Ideologies of Labor and the Consequences of Toil in India's Construction Industry

Adam Sargent, *Western Sydney University, Australia*

ABSTRACT

This article examines the semiotics of labor through an analysis of a construction skill training program in Delhi. It focuses on recurring struggles between students and administrators over the nature and consequences of the activities they engaged in at the training center. Drawing on the notion of language ideology, it argues that students and administrators invoked different ideologies of labor in framing the value and meaning of productive activities. Under different ideological framings, productive action had the potential to transform the subject in radically different but equally unstable ways. While students worried that engaging in "labor work" could transform them into abject laborers, administrators tried to shore up the notion that "practical" would make students into successful workers. More generally, the paper suggests that attending to ideologies of labor can nuance accounts of how labor transforms subjects and social worlds.

W hile political economic phenomena like branding and financial derivatives clearly rely on the mediation of signs, manual labor seems distinct from such mediations. The materiality of toil—from digging ditches to laying bricks—may be hidden or exposed in language but seems ultimately unchanged by its representation. In contrast to this view, this article argues that even the most physical aspects of labor take shape through and

https://doi.org/10.1086/715715

alongside discourse. Such a position draws our attention to the ways that struggles over the meaning of toil shape the lives and worlds of workers. These struggles were especially salient in the programs of a construction skill training center in India. Here the very same laborious activities—carrying cement, digging, or laying bricks—were variously understood as key elements of training called "practical," or as humiliating toil called "labor work" (*labor kām*). These contrasting positions set administrators of the program against their students as they struggled over the value of productive activities and their potential to transform the social selves of those who undertook them. Tracking these contestations offers insights into how categories of labor are built out of the experience of productive activity. Far from given, labor takes shape through the semiotic contestations and construals of those engaged in productive activities.

This approach to labor contributes to accounts of political economy that have stressed the imbrication of semiotic and material processes. Semiotically informed approaches to linguistic anthropology have long stressed the materiality of language, and signs more generally, in order to highlight the imbrications of language with questions of power, inequality and domination (Gal 1989; Irvine 1989; Shankar and Cavanaugh 2012). Extending these insights to the realm of labor, scholars have demonstrated how linguistic practices help create and maintain divisions of labor in different sectors (Manning 2002; Urciuoli and LaDousa 2013). Of particular interest has been the way that discursive practices are disciplined, quantified, and evaluated as a crucial element of many work tasks in late capitalism (Urciuoli 2008; Duchêne and Heller 2012; McElhinny 2012; Cavanaugh 2016).

At the same time, there has been a recent turn to questions of labor in sociocultural anthropology and social theory (Weeks 2011; Harvey and Krohn-Hansen 2018; Besky and Blanchette 2019). Analyzing invisible, non-standard, and even nonhuman forms of labor, scholars have reflected on and rethought the emergence of particular forms of labor out of variegated life-sustaining practices (Cooper and Waldby 2014; Barua 2017; Millar 2018). This work demonstrates not only how practices become sites of capitalist value extraction, but also how particular ways of doing labor shape social actors and their worlds (Povinelli 1993; Hankins 2014; Narotzky 2018).

Despite the fact that scholars in both groups are often responding to similar transformations in contemporary capitalism, these literatures remain largely separate. This article puts these perspectives into conversation by addressing questions of what labor is and how it transforms social actors, locating answers to both in processes of discursive interaction. It focuses less on how language is made productive as a form of labor than on how people use language to practice labor in

particular ways. At issue here is both the materiality of language but also the semiotic mediation of the material elements of economic relations. Work on the semiotics of value has noted that even the very usefulness of commodities (Agha 2011) or labor (Kockelman 2007) is mediated through discourses that naturalize the qualities of such objects. This work suggests that the objects of political economy are actively construed and struggled over in the course of socioeconomic life. Language, then, is not only a material object that circulates in political economies (Irvine 1989), or a form of labor (Urciuoli and LaDousa 2013), but also a primary medium through which labor itself is made (Cant 2018).

To elucidate the semiotic processes involved in making labor I focus on competing ideologies of labor that shape how actors engage in and orient to productive action. In speaking of "ideologies of labor" this article parts ways with a distinction that many authors make between labor, conceived of as capitalist surplus-value producing activity, and work, a more general category for creative action not necessarily limited to capitalist labor discipline (Gidwani 2001; cf. Arendt 1998). As Narotzky reminds us, "labor" and "work" are not inherently different and may "be simultaneously present in the human experience of energy expenditure" (Narotzky 2018, 32). In my usage, the terms *labor* and *productive activity* denote the creative energy or force involved in "the production of convincing signs—whether they are arguments, cultural artifacts, moral judgments, or even types of people" (Hankins 2014, 17). A force which engages us with the world and "transforms subject and object alike" (ibid.). This concept does not differentiate between material and immaterial labor, or production and reproduction. Such a capacious concept of labor draws our analytical attention to the processes by which specific forms of labor are shaped into recognizable varieties, struggled over, and negotiated.

The concept of ideologies of labor draws on the analysis of ideology developed in research on language ideology and its elaboration beyond language proper (Schieffelin et al. 1998; Keane 2018; Hull 2012; Kowalski 2016). The notion of language ideologies (Kroskrity 2000; Silverstein 2003; Irvine and Gal 2019) provides a nuanced model for grounding diverse practices of labor in the ongoing flow of social action. Three aspects of this literature are particularly important for the concept of ideologies of labor. First, language ideologies play a crucial role in the dialectic between an indexically charged utterance (e.g., an honorific address term) and its metasemiotic framing (e.g., honoring the addressee, or 'being polite'), as participants seek to regiment the meaning of their utterances (Silverstein 2003; Nakassis 2018). Ideologies of labor then play a similar role with respect to productive activities. Actors may frame their own or

others' productive activities as practical experience or humiliating toil, and in doing so, they draw on schemas of productive action. Labor, either as an ethnographic or analytical category, emerges out of this dialectic between pragmatic action (e.g., carrying bricks) and its metapragmatic framings (e.g., as humiliating toil). Of course, these regimentations are never wholly fixed and always subject to contestation and slippage (Gal 1998).

Second, language ideologies connect linguistic material, and linguistic variation, to people, events, or activities associated with them. This process often takes the form of rhematization, in which indexical connections of cooccurrence or causation are read as iconic—sharing in some similarity (Irvine and Gal 2000). In the case of ideologies of labor, the fact that one is carrying bricks could support the assertion that one is somehow fit for this sort of activity. The contingent connection between actor and act is framed as a sign of some underlying affinity.

Third, this approach to ideology does not cast it as "false" as in some older strands of Marxist critique. Ideology, in this approach, is a constitutive element of social reality. The political aim of an analysis of ideologies of labor then is not to unmask a material reality of exploitation underneath a veneer of practical training, although this too is crucial. Rather it is to shed light on the full range of power-laden struggles that emerge around productive activity and its transformative effects.

I begin by contextualizing the training program as a useful case for demonstrating the analytical value of ideologies of labor. Understanding the structure of the training program, especially its emphasis on the immediate experience of construction processes elucidates why productive activity became an explicit site of contestation in the first place. With this context, the article moves on to explore metapragmatic terms such as *practical* and *labor*, whose senses emerge out of contrasting metasemiotic regimes. These regimes were mobilized by administrators and students respectively and appealed to very different ideologies of labor that variously construed the transformative effects of productive activity. The conclusion steps back from the training program to suggest how ideologies of labor might change the way we analyze labor and capitalism.

Training and Labor

The context of training is a particularly useful place to begin an analysis of ideologies of labor because this background renders the ideologies and their tensions more visible. This is because formal training programs involve explicit discourse about how work should proceed and why. In this they formalize the sorts of relations of supervision that often exist between experienced workers and apprentices (Marchand 2008; Lave and Wenger 1991). Training activities draw attention

to many aspects of labor that will become habitual once a particular form of work has been sufficiently learned. In comparison to workplaces, both students and trainers engaged in explicit commentary about training activities and their effects from labelling actions, tools, and materials, to arguing about best practices. Training activities paired practical tasks with explicit commentary on such tasks. The prevalence of such explicit reflexive language rendered ideologies of labor visible where they are often implicit in workplaces. At the training program run by the Construction Training Council (hereafter CTC) in their new headquarters outside of Delhi, this reflexive awareness was conditioned by their overall mission to develop the construction industry and thus the country. The training provided by the CTC was self-consciously formal, and program officials were at pains to distinguish it from the current forms of apprenticeship and on-the-job-training that were still the norm in the Indian construction industry.

Founded in 1996 the CTC consists of a network of training centers and offices that stretch across the country and offer site certification, arbitration, and training services. The training activities at the CTC should be understood in the context of national programs to train India's workers, from the earlier Indian Technical Institutes (ITI) against which the CTC defined itself to most recently the "Skill India" campaign which launched after my fieldwork but in which the CTC has participated. Such initiatives disseminate "skills discourses" that link the acquisition of certified skills to economic success (Urciuoli 2008; Gershon 2011). In such discourses older apprenticeship models are generally eschewed as being inefficient and producing uneven results whereas formal skill training has the potential to create a labor force with certified skills and skill levels (Venkateshwarlu et al. 2017).

At the time of my fieldwork, the CTC was in the process of transitioning its central operations from their offices in south Delhi to a new headquarters in Faridabad, a satellite city two hours south of Delhi. The headquarters itself was under construction which, as program administrators insisted, offered a unique opportunity for students to take part in actual construction tasks, as opposed to contrived test projects. Male students lived on the construction site in temporary facilities within the partially constructed headquarters. Female students and some permanent staff lived in a CTC-run guesthouse a short walk from the site.[1] For many, the three-month stay at the headquarters was the first time they had been away from home and family. This was both a source of discomfort with respect to differences in food and environment, but also pleasure in being away from familial surveillance.

---

1. I also rented a room in the guesthouse at the suggestion of the director general of the CTC.

The CTC offered subsidized training programs in partnership with various development projects. These programs were often targeted at marginalized groups (e.g., women, Muslims, and unemployed youth) and drew large numbers of students from different regions of India. For example, during my time at the CTC many of the students came to the headquarters as part of a project to develop the northeast region of India.[2] Students whose families had paid the Rs. 15,000 tuition tended to come from nearer areas, such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh.[3] In general students came from lower middle-class backgrounds although there was more variation among students who came as part of a development scheme since their fees and travel expenses were covered. As will become clear below, students had solidly middle-class aspirations regardless of any differences in class background. Such aspirations were shot through with dimensions of caste difference. Scholars of South Asia have noted how class and caste hierarchies are often intertwined in ways that make distance from manual labor a crucial marker of middle-class but also high-caste status (Frøystad 2006; Roy 2012).

Such issues were especially poignant for the students I met, most of whom were training to become low-level construction managers referred to as "supervisors" in the industry. While supervisors usually have stable employment with large construction firms their starting salaries are comparable to skilled workers' and they often live on construction sites amongst the construction workers. Given their proximity to manual labor, supervisors stressed the fact that their jobs did not involve doing work but causing it to be done.

1. *Kām*   *kar-nā*
   Work   do-INF[4]
   Do work   'to do work'

2. *Kām*   *kar-vā-nā*
   Work   do-IC-INF
   Cause work   'to cause work to be done [through the mediation of someone else]'

The second construction distances the subject from the physical act of work by specifying that they cause it to be done. In my experience supervisors tended to

---

2. The program focused on brining students from Assam, Mizoram, and Meghalaya.

3. These areas are all Hindi-speaking regions whereas the students from northeast regions often spoke Hindi as a second or third language.

4. In the trilineal glosses I have provided the Hindi, a morphemic gloss focusing on relevant features, and a direct English translation as well as an interpretive translation. I use the following shorthand: 1=first person, 2= second person, CONJ=conjunctive, DAT=Dative, FAM=Familiar, IC=indirect causative, IMP=Imperative, INF=infinitive, INTERJ=Interjection, INTI=Intimate, PL=Plural, POL=Polite, PTCP=Participle.

use the indirect causative (*karvānā*) even when they were the ones directly ordering workers and thus could use the direct form (*karānā*). Note that this construction reinforces hierarchies of status around manual labor based on whether one engages in labor or orders others to do so. As we will see, students were acutely aware of these hierarchies.

The CTC was run by the director general, a man I call Dr. Prakash. Under Dr. Prakash were a number of administrators including the head of instruction, Deepak Mukerjee, who was responsible for overseeing the training program at the headquarters. Administrators were generally upper middle-class, having at least master's degrees and coming to the CTC from management positions in business and engineering. Under Deepak Mukerjee were a number of instructors who were responsible for carrying out the training activities. The instructors were from similar lower middle-class backgrounds as the students, and many of them had experience working as supervisors or foremen in the construction industry.

The training program at the headquarters was based on two types of activity: *practical* and *theory*.[5] The director general believed that the heavy emphasis placed on *practical*, i.e., on practical training in specific tasks, distinguished the CTC from other training programs. Practical began directly after breakfast when students were split up into groups and assigned to an instructor who would take them to an area of the site where they would engage in a construction task. These tasks were almost always ones that would aid in the completion of the building and often meant that students engaged in the same activities as paid construction workers. Practical could include anything from carrying materials, clearing debris, and digging ditches, to laying bricks, plastering walls, and pouring concrete. At noon the students took an hour lunch break, after which they assembled in a classroom for *theory*, which usually consisted of a lecture given by different CTC instructors or administrators. At three o'clock students would be broken up into different groups for more practical. At five o'clock work would stop, and students would return to their rooms to wash up and prepare for dinner. At eight o'clock the gates to the dorms were locked for the night. This routine was repeated six days a week with Sunday as a free day, allowing students to organize chaperoned excursions to nearby markets and occasional day trips to more distant attractions such as the Taj Mahal.

5. In the register of Indian English that my interlocutors used, terms like *practical, theory*, and *labor*, differed in their sense from standard U.S. or British English. I have used italics to denote the Indian English sense of the term.

Protesting Labor

After three days of this schedule, the first batch of students to come from the northeast region went on strike (*bandh*). In addition to the grueling pace of work under a much hotter Faridabad sun, the plumbing in the men's toilets had backed up causing sewage to flood their bathroom and shower area. This was the last straw. After lunch, the students gathered in a large room in the basement that acted as the men's dorm. At two o'clock, when they were supposed to be going to their theory class, the students marched in formation wearing their standard issue blue safety helmets, navy coveralls, and black safety shoes. As they approached the main entrance of the headquarters, Deepak Mukerjee came out to meet them. When the students drew near, one of them said loudly, "Sir, we feel that you think of us as laborers, we are not laborers. We are students" (*Sir, humko lagta hai ki āp hame labor samajhte haĩ. Ham labor nahī̃ haĩ. Ham students haĩ*).[6]

The other students shouted their agreement and added grievances ranging from the poor living conditions to the lack of non-vegetarian food options. After listening for a few moments, Deepak responded by stressing that construction was a difficult line of work and they would have to change their attitude if they wanted to succeed. "A doctor works with his hands, do you call him a laborer?" (*Doctor hāth se kām karte usko labor bolte haĩ kyā?*) he asked. To this, he added a phrase that students were told repeatedly at the headquarters. "If you haven't done the work with your own hands, then how will you tell [others to do it]?" (*Agar apne hāth se kām nahī̃ kīyā to kaise batāoge?*). Deepak implied that the very activities the students were complaining about were the foundation blocks of becoming good supervisors.

Temporarily satisfied with Deepak's assurances that the plumbing would be fixed, the student strike ended almost as soon as it began. But weeks later a new batch of students protested their treatment as laborers, this time through a signed petition with a list of demands. Although not always rising to the level of protest, each new batch of students complained about and resisted their treatment as laborers. Administrators like Deepak told me that this was because students were lazy and were trying to avoid hard work. In contrast, we might argue that the CTC was using the training program, and especially its emphasis on practical, to extract surplus-value from the students. Students themselves often complained that the CTC was using them as free labor while also collecting tuition

---

6. Unless otherwise indicated all quotations are from field notes taken during or directly after the events described.

fees. In this analysis student labor, *qua* value-creating activity, is exploited by being misrecognized as 'training'. Such a critique of unrecognized and thus un- or improperly remunerated labor has been central to accounts of domestic and affective labor (Hardt 1999; Weeks 2011; Hochschild 2012), unwaged labor (Denning 2010; Millar 2014) and most recently in forms of nonhuman labor (Barua 2017; Besky and Blanchette 2019).

While applying this critique to this case would call attention to an important way in which the CTC extracted value from the process of training, doing so would imply that the administrators were ignorant or disingenuous when they asserted the importance of the training program. Moreover, such a critique does not fully capture the contours of the students' protests and the tensions to which they responded. The students did not protest their treatment by virtue of being laborers, rather they demanded better conditions as a sign that they were not laborers. The issue is not only unremunerated activity but also the linkage between activities and selves. The protest actions marked a contestation over the nature and effects of the productive activities they were being forced to engage in as part of their training. The terms *labor* and *practical* are labels that pick out different aspects of these productive activities, and are themselves contested.

When the leader of the group of striking students claimed that they were not laborers the term he used was "labor" (lɜːbər). Across North India, this term is used to refer to a person type (as in "We are not labor") while laboring is designated as *labor kām*, or labor work. "Labor," as used by my interlocutors acted as a sort of euphemism for the Hindi *mazadūr* (laborer, worker) which was generally more politicized, appearing in union names and activist texts. Labor work consists of activities that are thought to require no skill to perform, necessitating only brute force. As such this work is associated with *labor* 'workers, laborers' who are understood to lack any recognizable skill, be undedicated to a particular trade, and be illiterate (Talib 2010; Mohsini 2016). In the construction industry, members of the category *labor* were asked to carry materials, clear debris, dig, or perform any other task they were assigned by a supervisor (cf. Parry 2013). When students complained of being treated as *labor*, they framed the activities of training as those sorts of activities that would only be appropriate for a particular type of person. The term *labor* blurred the lines between action and actor.

In contrast to treating them as *labor*, the administrators repeatedly explained that the hardships of training were all valuable experiences, familiarity with which was acquired through what they referred to as *practical*. As a key element in training, *practical* would help the students develop into professional supervisors. Using heavily gendered imagery, many administrators spoke of

taking "raw boys" from rural areas turning them into "men," who could compete and produce in the nation's demanding construction industry. The director general of the CTC, Dr. Prakash, often recounted his early career as an engineer in Canada where he had endured winters that were as cold as Faridabad summers were hot. For the administrators, *practical* provided a chance to toughen students up while also being a source of authoritative knowledge about construction techniques. Doing work with one's hands would provide an experiential foundation for becoming the kind of professional who possessed both the strength and the intimate knowledge of work practices that were necessary to succeed. For supervisors, the *practical* regime was thus designed to expose the students to a variety of construction tasks, and to impart experiential knowledge of several trades that the students might be asked to oversee. The ability to learn from such experiences was itself a benefit of practical as it was thought to make CTC-trained students into self-improving workers. As used by administrators at the CTC, *practical* named a category of productive activity and charted a particular transformation that would occur in the subject as they engaged in this type of activity.

The terms *labor* and *practical* should be seen as metapragmatic labels (Reyes 2011; Silverstein 1993; Urciuoli 2008). They were used to construe heterogenous experiences of productive activity as a particular sort of action. They also linked these activities to particular social figures, either the skilled and effective worker or the abject laborer. When actors categorized productive activity in these ways, they were elaborating particular ideologies of labor that charted the value and effects of productive action. Framing one's action as *practical* or *labor* implied a particular model of how the exertion, sweat, pain, and pleasure of productive activity might change the actors and their prospects. Such framings informed what sorts of productive activities students would allow themselves to do and which ones they resisted.

As analysts, we cannot assume that labor exists prior to cultural, or metasemiotic, distinctions between types of action. Indeed one of the key insights of the anthropology of work has been that even technically efficacious action is not neutral but always already shot through with cultural values (Sahlins 1976; Taussig 1980; Povinelli 1993; Chakrabarty 2000). These accounts raise the question not only of what sorts of activities may fall under an analytic category of labor but of how laboring activities transform the laborer in unforeseen ways. Attending to questions of language use and semiosis more generally can be helpful in elucidating this process (Manning 2002; Hankins 2014). Attention to ideologies of labor adds to more general anthropological insights about work by focusing on the interactional

processes through which material experiences of productive activity are shaped into instances of different kinds of work with drastically different effects.

Doing Practical

On my first day of fieldwork at the CTC, I was embedded with a group of students who had just arrived in Faridabad from another CTC training center in Amethi, a small town about 400 miles southwest of Delhi. I lined up with the students as we were issued construction helmets, safety shoes, poorly fitting coveralls, and white cloth gloves. Once we had changed into our safety equipment, we were split up into groups under the supervision of an instructor. Our instructor told us that we were to collect bricks from a rubble pile and stack them closer to the headquarters so they could be used for building a boundary wall. Unbeknownst to us we had begun our first practical exercise.

In April the sun was already quite hot, and it wasn't long before my groupmates and I were sweating profusely. As we worked, we spontaneously formed ourselves into a chain, passing bricks two at a time from person to person. After some time, the students began to complain, with one saying that this was just "labor work" (*labor kām*). We received no explicit instructions on how to stack the bricks, and our instructor limited his comments to exhortations to keep working. After a few hours of stacking the bricks, we were called into a large classroom for a formal meeting with the director general. All the students stood as Dr. Prakash entered the room and immediately directed everyone to sit. He welcomed the students to the CTC and then asked what we had done that day. The students responded that they had carried bricks and on student added that it seemed like work (*kām*). Dr. Prakash smiled knowingly at this comment and then asked: "How many bricks did you carry?" (*kitane īṭ uṭhāe?*). The students sat silently looking at each other as they realized that no one had thought to count the bricks that we had stacked. This, Dr. Prakash announced, was our first lesson. In construction work, the most important thing was to count how much work had been done. If we kept track of this, then we could figure out the productivity of each worker. He added that by carrying the bricks with our own hands, we would come to know how many bricks it was reasonable to expect a worker to carry.

With this lesson, we were again sent out to carry and stack bricks with the difference that this time we were instructed in how to stack the bricks to make them easier to count. After a while, our instructor told us to stop and demonstrated how to calculate the number of bricks stacked per person per hour. The students took notes in their notebooks as they watched the instructor. They then did the calculations themselves counting the total number of bricks in

the stack, dividing by the number of hours worked, and the number of people in the group. After they had finished calculating they checked their answers within their groups and even compared calculations with other groups.

Dr. Prakash's lesson nicely illustrated two central elements of *practical*. The first is the emphasis on the immediate experience of construction activities. Each new batch of students that came to the headquarters went through this lesson, beginning with relatively unguided time spent carrying bricks (or some other construction material). As with Dr. Prakash's story about enduring cold winters in Canada, the physically taxing nature of this task (and the potential frustration felt) would toughen the students to the hardships of construction work. The entire structure of training at the CTC was designed to simulate the experience of construction sites. As one administrator pointed out, the value of the CTC's method was that it allowed students to "contribute to a real building" (*asalī imārat ko contribute kartā hai*) rather than just working on "test" projects. Students at the CTC were doing work that would amount to something, the built structure of the headquarters, which made their practical more authentic than if they had only been building a test object.

Yet this experience was never complete. As one student joked to me, "Will a building be built with two bricks?" (*Imārat do īṭ se banegā kyā?*). His joke referenced the way that students at the CTC carried bricks two at a time, one in each hand. By contrast laborers in the construction industry carried anywhere from eight to ten bricks in a standard headload. CTC instructors and administrators were not concerned with whether or not the students became adept at laying bricks or plastering walls, what was important was that they engaged in such activities. Engaging in these activities on a construction site would toughen students and prepare them for industry.

The second element of *practical* was that it provided grist for the creation of authoritative knowledge that would be needed as a supervisor. With the intervention of Dr. Prakash's question—how many bricks did you carry?—the experience of productive activity was retroactively framed as the basis of learning through questioning and calculation. Dividing the task into two bouts of brick-carrying dramatized the reframing of the productive activity as now the basis of calculating productivity. While generally less dramatic than this initial lesson, all *practical* at the CTC had this structure. Students were repeatedly exhorted to ask questions as they took part in practical activities. As one administrator put it the ideal student was characterized by "working and asking questions" (*kām kar rahā hai aur savāl pūch rahā hai*). Asking questions, especially about how to calculate productivity, reframed the activity that one was engaged in as the

experiential material for increasing know-how. The productive activity is no longer only a drudgery but is also an object of inquiry and potential managerial intervention.

Dr. Prakash's question, and his exhortations to always be thinking about productivity, were attempts to get the students to orient toward productive activity in a certain way. Students were to engage in all different sorts of labor, but to do so not as laborers but rather as a way of collecting experience and building knowledge. For CTC administrators, when students asked questions, and wrote down the answers, they made material experiences of productive activity into instances of construction experience that could be drawn upon in speaking authoritatively about the industry. Through explanations, lesson structures, commands, and stories, administrators tried to model this approach to productive activity as the foundation of a generalized knowledge. In so doing they appealed to an ideology of labor in which productive activity was a neutral resource.

The training programs at the CTC were designed to frame practical activities as this sort of neutral work that would act as a support for generalized know-how. As a metasemiotic regime *practical* reorganized productive activity. The term picked out certain qualities of construction tasks while erasing others (Irvine and Gal 2019). For example, the social distinctions between those who carried bricks, plastered walls, or dug ditches were not part of *practical*, neither were the specific forms of dexterity that emerge in the interplay between working bodies and their tasks. At the same time, *practical* framed experience with construction activities as the foundations for performances of authoritative construction knowledge. Ideologies of labor such as *practical* not only erased but regrouped productive activities, marking them as diacritics of particular social types, in this case the authoritative supervisor (Agha 2007, 265–272). In this schema, experiencing productive activities transformed the acting subject only by adding to their knowledge and endurance. The value of the training program that the CTC offered depended on this ideology of labor in which productive activities were grist for the mill of authoritative knowledge. Ideologies of labor mediated a more general metasemiotic process in which amorphous productive activities became diacritics of delimited varieties of work linked to specific person types (Agha 2011) and even keyed to varying pay scales (Urciolli 2008).

Doing Labor

While students strenuously objected to being treated as laborers, this objection did not extend equally to all training activities. Students spoke of getting knowledge or know-how (*jñan, jānakārī*) from certain activities. To understand how it

was possible for students to both get knowledge from productive activities, as suggested in construals of *practical*, while also complaining and resisting other activities as *labor* it will be necessary to look closely at the kinds of activities that students engaged in and the stances they took toward these actions. Student construals of productive activity emphasized aspects that were erased in *practical* and linked these actions to very different person-types.

Contrary to the claims of administrators that students were only trying to avoid working hard, many students spent long hours diligently applying plaster, laying bricks, and marking out the locations and dimensions of walls. At the same time, students would avoid activities they felt to be labor work wherever possible and, when forced, would often engage in them half-heartedly taking any opportunity for a break. On one such break, I asked Harish, a student from Amethi, what made the excavation training to which he had been assigned labor work. He responded with a rhetorical question. "What will we get from doing this? Nothing. No knowledge will come from this" (*Is se kyā milegā? Kuch nahī̃. Koi jānakārī nahī̃ milegā.*). In contrast, laying bricks, he told me, would provide knowledge. When I asked what sort of knowledge he would get from laying bricks he told me that it would help him to "make those beneath me work" (*Mere nīce ko kām karvānā*). For certain activities then, it seemed that the administrators' message about the value of having done activities with one's hand had been taken up by the students. Yet we should note that even here the value of *practical* is framed as placing Harish in a hierarchy of labor that intertwines caste and class. Using the indirect causative (*karvānā*), Harish implies that training in brick laying will allow him to distance himself from manual labor by ordering others to do it. The value of *practical* here lies in helping students to distinguish themselves from laborers.

Other activities, namely those that would be done by unskilled laborers, had no such redeeming value, and were instead dangerous sources of humiliation. Near to where Harish was supposed to be digging, Vijay and Rahul were laying bricks on a section of the boundary wall. At one point they ran out of mortar. Looking around, Vijay called out to one of the students in his group. His cries quickly slid down the honorific registers from a relatively indirect request, to familiar command, to the most informal and direct.

1. *[Hame]*   *aur*   *masālā*   *cāh-iye*
   [1PL-DAT]   more   mortar   want-IMP-POL
   [To us] more mortar please want
   '[We] need more mortar'

2. *[Tum]*   *jā-o*   *jā-o*   *masālā* *le-ke*   *ā-o*
   [2S-FAM]   go-IMP-FAM   go-IMP-FAM   mortar take-CONJ-PTCP come-IMP-FAM
   [you] go go having taken mortar come
   'Go, go bring some mortar'

3. *Are*   *[tū]*   *jā-ø*   *masālā* *lā-ø*
   INTERJ   [2S-INTI]   go-IMP-INTI   mortar   bring-IMP-INTI
   Hey, [you] go bring mortar.
   'Hey! Bring some mortar'

The first phrase is polite relying on indirectness and focusing on the speaker's need in formulating the request (Ervin-Tripp 1976). The second phrase is more direct and uses (by implication) the familiar second person pronoun. The third phrase is even more direct, was uttered with heightened volume, and uses the lowest form of address (*tū*), shifting the imperatives from what could be an informal directive to friend (*jāo*) to a command given to an inferior (*jā*).

The student who had been called out reluctantly came forward to grab one of the empty metal bowls from the scaffold and fill it with mortar. While he was gone Vijay and Rahul's instructor came by to inspect their work and ask them why they weren't doing anything. Rahul said that they were waiting for more mortar. When the student arrived with the bowl of mortar Vijay cracked a mischievous grin and said in a loud voice "look the labor has come" (*dekho labor ā gayā*). The other student began to argue, but the instructor told him to go and fill another bowl of mortar. Later, Harish came over to Vijay and Rahul and began asking questions about their work. As he approached the wall, Vijay recoiled in mock insult and, using a stylized English voice, said: "get away from here you dirty labor." Harish persisted pointing out an area of the wall where it seemed that the students had made a mistake. Mimicking Vijay's voice, Rahul responded, also in English, "It is not our problem . . . boss told us is OK." They laughed and finally, Rahul switched to Hindi and explained what they had done.

Unlike other practical activities, such as excavation, brickwork training forced some students to enact the position of laborer while others acted as masons. The humor of Vijay and Rahul's comments works by amplifying this resonance between the students' activities and their associated person types (e.g., laborer, mason, boss). The edges of this playful frame are, of course, indeterminate (Bateson 2000). Vijay's shifting forms of address begin to blur the distinction between training and work by recreating the rough forms of address found on construction sites, although he did not go so far as to include profanities. When the student returned Vijay amplified the blurring begun with the forms of address, by making an explicit connection between the productive activity the student is engaged in

and a social position of inferiority. The student became a laborer by virtue of being treated, and acting, as one. With Harish, Vijay took this to an absurd extreme, driving home the social abjection of being a laborer Rahul's utterance compliments this collapse between training and work, framing Vijay and himself as masons and the instructor as their boss.

Under the frame of humor, Vijay and Rahul point to the same tensions that motivated student protests. As Vijay implies, engaging in the productive activities of *labor* can make one recognizable as *labor*. That is, engaging in certain sorts of activities may transform the acting subject in ways they cannot wholly control. The joke simultaneously suggests and denies this possibility. It is this dual movement of humor that made it so useful in articulating the profound ambivalence that students felt about the training offered at the CTC. As one student who had come to the CTC from a poor family confided in me, "I came here for my future but now I'm afraid I might fall" (*Mere future ke liye āyā hū̃ lekin ab lagtā hai ki gir jāū)*. In this light, student protests should be understood as attempts to negate the dangerous effects of the labor work that they were being forced to do. The hardships of training at the CTC were taken not as neutral experiences from which to build one's knowledge and authority but as charged signs of one's social self. In protests, jokes, and complaints the students sought not only to make the training less onerous but to control how productive actions were shaping them into types of people.

The notion of a self that is susceptible to transformation from material action and substances is in line with other descriptions of personhood in South Asia (Marriott and Inden 1977; Daniel 1984; Trawick 1990; Busby 1997; Lamb 2000; Walters 2016). As such we should understand students' ideological construals of productive activity as drawing on larger cultural idioms for evaluating material action and personhood. Vijay and Rahul's humor brought attention to the transformative force of productive action. In doing so, they created an ideological construal of labor quite different from that espoused by the administrators. Vijay's joking references to his friends as *labor* picks out the linkage between activity (labor work) and subject (laborer). The comment construes the contingent connection between the person doing the activity and the activity itself as an iconic one, indicative of an underlying similarity or affinity (Irvine and Gal 2000). In this ideology of labor, the differences between types of productive activity are linked to social types and amplified. Moreover, the experience of productive action is framed as being transformative of one's social self, not only through accumulating knowledge but through the ramifications of taking up different types of material action.

This understanding of the stakes of productive action became clearer when I asked students why they had decided to take a formal training course. For almost all of the students, the course was part of an aspirational project aimed at securing relatively lucrative employment in a fast-growing industry. As Vijay explained, the program only cost Rs. 15,000 and it gave you access to a job where you could earn at least Rs. 6–8,000 per month and more after six months.[7] With these numbers, the course seemed like a solid investment in upward mobility. To be more specific I asked students why they didn't just go straight into the industry where they could work their way up from laborers, to skilled workers (*mistarī*), to supervisors. Vijay told me that this was the "labor way" (*labor kā rāstā*) and went on to explain that he and his classmates could not do this kind of work because they were "middle-class." He added that there were three classes—low, middle, and high—and that each class was suited to different kinds of work. Low-class people did "small work" (*choṭā kām*) or "labor work" (*labor kām*) because they had nothing else—but people of his standing could not do such things and were more suited to work like running a shop.

Other students echoed this fundamental divide between the type of person who would do labor work and the type of person who engaged in formal training. During a taped conversation Latif, a student from Assam, explained the difference between people who would succeed by first becoming skilled workers (*mistrī*) and those who would learn from a book.

Mistrī jo hotā hai un logō ke pā.. matalab unskilled hotā hai wah paRe likhe nahī̃ hotā hai usme aur jo kām vagairah kartā hai . . . hard kām kar sakatā hai to yahā̃ pe jo dasavī̃ class pass hai yā BA pass hai un logō kyā lāge wah to hard kām nahī̃ kar sakegā kyõki un logõ ko kitāb se sīkhā ki kaise karnā hai yā kaise ke- yah nikālnā hai . . . yah sab kuch jānakārī dekhke matalab supervisor kā (kām).	People who become skilled workers they have.. I mean they are unskilled.. they aren't literate and the kinds of work and stuff they do . . . they can do hard work but here for those who have passed tenth class or have a BA what good would it do . . . they will not be able to do hard work because those people learned from books how this should be done and how to- how this comes out.. knowing all this information I mean.. It's the supervisor's (job).

Both Vijay and Latif articulate the training program in opposition to forms of activity associated with different types of people. "Labor work" or "hard work" is figured as incongruous with educated, middle-class selves. Those who would work their way up from being a laborer are framed as fundamentally different

7. Rs. 15,000 was about $300 USD at the time and Rs. 6–8,000 was $120–160. This salary would have potentially included food and lodging (on site). The chances of getting a raise after six months were slim.

kinds of people. Crucially these person types are defined by corresponding forms of action. Note that Latif claims that educated people, like the students, cannot do "hard work." In their comments, Latif and Vijay seamlessly tie together markers of class (wealth, income, education) with biologized forms of difference (capacities for manual labor) that shade into caste distinctions (Frøystad 2006). In this ideological framing to do "hard work" or "labor work" is to risk becoming a *labor* oneself. The tension that characterized the training program at the CTC was between an ideology of labor in which all action provided neutral experience from which to glean knowledge and one in which different material activities could render one the sort of person who was fit for such action. In their grumblings, protests, and wry jokes, students continually returned to the fact that the institutional training which had become part of their aspirations for upward mobility asked that they engage in activities that threatened to drag them down.

Conclusion

While questions of whether training activities constituted *practical* or *labor* never seemed to be far from the minds of students, these contestations quickly went from open acts of resistance like the protests to more subtle critiques as students went on in the program. To my surprise, students that I interviewed at that end of their program did not speak of their experiences at the CTC in terms of being treated as *labor*. When I asked the student, who had acted as spokesperson for the striking students whether he had ever felt that the training was labor work he said no and that he had gained knowledge from the training. He added that in the beginning, the students had felt bad because they had not known what to expect. He had assumed that the CTC would be like other institutions of learning and would not involve doing work (*kām karnā*). Once he had realized that he would have to work, and got used to the hot weather, everything was fine. Now, he told me, "I have taken all the knowledge of construction," (*pūrā jñān liyā construction kā*) meaning he was ready to be a supervisor. Other students too minimized their discomforts with the program and affirmed the value of *practical* in similar terms as the administrators.

Initially, I thought that students responded this way because they knew they were being recorded and were worried about who might hear their responses. While this certainly played a role, it was also the case that I conducted most of these interviews as students were finishing the program and hence were preparing for placement interviews with construction companies. In these interviews, students presented their time at the CTC as having provided them with valuable

knowledge and skills as a construction supervisor. In this way, students presented the vision of *practical* as a metasemiotic regime, echoing the kinds of discursive framing of hardship and authoritative knowledge that administrators had stressed to them. Although not always successful many students received joining offers before leaving the CTC. The students, it seemed, had accepted the CTC's position in preparation for their new jobs in the construction industry.

As I stayed longer at the CTC, I began to hear reports from students who had left their new jobs within months of joining. The most common reason I heard was that they felt that the company had treated them like *labor*, that they were forced to work long hours, eat low quality food, and live in shacks that offered little protection from the environment. Faced with the task of performing an authoritative and valuable worker self in an interview, the students had adopted the CTC's ideology of labor, that their practical experience of doing work had equipped them to supervise it. When they arrived on the construction site, these students were confronted with material vicissitudes they had endured in training now with no clear end in sight. The continued presence of these material conditions again brought up anxieties of becoming *labor* and drove most CTC graduates to seek employment in other areas.

Theses shifting performances suggest that ideologies of labor, like language ideologies, are not properties of a person, but are rather located in discursively mediated social interactions were participants appeal to them in parsing their own and others' activities. In each case ideologies of labor emerge in peoples' projects of trying to fix the meaning and value of action in the world. In taking up a stance as a professional construction supervisor, students appealed to an ideology of labor in which previous acts of *practical* shored up authoritative knowledge. In the context of work, however, the productive actions of their jobs entangled them with material signs of labor work (e.g., long hours, poor food). Students resisted the negative transformations that could come from this activity. Ironically, leaving a particular job, was also a way of asserting one's status as a professional, that is, as not a laborer.

This material also suggests other contexts in which ideologies of labor are relevant. While I have focused on a case where ideologies of labor emerged in face-to-face interactions and in fairly explicit ways, the concept of ideologies of labor is not limited to these cases. The literature that documents how language has become a form of labor has provided close analyses of corporate literature marketing and disseminating so-called "soft skills" like communication and leadership (Cameron 2000; Urciuoli 2008; Gershon 2016). It is not only that language is commodified in these situations (Heller 2010; Shankar and

Cavanaugh 2012), but also that linguistic practices so commodified are linked to a particular image of productive activity. For language to become a form of labor involves a framing not only of language but of labor as well.

Attending to these ideologies brings our attention to the semiotic means by which diverse kinds of action become recognizable and remunerable (or not) as labor. Such a concern has been at the heart of recent critiques that have sought tease out the complicated connections between human (and nonhuman) action and the creation and appropriation of capitalist value. In this literature, capitalism appears as an unstable veneer that temporarily conjoins diverse materials and actors in an attempt to harness their productive forces (Yanagisako 2002; Bear 2015; Bear et al. 2015; Tsing 2015). The imagery here is one of excess, that there is "always a surplus of meaning to the act of work that is not contained (not only a surplus of value that is appropriated)" (Bear 2013, 156). This insight brings attention to the ways that "experiences of work do work on the self—reshaping bodily sensations, daily rhythms, and ways of being in the world" (Millar 2018, 24). Attending to ideologies of labor makes clear that this aspect of work exists in dialectical tension with people's representations of their activity. The surplus of meaning in acts of work emerges out of the dialectic between the experiences of action in the world, and our attempts to fix their meaning. The concept of ideologies of labor, and the semiotic framework of which it is a part, focuses analytical attention on the mundane interactions—remuneration, jokes, complaints, commands, instructions—that structure work. It expands on studies of language and political economy to focus more squarely on how workers struggle to shape the consequences of their productive activities. At stake here is not only which human capacities are exploited for the extraction of capitalist value. Rather, close attention to the semiotics of labor demonstrates that this exploitation always happens alongside semiotic struggles over the sorts of selves that such action creates, destroys, and transforms.

References

Agha, Asif. 2007. *Language and Social Relations*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
———. 2011. "Commodity Registers." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 21 (1): 22–53.
Arendt, Hannah. 1998. *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Barua, Maan. 2017. "Nonhuman Labour, Encounter Value, Spectacular Accumulation: The Geographies of a Lively Commodity." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 42 (2): 274–88.
Bateson, Gregory. 2000. *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology*. University of Chicago Press.
Bear, Laura. 2013. "'This Body Is Our Body': Vishwakarma Puja, the Social Debts of Kinship, and Theologies of Materiality in a Neoliberal Shipyard." In *Vital Relations: Modernity*

and the Presistent Life of Kinship, edited by Susan McKinnon and Fenella Cannell, 155–78. Santa Fe: School of American Resarch Press.

———. 2015. *Navigating Austerity: Currents of Debt along a South Asian River*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Bear, Laura, Anna Tsing, Karen Ho, and Sylvia Yanagisako. 2015. "Gens: A Feminist Manifesto for the Study of Capitalism." Theorizing the Contemporary, *Fieldsights*, March 30. https://culanth.org/fieldsights/gens-a-feminist-manifesto-for-the-study-of-capitalism

Besky, Sarah, and Alex Blanchette. 2019. "Introduction: The Fragility of Work." In *How Nature Works*, edited by Sarah Besky and Alex Blanchette. New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press.

Busby, Cecilia. 1997. "Permeable and Partible Persons: A Comparative Analysis of Gender and Body in South India and Melanesia." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 3 (2) : 261–78.

Cameron, Deborah. 2000. *Good to Talk?: Living and Working in a Communication Culture*. London: Sage Publications.

Cant, Alanna. 2018. "'Making' Labour in Mexican Artisanal Workshops." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 24: 61–74.

Cavanaugh, Jillian R. 2016. "Talk as Work: Economic Sociability in Northern Italian Heritage Food Production." *Language & Communication* 48: 41–52.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 2000. *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Cooper, Melinda, and Catherine Waldby. 2014. *Clinical Labor: Tissue Donors and Research Subjects in the Global Bioeconomy*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Daniel, E. Valentine. 1984. *Fluid Signs: Being a Person the Tamil Way*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Denning, Michael. 2010. "Wageless Life." *New Left Review* 66: 79–98.

Duchêne, Alexandre, and Monica Heller, eds.. 2012. *Language in Late Capitalism: Pride and Profit*. New York: Routledge.

Ervin-Tripp, Susan. 1976. "Is Sybil There? The Structure of Some American English Directives." *Language in Society* 5 (1): 25–66.

Frøystad, Kathinka. 2006. "Anonymous Encounters: Class Categorisation and Social Distancing in Public Places." In *The Meaning of the Local: Politics of Place in Urban India*, edited by Geert De Neve and Henrike Donner, 159–81. New York: Routledge.

Gal, Susan. 1989. "Language and Political Economy." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 18: 345–67.

———. 1998. "Multiplicity and Contention among Language Ideologies: A Commentary." In *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory*, edited by Bambi Schieffelin, Kathryn A Woolard, and Paul Kroskrity. New York: Oxford University Press.

Gershon, Ilana. 2011. "Neoliberal Agency." *Current Anthropology* 52 (4): 537–55.

———. 2016. "'I'm Not a Businessman, I'm a Business, Man': Typing the Neoliberal Self into a Branded Existence." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 6 (3): 223–46.

Gidwani, Vinay. 2001. "The Culutral Logic of Work: Explaining Labour Depolyment and Piece-Rate Contracts in Matar Taluka, Gujarat." *The Journal of Development Studies* 38 (2): 57–108.

Hankins, Joseph. 2014. *Working Skin: Making Leather, Making a Multicultural Japan*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hardt, Michael. 1999. "Affective Labor." *Boundary 2* 26 (2): 89–100.

Harvey, Penny, and Christian Krohn-Hansen. 2018. "Introduction. Dislocating Labour: Anthropological Reconfigurations." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 24 (S1): 10–28.

Heller, Monica. 2010. "The Commodification of Language." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39 (1): 101–14.

Hochschild, Arlie Russell. 2012. *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hull, Matthew. 2012. *Government of Paper: The Materiality of Bureaucracy in Urban Pakistan*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Irvine, Judith, and Susan Gal. 2000. "Language Ideology and Linguistic Differentiation." In *Regimes of Language: Ideologies, Polities, and Identities*, edited by Paul V. Kroskrity, 35–84. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.

Irvine, Judith, and Susan Gal. 2019. *Signs of Difference: Language and Ideology in Social Life*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Irvine, Judith 1989. "When Talk Isn't Cheap: Language and Political Economy." *American Ethnologist* 16 (2): 248–67.

Keane, Webb. 2018. "On Semiotic Ideology." *Signs and Society* 6 (1): 64–87.

Kockelman, Paul. 2007. "Number, Unit, and Utility in a Mayan Community: The Relation between Use-Value, Labour-Power, and Personhood." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 13 (2): 401–17.

Kowalski, Julia. 2016. "Ordering Dependence: Care, Disorder, and Kinship Ideology in North Indian Antiviolence Counseling." *American Ethnologist* 43 (1): 63–75.

Kroskrity, Paul, ed. 2000. *Regimes of Language: Ideologies, Polities, and Identities*. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.

Lamb, Sarah. 2000. *White Saris and Sweet Mangoes: Aging, Gender, and Body in North India*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Lave, Jean., and Etienne Wenger. 1991. *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Manning, Paul. 2002. "English Money and Welsh Rocks: Divisions of Language and Divisions of Labor in Nineteenth-Century Welsh Slate Quarries." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44 (3): 481–510.

Marchand, Trevor H J. 2008. "Muscles, Morals and Mind: Craft Apprenticeship and the Formation of Person." *British Journal of Educational Studies* 56 (3): 245–71.

Marriott, McKim, and Ronald Inden. 1977. "Toward an Ethnosociology of South Asian Caste Systems." In *The New Wind: Changing Identities in South Asia*, edited by David Kenneth, 227–38. The Hague: Mouton Publishers.

McElhinny, Bonnie. 2012. "Silicon Valley Sociolinguistics? Analyzing Language, Gender, and Communities of Practice in the New Knowledge Economy." In *Language in Late Capitalism: Pride and Profit*, edited by Alexandre Duchêne and Monica Heller. New York: Rutledge.

Millar, Kathleen. 2014. "The Precarious Present: Wageless Labor and Disrupted Life in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil." *Cultural Anthropology* 29 (1): 32–53.

———. 2018. *Reclaiming the Discarded: Life and Labor on Rio's Garbage Dump*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Mohsini, Mira. 2016. "Crafting Muslim Artisans: Agency and Exclusion in India's Urban Crafts Communities." In *Critical Craft: Technology, Globalization, and Capitalism*, edited by Alicia Ory DeNicola and Clare M. Wilkinson-Weber, 239–58. New York: Bloomsbury.

Nakassis, Constantine V. 2018. "Indexicality's Ambivalent Ground." *Signs and Society* 6 (1): 281–304.

Narotzky, Susana. 2018. "Rethinking the Concept of Labour." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 24 (S1): 29–43.

Parry, Jonathan. 2013. "Company and Contract Labour in a Central Indian Steel Plant." *Economy and Society* 42 (3): 348–74.

Povinelli, Elizabeth A. 1993. *Labor's Lot: The Power, History, and Culture of Aboriginal Action*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Reyes, Angela. 2011. "'Racist!': Metapragmatic Regimentation of Racist Discourse by Asian American Youth." *Discourse and Society* 22 (4): 458–73.

Roy, Dayabati. 2012. "Caste and Power: An Ethnography in West Bengal, India." *Modern Asian Studies* 46 (04): 947–74.

Sahlins, Marshall. 1976. *Culture and Practical Reason*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Schieffelin, Bambi B., Kathryn Ann. Woolard, and Paul V. Kroskrity, eds. 1998. *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Shankar, Shalini, and Jillian R. Cavanaugh. 2012. "Language and Materiality in Global Capitalism." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41 (1): 355–69.

Silverstein, Michael. 1993. "Metapragmatic Discourse and Metapragmatic Function." In *Reflexive Language: Reported Speech and Metapragmatics*, edited by John A. Lucy. New York: Cambridge University Press.

———. 2003. "Indexical Order and the Dialectics of Sociolinguistic Life." *Language and Communication* 23 (3–4): 193–229.

Talib, Mohammad. 2010. *Writing Labour: Stone Quarry Workers on the Periphery of Delhi over the Last Quarter Century*. Oxford University Press.

Taussig, Michael T. 1980. *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Trawick, Margaret. 1990. *Notes on Love in a Tamil Family*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Tsing, Anna. 2015. *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Urciuoli, Bonnie. 2008. "Skills and Selves in the New Workplace." *American Ethnologist* 35 (2): 211–28.

Urciuoli, Bonnie, and Chaise LaDousa. 2013. "Language Management/Labor." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 42 (1): 175–90.

Venkateshwarlu, N., Rakhi Sharma, and Ashish Agarwal. 2017. "Skill Development Training Programme: A Case Study of IGNOU." *Global Journal of Enterprise Information System* 8 (4): 66.

Walters, Kimberly. 2016. "The Stickiness of Sex Work: Pleasure, Habit, and Intersubstantiality in South India." *Signs: Journal of Women and Culture in Society* 42 (1): 99–121.

Weeks, Kathi. 2011. *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics and Postwar Imaginaries.* Durham: Duke University Press.

Yanagisako, Sylvia. 2002. *Producing Culture and Capital. Producing Culture and Capital: Family Firms in Italy.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.