

The “Anti-Work” Movement: Articulating a Challenge to the Protestant Work Ethic

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Abstract: By analyzing a particular moment surrounding a controversial *Fox News* interview in the circulation of “anti-work” discourse on *Reddit*, this article explores how the rhetorical production of “anti-work” discourse in neoliberal mass media challenges previous notions of the Protestant work ethic’s connection to worker identity formation. Interweaving methodologies from political theory, cultural studies, and rhetoric, I consider how this discourse resists exploitative work practices, signaling hegemonic shifts crucial for social movement. The pandemic has brought forth a shared precarity that has crossed previously insulated identities, allowing a potential for such re-articulating of desires and needs. Combined with the late-capitalist, neoliberal order, this particular time works as a *kairotic* moment for potential shifts in narratives of work and labor, including the disruption of the dominant ideology of the Protestant work ethic. As people vocalize workplace grievance and exploitation, a potential rearticulation of workers’ desires and work identity comes into play. These shifts also necessitate thinking outside of the system toward post work imaginaries. Scholarship attuned to these new forms of discourse might aid the process of developing new hegemonic articulations by describing and prescribing them, motivating us to act upon the socio-economic welfare of our precarious status.

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Tags: Anti-work, Protestant work ethic, worker identity, social movement, post work imaginaries

During a now-infamous 2022 episode of *Jesse Watters Prime* on Fox News, the conservative host asked his guest, with a smirk, “Why do you like the idea of being home, not working, but still getting paid by corporate America?” (“Jessie Watters takes on the one who operates the Anti Work Group”). Over the course of three minutes on primetime television, Watters grilled Doreen Ford, a long-time moderator of the subreddit *r/antiwork*, during a segment on the burgeoning

“anti-work” movement. On a split screen, viewers watched as the boisterous, clean-cut Watters rushed through a few patronizing questions, constantly cutting off Ford, who was streaming from a dimly lit, messy basement bedroom, unkempt and stumbling through her answers. Basking in the glow of over one million followers and recent mainstream exposure, the r/antiwork community watched as the conservative political analyst nearly smote the movement on the spot. Within two days, the subreddit’s posting volume collapsed to less than half, over 35,000 members unsubscribed, and Ford was removed as moderator (Medlar et al). Ego bruised and battle wearied, the community cleaned their wounds with reforms and restructuring of the platform. Posts began flooding in again, with top posts stating that the interview was merely an attempt to quell the rising popularity of “anti-work” sentiment or, similarly, that the community’s foundational ideals should not be swayed.

While the origins of the phrase “anti-work” are unclear, many consider it an extension of previous work disillusionment and exploitation, now repackaged in hashtags and viral trends. R/antiwork considers the phrase a useful distinction from “anti-job,” because “a job is just an activity one is paid for and we are not all against money,” or “anti-labor” because “we’re not against effort, labor or being productive. We’re against jobs as they are structured under capitalism and the state” (“r/antiwork” FAQ). In his *enculturation* article, “Burning Out: Writing and the Self in the Era of Terminal Productivity,” James Daniel points out, “to oppose work is not necessarily to oppose labor as such but rather to critique participation in the institutionalized and market-bound forms of work that structure contemporary life” (Daniel). According to BBC journalist Brian O’Connor, the “anti-work” movement “seeks to do away with [the] economic order that underpins the modern workplace. ‘Anti-work,’ which has roots in anarchist and socialist economic critique, argues that the bulk of today’s jobs aren’t necessary; instead, they enforce wage slavery and deprive workers of full value of their output” (O’Connor). In the late-capitalist, neoliberal era, on the heels of a disastrous pandemic, such critiques have become glaring in the face of heightened essential worker exploitation and rampant wealth inequality.¹

Labor data also signals growing resentment in the workforce. “Quiet-quitting,” or “acting your wage,” briefly became popular sentiments that articulated such resentment towards working beyond explicit job expectations and proper remuneration. According to a 2022 poll by workplace research company Gallup, “quiet quitters’ made up at least 50% of the workforce” (Harter). Gallup’s data also pointed to the lowest level of work engagement in the past decade, with Gen Z and younger Millennials being the primary generations vocalizing disengagement and discontent at work. In their analysis, Sandro Formica and Fabiola Sfodera connected the trending concept of

1 I prefer Wendy Brown’s Foucauldian inspired notion of neoliberalism here. She states, “It [neoliberalism] names a historically specific economic and political reaction against Keynesianism and democratic socialism, as well as a more generalized practice of ‘economizing’ spheres and activities heretofore governed by other tables of value” (21). Neoliberalism becomes a rationality when the “economic rationality becomes a governing (or political) one... the field of normative reason from which instruments and techniques... are forged” (121). See, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution*. Zone Books, 2015.

'quiet quitting' to "The Great Resignation" in 2021, when "over 47 million Americans voluntarily quit their jobs" (900). A 2022 Pew Research Center poll cites that "low pay, a lack of opportunities for advancement and feeling disrespected at work are the top reasons why Americans quit their jobs last year" (Parker and Horowitz). According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the trend of quitting escalated even higher in 2022 (Iacurci). Even as the Great Resignation moment has passed, the uptick in wages over the past few years gave some employees a momentary advantage in the job market. While direct causation can be hard to determine, such viral discourse associated with the "anti-work" moment and actual resistance performed in the labor force have simultaneously increased.

In this essay, I argue a deeper rhetorical analysis of the "anti-work" movement reveals the shifting ways in which people critique work. In addition, I argue such critique reflects a larger rearticulation of the Protestant work ethic, illuminating how upcoming generations are questioning the ties of work to identity. Many workers during the pandemic were confronted with the stark realities of "essential" work: risking their personal health for the economic vitality of the market. With rising inflation, a scarcity of necessary commodities (notably toilet paper and masks being hoarded or upsold), and a precarious future, many workers were expected to forge ahead, upholding the ceaseless production of the neoliberal economic order. The previously lauded Protestant work ethic, working hard towards future success, became a distant reality for many. Sustainability practices became popular amongst social media users, such as spending idle time learning long forgotten crafts or figuring ways to make food without the risk of shopping in public or paying gauged prices (Beck). For some, the lockdowns became a wakeup call to a life outside of the daily grind. Today many workers are still fighting the notion of returning to offices, citing transportation and/or childcare costs, or even an overall sense of ease working away from the corporate environment (Bloom). In sum, the pandemic worked as a hammer to crack open the preconceived ties of identity to work. Now workers are lessening their investment in work and setting boundaries that clarify a separation between work and life.

By analyzing a particular moment surrounding the controversial Fox News interview in the circulation of "anti-work" discourse on *Reddit*, this article explores how the rhetorical production of "anti-work" discourse in neoliberal mass media challenges previous notions of the Protestant work ethic's connection to worker identity formation. Interweaving methodologies from political theory, cultural studies, and rhetoric, I consider how this discourse may articulate political resistance to exploitative work practices that signal hegemonic shifts crucial for social movement. The pandemic has brought forth a shared precarity that has crossed previously insulated identities, allowing a potential for such re-articulating of desires and needs. Combined with the late-capitalist, neoliberal order, this particular time works as a kairotic moment for potential paradigm shifts in narratives of work and labor.

Shifting Tides of Work and Labor

Work and labor studies have seen a particular uptake since the pandemic, with attunement to the precarity of the essential worker, such as interrogating the notion of ‘dying for the economy’ (Darian-Smith), as well as the ‘Great Resignation’ of 2021 spearheading research on worker mental health and wage exploitation (Formica and Sfodera). James Daniel’s definitions of work and labor are useful to help delineate the importance of grievances against work, rather than labor, in “anti-work” discourse, as much of the opposition to “anti-work” discourse seems to evolve around a misunderstanding and/or conflation of the terms work and labor. Daniel conceptualizes labor as “fundamentally associated with production,” while work “may be distinguished as the formalization of labor practices, often localized in sites or organizations,” such that “work names the conditions and locations of labor, though not necessarily stable or consistent ones” (Daniel). These conditions and locations have become especially fraught given the massive waves of instability across social and economic lines, coupled with intense bouts of violence against minority communities and the erosion of democracy itself. Given the socio-economic precarity in post(?)-pandemic times, it seems crucial that reprisals of work and labor discourse, and their concurrent analysis, are fruitful for understanding the ways in which such discourse is often a constitutive element of socio-economic upheavals.

Much attention has been given to inequalities that have been further exacerbated (and/or illuminated) by the pandemic. Important intersectional interventions have also elucidated the heightened economic and health precarity for marginalized communities. In the Council on Foreign Relations 2021 study, journalist Joshua Kurlantzick notes that “[s]imply by killing more poor people and minority citizens per capita in these countries, COVID-19, along with ineffective government management of the pandemic, has fragmented poor and minority families, leaving them with fewer potential wage-earners for the future and potentially more financially strained than wealthier peers” (9). In the neoliberal era, many were faced with a stark realization of capitalism’s hold on society, though this is no new story. In *Digital Objects, Digital Subjects* (2019), Kylie Jarrett argues that “for anyone who is not a white, cis-, het- man, it is difficult to see precisely what is novel about the conditions in which all of life is subsumed into capital... Yet women, people of colour, and LGBTQ+ have never experienced such contexts as places of autonomy or agency” (104). As women became the majority of remote workers during the pandemic (Palarino et al.), many saw an uptick in labor, though not necessarily an uptick in perceived value (Gaskell). The pandemic also imposed a newfound sense of precarity across a wide spectrum of American workers, challenging the preconceived notions of success and value attached to a strong work ethic. For those privileged enough to work from home, lockdowns and shutdowns pervaded their previously insulated realms, as massive groups inched closer towards economic and health precarity than ever before. Such precarity has begun to destabilize previous notions of the Protestant work ethic.

Most Americans are familiar with the Protestant work ethic, exemplified in John Winthrop's shining "City Upon a Hill" metaphor, through which hard work "came to be seen not as a burden or bare necessity but as a privilege, a glory, and a delight" (Porter 537). According to business scholar Gayle Porter, this work ethic is one of "impressive economic accomplishment" that is historically attributed to the combination of capitalism and democracy, with capitalism effectively combining the impulses of asceticism and acquisitiveness (535). Porter argues that historically, the unique work ethic "supported the balance of these impulses- the desire to have things along with the belief in deferred gratification. Together these factors fed into the democratic ideals adopted for governance" (536). Democratic traditions of participation in social and political processes, combined with potential individual success by way of capitalism, together "support and are supported by an ethic of hard work and striving for ever greater future rewards" (541). Throughout the course of the twentieth century, work became such "an integral part of personal identity that some people [came to] invest their entire sense of well-being in work related activity" (Porter 538).

The workplace can also reify such identifications. As many current scholars working at the intersections of gender and work reiterate, work "plays a significant role in both the production and reproduction of gendered identities and hierarchies: gender is re-created along with value," and such identities "can sometimes alienate workers from their job and other times bind them more tightly to it" (Weeks 10). The alienation exacerbated by inequitable wealth contributions, isolated remote work, and hazardous working environments during, and post, lockdown destabilizes previous notions of work identification to overall security and well-being.

Despite this destabilization, historian James Livingston explains why many are still under the spell of the Protestant work ethic. In his 2017 *The Baffler* article, he argues that there are two assumptions that underlie the resistance to an "anti-work" ethic. First, the Hegelian and Marxist assumption that a "trans-historical element of human nature, is the site on which human subjectivity-individuality-is conceived and constructed," and second, Marx's historical progress, that "the proletariat can constitute itself as a class-conscious agent of progressive historical change- overthrow capitalism, install socialism, and so forth- only insofar as its avowed political purpose becomes the abolition of the social conditions that created it in the first place: alienated labor" (92). He further argues that in the absence of this social stratum of historical progress, "talk of opposition to capitalism or transition to socialism becomes intellectually ungrounded, creating the hot air that inflates liberal balloons" (92). The Protestant work ethic's ties to capitalism, democracy, and this intrinsic element of human labor has created a near impenetrable armor around the concept of work altogether. Livingston's final statement echoes the "anti-work" message:

The question is, what happens if we dispense with this bourgeois conception of work and the ego ideal that attends it? Instead of repatriating work from overseas or reclaiming factory labor from the robots on the shop floor, or increasing public spending to create full employment,

what if we said, fuck work. Or, more politely: ‘We prefer not to. Work and life are not the same thing. And now that work matters less in the making of our character because socially necessary labor is, practically speaking, unavailable, we can create lives less burdened by its demands.’” (98)

Despite the stature of the Protestant work ethic, I argue there is a shift seeping in, whether from consistent wage degradation, increasing inequality, or the pandemic’s glaring insight into the commodification of workers’ livelihoods. While collective organizing has seen an uptick in recent years, the recent reiterations of workplace resistance and support on community platforms such as r/antiwork move from a reformist understanding of work to a radical notion that loosens these Protestant ties of identity to work.

R/antiwork and the Rise of the “Anti-Work” Movement

Spearheading this challenge to the Protestant work ethic is the subreddit r/antiwork. R/antiwork describes their subreddit as “for those who want to end work, are curious about ending work, want to get the most out of a work-free life, want more information on “anti-work” ideas and want personal help with their own jobs/work-related struggles” (r/antiwork). Founded in 2013 as a discussion forum for radical, anarchist views on work, the subreddit experienced exponential growth during the pandemic. According to Medlar et al’s analysis, “[i]n late 2021, r/antiwork became the fastest growing community on Reddit, coinciding with what the mainstream media began referring to as the Great Resignation. This same media coverage was attributed with popularising the subreddit and, therefore, accelerating its growth” (1). While r/antiwork is a communal space to share workplace grievances or articulate desires for ending work altogether, many use the space to advocate for work reform by circulating union literature, workers’ rights legislation, and even support for strikes. The subreddit’s FAQ page provides advice on organizing, resources for labor action, and a library full of books and articles ranging from sociologist David Graeber’s *Bullshit Jobs* to Karl Marx’s foundational theories found in such works as *Capital*. There also seems to be an acknowledgment of users’ different political views, offering information on anarcho-syndicalism, Marxism, communism, and other strains of radical political ideologies. Top posts of all time include screenshots from users quitting their job due to exploitative demands, videos of strike walkouts, and links to mainstream newspaper articles and tweets covering rampant inequality, socio-economic upheavals, and other worker related news.

One notable circulation among the subreddit was the discourse surrounding the aforementioned “quiet quitting.” While the term first appeared over a decade ago, its viral resurgence brought the phrase back into the zeitgeist. In March 2022, *TikTok* user Brian Creely criticized the term while reviewing an *Insider* article (Ito), interpreting the practice as “taking it easy” (Creely qtd. in Marsden). Zaid Khan’s counter video hit *TikTok* shortly after, gathering over 3.5 million views (Marsden). Khan, as well as several other self-described Gen Z workers, considers quiet quitting

as “still performing your duties, but you’re no longer subscribing to the hustle culture mentality that work has to be your life” (Khan). NPR’s Planet Money described the trend as “setting boundaries and simply completing the tasks you’re supposed to complete within the time that you’re paid to do them — with no extra frills” (Rosalsky and Selyukh). The phrase’s positive connotations associate the act of resistance with a life separated from the work self, to visualize a future not dominated by the economic stranglehold of capitalism. Such a view falls in line with the “anti-work” movement.

The subreddit was quick to jump on the misconceptions surrounding the phrase “quiet quitting,” with top posts criticizing the term as a “bullshit term made up to describe people not allowing their job to take advantage of them anymore” (u/Willieawake). Other top posts, such as the 3.1 K upvoted, “I’ve been ‘quiet quitting’ for a week and have never been more relaxed” (u/TerrBear5317), received praise, as well as skepticism over the phrase itself. One poster referred to the term as a capitalist marketing ploy to degrade doing your normal work, while others shared their own joys found within putting up boundaries at work. Both “quiet quitting” and “anti-work” discourse, like most viral or trending social media topics, immediately sparked debate over the anti-work movement’s actual focus. Yet the backlash ignited further discourse around worker exploitation and workplace volatility. Through an ecological circulation of the term, the concept leaped from social media platforms to online magazines and mainstream newspapers, putting it on the radar of those typically outside certain platform communities. With headlines like the *New York Times* article, “Hating Your Job Is Cool. But Is It a Labor Movement?” (Whang), and *The Atlantic*’s “Quiet Quitting Is a Fake Trend,” (Thompson) popping up in the first pages of a Google search, “anti-work” discourse was getting attention, regardless, or perhaps because of, the critiques.

Growing in subscribers, who call themselves “idlers,” the subreddit continued to see an accelerated growth rate of posting until Doreen Ford’s infamous *Fox News* interview in January 2023. Above the Fox News banner, “The War Against Working,” Ford was unable to articulate the ideology behind the subreddit, that “[w]ork puts the needs and desires of managers and corporations above and beyond workers, often to the point of abuse through being overworked and underpaid,” or that idlers were not against “effort, labor, or being productive” but against the exploitation caused by capitalism and the state (r/antiwork FAQ). Instead, Ford espoused the virtue of being lazy. Rather than critique the systemic issues surrounding notions of working to live, she only mentions her part time job as a dog walker and rent-free accommodations at her parents’ house. She also seemed ignorant of the staunchly conservative mass media platform she was communicating with. Mentioning her desire to become a philosophy professor only further enraged conservative viewers, many of whom tune into Fox News prime to find validation in a culture war aimed at academia itself. *Vice* summed up the anti-work community’s reaction best:

They are angry that Ford did an interview with a media platform that is predisposed to be biased against a movement that's broadly anti-capitalistic, leftist, and pro workers' rights. And they're mad that the movement—which includes many “essential” and blue-collar workers who put in 40-, 60-, or 80-hour weeks just to make ends meet—was so easily able to be portrayed as lazy communists who want to stay home all day and get free stuff from the government. (Koebler)

Watters was able to tap into the predetermined beliefs held by many *Fox News* members, that the American dream is built and maintained on the premise of the Protestant work ethic. Anything that challenges such an ethic must automatically be lazy, and most importantly, anti-American. “Anti-work” discourse goes directly against these deeply embedded notions of the Protestant work ethic, questioning the ceaseless output while unsettling ties of identity to work. Peaking at 2,658 posts the following day, the subreddit soon went private while the moderators began implementing reforms to the site (Medlar et al). After opening to the public again, r/antiwork's subscriber growth resumed quickly. The community was not ready to shut down. The top subreddit post of all time (48k votes) concerning the interview on r/antiwork states, “If the Fox news interview has you concerned about Antiwork, then congratulations, you now know how it feels to be weaponized against your allies” (u/Meta_Digital). Others acknowledged the interview as an attempt to quell the subreddit's growing popularity. Medlar et. al's research on comment and subscriber data revealed that while a drastic drop in subscribers followed the interview, the quality of discussion has remained the same (7). Their research also reveals the correlation between mainstream media coverage and the subreddit's activity. After the interview, dozens of publications brought r/antiwork back into the headlines. Many articles were praising the community and the “anti-work” movement (see Needleman, Kelly), though others are still in line with *Fox News*, considering the subreddit simply a community of modern youth who no longer understand the value of work or the momentum of an actual movement (Polumbo).

Rearticulating an American Work Ethic

I argue this resistance to “anti-work” discourse lies within the dominant narrative of the Protestant work ethic, a Gramscian hegemonic bloc bolstered by a long history of capitalist and democratic desires that constitute a form of American identity.² By questioning these presupposed intrinsic ties to work, Americans are tasked with transforming their ideologies surrounding work and labor. Passed down through generations, many Americans have been taught that hard work pays off both spiritually and literally. From Protestant preachings about working towards grace to the American dream of upward mobility, these Americans allow for work to symbolize their life's purpose. While there are periods of American history where work was crucial in the formation of society, the rapid transformation of technology and industry has displaced previous notions of

2 “As described by Michael Denning (1997), a Gramscian historical bloc is “a complex, contradictory and discordant ensemble of the superstructures,” “an alliance of social forces and a specific social formation” (p. 6).” (Dolber 3699).

work and labor geared towards a means of survival for communities evolving through Western expansion. Later automation led many to believe in a future of fifteen-hour work weeks. However, the growth of the administration sector, along with a rapid advance of economic inequality, has assisted in keeping American workers exploited. In his provocative 2018 book, *Bullshit Jobs*, David Graeber argues there is a clear moral and political reason for keeping the working classes continuously working: “The ruling class has figured out that a happy and productive population with free time on their hands is a mortal danger... And, on the other hand, the feeling that work is a moral value in itself... anyone not willing to submit themselves to some kind of intense work discipline for most of their waking hours deserves nothing, is extraordinarily convenient for [the ruling class]” (xix). In the current neoliberal, late capitalist era, upward economic mobility is also drastically decreasing. Continuous hyperinflation, increased commodification of the housing market, and stagnant wages are keeping lower and middle classes from achieving any previous notion of the American dream.

R/antiwork, through its informative posting and sharing on the community platform, seeks to challenge this narrative of the Protestant work ethic by articulating a disconnect from imposed worker identity or a sense of value found within the work ethic. According to psychologist George M. Alliger, “anti-work” “asks whether work should even exist. Or it suggests that human labor, especially wage labor, is corruptive of human personality and society. This corrosion occurs despite and perhaps to some extent because the ethic and expectation of work is everywhere, so pervasive as to be almost indiscernible” (2). Under neoliberalism, society has moved further and further away from welfare policies towards a continuous, ceaseless means of production. The “work hustle” mentality of the millennial generation, where overworking and job glorification were among trends of young white-collar workers, has permeated into a corporate expectation of an all-encompassing work culture. However, in the aftermath of the pandemic, the “anti-work” message is gaining traction, with worker grievance transforming into a critique of the Protestant work ethic itself.

While previous labor and feminist movements have called for greater equity in the workplace, Marxist Feminist scholar Kathi Weeks takes this further. She argues that many sometimes fail to understand, or simply ignore, the underlying neoliberal rationalism that frames the patriarchal and late capitalist ideology permeating the Protestant work ethic. What might happen if society began to shift away from this neoliberal work ethic? To privilege life over work? While these questions seem utopic, it just might be this utopian way of imagining that creates real affective change. Echoing Michelle C. Smith, future hope must contain a “necessity of a utopian impulse” (153).

Imagining a Post-Work Utopia

While r/antiwork experienced a setback with the *Fox News* interview, the r/antiwork community rebuilt upon a shared foundation of an imagined future where work is no longer exploitive and detrimental to life itself. Posters sharing their workplace grievances and the responding support have unlocked larger conversations about the Protestant work ethic entirely, and though these resentments have been vocalized throughout history, the hyper communicative nature of the networked public sphere has amplified the circulation. Catherine Chaput argues for a “critical thinking tethered to affective acumen... not only will this critical ontology of our selves revive anticapitalist discourse, but also stands to propel a number of other oppositional movements that have been stymied by a biopolitical governmentality at odds with its critique” (*Market Affect* 160). Through activist politics, Chaput argues, “[a]ctive participation in disruptive moments produce different bodies, different subjectivities, and different affective terrains” (160). A potential disruption in the capitalist discourse lies within posting and sharing “anti-work” discourse on digital platforms.

The ecological circulation of such discourse lays the groundwork for inventing innovative approaches to work and labor. Rhetorician Dan Ehrenfeld states that “the public sphere is a social-material reality that continually provides the grounding for imagined worlds, or ‘fictions.’ And it is simultaneously a ‘political imaginary’ that nevertheless materializes itself in the world, coming to ‘exert a real force’” (310). Considering the networked public sphere in the same light, I propose looking to the circulation of “anti-work” discourse, and how it (re)articulates these imagined worlds of different work culture, as fictions that may materialize with real force through actualized workplace resistance. For social media followers of similar threads of “anti-work” discourse, championing each other to reject toxic work culture through posts, shares, and likes, creates an imagined world where “people should self-organise and labor only as much as needed, rather than working longer hours to create excess capital or goods” (O’Connor). As people vocalize workplace grievance and exploitation, a potential rearticulation of workers’ desires and work identity comes into play.

Such shifts necessitate thinking outside of the system: post work imaginaries through utopian demand. Weeks asks us to consider an alternative to capitalist society that escapes the socialist bent, as socialism is no longer the “persuasive signifier of a postcapitalist alternative” (29). Weeks identifies a form of imaginary as a “utopian demand,” a “utopia without apologies” (175-76). To function effectively, “the demand must constitute a radical and potentially far-reaching change, generate a critical distance, and stimulate the political imagination... a utopian demand should be recognizable as a possibility grounded in actually existing tendencies” (221). The late capitalist model, one that depends on the biopolitical and socioeconomic exploitation of the majority, must be challenged politically. As Weeks notes, “Freedom... depends on collective action rather than individual will, and this is what makes it political” (222). For Weeks, and other scholars calling for “anti-work” politics, these movements must push past calling for equal wages, more jobs, better

benefits (though all of these are valid), and instead ask the bigger question: why continue to uphold the exploitative nature of work to begin with? Why not see the *value* of a life outside of work itself? It is a big ask. It is huge. And certain bodies are at risk of more violence for asking these questions. But like the utopian demand, it is rooted in real life and gives some semblance of hope towards the dark days on the horizon.

Platforms such as *Reddit*, often dismissed for their magnification of hive-minded, and at times hateful, dispersal of information, are fast becoming the best locations to track how digital communities (re)act towards the precarious nature of our times. Tracing the various conversations that span community-based platforms and mainstream media helps to illuminate individual identities interacting within the public sphere. While one must, at times, dig through the disinformation or trolling, we may uncover real stories of real people that articulate potential hegemonic shifts. I see potential for these digital conversations to impact the socio-economic realities outside of these platforms. *Black Lives Matter* showed us the power of hashtag circulation in July 2013, leading to police reforms and organizational changes, such as increased training and bans of no-knock warrants (Ray). The #MeToo movement also provided a platform for collective grievance and organizing. Women's testimony led to several legal and career take downs of prominent men, as well as bringing awareness to the overwhelming number of sexual assault victims (Burgess). Both movements used the affordances of digital circulation to create awareness and find modes of collective organization geared towards changing the narratives around race and gender. In comparison to other social movements and their collective strength on digital platforms, there are potential affordances in the circulation of "anti-work" discourse that can be articulated with more organized, long-standing social movement organizations and tactics. These social movements can disrupt the dominant hegemonic ideology of the Protestant work ethic. Scholarship attuned to these new forms of discourse might aid the process of developing new hegemonic articulations by describing and prescribing them, motivating us to act upon the socio-economic welfare of our precarious status.

As many continue to grapple with the aftermath of the pandemic and lockdowns, scholarship on work and labor is vital to uncover the ways in which ties to previous notions of work ethic and identity become challenged in the face of such socio-economic upheaval. While attending to specific occupations or official documentation for sites of unrest provides data for such changes, broader conversations on digital community platforms can also enrich our understanding of how workers are articulating their grievances. Scholars interested in work-related rhetorics may look to these forms of discourse as not only a way to illuminate these individual and collective responses to such shifts, but also to denaturalize neoliberal attitudes about work.

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