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The Company Owns the Mine but They Don't Own Us: Feminist Critiques of Capitalism in the Coalfields of Kentucky in the 1970s

Jessica Wilkerson

During a miners' strike in 1973, Earl Dotter photographed Minnie Lunsford, the oldest among a group of women who stood on the picket lines in support of striking miners. She wore a sign that stated, 'Duke Power Company Owns the Brookside Mine, But They Don't Own Us'. Her statement boldly addressed a history of exploited workers who laboured for years only to be tossed aside when they were sick or disabled – or worse, killed in the mines. Part of the power of the statement is where it appears. Written across the body of a woman who had never been employed in the mines, the declaration exposed the company's control over the above-ground world of mining communities where women lived, worked and cared for families. Lunsford's fellow picketer Sudie Crusenberry cut out a magazine print of the photograph and pasted it on the cover of one of her scrapbooks. Between its covers, she documented the strike, past and present battles in the coalfields, and the activities of the Brookside Women's Club, an organisation founded by miners' female kin to support the strike. Along with the picture of Lunsford, Crusenberry included an image of Mother Jones and her famous battle cry, 'Remember the dead and fight like hell for the living'. On another page she inserted the lyrics of a song by Aunt Molly Jackson, a miner's wife affiliated with leftist organisers in the 1930s. Her song 'Dreadful Memories' captured the gendered class divide in the coalfields where 'the coal operators and their wives and their children/Were all dressed in jewels and silk' while the miners' wives cannot afford to feed their children and are haunted by the 'dreadful memories' of seeing children 'sick and hungry, weak and cold' who 'starve to death and die'. Crusenberry positioned these lyrics alongside a portrait of herself at an organising meeting. Lastly, she tucked into the pages of the book an International Women's Day button from a local women's rights meeting where she had been a speaker after the strike had ended. The photograph of Lunsford along with Crusenberry's bricolage – and the stories that led to these material artefacts of a 1970s miners' strike – offer windows into these women's worlds where collective memory, a strike and contemporary social movements melded in Harlan County, Kentucky.[1]

Lunsford and Crusenberry joined miners as they fought for union recognition. In September 1973, miners in Brookside, Kentucky, at the Eastover Mining Company, a subsidiary of Duke Power Company, walked off their jobs after the company refused to recognise their vote to form a local of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA). Following an injunction that limited pickets to three miners per entrance, wives, daughters and mothers of miners stood in for male picketers and soon founded the Brookside Women's Club. Over the course of the next year, women continued to organise in support of the striking workers. Their club's ranks grew to nearly 100 local supporters, including relatives of miners and women leaders from various community organisations in eastern Kentucky, and they attracted dozens of supporters from across the country.

The Brookside Women's Club was covered by the national press and made the front pages of underground, left-leaning newspapers. In 1976 the strike and the women's club featured prominently in the Academy Award-winning documentary film *Harlan County, USA*, directed by Barbara Kopple. A month after the strike began, Kopple began filming in Harlan County with the hopes of bringing attention to the campaign for a democratically-controlled UMWA, an effort dubbed 'Miners for Democracy'. The campaign's organisers saw a victory in Harlan County as vital; a unionised eastern Kentucky, with its long history of labour battles, would provide a boost to the labour movement nationally. Few would have guessed that the female relatives of miners would become major players in this drama. Moved by the Brookside women's commitment and passion, Kopple helped to make them central figures in the unfolding story of labour strife.[2]

Harlan County, USA kept the women's stories before a national audience for years to come. The Brookside women became cultural icons, symbolic of a flinty, Appalachian working class that battled against capital in the coalfields. Yet these women's stories have been divorced from the history of the 1970s, which saw an upsurge of militant labour and feminist activism. Their social positions as daughters, mothers and wives pushed them into the labour battle and informed their sense of class solidarity; at the same time their actions challenged the gender relations that buttressed the coalfield economy. At least some of the activists aligned themselves with the women's liberation movement, though decidedly from a position of liberating poor and working-class families from the ills of capitalism. Working-class women's activism in coal country dramatises key struggles of the 1970s – a wave of labour uprisings and the modern American women's movement – from the perspective of women who straddled these two movements and sought to unite them through their own histories.

This article argues that the Brookside women's support of striking miners was fundamentally about gendered class inequality: the denigration of working-class, female caregivers alongside the devaluing of men's labour. Using collective memory and individual experience as their interpretive devices, the Brookside women forged a class-conscious feminism. In it they exposed the traumas of coalfield capitalism, shone a light on women's unpaid care work (one of the foundations of corporate capitalism) and destabilised the gender and class hierarchies that defined coalfield communities. The movement that unfolded in the mountains of Kentucky offers an important example of what theorist Nancy Fraser terms 'gender justice', an approach that links gender inequality to various struggles against domination and integrates dimensions

of redistribution, recognition and representation.[3] The Brookside women envisioned a multi-dimensional transformation of society, from the valuing of care work and the presence of women in public debates, to recognising that capitalist labour markets were detrimental to many women's lives.

This story complicates a by now familiar refrain in labour history that identity politics, notably feminism, 'eclipsed' class politics in the 1970s. The Brookside women help to unravel the conception of feminism that undergirds some historians' analysis of 1970s politics. Several scholars have argued that the turn away from class solidarity – the core of New Deal liberalism – combined with other factors to weaken the labour movement.[4] This argument assumes a sharp divide between the old order in which economic justice was central, and an era of fragmentation during which feminists and minority groups fought symbols of oppression rather than economic structures that had led to material stratification. While it is the case that the feminism that became dominant by the 1980s had a class problem, the narrative of a sharp divide overlooks how women at the grassroots practised a form of gender-conscious activism that grew directly out of class struggle and social relations. Returning to Fraser's analysis, she has argued that the subordination of social struggles to cultural struggles was not 'the original intention' of feminist politics, but a 'cunning of history'.[5] Yet many scholars take for granted a simplified version of the women's movement in which recognition of gender identity (to the exclusion of class) was always the paramount goal.[6] My aim is to offer a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between class and feminist politics of the 1970s by highlighting two fundamental elements of the Brookside story: first, how gendered class-consciousness bridged the gaps between the women's and labour movements, and second, the ways that women who performed the domestic and caregiving labour in the coalfield economy informed the labour struggle in Brookside.

Many feminist scholars have questioned a history that separates economic and gender issues, feminism and class solidarity, as it relies on a too narrow definition of the women's movement. Scholars have examined how, along with hallmark women's issues such as domestic violence, reproductive rights and gender discrimination in the workplace, 1970s feminists championed a diverse range of campaigns as multi-class feminist coalitions mobilised in support of welfare rights, full employment, childcare and income assistance for caregivers.[7] Moreover, new histories of modern American feminism have transformed the field. Most recently, Annelise Orleck has tackled the myth that radical feminism 'was an outburst of anger by young, white, affluent women that held little appeal for other women and made little sense to anyone else'.[8] Building on over a decade of new scholarship and examining the histories of women whose feminism was rooted in race and class positions, Orleck offers a new synthetic narrative of the 1960s and 1970s women's movement that reveals an array of activists – Latina farm workers, Native American activists and black welfare rights activists. Newer histories have also examined the importance of place and context for the women's movement, shifting away from a focus on national organisations. Lastly, others have lengthened the timeline, further filling out the history of the modern women's movement. For example, Dorothy Sue Cobble has shown how labour feminists pushed the boundaries of the New Deal coalition from its inception in the 1930s and helped to foster patterns of working-class women's activism that spanned the twentieth century.[9]

The history of the Brookside women adds a new dimension to this important scholarship by focusing on an understudied group: white, working-class women who

laboured part-time or as housewives and were not officially members of unions. Studies of class-inflected feminism have focused primarily on two areas. First, socialist feminists affiliated with the New Left theorised that gender could not be separated from race and class, and many sought ways to support working women – some even joined the picket lines in Harlan County. Second, many blue-collar, working women saw their concerns as workers as intertwined with their struggles as women, as they publicised sex discrimination, tested the boundaries of traditional male workplaces and fought for higher wages in traditionally female work. Women coal miners would do just that by the early 1980s.

I focus on the women who identified as working-class caregivers. For the Brookside women, class status and union politics converged to create a grassroots feminism that exposed how unrestrained capitalism held little promise for caregiving, female dependants in the coalfields.[10] As in other mining towns across the globe, their unpaid labour buttressed industrial capitalism. With few opportunities for steady paid employment, women focused on the daily work of sustaining families, which included feeding families, raising children, cleaning homes (a constant battle against coal dust) and caring for sick and disabled miners, many of whom suffered from coal workers' pneumoconiosis, commonly known as black lung disease. Women made radical demands upon coal corporations that stemmed from their positions as caregivers, and these shaped their approach to the women's movement. They believed that coal companies owed them something: along with better benefits that would come with a union (and would aid the family), they wanted corporations to take responsibility for a wrecked environment, to provide better housing and benefits and to lessen the burdens of care work by better protecting men on the job.[11]

The women's campaigns arose in a context in which mining families had been arguing for corporate responsibility, union support and federal intervention for over a decade. Their activism followed on the heels of coal miners and miners' widows roving pickets in the 1960s to ensure unions delivered on promises. As Robyn Muncy has shown, Appalachian miners argued that the UMWA should provide a range of benefits, including access to hospitals, and that the federal government had a duty to force unions and employers 'to deliver the goods'. Muncy described miners' protests for benefits as a function of the 'welfare regime', the 'interlocking system of public and private policies, institutions and programs that aim to promote social welfare'.[12] Along with roving pickets, women in eastern Kentucky in the early 1970s would have been familiar with the War on Poverty and the demands that antipoverty activists made upon the state – from access to food stamps to affordable health care – as well as their efforts to expose corporate abuse in the coalfields. In sum, their activism was part of a longer and larger movement to put pressure on public and private institutions to strengthen social supports for working-class families.

This article traces the Brookside women's engagement with labour and women's movements through three interwoven stories: women's historical memory of gendered class struggles in the twentieth century, women's involvement in the 1970s strike in Harlan County, Kentucky, and some women's individual transformations during and after the strike, as they grappled publicly with gender and class barriers in their lives. When they joined the strike, women did so as the kin of miners, arguing that putting their female bodies on the line would prevent labour clashes between men. They were also informed deeply by the politics of the time, as they encountered antipoverty

activists, socialist feminists, sympathetic documentary filmmakers and a union undergoing democratisation. As women became spokespeople on film, in newspapers and at public meetings, some of them began to connect the labour movement to their social status as female caregivers, and others began to relate their activism to the women's liberation movement. While most of the local women in the strike would not have called themselves feminists (because of feminism's association with white, middle-class, urban women), they nonetheless acted in gender-conscious ways: they raised what they perceived to be women's issues as they placed women's subordination in the context of single industry capitalism and argued for economic fairness from their perspectives as mothers, wives and daughters burdened by the heavy duty care work particular to the coalfields.[13]

Collective memory in the coalfields

The Appalachian region experienced rapid growth in the early twentieth century as the railroad arrived and industry gained access to the coalfields of the Cumberland Mountains. The sparsely populated region of mountain farmers transformed into an area of industrial growth. By 1925, a majority of the workforce lived in company-owned 'coal camps'. Along with housing, these towns included schools, churches, theatres, commissaries, barber shops and post offices, all owned and operated by the company.[14]

By the early 1970s, Brookside was one of the region's last remaining coal camps, and the women who led the Brookside Women's Club had lived either there or in other coal camps as children. Founded by the relatively small Harlan Collieries Company in 1924 and purchased in 1970 by Eastover Mining Company, Brookside was a modest community. Its four-room homes did not have insulation or indoor plumbing, and the community lacked the amenities of urban planning, such as the modern water systems of larger coal towns.[15] Nonetheless, residents had a strong sense of community. Men worked together in the mines, women shared resources and completed chores together, and families gathered in schools, churches and community centres.[16]

Community ties were also staked on the individual and collective memories of miners' labour struggles. In the 1920s the communist-led National Miners Union began campaigns and in the 1930s the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) organised miners and faced off against company-hired guards, leading to the famous Bloody Harlan battle between miners and the local sheriff.[17] During the 1970s strike, three generations of women were represented on the picket lines and their activism reflected a living memory of the 1930s labour movement. Some were children during the 1930s labour battles, at least one woman was a young mother in the 1930s, and others were granddaughters of men who had been pro-union miners.[18]

The childhood memories of Lois Scott, who became an outspoken leader in Brookside, reveal the emotional and psychological dimensions of coal-camp girlhood. Scott was born on 3 November 1929, just days after the stock market crash.[19] Scott, her parents and twelve siblings lived in the Benham coal camp in Harlan County. In the 1930s, Lois's father, Dave Jones, could find work only two days a week. Scott's country-dwelling relatives kept the large family from starving by sending food.

Coal operators reacted to the Depression and an overall decline in coal demand by cutting wages by 10 per cent and reducing hours of operation. Miners and their families

faced severe poverty, and they found that the Red Cross (one of the few social safety nets before the advent of New Deal programmes) offered financial assistance only to drought victims in regions dominated by agriculture, not to those who suffered because of industrial collapse. The UMWA saw the opportunity to act and initiated what would become a nine-year unionisation campaign in eastern Kentucky and Tennessee.[20]

Dave Jones began organising for the UMWA and soon met punishment from the coal operators. The Harlan County Coal Operators' Association, established in 1916 by local firms to facilitate political control of the county government, including the sheriff's department, kept close watch over union activity.[21] Moreover, the mine bosses employed guards, spies and 'gun thugs' in their attempts to quell labour protests. When miners tried to organise a union, they risked their jobs, their housing and sometimes their lives. People who were children during the 1920s and 1930s in eastern Kentucky towns grew up with the chilling stories of gun violence, protracted standoffs and murders stemming from labour struggles. 'This is important to me, and this scared me', Lois Scott remembered. One night company guards invaded her home and made the children get out of bed so that they could search underneath the mattresses for union literature. 'They'd kick the door open and shine the flash light in our eyes', she recalled.[22] She knew that her father was pro-union, and she feared for his life. Another night the guards came into the house and told Bessie Jones that her husband had been shot. Later that night, the family learned that Dave Jones was alive, uninjured and hiding. The guards had lied in an attempt to frighten his wife into providing them information about the union organisers' whereabouts. Later, Scott declared that the Brookside strike 'gave me the opportunity to show the feelings, I guess you'd call it the hatred, I feel for the coal operator – for what he done to my father and to my brother and the family'.[23]

Seventy-year-old Minnie Lunsford, who had been a young woman in the 1930s and was one of the oldest women to join the picket lines, often used stories of the 1930s labour battles to rally supporters. She recalled the times during the Great Depression when mining companies cut wages and fought the union. When violence broke out between union workers and non-union security guards, the National Guard was called in to quell the labour protests. Lunsford remembered that she stayed inside with her children, and kept a close watch on the machine guns that sat atop hills surrounding the coal company town. 'I would put my children to sleep and I would walk the floor and worry about my children's safety', she said. During the Brookside strike, she feared that the situation could become a repeat of the repression she witnessed earlier in her life. 'We're living in a critical time', Lunsford stated as she compared the 1930s to the 1970s strikes. One of the biggest changes in Lunsford's eyes was that more women could publicly support the men. In the past, she had stayed indoors with the children; now she joined the men on the picket line and helped make decisions about how to support the union.[24]

For younger women, stories of the past helped them to make sense of contemporary problems. For instance, Lois Scott's twenty-five-year-old daughter, Bessie Lou Cornett, explained her own participation in the strike as an attempt to reverse the decades of injustice her family had known.[25] She recounted sitting at the dinner table and listening to her grandfather Dave Jones tell stories about UMWA organising in the 1930s. 'That's mostly what we talked about', Cornett stated. Her sense of injustice grew as she watched her grandfather die of black lung disease after forty-two years of working in coal dust.

When the Brookside strike began, Cornett was eager to participate. 'When I watched [my grandfather] die and suffer like he did with that black lung disease', she reflected, 'I knew that something could be done about it. And I told myself, if I ever get the opportunity to get those coal operators I will. Because I thought, you know, [the company] was the enemy. So when this strike came up, I saw the opportunity, and I jumped right in there'.[26]

Collective memory was at the heart of the Brookside women's activism. It offered a framework for making sense of coalfield politics. These memories were also gendered narratives: a mother worrying or a daughter seeking revenge for the harms inflicted upon grandfathers, fathers and brothers. As the strike became more heated, women would continue to draw on a collective past – specifically from the perspective of coalfield women – as they exposed the worst abuses of the coal companies.

'Why don't we just [go] down to the picket line ourselves': striking in the 1970s

In the boom and bust cycle of the coal industry, the early 1970s were considered relatively stable, but the workers knew how quickly the tide could turn. At the Eastover Mine in Brookside, workers made relatively good wages – $45 per day. Decent pay, however, did not make up for the fact that the company union installed and controlled by management failed to secure medical benefits and pensions, and it made no effort to address dangerous working conditions. Because the union's leadership had been hand-picked by the company, workers did not believe that they could report their problems in good faith. In 1972, the Mine Enforcement Safety Administration found that the rate of disabling injury at Brookside was twice the national average. It documented an array of mechanical and structural problems in the mines, such as 'loose, broken, or missing roof bolts' and dangerous flooding. Each day that miners went below ground, they risked serious injury and even death. Over the long term, they were prone to developing black lung disease from inhaling coal dust day in and day out.[27]

As Brookside miners grew wary of the constant threats to their safety, UMWA miners nationwide erupted over their union's corrupt leadership, which had committed severe crimes and had done little to address the dangerous working conditions that miners faced. An internal movement called Miners for Democracy pushed for democratic reform in the UMWA.[28] Inspired by that movement, Brookside miners voted 113 to fifty-five for the UMWA to be their representative in June 1973. In July the company refused to recognise the UMWA as the workers' union or to accept a contract, and all 180 miners employed at Eastover walked out.[29] Eastover promptly hired non-union workers and, by September, obtained a court injunction to limit the number of striking miners who could picket.[30]

Wives, mothers and daughters stepped in to replace men on the picket lines in late September 1973. The women noted that while it was illegal for more than three miners to picket, the injunctions said nothing about women. As Bessie Lou Cornett recalled:

> We wanted to be able to help the men stop the scabs and get a contract without all that violence. And so what we did was we talked to each other. We had a march and said, 'Why don't we just [go] down to the picket line ourselves. We can stop the scabs. The court don't have an injunction against us'. We saw that as a tactic for getting around the injunction. So, that's what we did.[31]

Minnie Lunsford reflected on the decision to join the Brookside men: '[I]t looked pitiful for them [miners] to be setting there ... and the [strikebreakers] going on to work. The women put up with it for about a week, and they got to calling one another, and they would go out to the picket line'.[32] The speed at which women from Brookside and nearby communities responded demonstrates what historian Camille Guerin-Gonzales calls 'elaborate cultures of solidarity' in mining communities, where women's ties to both men and other women created collectivities that were worth defending'.[33]

Almost as soon as they joined the picket line, women from Brookside and their allies formed an organisation called the Brookside Women's Club. The club was open to all wives of Brookside miners on strike and any women who supported the union. The women elected officers, and they met at each other's homes and at the community centre. They used the club to make decisions about when and where to meet for protests, how to raise money in support of the strike and how to distribute funds. The group helped to pay for prescription medications for miners who were out on strike, and it supplied families with clothing and women with the gas money they needed to be able to drive to the picket lines. Most importantly, the group provided a sense of working-class solidarity for the striking miners and their families. For instance, the women stood on roadside corners with milk jugs and signs stating, 'Striking Families Need $ Please Donate'. The women always saw the strike as a community effort; whole families were on strike with the miner and breadwinner, and the women expected the working-class community to come together and support the families.[34]

The club advertised itself as a supporter of pro-union families, but the women also had practical reasons for joining the strike: they believed that their presence would prevent extreme forms of violence between anti-union and union men. Ultimately, however, their presence did not prevent violence. Instead, it exposed the pervasive forms of violence, including company-supported attacks on miners and state-backed repression of the strike. For instance, while it was common for anti-union and union workers to arm themselves, the company recruited 'gun thugs', as the women called them, to harass protesters. The most notorious gun-toting, anti-union man was known for brandishing his gun to intimidate women, and during one particularly heated stand-off he fired upon female protesters and members of the documentary film crew.

Women met threats of violence with civil disobedience. Kopple and her team caught one of the most dramatic moments of protest on film. At daybreak on 23 October 1973, dozens of women prepared to hold the picket line in Harlan County, Kentucky. Dense fog silhouetted the gathering crowd. State police stood on one side of the road, forming human fences to keep protesters out of the street. 'Very tough looking women' stood on the other side. Events from the past couple of days portended conflict. Ninety strikebreakers had arrived, and the state police were prepared to escort them and mine bosses onto company property. Meanwhile, hundreds of union supporters from Kentucky and Virginia mines joined locals on the picket line. Tensions broke when one carload of strikebreakers made it past the picketers. Before the second car could pass through, Lois Scott called out to her comrades in the Brookside Women's Club, 'Come on, girls! Lay down! Lay Down!' Scott, Betty Eldridge and Melba Strong stretched across the road to block a car from entering the company gates. If the men wanted to break the picket line, they would first have to run over the protesters. Despite jeers from the crowd, the state police quickly intervened.[35] The police dragged the women into

police cars and arrested them for blocking the road.[36] Betty Eldridge reported that the police officer slammed her knee in a police car, crushing it 'to a pulp'. She interpreted the aggressive act as evidence that the law at Brookside was 'all one sided'.[37]

The women publicised these acts of aggression in the hopes of attracting more members. In one of the early recruiting fliers, the club listed the attacks on women picketers and union miners, naming some of the strikebreakers who threatened them. They reported that one strikebreaker hit a woman picketer with his car, another threatened to shoot protesters and one anti-union man shot into the truck of a union supporter.[38]

Brookside women also hoped to expose the political machines of Harlan County and the unjust operations of the local court. F. Byrd Hogg, the Circuit Court Judge who presided over the trials of those who disregarded the strike injunctions, became so notorious for siding with the company and against strikers that he was widely rumoured to secretly be a coal operator. According to Eldridge, he did not like the idea of women participating in the protests or the legal process. When she questioned a police officer's testimony, Hogg told her she was a 'big-mouth, interfering woman' who was 'sticking her nose' where she had no business, and he indicted her for contempt of court. She saw the indictment as an attempt to intimidate her and to pressure her to reveal the UMWA's tactics. The judge asked her if the union was paying her to picket. Eldridge responded that she picketed on 'principle'. To her, supporting a union comes 'from the inside of you. It's not money'. The courts and the company people could not seem to understand that people would stand up for their beliefs 'without [someone] loading their pockets with money'.[39]

Women referenced their sex frequently, from their declarations that they would use their female bodies to prevent violence to accounts of sexism as they entered into spaces where they contested power. In these moments, they often drew upon their positions as wives and mothers to defend their stance.[40] For instance, when Judge Hogg sentenced Nannie Rainey along with six women and eight men to six months in jail or $500 for violating the injunction, Rainey took her seven young children to jail with her (five other children also went to jail with their parents). Rainey told a reporter that her only crime was 'trying to protect my husband's job'. She added that she was following in the tradition of her own father, 'who went through this same kind of battle years ago'.[41] News of the arrests spread and photographs of the women and children behind bars circulated through the media, showing up in union literature, regional newspapers and leftist publications. Following the arrests, Brookside strikers upped their protests in response, leading the judge to suspend the jail sentences after two days (though he kept the $500 fines in place).[42]

Throughout the strike women employed language to position themselves as wives, mothers and daughters who were mobilising in defence of the men in their lives and for their families. In this way, they signalled that their activism was not meant to threaten gender norms and hierarchy. But as the strike wore on, women more frequently pushed the boundaries of their activism's meaning, especially as they engaged in more direct action. Moreover, the rhetoric of 'protecting' a man's job elided the bold actions of women; even as they spoke in deference to gender hierarchy, they paradoxically challenged gender and class boundaries by showing up in male-dominated spaces, such as the picket line, the jail and the courthouse. This point was not lost on their adversaries. At a press conference Norman Yarborough, president of Eastover Mining Company, said, 'I wouldn't like to think that my wife would do that'.[43] Another woman

reported that anti-union men would yell things like, 'If you was my wife, you'd be home where you belong'.[44]

In the wake of more arrests and trials, the membership of the Brookside Women's Club grew along with their public presence.[45] The Club responded to the situation at hand: people had been arrested and fined exorbitant amounts, the company was not considering negotiations, and it was going to be a long winter for families with little income. For the next several months, the women continued to picket at Brookside until Eastover, unable to bring in enough strikebreakers, shut down the mine in December. The women then turned their attention to the Highsplint mine, another Eastover operation in Harlan County, and they continued to work on bringing publicity to the expanded strike and supporting the individuals who were called before court for violating the injunction.[46]

The Brookside Women had begun their protests to ease tensions and support miners. Nine months into the conflict they were speaking on a public stage about their experiences as women and mothers in the coalfields. In March of 1974 representatives of the club joined the Citizens Public Inquiry, a forum to discuss the abuses of the coal company. Funded by the Field Foundation, the Citizens Public Inquiry was modelled after a 1931 citizen's inquiry to investigate coal company intimidation that was headed by the radical novelists Theodore Dreiser and John Dos Passos.[47] UMWA President Arnold Miller proposed the 1974 meeting and Daniel Pollitt, a University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill law professor who was committed to civil rights and labour justice, moderated the meetings at a community centre near Brookside. He and local religious leaders, a former US Secretary of Labor, faculty from Duke University, activists from various regional councils and members of the Brookside Women's Club joined miners to testify in support of the UMWA contract.[48]

These women discussed the social dynamics of the coalfields and how not only their miner husbands but they too had to navigate company politics. They documented the lack of running water in the coal camp, the poor quality of the well water that served the community, the privies that polluted the creek and the lack of recreational areas or 'niceties of any kind'.[49] Bessie Lou Cornett reported that she had urged the Health Department to test the drinking water a year earlier because she feared that the outdoor spigots were not safe. The Health Department found that the water was highly contaminated with faecal bacteria. Another woman stated that at times the water was so black from coal dust that she had to strain it with a cloth. The women then pointed out that, because the company owned the wells and the water in the camp, the Health Department refused to do anything to remedy the problem. They also testified that the company threatened to tear down housing or evict residents as a way of maintaining control over workers.[50] US Secretary of Labor Willard Wirtz noted that the strike raised not only 'a collective bargaining contract issue', but also a social issue. Wirtz recognised that the women's involvement brought attention to the strike as a community issue that went far beyond a dispute between business and labour.[51]

The women participated in the meetings not only as wives of miners, but also as a group of women invested in the general well-being of the working-class community. During public hearings in the 1930s, officials had questioned miners' wives on the witness stand and focused on the treatment of their pro-union husbands. In contrast, at the 1974 hearing, women were much more involved in shaping events. This partly reflected their organised involvement. Women testified as a group. They all sat together

at one table, some of them with children, and they were a formidable presence as they charged the coal company of crimes and the local government of circumventing the law. The issues that the women discussed – housing and the ability to care for families – hearkened back to other miners' wives protests, yet their presence as a group points to a pronounced gender-consciousness that was not a part of the earlier protests.[52]

The Brookside women connected the labour strike to personal and community struggles, for many of them had stories about everyday forms of violence that came with poverty and coal operations that put profit above human dignity. Not only were the coal mines hard places for men to work, the coalfields were a tough place for women to raise children and nurture a family. For Sudie Crusenberry, past and present tragedies were the markers of her life trajectory and underpinned her activism. Perhaps more than any other woman involved in the strike, Crusenberry's life experiences point to the constant threat of tragic accidents that disrupted women's lives, reveal the forms that everyday violence took and show how a lifetime of unfair treatment could motivate and shape women's activism.

Like Lois Scott and Minnie Lunsford, Sudie Crusenberry belonged to a generation that had witnessed instability and violence in the coalfields. She had lived all her life in Brookside, where she was born in 1933.[53] Crusenberry's father was a coal miner who had begun work as a child. As an adult he worked at a mine that was walking distance from the home he shared with his wife and children. When a man was hurt or if an accident occurred, such as a collapsed roof, the company sounded an alarm. Young Sudie would run to the mine to make sure her father was not the injured man. On numerous occasions, she had seen men carried out of the mine with injuries and, sometimes, dead.[54]

Before the Brookside strike, Sudie Crusenberry was like many women in her community: her husband worked for the coal mines; she went to church on Sundays; she tended a large hillside garden and canned all the produce; and she kept a close watch over her three daughters and two sons, each of whom she was determined would get the high school diploma she did not have the privilege to obtain. Her worst fear came true a few years before the strike when her husband William, whom she had begged not to work in the coal mine, got caught in the mine during a cave-in. His back and pelvis were broken, and his doctors doubted he would be able to walk again. After two months he was healed enough to come home from the hospital. Crusenberry worked with him daily, massaging his legs and helping him regain strength in his muscles. Crusenberry, her ailing husband and her young children lived on worker's compensation, which paid significantly less than the regular pay check, and the company continued to take out rent for their house. Fortunately, the family had a large store of canned goods that Crusenberry kept under the beds and along the walls. When hard times fell on her family, she was prepared.[55]

But Crusenberry could only withstand so much. Once her husband was declared unable to work in the mines, the company evicted her and her family out of the coal camp house. This last injustice – the company forcing her family out of their home when they were at their most vulnerable – lit a fire in Crusenberry. She believed that if William had been in a condition to work the family could have kept the house, but as soon as company officials learned the extent of his injuries, they told Crusenberry that they were going to tear down her home. Crusenberry's father, who suffered from black lung disease and also lived in the community, was also forced to move.

Crusenberry told her story at the Citizens Inquiry, and the *United Mine Workers Journal* printed her narrative in April 1974, at the peak of the strike. She testified that the destruction of the houses and the displacement of coal miners and their families was a severe injustice. The wood-frame houses may not have appeared special to an outsider, 'just shelters from the storm', but, for Crusenberry, the landscape of the coal camp held a lifetime of memories.[56] Her husband had been crushed in the mines, and she had known deep poverty much of her life. Yet she had made a home in the coal camp, and now the company was taking that away, too. Crusenberry recalled going back to the camp and standing in the spot where her house had been. Two of her children, one who died at birth and another who died at ten months old, were buried in the camp cemetery. After the company tore down the houses, they built a road that made it difficult to get to the gravesite.[57]

As Sudie Crusenberry became more active in the strike, she always pointed out that the company had forced her and her family out of their home before they had a new place to live. For her, the company's unwillingness to honour a UMWA contract and their treatment of families who had lived in coal camps for two and three generations were a part of the same problem. Coal companies had too much power, and they wielded that power over the workers and everyone in the community. If anyone questioned the relationship between housing and union organising, Crusenberry put doubt to rest when she covered the walls of one of the rooms of the house with UMWA bumper stickers before it was demolished.[58]

Crusenberry infused the Brookside Women's Club with discussions about what was just in a community dominated by a single industry and brought attention to the well-being of miners' wives and their children. She came to the club as a mother who wanted to provide better futures for her children. Sudie explained her support of the strike, 'I went down there in support of the miners, for the miners, and in support of my own children, too, that I'm raising up'. By the time she had joined the club, Sudie had two young sons, along with her three older daughters. She was especially concerned about the future of her male children growing up in a place where there were few jobs for men outside of coal mining. This point became especially clear in one club meeting when two club members got into an argument. One woman accused another of committing adultery. Crusenberry interrupted the argument and emphatically reminded the women what was most important: 'I don't care who takes whose man, who lives with whose man, what they do, they can take mine, take him on, they can have him! I'll shed no tears. I'm not after a man; I'm after a contract! I'm raising two boys'. Crusenberry then began discussing her own experience as the wife of a disabled miner, the daughter of a sick miner, a girl who grew up poor in the coal camps and a woman who had lost her home to the company. She punctuated memories of a coal camp life with the poverty, hardship and physical violence that existed in the coalfields. As she shared these memories, the pain became so great that she began to sob:

> My husband was smashed up in the mine, retired, and Eastover just pushed us off. We was pushed off before the rent was up and all of that. He was smashed up there and Daddy is down with coal dust from that mines. [Crying] I went to Ages school. I've got part of the sixth grade because Daddy got eight dollars and something a shift. Nothing to go to school on! Have to go in overalls. And pile out slate for a living after I growed up, [get] coal out of it and sell it![59]

Through her own testimony, she brought to the fore a lifetime of injustices that came with poverty and unstable working conditions. Her testimony and memories suggest the intertwined roots of poverty and the particular effects that poverty had on girls in the coalfields: lack of education, homelessness, a sick father and a disabled husband who required the care-giving labour of women in the family, and the shame of being poor. As the formerly quiet and private Crusenberry was swept into a gender-conscious movement in the coalfields, she expressed her and her group's moral visions: that children in the coalfields deserved educations, that miners and their families deserved better wages, and that until they were freed from the everyday violence of the coalfields, mothers would continue to speak out.[60] Some of them would continue their activism under the banner of the women's movement.

Contextualising Brookside: Appalachia's links to liberation movements

As the strike wore on Brookside women connected with a regional network that raised issues of power, class and gender injustice in the mountains and sparked broader discussions about the meaning of women's rights for working-class women. Their radical and gender-conscious activism garnered attention from self-proclaimed feminists who travelled to Brookside to meet club members and led some Brookside women to count themselves among the movers of the women's movement, moulding feminism to fit their visions of gender equality. Their activism would provide the foundations for the first explicitly feminist campaigns in Appalachia.

In the decade prior to the Brookside Strike, Appalachia had been a key battleground in the Johnson administration's federal War on Poverty. While the underfunded anti-poverty programmes did not erase poverty in Appalachia, they nonetheless helped to politicise a generation of people in Appalachia and energised grassroots campaigns.[61] Significantly, the war on poverty in Appalachia spurred many poor and working-class women in eastern Kentucky to challenge the coal industry's control of local government as well as regional resources and land.[62]

Female leaders of social justice causes across Appalachia joined the picket lines and helped to publicise the events. For example, Eula Hall, a former federal anti-poverty worker who had become a leader in the Eastern Kentucky Welfare Rights Organisation and founder of a community health clinic in nearby Floyd County, heard about the Brookside women at a health fair she had organised. Hall soon joined the club, arrived early in the mornings to picket and helped plan rallies. Florence Reece, who wrote 'Which Side Are You On?' during the 1930s labour struggles in Harlan County and who had become a heroine to 1960s activists, travelled from Tennessee to show her support for the Brookside picketers. She led sing-alongs and posed for pictures with strikers.[63] A network of younger, militant women and men who had been instrumental in youth and poor people's movements in Appalachia joined in, too, as well as young people who travelled to the region specifically for the strike, like the *Harlan County, USA* filmmakers. Along with making films, young people picketed, photographed the strikers and wrote many of the articles that appeared in progressive and left-leaning publications.[64]

The strike at Brookside came to symbolise the power imbalance in the mountains for many and garnered support from a host of regional social justice organisations. Among supporting organisations were the Black Lung Association, the Eastern

Kentucky Welfare Rights Organisation and the strikers at the Pikeville Hospital (who went on strike after the Pikeville Methodist Hospital in Pike County, Kentucky refused to recognise the employees' union representation). All of these groups joined the picket lines and attended union rallies. Brookside women also began to take turns on the picket lines of the hospital workers, who were mostly women, and some Brookside women were again arrested for violating strike injunctions. Supportive networks developed outside of Kentucky as well. For instance, the Appalachian Women's Organisation of Cincinnati held a rally attended by 200 people in a migrant community there. And in the summer of 1974, 3,500 people from across the country travelled to Harlan to attend a UMWA rally.[65]

Because women were among the most radical activists in the strike, it was only a matter of time before the question of feminism was posed to them. *New York Times* reporter Judy Klemesrud covered the women's movement in the 1960s and 1970s, publishing the paper's first articles on the movement. Even though she was sympathetic to the movement, the mocking tone in her article about the Brookside Women's Club reveals class dynamics within and potential barriers to feminism. Klemesrud headlined her article 'Coal Miners Started the Strike – Then Their Women Took Over', playing on stereotypes of downtrodden, emasculated men. She described the women as 'bored housewives who find picketing more exciting than scrubbing floors', doubtless alluding to Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*.[66] Club member Betty Eldridge countered later, 'If somebody's looking for excitement, I wouldn't recommend going to a picket line. There's no excitement. It's just a whole lot of trouble'.[67] Eldridge had little patience for the 'New York woman' who demeaned the circumstances of the protests and failed to recognise the weight of the situation: women risked their homes (many lived in company housing) and their physical safety and financial stability by participating in the strike; their husbands hazarded being blacklisted; and the women faced criminal charges for their activities.

In spite of her errors, the *Times* reporter captured some of the women's thoughts about feminism. Thirty-four-year-old Nannie Rainey, who when arrested took her seven children to jail, asserted that women were willing to protest and spend time behind bars because they saw 'all those women libbers picketing on television, and we didn't see why we couldn't, too'. Barbara Callahan, a twenty-three-year-old woman from Harlan, responded to a reporter's query if the women were supporters of women's liberation by exclaiming, 'Right on'. She then qualified her statement, adding that she was 'all for families and motherhood', too.[68] That at least some of the women saw their protests in relation to the women's movement reveals the ways that women negotiated the meanings of the women's movement and gender equality to make a space for themselves. As sociologist Sally Ward Maggard reported in her study of the Brookside women, the strike led many of them to reconsider their domestic roles in light of their labour protests. For instance, some reported that they slacked off household duties so that they could spend more time picketing. Betty Eldridge asserted, 'You've got to have priorities ... Something had to go'.[69]

Klemesrud was not the only self-identified feminist the Brookside women encountered. Throughout the strike they met and had discussions with socialist feminists and other young women, like Kopple and her film crew, who may not have belonged to feminist organisations but were nonetheless influenced by women's liberation. Kopple, who chose to focus heavily on the Brookside Women's Club in the film *Harlan County,*

USA, helped to bring attention to working-class women's struggles for justice. She was also deeply engaged in the women's group during the months that she filmed, living with local women and supporting their efforts. As she learned from and was inspired by the women, she also helped them to make connections between their own activism and other working-class women's movements. For instance, Kopple arranged for the 1954 film *Salt of the Earth*, based on the 1951 zinc mine strikes in New Mexico, along with other labour films to be sent to Harlan County.[70] The Club showed *Salt of the Earth* at several meetings.[71] While we do not have direct accounts of how the women responded to the film, it is likely that some of them related to the protagonist of *Salt of the Earth*, Esperanza Quintero, a passive housewife who develops into a leader, argues for women's equal participation in the male-led strike and freely expresses the needs of working-class women.[72]

The Brookside Women's Club was also visited by some of the leading voices in the women's liberation movement, especially those who theorised a socialist feminist approach and sought to build coalitions with working-class communities. Barbara Winslow and Sheila Rowbotham visited Brookside for four days in 1973. They met with members of the club, interviewed some of the women, and gave them copies of Rowbotham's recently published book, *Women, Resistance and Revolution*, which documented women's involvement in modern revolutionary movements in Russia, China and Latin America. As Winslow later recalled, the Brookside Women's Club inspired her and others to push the newly formed Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) to open membership to working-class women who were not officially members of unions. Though these efforts were unsuccessful, they show how the campaigns of the Brookside women, and others like them, shaped debates within national feminist organisations and reveal the forgotten alternatives within the women's movement, as a critical mass of women fought for a women's movement that integrated a class analysis and a labour movement that adopted feminist politics.[73]

We can see this especially clearly in the strike's conclusion and its legacy for participants. On 29 August 1974, soon after the fatal shooting of striking miner Lawrence Jones by a strikebreaker, Eastover Mining Company finally signed the UMWA national wage agreement and recognised the collective bargaining rights of the Brookside miners. The local male leaders of the UMWA appreciated the women's support and realised the important roles they played in helping the men win a contract, often making statements like, 'If it hadn't been for the women, we'd have lost this strike'.[74] The union victory was bittersweet; Lawrence Jones left behind a young wife and baby. Many of the women had hoped to prevent such violence. Nonetheless, the Brookside women and supporters of the strike considered Jones a martyr, as his death spurred Eastover into a contract with the UMWA.[75]

After the strike was won and the camera crews left the scene, the Brookside Women's Club continued to meet and women began to participate in new causes, including those that were explicitly organised in support of gender equality. Some of them attended Appalachian Women's Rights Organisation meetings where they spoke about economic injustice in women's lives. With the support of that organisation, women also began to consider working in the mines and breaking down gender barriers in the coalfields. Some women negotiated new relationships with their husbands as they decided to go back to school or start jobs outside the household when the strike was over. At least five women returned to school and two women started their

own businesses. Others joined community and labour organisations, and the women who figured most prominently in the film *Harlan County, USA* went on speaking tours.[76]

The Appalachian Women's Rights Organisation (AWRO), in particular, demonstrates how Appalachian women connected gender and class politics. The organisation brought local women together with leftist activists who had come to Kentucky as anti-poverty workers in the 1960s, as well as some who saw the Appalachian Movement as an important chapter in the ongoing struggle for economic justice and civil rights nationwide. At the first meeting of the AWRO, the thirty people in attendance discussed items for immediate action: they needed childcare and drivers' education for women; they wanted to show support for unionised women and help fight job discrimination; they needed better housing options and a shelter for battered women; and they hoped for more employment opportunities for women in general.[77]

On 9 March 1975, the AWRO held a meeting to celebrate International Women's Day, at which speakers, including Sudie Crusenberry, described women's leadership in eastern Kentucky and the importance of a women's rights movement in the region. The speakers emphasised what they believed were the most significant problems facing mountain women: managing a family on welfare, job discrimination, environmental destruction and domestic violence.

Along with local women, veteran activist Lyn Wells travelled from Detroit, Michigan, to discuss the meaning of International Women's Day and to dispel myths about the women's movement. Wells began participating in civil rights demonstrations in Washington, DC at age fourteen, and she had been a member of civil rights and student organisations as they unfolded in the 1960s. By the 1970s, she was a member of the October League, a Marxist-Leninist faction that had broken away from Students for a Democratic Society and sought to unite the US working class. The League also supported women's liberation, stating in its constitution, 'Women's liberation is a component part of proletarian revolution, and the OL firmly upholds the revolutionary struggle for the full equality and the emancipation of women'.[78] Wells emphasised women's economic freedom. She asserted that women's rights included more than 'the right to be mayor'; they also included the right to decent jobs and childcare as well. She argued that the women's movement was not about giving up 'children and family in order to be free', but about giving women basic economic rights so that they could make better decisions for themselves and their families. International Women's Day was a chance to bring attention to women's fight for the right to participate equally in society. Wells passed out International Women's Day/October League buttons, one of which Sudie Crusenberry placed in her scrapbook.[79]

Shortly after the International Women's Day events, the officers of the Kentucky Commission on Women travelled to Hazard, Kentucky, for a session to hear grievances from women in eastern Kentucky. Local women pushed the Commission, which reflected middle-class views, to acknowledge class differences in women's lives. The fifty women who attended the meeting, including representatives of the AWRO, presented the Commission with a statement describing the most pressing problems facing women in Appalachia: economic insecurity, lack of decent and secure jobs, lack of childcare, threats of welfare cutbacks and the need for shelters for battered women. The statement described the strong leadership of women in the region, from fighting for the UMWA contract to stopping the devastation of strip mining.[80]

As Bessie Lou Cornett explained in a 1976 interview with the *Liberation News Service*, 'If you were exposed to a lot of other social activities, you might begin to broaden your interests a little outside of the home, and see that you had more potential'.[81] Cornett saw the strike as an opportunity for women to 'speak out more' and test the boundaries of coalfield gender codes. In sum, she stated, 'The lessons that were learned at Brookside weren't lost'.[82] These 'lessons' went beyond the labour struggle itself and encompassed the options available to women, their relationships to men and the whole structure of gender and class inequality in the coalfields. The battle at Brookside 'won a lot of concessions for all workers', Cornett stated, 'but it still didn't mean there was full equality, and we still have to carry it forward'.[83]

The women's rights activists in eastern Kentucky laid the foundations for a more aggressive push by women in subsequent years to break down gender barriers in the workplace and to focus on alternative economic development in the mountains that benefited women. The Appalachian Women's Rights Organisation supported early affirmative action efforts by women after four women in Harlan County were denied employment in the mines and filed discrimination charges with the Kentucky Human Rights Commission.[84] By the early 1980s, women would win numerous lawsuits to gain access to the highest paying jobs in the mines. They also joined the UMWA and changed it from within. Most notably, they helped to usher in union-supported family leave policies. Other organisations would focus on education and economic opportunities for working-class women, from partnering with regional colleges to developing GED and remote college programmes to opening up cooperative businesses.[85]

In popular memory, the version of feminism that emerged in the 1980s is too often the only one remembered. Over the course of the 1980s, a dominant strand of the women's movement focused on the composition of the labour market rather than the ways in which the structure of the economy produced inequality, and that focus ultimately benefited professional and corporate women more than working-class women. But the Brookside women's history shows us how 'varied forms of feminism' emerged 'at the intersections of social movements'.[86] At the heart of the movement of Appalachian women was what one activist described as 'economic and survival problems' that women faced daily.[87] Their activism underscores the importance of compensation for care work, occupational safety, a strong labour movement attuned to women's issues and access to education and quality jobs.

The Brookside women's history helps to broaden our understanding of how feminism touched American women's lives. But the goal here is not only to show how the women's movement overlapped with the labour movement and was more expansive than previously imagined. It is also to reveal the ways that women's movements reflect a complex configuration of gender and class and to assert that this deserves scholars' attention. The Brookside women interpreted their own needs as working-class women, drawing upon embodied experiences of capitalism. They turned their stories of caregiving in the coalfields into powerful political narratives, and they argued that their concerns were legitimate in the context of both the labour and the women's movements. For them, gender and class-conscious movements were not at odds; if their lives were to improve, they needed – and they demanded – both.

In October 1976, Bessie Lou Cornett and her mother Lois Scott joined Barbara Kopple at showings of the recently released *Harlan County, USA*. When the film ended and the lights came up, folksinger Hazel Dickens, who wrote music for the

film, played a few more songs for the crowd before Cornett and Scott joined the director on stage to answer questions from the audience. As the reviewer noted, the post-film discussion 'focused not at all on the film *as a film* but rather on the content, the issues it raised. People wanted to know what had happened since Kopple stopped filming'.[88] The audience learned how the struggle for unionisation and for the rights of working-class people continued in eastern Kentucky, as the company continued to try and break the UMWA and mining families continued to address black lung disease and environmental concerns.

It is telling that leaders of the Brookside women became the spokespeople for these struggles before an urban audience at the Lincoln Theatre. The mother-daughter team represented a movement of women in Appalachia, positioned in one of the poorest regions in the country. They attempted to show the rest of America how structural class inequality shaped women's daily existence. The lives of Bessie Lou Cornett, Lois Scott and the many other women who spoke about the poverty, discrimination and injustice they experienced in the coalfields of Kentucky provide us with a better sense of how women's movements for justice emerged on stages not typically associated with second-wave feminism. Their stories point to how specific and local moments of crisis propelled women into the democratic movements of the 1970s. Once mobilised, they connected collective memories of labour protest and individual experiences of class and gender inequality to engage broader debates about justice and equality in American society.

Notes

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1. Sudie Crusenberry, Scrapbooks, Appalachian Archive, Southeast Kentucky Community and Technical College, Cumberland, Kentucky; photo by Earl Dotter for *United Mine Workers Journal*. There are a handful of studies of the strike. For an oral history of the strike, see Alessandro Portelli, *They Say in Harlan County: An Oral History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). Sociologist Sally Ward Maggard has written most extensively about the strike and involvement of women. See Sally Ward Maggard, 'Gender Contested: Women's Participation in the Brookside Coal Strike', in Guida West and Rhoda Blumberg (eds), *Women and Social Protest* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 75–90; Sally Ward Maggard, 'Women's Participation in the Brookside Coal Strike: Militance, Class, and Gender in Appalachia', *Frontiers* 9/3 (1987), pp. 16–21; Sally Ward Maggard, 'Eastern Kentucky Women on Strike: A Study of Gender, Class, and Political Action in the 1970s' (PhD Dissertation, University of Kentucky, 1989). See also Ronald D. Eller, *Uneven Ground: Appalachia Since 1945* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2008).
2. *Harlan County, USA*, Criterion Collection, DVD, directed by Barbara Kopple (New York: Cabin Creek Films, 1976, 2006) and 'The Making of Harlan County USA', in *Harlan County, USA*. See also Alan Rosenthal, *The Documentary Conscience: A Casebook in Filmmaking* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 303–16. My narrative of the strike draws on the detailed timeline of the events at Brookside developed in Maggard, 'Eastern Kentucky Women on Strike'.
3. Nancy Fraser, *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis* (New York: Verso, 2013), pp. 159–74.
4. See especially Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003) and Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working*

Class (New York: The New Press, 2012). Lichtenstein argues that the 'rights conscious' legal framework that grew out of the civil rights and women's movements helped individual workers more than it infused the trade union movement with energy, and asserts that at times it was even at odds with unionisation. Jefferson Cowie argues that social issues 'eclipsed an older order, one infused with a vision of collective economic rights that had itself been deeply compromised at its New Deal birth by its racial and gender limitations' (p. 215). See also Jefferson Cowie and Nick Salvatore, 'The Long Exception: Rethinking the Place of the New Deal in American History', *International Labor and Working Class History* 74 (2008), pp. 3–32, and the response by Nancy MacLean, 'Getting New Deal History Wrong', *International Labor and Working Class History* 74 (2008), pp. 49–55. On identity politics and feminism specifically, see Marisa Chappell, 'Demanding a New Family Wage: Feminist Consensus in the 1970s Full Employment Campaign', in Stephanie Gilmore (ed.), *Feminist Coalitions: Historical Perspectives on Second-Wave Feminism in the United States* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), pp. 252–84; and Dorothy Sue Cobble, 'A "Tiger by the Toenail": The 1970s Origins of the New Working-Class Majority', *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 2/3 (2005), pp. 103–14.

5. Fraser, *Fortunes of Feminism*, pp. 209–26.
6. Scholars representing the new history of capitalism have had little to say about the history of feminism or the women's movement, despite calls by historians of welfare, feminised service industries and care work that women's status and gender hierarchy are necessary to the study of twentieth-century capitalism. See 'Interchange: the History of Capitalism', *Journal of American History* 101 (2014), pp. 503–36.
7. Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Premilla Nadasen, *Welfare Warriors: The Welfare Rights Movement in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Annelise Orleck, *Storming Caesar's Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005); Anne Enke, *Finding the Movement: Sexuality, Contested Space, and Feminist Activism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Anne Valk, *Radical Sisters: Second-Wave Feminism and Black Liberation in Washington, DC* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Marisa Chappell, *The War on Welfare: Family, Poverty, and Politics in Modern America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); Stephanie Gilmore, *Groundswell: Grassroots Feminist Activism in Postwar America* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Dorothy Sue Cobble, Linda Gordon and Astrid Henry, *Feminism Unfinished: A Short, Surprising History of American Women's Movements* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2014); Annelise Orleck, *Rethinking American Women's Activism* (New York: Routledge, 2014).
8. Orleck, *Rethinking American Women's Activism*, p. xiii.
9. Gilmore, *Groundswell*; Valk, *Radical Sisters*; Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement*; Cobble, Gordon and Henry, *Feminism Unfinished*.
10. On socialist feminism, see Rosalynn Baxandall and Linda Gordon (eds), *Dear Sisters: Dispatches from the Women's Liberation Movement* (New York: Basic Books, 2001); Cobble, Gordon and Henry, *Feminism Unfinished*; Myra Marx Ferree and Patricia Yancey Martin (eds), *Feminist Organizations: Harvest of the New Women's Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995); and Sara Evans, *Tidal Wave: How Women Changed America at Century's End* (New York: Free Press, 2003). Scholarship on union women includes Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement*; Ruth Milkman, *Gender at Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex during World War II* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Jane Latour, *Sisters in the Brotherhood: Working Women Organizing for Equality in New York City* (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2008); Susan E. Tallichet, *Daughters of the Mountain: Women Coal Miners in Central Appalachia* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006). Lisa Levenstein has offered a new perspective on feminism, class and caregiving. See Lisa Levenstein, '"Don't Agonize, Organize!": The Displaced Homemakers Campaign and the Contested Goals of 1970s Feminism', *Journal of American History* 100 (2014), pp. 144–68.
11. For more scholarship on women in mining communities and their involvement in labour struggles, see Ellen R. Baker, *On Strike and On Film: Mexican American Families and Blacklisted Filmmakers in Cold War America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Jaclyn J. Gier and Laurie Mercier (eds), *Mining Women: Gender in the Development of a Global Industry, 1670–2005* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), especially Camille Guerin-Gonzales, 'From Ludlow to Camp Solidarity: Women, Men, and Cultures of Solidarity in US Coal Communities, 1912–1990', in Gier and Mercier (eds), *Mining Women*, pp. 296–324; Barbara Kingsolver, *Holding the Line: Women in the Great Arizona Mine Strike of 1983* (Ithaca: ILR Press/Cornell University Press, 1996). On the history of care work, see Eileen Boris and Jennifer Klein, *Caring for America: Home Health Workers in the Shadow of the Welfare State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

12. Robyn Muncy, 'Coal Fired Reforms: Social Citizenship, Dissident Miners, and the Great Society', *Journal of American History* 96 (2009), pp. 72–98, here p. 73.
13. Maxine Molyneux, *Women's Movements in International Perspective: Latin America and Beyond* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 38–59. Molyneux distinguishes women's activism as 'practical gender interests' and 'strategic gender interests', when practical interests become politicised, p. 45. See also Temma Kaplan, *Crazy for Democracy: Women in Grassroots Movement* (New York: Routledge, 1997) and her discussion of 'female consciousness', or when women 'demand the freedom to act as they think their obligations entail' as wives and mothers, pp. 6–7. I use the broader term 'gender-conscious' to indicate that women recognised their own gender in relation to certain events and relationships. Some women politicised their positions as women and demonstrated a feminist consciousness.
14. On the history of industrialisation in the Appalachian South, see Ronald D. Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880–1930* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982) and Robert Weise, *Grasping at Independence: Debt, Male Authority, and Mineral Rights in Appalachian Kentucky, 1850–1915* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001). On the development of the coal industry and coal towns, see David Corbin, *Life, Work, and Rebellion in the Coal Fields: the Southern West Virginia Miners, 1880–1922* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981) and Shaunna L. Scott, *Two Sides to Everything: The Cultural Construction of Class Consciousness in Harlan County, Kentucky* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995).
15. Portelli, *They Say in Harlan County*, p. 12.
16. Scott, *Two Sides to Everything,* pp. 53, 62.
17. Portelli, *They Say in Harlan County*, pp. 119–20.
18. On the relationship between individual and collective memories, see Anna Green, 'Individual Remembering and "Collective Memory": Theoretical Presuppositions and Contemporary Debates', *Oral History Society* 32/2 (2004), pp. 35–44. For the contested memories of the 1930s miners' strikes, see Portelli, *They Say in Harlan County*, pp. 183–208.
19. Unless otherwise noted, Lois Scott's life narrative is drawn from the oral history, Lois Scott, interviewed by Melissa Scott, 27 March 1995, Appalachian Archive, Southeast Kentucky Community and Technical College.
20. John W. Hevener, *Which Side Are You On?: The Harlan County Coal Miners, 1931–1939* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1978).
21. Hevener, *Which Side Are you On?*, p. 15.
22. *Liberation News Service*, 23 October 1976.
23. *Liberation News Service*, 23 October 1976.
24. *Brookside Women*, produced by Nona Hall, and Anon., 'Brookside Women', *Journal of Current Social Issues* 11/6 (1974), pp. 42–52, here p. 52.
25. Bessie Lou Cornett later changed her name to Bessie Lou Parker. Because she went by Cornett at the time of the strike, I will refer to her by that name.
26. *Harlan County, USA*.
27. See Portelli, *They Say in Harlan County*, pp. 310–11; Scott, *Two Sides to Everything,* pp. 54-5; Lynda Ann Ewen, *Which Side Are You On?: The Brookside Mine Strike in Harlan County, Kentucky, 1973–1974* (Chicago: Vanguard Books, 1979), pp. 137–9.
28. For a history of the reform efforts see John H. M. Laslett (ed.), *The United Mine Workers of America: A Model of Industrial Solidarity?* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996).
29. Maggard, 'Eastern Kentucky Women on Strike', p. 314; Anon., 'Hard Times in Harlan County', *Journal of Current Social Issues*, 11/6 (1974), pp. 4–13, here p. 4.
30. Scott, *Two Sides to Everything*, p. 55.
31. Tom Bethell and Bob Hall, 'The Brookside Strike', in *Southern Exposure*, special issue on Harlan County 1931–1976, 1 (1976), pp. 114–23, here p. 122.
32. Minnie Lunsford interviewed by June Rostan, January–February 1977, quoted in Maggard, 'Eastern Kentucky Women on Strike', p. 157.
33. Guerin-Gonzales, 'From Ludlow to Camp Solidarity', p. 313.
34. Lois Scott, interviewed by Katie Gilliam, 3 April 1987, Appalachian Archive, Southeast Kentucky Community and Technical College; Ewen *Which Side Are You On?,* p. 39.
35. *Harlan County, USA* and 'The Making of Harlan County USA', in *Harlan County, USA*.
36. Maggard, 'Eastern Kentucky Women on Strike', p. 316.
37. Betty Eldridge, in *Brookside Women*, produced by Nona Hall.
38. 'Eastover Mining Company: Brookside Women Strike', folder 13, box 156, Council of the Southern Mountains Records, 1970–89, Southern Appalachian Archives, Berea College, Berea, Kentucky.

39. Betty Eldridge, in *Brookside Women*.
40. On motherist politics, see Annelise Orleck, 'Introduction', in Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle Hazirjian (eds), *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964–1980* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2011), pp. 1–30.
41. Anon., 'Women, Children Jailed in Harlan County', *United Mine Workers Journal*, 16–31 October 1973, p. 3.
42. Eileen Whalen, 'Women Save the Strike, Harlan Miners Fight for Union', *The Southern Patriot*, November 1973, pp. 1, 4.
43. Jim Somerville, 'Harlan Speaks Again', *Mountain Life and Work*, March 1974.
44. Maggard, 'Eastern Kentucky Women on Strike', p. 240.
45. Ewen, *Which Side Are You On?*, p. 75.
46. Maggard, 'Eastern Kentucky Women on Strike', p. 318.
47. *Harlan Miners Speak: Report on Terrorism in the Kentucky Coal Fields*, prepared by members of the National Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners, 1932 (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2008).
48. 'Hard Times in Harlan County', *Journal of Current Social Issues*, p. 4.
49. 'Hard Times in Harlan County', *Journal of Current Social Issues*, p. 11.
50. Anon., 'Brookside Women', p. 51.
51. Somerville, 'Harlan Speaks Again'.
52. Anon., 'Brookside Women', pp. 42–52.
53. Scott, *Two Sides to Everything*, pp. 50–51.
54. Nora Howard (daughter of Sudie Crusenberry), interviewed by the author, 31 August 2011; Anon., 'Sudie Crusenberry', *United Mine Workers Journal*, 1–15 April 1974, p. 7; Testimony at Citizens Inquiry, see 'Brookside Women', pp. 50–1.
55. Howard, interviewed by the author.
56. Howard, interviewed by the author.
57. Anon., 'Sudie Crusenberry'.
58. Howard, interview by the author.
59. *Harlan County, USA.*
60. James M. Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest: Culture, Biography, and Creativity in Social Movements* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. 186.
61. By the time of the strike Appalachia still had significantly higher rates of poverty than the rest of the country. In 1969, the percentage of people in poverty in Appalachia stood at 17.8 per cent, as compared to 13.7 per cent in the rest of the nation. In eastern Kentucky the rates were even worse; 26 per cent of the population lived in poverty in the 1970s. See Dan A. Black, Mark Mather and Seth G. Sanders, 'Standards of Living in Appalachia, 1960–2000', report for the Appalachian Regional Commission, September 2007, <http://www.arc.gov/research/researchreportdetails.asp?REPORT_ID=12>.
62. See Eller, *Uneven Ground.* The Appalachian Movement was also covered extensively in the regional publication *Mountain Life and Work*, published by the Council of the Southern Mountains.
63. 'Veteran of the '30s Visits Harlan Strikers', *The Southern Patriot*, November 1973.
64. For coverage of these events, see *The Southern Patriot* and *Mountain Life and Work* throughout 1974.
65. For coverage of these events, see *The Southern Patriot* and *Mountain Life and Work*, 1974.
66. Judy Klemesrud, 'Coal Miners Started the Strike – Then Their Women Took Over', *New York Times*, 15 May 1974, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=9805E3DF103DEF32A25756C1A9639C946590D6CF.>
67. Betty Eldridge in *Brookside Women*.
68. Klemesrud, 'Coal Miners Started the Strike'.
69. Quoted in Maggard, 'Eastern Kentucky Women on Strike', p. 237.
70. Barbara Kopple's showing of *Salt of the Earth*, along with her general unwillingness to give control of her own film to the UMWA Executive Board, led the board to refuse funding for *Harlan County, USA*. The executive board accused her of spreading communist propaganda. See Ewen, *Which Side Are You On?*, pp. 106–07.
71. Maggard, 'Eastern Kentucky Women on Strike', p. 159.
72. *Salt of the Earth*, written by Michael Wilson, directed by Herbert J. Biberman (New York: Independent Productions, 1954). For an analysis of the gender politics of the strike, see Baker, *On Strike and On Film*. By the 1960s *Salt of the Earth* gained a following as student leftists, unionists, and socialist feminists adopted it and began showing it in union halls, community centres and university forums. The Brookside women's

activism on the picket lines paralleled that of the women in *Salt of the Earth*, as it addressed not only class inequality and an abusive mining company, but also gender relations in the home and community.

73. Barbara Winslow, *Voices of Women Historians: The Personal, the Political, the Professional* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 228.
74. Eileen Whalen, 'Women Save the Strike, Harlan Miners Fight for Union', *The Southern Patriot*, November 1973, pp. 1, 4.
75. Portelli, *They Say in Harlan County*, pp. 324–30.
76. Maggard, 'Eastern Kentucky Women on Strike', pp. 243–7.
77. Anon., 'Appalachian Women's Rights Organization Forms', *Mountain Life and Work*, March 1975; Appalachian Women's Rights Organization Newsletter, box 128, folder 16, Council of the Southern Mountains Records.
78. Leon Fink, 'When Community Comes Home to Roost: the Southern Milltown as Lost Cause', *Journal of Social History* 40 (2006), pp. 119–45, here pp. 122–3; *Constitution of the October League (Marxist-Leninist)* (October 1975), in 'Encyclopedia of Anti-Revisionism On-Line', <https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/ncm-3/ol-constitution.htm>.
79. Anon., 'Eastern Kentucky Women', *Mountain Life and Work*, April 1975.
80. *Mountain Life and Work*, March 1975.
81. *Liberation News Service*, 23 October 1976.
82. *Liberation News Service,* 23 October 1976.
83. See Kingsolver, *Holding the Line*, p. 178.
84. Maggard, 'Eastern Kentucky Women on Strike'; *The Southern Patriot*, June–July 1975.
85. See Betty Jean Hall, 'Women Miners Can Dig It, Too!', in John Gaventa, Barbara Ellen Smith and Alex Willingham (eds), *Communities in Economic Crisis: Appalachia and the South* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), pp. 53–60; Mary Ann Hinsdale and Helen M. Lewis with S. Maxine Waller, *It Comes from the People: Community Development and Local Theology* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995).
86. Orleck, *Rethinking American Women's Activism*, p. x.
87. Sally Maggard to Gail Falk, n.d., Box 70, Folder 26, Council of the Southern Mountains Records, 1970–1989.
88. E. Ann Kaplan, '*Harlan County, USA*: The Documentary Form', *Jump Cut* 15 (1977), pp. 11–12.