Book Reviews

Come Out Swinging: The Changing World of Boxing in Gleason's Gym. By Lucia Trimbur. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2013. Pp. xiv+200.

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Come Out Swinging by Lucia Trimbur is an ethnographic description and analysis of the world of Gleason's Gym as a physical and cultural space. As described by Trimbur, Gleason's Gym is not just a physical place where people engage in boxing but is instead a living, breathing space carved out of the concrete jungle known as Brooklyn, where men of color, women, and white-collar men come together and construct for themselves a meaningful sociocultural world with identities to match. Updating the theme of the "mosaic of social worlds" by the earlier Chicago school urban ecologists and ethnographers, Trimbur integrates in a masterful way the micro and macro elements of this sociocultural phenomenon.

The political-economic environment within which the culture of Gleason's gym unfolds is 21st-century postindustrial New York City, where the manufacturing economy has declined, replaced by FIRE (finance, insurance, and real estate) and its accompanying neoliberal ideology of individual self-sufficiency, limited government, corporate deregulation, crime control, and the cutting of social programs aimed at helping the poor. In this postindustrial environment, there are winners and losers, with the winners being those professionals who work in the core sectors of the economy. A racialized and gendered division of labor has evolved, disproportionately affecting poor men and women of color, who become contingent labor working in the low-paying service sector of the economy. In this context, Gleason's Gym is changing—for economic reasons forced to accept women and to accommodate the new white-collar clientele, both of whom are good paying customers. This adaptation permits Gleason's to survive in a changing postindustrial environment.

At its core, *Come Out Swinging* is about a physical space that is defined by the commercial and recreational enterprise that is its raison d'être, boxing. Gleason's Gym is a business that attracts people into its space. Trimbur spent four years as a participant observer in Gleason's Gym, even taking up boxing to better understand "the sweet science." She displays a deep understanding of both the culture of that world and the people who give it life: the male boxers and their trainers, mostly poor men of color; women boxers, ethnically and racially diverse but mostly middle class and

highly educated; and the white, affluent, very successful white-collar business men who are self-proclaimed hipsters. These characters come from different backgrounds and they come with different motivations; what they have in common is a desire to box. The black boxers, both professional and amateur, work at being boxers. Trimbur argues persuasively that though the amateurs do not earn money from boxing, they perceive themselves occupationally as boxers. Their identity, their master status, is that of boxer, and that identity stands as a bulwark against the life that many of them have had outside the gym as ex-cons with long rap sheets from a youthful past on the streets of New York City. The gym and boxing are their refuge from that world of the street. Inextricably linked to the boxers are the trainers, mostly black men, who come from the streets but who are older, wiser, and bent on imparting to the young boxers all that they know about boxing and life. The trainers' role is reminiscent of Elijah Anderson's "old heads," described in his book about the streets of Philadelphia, *Streetwise* (University of Chicago Press, 1990). Trimbur appears to hold the trainers in the highest esteem, seeing them as the heart and soul of Gleason's Gym—they teach their charges the rules of boxing, such as to come out swinging and never back up. They also teach an ethic of personal responsibility and tough love, never permitting their black neophytes to use the racial injustices of the world as an excuse for giving up, both inside and outside the ring. The trainers constantly drive home to their young boxers the comparison between boxing and life—just as one can never give up in boxing, the same holds for life. As Trimbur writes: "When applied to the social world, the personal-responsibility narratives naturalize the inequality of social circumstances and refuse to allow excuses or complaints, demanding self-sufficiency instead" (p. 51).

The women boxers are vastly different in their social backgrounds and motivations. According to Trimbur, these women seek empowerment and the establishment of new identities. Many of them have experienced physical and/or psychological injuries—both a consequence of being women in a society that often treats women as less worthy. The women look to boxing as a way of using their bodies to exercise control and develop a new sense of identity. Trimbur writes, "There is an irony in seeking solace from violence in a violent sport. But for these women, boxing is a corporeal reclamation, a way of taking back one's body and feeling empowered" (p. 95). In a most poignant manner, Trimbur describes the difficulties these women encounter in overcoming their fear—ironically—of hurting their opponents in a sport that is about hurting one's opponent. Trimbur also describes the still-uphill battle that women wage for acceptance as boxers in a hypermasculine gym culture that has great difficulty welcoming women. In response, the women develop a subculture of support and acceptance.

The last group Trimbur describes is that of the well-heeled white-collar clients. These upper-crust white men now constitute 65% of the gym's membership. They constitute the economic backbone of Gleason's Gym, both for ownership and for the largely black and Latino trainers who sell their expertise. They are the clientele who buy the services of trainers like

"Harry" and "Mike" for anywhere between $20 and $75 per hour. What they buy, according to Trimbur's incisive analysis, involves a type of racialized consumerism wherein these white-collar businessmen buy black masculinity to compensate for or perhaps assuage their nagging fear of feminization and growing softness. As Trimbur writes: "The assumption of white-collar boxing is that proximity to the masculinity of the racial Other can help clients construct an identity" (p. 138). Trimbur comes close to betraying a near-visible sneer as she writes about these men and their place in the culture of the gym.

Trimbur has written a wonderful book about the world of boxing, specifically that place and space dedicated to boxing known as Gleason's Gym. Anyone who wants to understand boxing as practiced in 21st-century Brooklyn should read the sociological gift bestowed upon us called *Come Out Swinging.*

Unfinished Business: Paid Family Leave in California and the Future of U.S. Work-Family Policy. By Ruth Milkman and Eileen Appelbaum. Ithaca, N.Y.: ILR Press, 2013. Pp. xiv+151. $69.96 (cloth); $19.95 (paper).

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In 2002, California became the first state in the United States to create a paid family-leave program. Administered through the existing state disability insurance and funded by an employee tax, paid family leave (PFL) makes six weeks of partially paid leave available to most private-sector employees who seek to bond with a new child or to care for a seriously ill family member. In *Unfinished Business*, Ruth Milkman and Eileen Appelbaum tell the story of the political struggle that led to the advent of PFL and explore the effects and limitations of the program in the first several years following its implementation. The modest length of this book is deceptive, as the authors manage to convey the past, present, and future of this policy with great depth and the support of several fascinating data sources.

The authors begin by making the case for paid family leave, highlighting not only to the caregiving needs of children and the ill and disabled but drawing special attention to the inequalities by gender and class that shape the division of caring labor and the access to paid leave time by employees prior to PFL. These inequalities by gender and class prior to PFL are an important context for looking at the effects of PFL later in the book, where the authors find that the policy appears to have mitigated inequalities in leave taking by gender but not by class.

One of the most striking arguments in the book relates to the politics of family leave policy. Despite high popular support for paid family leave across gender, class, and political party affiliation, family-leave policies (even the unpaid leave provided by the national Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993) face extraordinary obstacles to passage due to business opposition. Even after compromises that reduced business costs (the PFL bill, e.g.,