessary for keep blue-collar mothers working and caring for their families.

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[132] New York City Transit, *New Hire Reporting 2005-2010*.

7.1 Methodology

My thesis hopes to elaborate on the challenges blue-collar women face in the urban working world with balancing their obligations as the primary breadwinner and caregiver. Given the limited literature on the intersection of blue-collar women, urban landscapes, and economic changes under a social justice lens, I chose to collect my own data and corroborate that with New Hire Reports. With the assistance of staff members at TWU Local 100, I interviewed 10 female members for my study using a structured interview template. I created a survey to guide the interviews I conducted (See Appendix A) and then recorded the oral responses from the women on the research questionnaire template[133]. Additionally, I took notes on other topics the women mentioned that were not on the research questionnaire template. The interviews were structured to focus on the needs of working women. Though 500 station agents were laid off, the personal stories behind why women chose the position of station agent was not well understood or documented. I constructed my questions for the survey to address this need.

Important things to note are that all women in my study identified as mothers and also as Black or Hispanic. Additionally, all the women are part of a union. The subsequent analysis shows their struggles balancing work and home responsibilities. Given that union members have greater protections than non-union members, this should come as a great to concern since most workers are not unionized.

To complement this, I analyzed NYCT new hiring reports from 2005-2010 to further understand the issue of gender segregation among job titles in TWU Local 100. With my research, I interviewed women who were station agents and reassigned to new

[133] See Appendix A

job titles due to the layoffs, to better understand how women choose work. The interviews I conducted provided a clearer picture into the struggle of the balance of motherhood and being a career woman. Because my research questionnaire asked respondents to elaborate on how their job affected their domestic responsibilities at home, I recorded all relevant responses on the template. Over the course of my interviews, the responses from the women clearly demonstrated that blue-collar TWU Local 100 women have difficulty negotiating a sufficient work/life balance due to the inflexibility that many job titles have and this negatively impacts their work and their children. The names of the women interviewed have been changed to protect their identities.

7.2 Analysis of New Hire Reports

NYCT new hire reports shed light on the gender segregation that exists in job titles with TWU Local 100 members. In 2005 2,204 individuals were hired into hourly positions by the NYCT. Of the 2,204 new hires, the majority of new hires (1,817) were men while women only comprised 387 of new hires. [134] In 2008, though only 8.48% of the total employees hired that year were hired in the category of Office/Clerical employees (which the station agent job title is a subcategory), women comprised 51.2% of new hires in this category.[135] The Office/Clerical category is a lower paid employment category. The Skilled Craft Division is a higher paying employment category for TWU Local 100 members. . In 2008, within the Skilled Craft division men comprised 93.7% of new hires in this division.[136] An equipment/system maintainer position falls under the

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[134] New York City Transit, *New Hire Reporting 2005*, report (New York: MTA, 2005).

[135] New York City Transit, *New Hire Reporting 2008*, report (New York: MTA, 2008).

[136] New York City Transit, *New Hire Reporting 2008*.

Skilled Craft division. A first year equipment/system maintainer employed after 12/16/2004 earned an hourly rated pay for the first year of $23.8050, $24.3450 for the second year, $24.8225 for the third year, and $25.8375 for the fourth year. Women are poorly represented in this job category with various job titles. For example, in 2005, 403 male new hires entered into the equipment/system maintainer job title, which comprised 88.37% of the male new hires in the Skilled Craft division. Only 4 female new hires entered into the equipment/system maintainer job title, under the Skilled Craft division. Furthermore, out of all of the jobs female new hires comprised in 2005, only 1.1% of female new hires entered into the Skilled Craft Division.[137]

Historically women have had high representation in the station agent job title. In 2005, there were a total of 2,204 new hires (1,817 male and 387 female new hires respectively). In 2005, females accounted 17.55% of all new hires. The station agent job title accounted for 11.56% of all new hires and women comprised 35.29% of all new female station agent hires in 2005.[138] In 2006, there were a total of 3,056 new hires (2,248 male and 808 female hires, respectively). In 2006, females accounted for 26.43% of all new hires. The station agent job title accounted for 12.66 % of all new hires, and females accounted for 47.28% of station agent new hires in 2006.[139] In 2007, there were a total of 3,697 new hires (2,949 male and 748 female hires, respectively). Women accounted for 20.23 % of all new hires in 2007 and the station agent job title accounted for 8.46% of new hires. Of all new female hires in 2007, station agents accounted for

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[137] New York City Transit, *New Hire Reporting 2005*.

[138] New York City Transit, *New Hire Reporting 2005*.

[139] New York City Transit, *New Hire Reporting 2006*, report (New York: MTA, 2006).

20.18%.[140] In 2008, there were a total of 2,486 new hires (1,974 male and 512 female hires, respectively). In 2008, females accounted for 20.59% of all new hires. The Station Agent job title accounted for 7.11 % of all new hires, and females accounted for 53.1% of Station Agent hires in 2008.[141] In 2009 there were a total of 1,504 new hires (1,237 male and 267 female hires, respectively). In 2009, females accounted for 17.75% of all new hires. The station agent job title accounted for 2.19% of all new hires, and females accounted for 42.42% of station agent hires in 2009.[142] In 2010, there were a total of 745 new hires (632 male and 113 female hires, respectively). In 2010, females accounted for 15.16% of all new hires. The station agent job title accounted for 2.68% of all new hires, and females accounted for 50% of Station Agent hires in 2010[143].[144]

7.3 Analysis of Qualatative Data

One woman, Janet, was a structure maintainer in the Skilled Craft division for over 10 years. Originally Janet started out as a station agent due to the flexible working hours and schedule. However, Janet decided to transition into a structure maintainer position when her sister lost her job. Janet's sister was willing to watch her children if Janet was willing to compensate her for providing childcare services. The structure maintainer position had irregular work hours since the majority of track work and maintenance is conducted at night. Since the structure maintainer position paid better,

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[140] New York City Transit, *New Hire Reporting 2007*, report (New York: MTA, 2007).

[141] New York City Transit, *New Hire Reporting 2008*.

[142] New York City Transit, *New Hire Reporting 2009*, report (New York: MTA, 2009).

[143] Due to MTA/NYCT regulations, I did not have access to data and statistics for their total workforce, and therefore the numbers do not accurately capture the gender segregation within job titles.

[144] New York City Transit, *New Hire Reporting 2010*, report (New York: MTA, 2010).

Janet was able to afford hiring her sister to provide childcare services. According to the collective bargaining agreement with TWU Local 100, for structure maintainers employed after 12/12/2004, the hourly rated pay for the first year is $23.8050, $24.3450 for the second year, $24.8225 for the third year, and $25.8375 for the fourth year.[145] Before Janet could secure a position as a structure maintainer, she had to complete an apprenticeship program. During the apprenticeship, for those who entered in after 12/16/2004, the structure maintainer trainee earned $20.7075 an hour. After four months the hourly pay rose to $21.58; after 8 months the pay rose to an hourly rate of $22.4675; and after a year of training the hourly rate of pay was $23.100.[146]

Another woman, Erica was a light maintainer in the Skilled Craft division. Erica began her career with the MTA as a part-time traffic checker, which has the lowest paid hourly rate. Part time traffic checkers appointed on or after 1/30/2003 earn an hourly rate of pay of $11.0975 when first entering. After 19 months of employment, the hourly rate of pay rises to $11.7500. After 31 months of employment the rate of pay for a part time traffic checker rises to $13.0550. The maximum hourly pay for part time or full time traffic checkers is $13.0550.[147] After spending a year as a part-time traffic checker, she transitioned into the job title of a full time station agent. In the interview Erica mentioned that the station agent position was much more enjoyable than the traffic checker position. Erica said the traffic checker position was the "worst job ever…I had to stand outside in all types of weather and made very little money". As a traffic checker, Erica found herself in the winter with cold feet and hands because her job responsibility was to act as

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[145] *Collective Bargaining Agreement Between NYCT, MaBSTOA, and TWU Local 100*, A67.

[146] *Collective Bargaining Agreement Between NYCT, MaBSTOA, and TWU Local 100*, A68.

[147] *Collective Bargaining Agreement Between NYCT, MaBSTOA, and TWU Local 100*, A73.

a "human stop watch" and clock the arrival time of buses at various bus stops. The station agent position did not require her to be on her feet. She could sit down on a chair within her heated booth. In 2008, a fellow TWU Local 100 member informed Erica of an opening as a light maintainer. The pay rate for the apprenticeship as a light maintainer was the exact pay that Janet received during the training period. After Erica finished the light maintainer apprenticeship program she received the exact pay as Janet did as a structure maintainer. In the interview Erica mentioned how physically tiring the work is as a light maintainer. She misses the less strenuous aspects of the job as a station agent, but does not miss the pay.

Sarah is another interviewee and she entered the MTA as a station agent but has been unemployed for six months since 2010. Before being laid off, she held the station agent position for over 5 years. When she was rehired, the MTA reassigned Sarah as a CTA cleaner. She worked as a CTA cleaner for four months. Sarah took a pay cut when she took this position. The hourly rate of pay for cleaners who were appointed the position on or after 4/29/1988 and after 12/16/2004, for the first year the hourly rate is $12.2775, the second year $14.0300, the third year $15.7775, the fourth year $20.5750.[148] Sarah is very dissatisfied with the cleaner position. The work is very laborious and her body is not used to the heavy lifting required of the job. She expressed that her time working for the MTA has been "very unpredictable" and wants to move into a subway conductor position. If Sarah did transition into be a conductor, the hourly rate of pay for those appointed on or after 5/15/1992 and after 12/16/2004 for the first year would be $15.7800 an hour, the second year $16.9075, the third year $19.1600, the fourth year

[148] *Collective Bargaining Agreement Between NYCT, MaBSTOA, and TWU Local 100*, A65.

$22.5425.[149] According to the NYCT new hire reports, in 2005, only 9 females were hired into the conductor job title, 148 in 2006, 46 in 2007, 76 in 2008, 23 in 2009, and 4 in 2010.[150] The conductor position would pay better and would also not require as much physical labor as the cleaner position.

Michelle was a station agent for over 4.5 years. She was very happy with the position because it allowed her job flexibility with her schedule, which was important to her since she was a single mother to two young children. Michelle explained the station agent position provided flexibility so that if an emergency occurred with her children, she could leave the ticket booth and take care of her children. Alternatively, a bus driver position has a more rigid schedule and taking such a position would put her children at risk since she could not abandon the bus if a crisis occurred with her children. Prior to the MTA/NYCT budget crisis and subsequent layoffs, Michelle was offered a salaried managerial/supervisor position in the station agent category. However, like many of the other women I interviewed, Michelle was forced to decline her career advancement because of her mothering responsibilities. Many of the station agents I interviewed mentioned they had been offered managerial/supervisor positions but chose not to move into these positions due to the positions being salaried, which counter-intuitively, has the potential to yield a lower gross income. The women I interviewed explained that a station agent is able to acquire overtime pay and will actually make more money than a salaried station agent manager/supervisor for roughly the first 5 years of employment. My interviewees also noted that station agents who stay within their hourly paid job title have

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[149] *Collective Bargaining Agreement Between NYCT, MaBSTOA, and TWU Local 100*, A66.

[150] New York City Transit, *New Hire Reporting 2005-2010*.

more flexible working hours but if one advances to a managerial/supervisor position, the schedule is irregular. Managers and supervisors are often called into work in the middle of the night, whereas the hourly station agent has a set schedule that is obtained a month in advance when the schedule "pick" occurs. The flexibility is paired with predictability.

Thus, though the women lacked agency over their interactions with the MTA, they were able to negotiate capitalistic spaces with the MTA by staying as an hourly station agent and obtaining overtime pay. Furthermore, socialist feminism suggests, "patriarchy within the household cannot be merely relegated to attitudes about who ought to perform which task".[151] The MTA did not force women to be station agents since all potential MTA employees must take and pass a standardized entrance test, regardless of the job title the person eventually ends up obtaining. However, the MTA's stringent rules for on-the job absences made the station agent position the de facto job title for the majority of TWU Local 100 female members, which was abundantly apparent with the case of Michelle.

Through my interviews the topic of job flexibility was a subject the majority of the women I interviewed mentioned. Due to the station agent layoffs, and booth closures, the job flexibility that once existed, was now gone. Station agents were re-assigned to new booth locations. During the time period when Sarah was laid-off as a station agent and rehired as a cleaner, she informed me that many of her fellow station agents were put in difficult scheduling situations with the new employment arrangement. Given this situation, for some station agents to trying to have some agency with their work

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[151] Toni M. Calasanti and Carol A. Bailey, "Gender Inequality and the Division of Household Labor in the United States and Sweden: A Socialist-Feminist Approach," *Social Problems*, 1st ser., 38 (1991): 39, accessed April 1, 2012, JSTOR.

schedules and hours, some eventually opted to switch job tiles to become a cleaner so that they would not have to work in booths far away from their children's schools. Not only did the location of station agent booths change, so did the work hours due to the massive station agent layoffs. Station agents who were previously accustomed to working a day shift were now expected to staff booths during night shifts. The majority of the women I interviewed spoke about the difficulty of finding reliable and affordable childcare during normal working hours. For example, Sarah informed me of the difficulty of securing consistent and affordable childcare options during a night shift. Sarah relayed to me the story of a fellow station agent who had three young children. This station agent was also a single mother. One evening her normal babysitter did not show up and the station agent was put in a difficult situation. She could either call out of work, which would result in loosing pay, or she could leave her children unattended at home while she went to work at night. The station agent informed her supervisors at the MTA of the situation, and they informed her that it is her responsibility to find reliable children no matter what the working shift is. The childcare providers who were willing to watch her three young children in the evening as she worked the night shift were expensive and ultimately this station agent quit working for the MTA. Her employer did not empathize with her needs to balance work and home/life needs when she was assigned to the new hours due to the budget cuts and layoffs.

Chapter 8: Avenues for Policy Recourse: Reccomendations

Mass transportation is New York City's lifeline to existence. The MTA/NYCT engaged in cost-cutting behavior to reduce their $383 million budget gap. The MTA/NYCT believed that by engaging in employee reduction, more specifically with the reduction and layoffs of many union jobs (TWU Local 100), money would be saved. My research demonstrates that female TWU Local 100 workers have struggled greatly due to the nature of the jobs they held and the rough realities upon losing their jobs. My study is significant because little to no research has been conducted on how the MTA/NYCT's budget cuts have affected women. More specifically, there is a lack of data that focuses specifically on women, budget cuts, and transportation in metropolitan areas in the United States.

The dual interests of this thesis have been to highlight the economic struggles blue-collar working women face and the inequalities that stem from urban landscapes with the case of the MTA/NYCT's budget deficit and subsequent layoffs brings. My thesis has shown how urban areas are highly dependent on transportation, and how the history of transportation is intertwined in the very historical fabric of the city and its infrastructure. And yet despite this dependence, the transportation system has also served to geographically isolate the very workers who help operate the system: blue-collar working women. Additionally, the type of work offered has kept working mothers in a state of limbo in terms of career advancement, which is an apt portrayal of the struggles single working mothers across the country face. Striking a balance between being the primary breadwinner and caretaker for the household has been a central concern of single working blue-collar mothers. The piecemeal answer so far has been to take low wage

jobs that have little security and upward mobility but lots of flexibility, which simultaneously isolates those women further into the urban landscape. My attempt has been to highlight these lived struggles before presenting alternative solutions.

With my study, I originally thought the MTA/NYCT had directly targeted layoffs in blue-collar positions that women had, but after analyzing my research, a different picture emerged. It is not that the MTA/NYCT targeted female employees so much as it is the jobs they targeted were female dominated. Through the interviews I conducted with female TWU Local 100 members, I learned why there was a large concentration of women in the job titles that were laid off. These jobs were highly amenable to being a blue-collar working mother. In discovering the decision process for why women chose certain job titles, it became clear that vulnerable employment positions are their only option.

My research demonstrates that female TWU Local 100 members are interested in pursuing higher-skilled and better paying positions within the MTA. However, many of these positions do not allow flexible scheduling, which is necessary for working mothers. While higher wage jobs with upward mobility are ideal, the rigid scheduling does not allow these women to attend to their caretaking responsibilities which have equal priority. Budget deficits and layoffs aside, the MTA/NYCT needs to be more proactive with meeting the needs of its female employees, especially those who are mothers with blue-collar job titles. In fact, before the fiscal crisis, in November 2007, the MTA commissioned a report that identified recommendations for creating a stronger, more

respectful partnership between management and labor.[152] Through the report, the MTA identified employee availability as an issue, especially unscheduled absences. Many employees turn to the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), a federal law passed in 1993, to allow for unscheduled absences. FMLA provides eligible employees up to 12 weeks of leave in a 12-month period. To be considered, employees must have worked for their employer for at least 12 months at the time the leave is requested. Additionally, the employee must have worked at least 1,250 hours during the 12-month work period before the leave begins. A 2004 study conducted by the *Employment Policy Foundation* identified the transportation industry to have one of the highest FMLA costs.[153] According to the MTA, they recognize their "obligations under the law and [support] the intent of [FMLA] while simultaneously understanding that the law poses a challenge in terms of employee availability".[154] Time and attendance issues are the basis for the majority of disciplinary actions taken by the MTA (57 percent).[155] When the MTA studied the challenges of its employees with the work/life balance issue they discovered that their workforce is now comprised of more single parents than ever before. The MTA runs a schedule driven operation but the traditional methods of handling availability issues must be adjusted for the current workforce. The MTA discovered that over 90 percent of FMLA requests were for intermittent leave, which is when employees take unplanned or last-minute leaves related to personal/life issues (child care, eldercare, and

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[152] MTA, Press Office, "MTA Releases Panel Recommendations for Workforce Development," news release, January 16, 2008, MTA, accessed December 5, 2011, http://www.mta.info/mta/news/releases/?en=080116-HQ1.

[153] Richard Ravitch et al., *Engaging, Recognizing, and Developing the MTA Workforce*, report (New York: MTA, 2007), 24.

[154] Richard Ravitch et al., *Engaging, Recognizing, and Developing the MTA Workforce*, 26.

[155] Richard Ravitch et al., *Engaging, Recognizing, and Developing the MTA Workforce*, 27.

health challenges).[156] When the MTA/NYCT instigated cost-cutting measures due to the 2009/2010 budget crisis, it would have made fiscal sense to implement programs to reduce the high rates of intermittent leave, which comes at a high cost. Studies report that due to balancing obligations at home with children, employee absenteeism costs businesses up to $1,984 per employee per year.[157] The MTA is working with a limited budget, but it makes fiscal since to adjust their policies and programs to retain its current workforce.

For the MTA/NYCT to retain its current workforce, I suggest the MTA actively initiate programs to solve the frequent need for its employees to take FMLA for intermittent leave. Initiatives put in place will not only positively impact employees, but will also be fiscally wise for the MTA.

First, I recommend that the MTA/NYCT assign a taskforce to focus on the issues that affect their female employees, especially the needs of their hourly workers. Because the MTA operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days of the year, its employees are constantly working around the clock. However the lives and schedules of their loved ones at home remain constant too. These home lives are pockmarked with constants such as school that finishes in the afternoon and close for months in the summer. Working mothers and single working mothers chose untraditional hours and schedule to create time for domestic responsibilities. In both scenarios childcare and domestic responsibilities is the major factor in the job title decision-making process for women. In a study conducted by *The Shriver Report*, men and women were asked to

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[156] Richard Ravitch et al., *Engaging, Recognizing, and Developing the MTA Workforce*, 26.

[157] Executive Office of the President Council of Economic Advisers, comp., *Work-Life Balance and the Economics of Workplace Flexibility*, report (Washington, DC: President of the United States, 2010), 18.

identify who in the household is responsible for taking care of the children. 69 percent of the women surveyed reported that they were solely responsible for the childcare responsibilities in their household. When men were surveyed, only 13 percent responded that they were the main providers of childcare in their family.[158]

Currently TWU Local 100 has established a Childcare Fund (CCF) for its members. CCF was created through TWU Local 100's collective bargaining process during the 2002 contract negotiations. It is funded by the MTA/NYCT and jointly administered by TWU Local 100 and the MTA/NYCT. A Director and four of board trustees- two from the MTA/NYCT and two from TWU Local 100- oversee the CCF.

The mission of CCF is to increase TWU Local 100 members' accessibility to high quality, affordable, childcare and youth services and information. CCF is dedicated to assisting parents in integrating their work and family responsibilities. Since 2002, over 7,008 families have benefited from the subsidies for daycare, afterschool and summer programs that CCF makes available. Only active TWU Local 100 members are eligible to apply for CCF. The member must have passed their probationary period on the job and have legal guardianship or a dependent 12 years of age and under. Members must fill out paperwork to qualify for CCF. Members must also provide the child's original birth certificate and original social security card. Additionally, the member must provide proof of the child's health insurance. The child's name also must be on the member's most recent 1040 tax return. The member must also provide two pay stubs. It is also mandatory for members to attend a CCF registration event to receive a CCF application. If a member does not apply for the voucher during the registration period, preference is

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[158] Boushey, O'Leary, *The Shriver Report*, 410.

given to those with seniority after the deadline. With the voucher program, payments are made directly to the childcare provider. However CCF mandates that under no circumstances will the monthly payment exceed 25% with a maximum of $200 for a licensed childcare provider or 15% with a maximum of $120 for unlicensed providers. According to CCF, the voucher is valid for one school year and expires every June 30th for children ages 6 to 12, and August 31st for children under the age of 5. It is the case with many working mothers that it is difficult to secure childcare options in the summer. The summer recess with school is difficult for many working mothers to find safe and affordable childcare solutions. CCF provides vouchers for licensed summer camps. The voucher covers 37.5% of summer camp fees, and will not exceed $750 towards a licensed summer camp of the member's choice. The voucher is only available for children between the ages of 6-12 and is only good for one summer. TWU Local 100 members must re-apply every year to receive this benefit. CCF also has a newborn stipend where up to $800 is paid to those who are parents of newborn babies.[159]

The taskforce would help to better guide the CCF. Evidently, the MTA/NYCT needs to actively increase support for existing childcare programs. CCF assists in alleviating the costs associated with childcare, but it does not solve the frequent need for emergency childcare services, which impacts job title selection for women. Female TWU Local 100 members have expressed that they have chosen particular job titles due to the need for accommodating schedules and hours. The majority of titles are not as flexible as the station agent title. For that reason, it is in the MTA/NYCT's best interest to officially create work-flexibility options for those who are interested in obtaining

[159] TWU Local 100. "TWU Local 100--NYCT Childcare Fund." TWULocal100ccf.org. June 28, 2010. Accessed March 3, 2012. http://www.twulocal100ccf.org/programs.html.

positions with various job titles. Such a move will be mutually beneficial for the MTA/NYCT and its workers. The MTA/NYCT will retain a productive and healthy workforce and the needs of its women workforce will be addressed.

Such a move will also place the MTA/NYCT in line with public opinion. 84% of Americans agree with the statement that businesses that fail to adapt to the needs of modern families risk loosing good workers.[160] Additionally, 73% of Americans would like businesses to provide more childcare options for employees. Finally, 74% of Americans think employers should be required to give workers more flexibility in their work schedules. [161] According to a report by the *Executive Office of the President Council of Economic Advisors*, about one-third of companies cite costs or limited funds as the reason behind why workplace flexibility arrangements are not implemented.[162] However costs associated with employee absenteeism can be lowered, especially if flexible programs are implemented since the MTA has such a high rate of FMLA due to intermittent leave.

Secondly, I'd recommend in addition to devoting more time and resources for providing childcare services for its employees, the MTA/NYCT should investigate ways to expand workplace flexibility options. One way to achieve this is to provide employees with more control over their working hours. I suggest the MTA implement compressed workweeks, where an employee works for more hours on certain days so flexible hours can occur later on in the week. Another option is to allow for employees to

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[160] Boushey, O'Leary, *The Shriver Report*, 411.

[161] Boushey, O'Leary, *The Shriver Report*, 411.

[162] Executive Office of the President Council of Economic Advisers, *Work-Life Balance and the Economics of Workplace Flexibility*, 3.

decide when they arrive or leave work.[163] Additionally, the MTA should allow employees to have flexibility in the number of hours worked. Employees should be allowed to adjust their working hours to different stages in life. For example, employees should be allowed to move from full-time to part-time and back to full-time while remaining at the same position or level, while having their benefits easily reinstated.[164]

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[163]Executive Office of the President Council of Economic Advisers, *Work-Life Balance and the Economics of Workplace Flexibility*, 7.

[164]Executive Office of the President Council of Economic Advisers, *Work-Life Balance and the Economics of Workplace Flexibility*, 13.

Chapter 9: Urban Studies Conclusion

The work-life conflict is an issue that affects many workers. About one-fifth of employed Americans work more than half of their hours outside the 9 a.m.-to-5 p.m. work day, work a rotating schedule, or have varying hours.[165] Also, one third of employed Americans work at least one day on the weekend.[166] According to *The Shriver Report*, most workers do not have workplace flexibility; nearly half do not have the right to a paid sick day or to care for a sick child or family member, and; most do not have access to paid family leave.[167] Moreover, 42% of working women have had trouble getting time off from work when they needed to care for a child.[168] The *Executive Office of the President Council of Economic Advisor*s created a report "Work-Life Balance and the Economics of Workplace Flexibility" to study the needs of working parents in 2010. It discovered that less-skilled workers have less workplace flexibility in terms of work schedules than higher-skilled workers.[169] Additionally, studies have found that hourly jobs, especially those that need around-the-clock coverage are less likely to provide schedule flexibility.[170]

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[165] Suzanne Bianchi, "Changing Families, Changing Workplaces," *Work and Family Journal* 21, no. 2 (2011): 22, accessed April 1, 2012.

[166] Vanessa R. Wight, Sara B. Raley, and Suzanne M. Bianchi, "Time for Children, One's Spouse and Oneself among Parents Who Work Nonstandard Hours," *Social Forces* 87, no. 1 (2008): 245, accessed March 26, 2012, JSTOR.

[167] Boushey, O'Leary, *The Shriver Report*, 49.

[168] Boushey, O'Leary, *The Shriver Report*, 441.

[169] Executive Office of the President Council of Economic Advisers, *Work-Life Balance and the Economics of Workplace Flexibility*, 2.

[170] Executive Office of the President Council of Economic Advisers, *Work-Life Balance and the Economics of Workplace Flexibility*, 10.

Today 58.6 percent of women over the age of 16 are involved in the labor force.[171] In addition, today nearly 4 in 10 mothers (39.3%) are primary breadwinners, bringing home the majority of the family's earnings, and nearly two-thirds (62.8%) are breadwinners or co-breadwinners, bringing home at least a quarter of the family's earnings.[172] However, women are saddled with a double burden, of working outside the home, and being responsible for the majority of domestic responsibilities as well. It appears that a woman's job is never done. Studies confirm that women continue to take on the majority of domestic responsibilities at home. According to a study conducted by the *Families and Work Institute,* 70% of working mothers do most of the cooking in their households, and 73% reported doing the majority of cleaning.[173] The data demonstrates that women are doing it all—providing for their families by obtaining employment outside of the home and providing the majority of care giving/domestic responsibilities at home. With such large numbers of women in the workforce, women are struggling to balance the domestic roles at home at the same time.

The work/life balance issue affects both women and men from different socioeconomic class. Through my case study, I've been able to shed light on the lived experience and struggles of blue-collar female TWU Local100 members who were laid off in a global financial crisis and economic downturn. My research reveals that blue-collar working women have needs that must be addressed regarding balancing work/life

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[171] United States Department of Labor, "Women's Bureau - Quick Stats on Women Workers, 2010," United States Department of Labor, August 22, 2011, accessed March 26, 2012, http://www.dol.gov/wb/factsheets/QS-womenwork2010.htm.

[172] Boushey, O'Leary, *The Shriver Report*, 32.

[173] Kenneth Matos and Ellen Galinsky, *Workplace Flexibility in the United States: A Status Report.*, report (New York: Families and Work Institute, 2010), 1.

issues. These needs ultimately influence the job titles they are willing to take so they can maintain the position as both breadwinner and caregiver.

My research assists in capturing the experiences of blue-collar women impacted by budget cuts in the field of transportation in a metropolitan area of the United States. By shedding light on this important issue, and through my recommendations, I hope structural changes will come.

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Appendix A: Research Questionnaire

Age:

What is the highest level of education/training you have completed?

Marital Status:
(Please write response below)

How many children do you have?
(Please write response below)

How old are your children?
(Please write response below)

Do any of your children have a disability or special needs?
(Please circle one)

Yes

No

How long have you been an employee of the MTA/NYC Transit?
(Please write response below)

What job title did you enter into the MTA/NYC Transit with?
(Please write response below)

What job title do you currently hold has an employee of the MTA/NYC Transit?
(Please write response below)

Did the 2009-2010 MTA/NYC Transit budget crisis affect your employment with the MTA/NYC Transit?
(Please circle one)

Yes

No

If your employment was affected by the 2009-2010 MTA/NYC Transit budget crisis, please describe how you were affected.
(Please write response below)

Has the 2009-2010 MTA/NYC Transit budget crisis affected your family?
(Please circle one)

Yes

No

If the 2009-2010 MTA/NYC Transit budget crisis affected your family, please describe.
(Please write response below)

Have you had the opportunity to move into a management position with the MTA/NYC Transit?
(Please circle one)

Yes

No

Are your working hours comfortable to work?
(Please circle one)

Yes

No

Are your working hours flexible?
(Please circle one)

Yes

No

If your working hours are flexible, please describe how they are flexible? *(Please write response below)*

Do your responsibilities at home reduce the effort you can devote to your job?
(Please circle one)

Yes

No

If your responsibilities at home reduce the effort you can devote to your job, please describe your situation.
(Please write response below)

Do personal or family worries and problems distract you when you are at work?
(Please circle one)

Yes

No

Abstract

Kathleen Adams

B.A. Fordham University

Blue-Collar Working Mothers: The Effects of the 2009/2010 MTA/NYCT Budget Cuts on Female TWU Local 100 Members

Thesis directed by Aimee M. Cox, Ph.D.

The 2009/2010 *Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA)/New York City Transit (NYCT)* fiscal crisis led to mass layoffs within the transportation industry. These layoffs were concentrated in female-dominate positions. This thesis seeks to explore the challenges and avenues of recourse for blue-collar working women by investigating a specific job title of the MTA/NYCT: the station agent. This job title experienced the layoff of 500 workers and nearly all of them were women. Using structured interviews and surveys with female members of the *Transportation Workers Union Local 100* who had worked as station agents but were ultimately terminated, my case study sheds light on the struggles blue-collar women in urban areas endure with balancing the modern reality of being a primary breadwinner and care-giver. I complement the interviews with NYCT new hire reports to help further expand on this topic by broadening the scope and generalizing the findings. This research seeks to underscore the needs of blue-collar women workers and the challenges they face in terms of work and geographic isolation. Based on the findings, this research also seeks to provide policy recommendations to aid the work/life balance struggles for female blue-collar employees of the MTA/NYCT.

Vita

Kathleen Adams was born in Shaker Heights, Ohio and currently resides in New York City. After graduating from *Hathaway Brown School* in Shaker Heights in 2006, she attended *Fordham University* in New York City where she double majored in Women's Studies and Urban Studies with a concentration in architecture and minored in Environmental Policy. Kathleen was the recipient of the *Anne Devenney Memorial Award* in 2010. In September 2010, Kathleen entered Fordham's *Graduate School of Arts and Sciences* in the Urban Studies program.

Kathleen is dedicated to advancing women's rights and empowering their voices. Kathleen's commitment to women's issues led to her being awarded *the Power of Woman* award in 2010 from *Planned Parenthood of Northeast Ohio*. She is also the founder of *Momma's Hip Hop Kitchen (MHHK)*, which showcases minority women's talents through the medium of fine and performing arts. Through her efforts MHHK has held five annual concerts, and has participated in numerous college tours. She has been awarded the *GO GIRL! Community Leadership Award from Bronx AIDS Services* in 2012 for her work with MHHK.