#### [Wilson 1] Historically, strikes have used egregious forms of racialized violence

**Wilson 1**: Wilson, Jake B. [A.A., Mount San Antonio College B.S. (magna cum laude), Conservation & Resource Studies, UC Berkeley M.A., Ph.D., Sociology, UC Riverside] “The Racialized Picket Line: White Workers and Racism in the Southern California Supermarket Strike” *SAGE Publications,* 2008, 10.1177/0896920507088163 EM

**Strikes are an ideal arena to study the ways in which racist practices and ideology pervade the labor movement for numerous reasons. Historically, strikes have engendered some of the most intense instances of racial antagonism (Bonacich, 1976). Picket lines have often evoked the most explicit instances of racial conflict within the labor move- ment, which at times even led to physical assaults on people of color by white workers and violent race riots (Tuttle, 1976). For example, in the Great Steel Strike of 1919, over 350,000 steel workers, who were primarily white men, went on strike (Spencer, 1994) which led to some of the most intense exhibitions of racism in the history of the labor movement (Tuttle, 1976). During the strike, African American workers were labeled a scab race by many of the white strikers and were vilified as anti-labor and incapable of labor solidarity (Kimmel, 1996). In addition to the racist ideology enacted on the picket line, white strikers also viewed the African American replacement workers as an eco- nomic threat (Brueggemann and Boswell, 1998). Given this historical context, strikes are important indicators of racial antagonism among organized labor.** The United Food and Commercial Workers’ (UFCW) supermarket strike in Southern California provides a great opportunity to examine whether or not these dynamics are still present in today’s labor movement. In October 2003, the UFCW called for a strike against Vons and Safeway resulting in the longest and largest grocery strike in US history. The lockout of workers at both Ralphs and Albertsons immediately followed the initial strike declaration. The 70,000 plus grocery workers in Southern California went on strike primarily to protect their wages, health benefits, and pension funds from being drastically cut by the grocery stores. The supermarkets claimed they needed to cut the wages of their workers in order to compete with Wal-Mart who was planning on moving into California’s grocery market. Wal-Mart paid their employees significantly less than the grocery stores did, and offered fewer benefits to their workers (Gibson, 2004). Over 900 grocery stores were affected by the strike leading to losses of over $1 billion in sales. This research seeks to answer a number of questions in order to uncover how racism operates in the contemporary labor movement by focusing on the Southern California supermarket strike: 1) How is working class whiteness expressed in contemporary strikes? 2) What distinguishes contemporary racial conflicts within the labor movement from their historical antecedents? 3) How do gender and race intersect in influencing white working class consciousness and white racial solidarity? 4) To what extent are customers racialized by white strikers in strikes that have a pub- lic component such as retail stores? It is important to contextualize the racial politics of California during this study. There has been a rise in nativism, anti-immigrant backlash, and white supremacy in the state over the past several years. In light of the demographic shift occurring in California, and concomitant rise in reactionary right-wing politics, the racial attitudes of white workers in this study must be grounded within this context.

#### [Wilson 2] White strikers use stereotypes to exclude POC in strikes and unions.

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**Each group of color represents a different obstacle to the views of white workers, which is contingent upon differing stereotypes of varying groups of color. We can sim- plify this situation as follows: African Americans and Latinos/Chicanos are seen as too poor to be able to live up to the moral and economic standards that are in line with white working class ideology. For Latinos/Chicanos, their perceived lack of citizenship and fail- ure to assimilate into American culture marks them as antithetical to the goals of white labor.** That is, Latinos are further cast aside as not understanding or representing American values due to the perception of negative stereotypes of Latino/Chicano immigrants. African American workers are viewed as immoral and inca- pable of fully recognizing the problems with scabbing. **Both of these groups (African American and Latino/Chicano workers) are viewed as being historically weakened by the state, making them undesirable actors in working class struggles.** Since they have been historically marginalized (albeit in very differing and unique ways) they are both viewed in light of larger stereotypical images of African American and Chicano masculinities that are perceived by white workers as violent and/or immoral. These stereotypes point to the linkages between racism and classism; that is, racial stereotypes are largely connected to class stereotypes and vice-versa. In contrast to Latino and African American workers, **Asian American customers are viewed as too rich, too foreign, and aided by the state to be in solidarity with the inter- ests of the white working class. The model minority stereotype is used to mark Asian American customers in opposition to white workers.** Asian Americans are compared in line with the employer class despite the low number of Asian Americans in the manage- ment of the grocery stores where the strikes occurred. This shows the extent to which white workers will rely on the differing racial constructions of people of color to reinforce the position of the white working class.

#### [Wilson 3] This perpetuates racism and weakens the strike.

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The racialized picket line can be thought of as a metaphorical dividing line of conflict influencing the way a strike unfolds. Part of this process occurs when labor (class) soli- darity becomes weakened and/or replaced with racial forms of solidarity (Martinot, 2003). **Racialized strikes arise within the context of capitalism, where exploitation is structured on the racial and gender divisions among workers which encourages differen- tial treatment and a wage tier system (Jackman, 1994).** Social inequality structurally determines varying degrees of exploitation particular groups of workers face based on a group’s race, gender, and/or citizenship status (Bonacich et al., forthcoming). These divi- sions allow capitalists to seek out labor forces that are most susceptible to higher degrees of exploitive labor practices while simultaneously lowering the wages of more privileged workers (Bonacich, 1972, 1975, 1976). Glenn (2002) develops a similar argument, tracing the ways in which capitalists utilize divisions of workers along lines of race and gender inequality. Owners of cap- ital sought to maximize their profits by paying the lowest possible wages while enact- ing maximum control over the production processes. Moreover, they took advantage of existing inequalities by using marginalized groups (people of color, immigrants, women, lesser skilled) that could be hired more cheaply. Free labor, as a Western institution, was not developed for people of color but instead for white people and white societies (Blauner, 2001). Citizenship rights, or the lack thereof, prove to be a pivotal signifier of defining class relations in the USA along racialized and gendered lines. Citizenship as it applies to labor thus plays a major role in linking racist eco- nomic doctrines that distinguish between forms of free labor and unfree labor (Almaguer, 1994; Glenn, 2002). **Since citizenship rights were historically given to free (white male) labor groups, white men were allowed a privileged position in the US labor market.** These privileges have allowed white men to join unions and increase their economic and social power in society (Royster, 2003). This also led to the for- mation of the ‘worker citizen’ ideal, which is constitutive of the dual attributes of whiteness and masculinity forming the ideal-type American worker (Glenn, 2002). Therefore, exclusion was a primary feature of the making of the white working class (Fletcher, 2002; Kimmel, 1996). **For white strikers participating in a multiracial labor struggle such as the grocery strike, this racial divide creates a host of practices that white strikers enact in order to maintain the racialized picket line. Although white workers ultimately stand to lose from a racially divided working class, many white workers continue to reinforce racial divisions. One of the reasons for this is that the ideological component of white supremacy becomes a site of influence beyond the sheer class location of the white working class (Martinot, 2003; Wellman, 1993).**