Identity Under Construction: Workers' Collective in an Argentine Metallurgical Factory

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Establecimientos Metalúrgicos Santa Rosa steelworks, founded in 1943, produced steels with different alloying elements, such as silicon, along with products of high added value, such as steel wires, for industrial uses.[1] Since the late 1930s, Santa Rosa steelworks was intertwined with the development of the Import Substitution Industrialization model that then ruled Argentine economic life. From 1968 to 1979, this factory employed almost 3,000 workers.[2] The factory developed through continuous renovations, the modernization of machinery, and the uninterrupted labour of its workers. The specific industrial regime built in this factory and the union practices sustained by the traditional Peronist shop stewards meant that the relationship between employer and workers was mostly harmonic. However, in the late 1960s, a movement emerged within the workforce that fought for control of workplace union organization. This movement also occurred in other Argentine factories at the time. A drop in wages and purchasing power combined with an intensification of production began to generate intense discontent among workers. During a period of intense political instability and social unrest, the traditional Peronist unions fell into crisis.

This article will look at how the Santa Rosa industrial regime and its workforce's reaction to changes in the production process contributed to shaping workers' identity. First, I will review the history of Peronist unions and scholarly debates about the autonomy of the working class during period in question. Next, I will analyze the union bureaucratization process that began in 1958 and the relationship between union leaders and rank-and-file members.

I.

In Argentina, the Juan Domingo Perón presidencies (1946-1952 and 1952-1955) encouraged a new type of relationship between the state, the workers, and the employers. This relationship was determined by two different regulations: the Decree 23.852/45, in 1945, set out rules for unions, and the Collective Bargain Law (number 14.250), in 1953, regulated relationships between social classes.

The decree organized workers by industry and gave the monopoly of representation to the union with the most members. Therefore, only one union in each industry could negotiate with the state and employers while receiving the members'

economic contributions. On the other hand, Law 14.250 institutionalized the relationships between classes by ensuring that their negotiations were approved by the state. This new relationship between the state and social classes reflected transformations in the economic model and the stimulus that the Peronist government gave to the development of the national market. This economic model is known in Argentina as Import Substitution Industrialization (*Industrialización por Sustitución de Importaciones* or ISI).[3]

During the first years of Perón's government, industrialization increased and manufacturing production became the most dynamic element in the national economy as more factories opened and developed. Consequently, the industrial working class grew considerably and became more powerful as a result of two elements. The first was its core economic role both as a producer and as a consumer of the goods that were produced in order to avoid an overproduction crisis. In 1950, the working class' share of the national income reached 47%.[4] The second element was legislation consolidating a nationally-based and centralized union structure which ultimately empowered these working-class organizations.

At this moment, Argentine unions became very powerful social and political institutions, owing principally to their economic resources, their ability to mobilize a large number of affiliates, and their presence at the shop-floor level. As historian Victoria Basualdo argues, the existing tradition of shop-floor organization was a key factor in making the Argentine labour movement one of the strongest and most active in Latin America from the mid-1940s to the mid-1970s.[5] However, many scholars who do not consider shop-floor organization have argued that, under Peronism, the working class was weak and reformist, pursuing a conciliation of interests between classes.[6] As a result, scholars have characterized union structures in this period as bureaucratic and "based on the passivity of the rank-and-file."[7] Even though some scholars have disproved these analyses—especially Louise Doyon's study—its principles are evident in studies examining the periods spanning 1955-1958 and 1958-1969.[8] Many scholars have linked union leaders' practices to the actions of the whole working class, dismissing struggles on the shop floor where rank-and-file members "managed to gain a position of unprecedented power" and overlooking their ability to establish their autonomy from the government.[9] Historian Marcos Schiavi affirmed that even if workers themselves were politically identified with Peronism, they managed to keep their autonomy through shop-floor union organization.[10]

Since the Peronist union legislation stipulated that unions needed state authorization to operate (personería gremial), many union leaders established a very close relationship with the state. Therefore, the legislation stimulated the bureaucratization of these workers' organizations by promoting highly centralized trade unionism that was subordinate to the uppermost stratum, and linking union leaders' prestige with their closeness to the state. Thus, union activity and the Peronist movement appear to be intertwined. Many scholars understood that this political alliance,

edified by conciliating interests between classes, determined state-citizen relations. As historian Eduardo Elena argues, Peronism was conceived as a form of "social citizenship," that "stoked a sense of empowerment among working-class Argentines that mitigated earlier experiences of exclusion."[11] Historian Daniel James postulates that Peronism proposed a new role in society for the working class because it recognized the workers as a social class that acted as a collective in the political arena.[12] But, as Elena has remarked, "this approach leaves unanswered crucial questions about the meaning of social citizenship as realized in practice, especially outside the much-studied arena of state-union relations."[13] I agree with Elena, but I approach this issue from a different perspective: the union's internal relations.

II.

Many studies overlook how crucial shop-floor organization was in forming workers' identity and how labour rights, citizenship, unionism, and Peronism were perceived and practiced. Workers gave rise to these perceptions on the shop floor with their comrades collectively, as a group. Therefore, scholars must re-think James' prioritizing of the public square over the factory as the place that established the Argentine working class as a political force, especially if we consider that workers went to the public square with their comrades as factory or union groups.[14]

The focus on union leaders or on the relations between union and state has misled some to believe that rank-and-file members were passive between 1946 and 1955. James argues that rank-and-file members emerged in the period known as the Peronist Resistance (Resistencia Peronista) with the overthrow of the Peronist government and the beginning of resistance against the military dictatorship that took power.[15] In this argument, the "passivity" of the rank-and-file between 1946 and 1955 vanished without further explanation.[16]

The 1955 *coup d´état* began a period of political instability and protest in which the working class played a very active role. Workers' power on the shop floor had economic implications for their employers when it collided with the productivity levels employers were trying to reach. Therefore, the state began disciplining workers in the workplace. In the political sphere, banning the Peronist movement made unions the only remaining legal Peronist organization, transforming them into powerful political institutions that could mobilize vast numbers of people to veto different policies. After 1955, democratic and military governments faced two problems: what to do with Peronism, and how to balance the forces at play on the shop floors. Different strategies were put into practice which generated different alliances between social actors as the government relied on unions' support for stability. As a result, unions became important organizations in Argentina's political life.

Studies of the working class from 1955-1976 approach the issue from different perspectives. One of them considers the differences within the unions between the leaders and the rank-and-file, understanding that the actions followed by

these organizations did not entirely represent all of its members. Scholars' perceptions of this vary based on how they perceive rank-and-file participation. Therefore, an analysis of the relationship between union leaders and workers is very important.

Labour historian Alejandro Schneider argues that during the Peronist Resistance years it is possible to observe the presence of both inexperienced figures and men who experienced union practices during the Peronist government.[17] As the military dictatorship sought to modify the balance of forces inside workplaces, the Resistance was carried out by workers with different ideologies, not only Peronists.[18] As a result, union organization on the shop floor was the target of attacks that sought to impose more efficient production processes. Workers' reactions to the new processes show how rank-and-file members perceived life at the factories during the Peronist government.

According to James, the Peronist Resistance was a defensive answer to the repression and provocation that the working class suffered on the shop floor.[19] Workers fought to preserve their rights. James links the action of rank-and-file members with a democratic approach inside the factories. He argues that new union leaders, elected in 1956 and later, emerged from the conflicts that took place on the shop floors after Perón was overthrown.[20] The differences between James and Schneider's arguments illustrate how each understands union dynamics and their contradictions after the Peronist Resistance ended.

The elected president Arturo Frondizi (1958-1962) promoted the use of international capital to develop the national industry and market.[21] Once again, this development was based on the institutionalization of the relationship between classes. Frondizi returned many rights to workers and unions that the military dictatorship had banned. The law of Asociaciones Profesionales (number 14.455), which dictated the union's internal life in a way very similar to the Peronist decree, was approved. The main purpose of the new accumulation model was the obtention of high profit levels and the rationalization of new production processes to raise the productivity of each machine. Consequently, strong and centralized unions were needed to enssure that the workers would respect what was negotiated during collective bargaining. Argentine workers rejected attempts to discipline them and, in 1959, a wave of protests and strikes shook relationships on shop floors between the unions and the employers, as well as between the unions and the state.[22] Frondizi answered by repressing workers.[23] As a result, 1959 marked the end of the Resistance movement and the beginning of a bureaucratization process within the unions.

Scholars tend to analyze this process by looking at union leaders and rank-and-file members in opposition to each other and highlighting the tensions that existed between the two groups from 1955 to 1976 and beyond. However, focusing on this opposition is limiting because scholars omit instances where leaders and rank-and-file members worked *together* in a dependent and dynamic relationship to collectively build identity and class conscience. As Ralph Darlington has argued,

"the role of leadership by union militants (…) *can* be an important variable in an understanding of the dynamics of the workplace industrial conflict."[24]

James maintains that the 1959 strikes were promoted by an oppositional movement within the unions rooted in the legacy of the Peronist Resistance and its "structure of feelings" showing that the rank and file were extremely confident in the power that they held on the shop-floor.[25] Unions challenged their leadership in two ways: using confrontational methods associated with the Resistance period, or by negotiating with the state and employers. Repression in the 1960s forced union leaders who had emerged during the Resistance period to reluctantly accept the less confrontational position held by some of their comrades.[26] Workers also accepted this new union strategy with "increased resignation and passivity" which "formed the background of a bureaucratization process that manifested itself in a changing relationship between leader and rank and file and in a changing attitude of leaders, as well as increasing corruption of the leaders."[27] According to James, once the Resistance was over, rank-and-file members returned to their previous passivity, leaving space for the rise of a bureaucracy inside the unions with a conciliatory strategy. James links the lack of democracy inside the unions with workers' retreat from their combativeness. James argues that collective agreements signed in 1960 limited the workplace union organization, fixed wages to increases in production, and demonstrated the workers' passivity: "The union organization in the workplace needed to be based on the points that were of immediate interest to the worker in his task."[28] In sum, James links rank-and-file members' passivity to limitations placed on workplace union organization.

In contrast, Schneider does not see the events of 1959 as a defeat for the union movement but as a transition towards a defensive strategy. For Schneider, the bureaucratization process was the consequence of a "combination of elements of continuity and rupture with the previous period."[29] Defense of the union's corporate interests were an element of continuity, under completely different economic, political, and legal conditions. Schneider makes clear that the rank and file's demoralization process observed by James must be reconsidered. Under the new legislation, workplace union organization ensured the compliance of the collective agreements on shop-floors. Since the class struggle at every workplace determined how the collective bargain was implemented, rank-and-file members were not unfamiliar with or unconcerned about what was negotiated.

Basualdo argues that collective agreements signed from 1960 onwards show that new regulations regarding production's rationalization and the ruling union's operations on the shop floor successfully combated workplace union organization.[30] However, she does not agree with James about workers' passivity, arguing, like Schneider, that protests and struggles on the shop-floor level prove that the working class was not passive. Rank-and-file protests revealed an active resistance in the form of factory takeovers that were carried out independently from the union leaders.[31]

Analyzing the union's political and bargaining power from 1958 onwards reveals workers' strong interest in defending their rights. The unions leadership could use the threat of completely stopping industrial production in the country as leverage in every negotiation. The union´s strong presence in workplaces and its ability to mobilize rank-and-file members made this possible. Argentine union leadership used both its associational and structural power in the pursuit of a political strategy, which I will look at later in this article.[32]

To develop its economic model, Frondizi's administration needed centralized unions that wanted to negotiate. This, among other economic factors and repressive measures meant that less combative union leaders would triumph. Thus, as Schneider argues, the defense of corporate interests acquired a very different meaning than it did during the Peronist Resistance. But in the new political and legal context, what did it mean to defend union organization?

The national government's respect for unions led to the emergence of other institutional needs beyond the defense of the organization. Unions were becoming an end in themselves, turning union leaders into guardians of the organization's interests. In this new context, negotiation acted as a tool for defending workers' interests and constructing a solid corporate union identity—which generated a sense of belonging amongst the workers—that was encouraged by leadership under the new government. Moderate union leaders who wanted to negotiate sought to consolidate a strategy for a strong and centralized union with bargaining power supported by the new political, economic, and legal context. As Schneider pointed out, it was not the apathy of the rank and file but a change in dynamics that helped a bureaucratic leadership develop. Even if the unions were strengthened and centralized like never before, there were internal dissidents and diversified practices that are worth examining.

The workplace union organization played a key role in the construction of a corporate identity among workers in Argentina during the second half of the twentieth century. The presence of shop stewards—who brought directives from union leadership to the factory—undoubtedly operated as a decisive element in the construction of a united workers collective on each shop floor. But how did the collective action emerge and develop in each workplace? If working-class identity was already formed, how was the factory worker collective built? What elements united factory workers beyond their rank-and-file union organizations?

III.

On each shop floor, different factors influenced the construction of a social and cultural order specific to each workplace. For example, at the Establecimientos Metalúrgicos Santa Rosa, workplace union organization was necessary to construct a workers' collective because the production process obstructed the ability of workers to socialize. Santa Rosa's roughly 3,000 workers were extremely separated because of the way the production process was structured. The factory had two main pro-

duction areas with different work paces and salaries: the hot and the cold areas. Inside these areas, there were different productive sections: steelworks (furnaces, where different alloys were produced), rolling, forging, steel-stretching, heat treatments, wire-drawing, and steel-cables sections. Each of these sections had different moments of rest, although rest was more frequent in the hot area since high temperatures were very difficult to bear. The factory was very large. In 1973 it occupied an area of about 32 hectares with a covered area of 220,000 m^2.[33] As a result, the sociability of Santa Rosa workers' was informed by the geography of production reduced to their section.

As sociologist Michael Burawoy argues, each space and the different factors associated with each productive process determined how workers and employers interacted, generating specific political, ideological, and cultural effects on individuals. In other words, political and ideological elements that regulated the social relations of production were constructed and reproduced in the productive process's organization.[34] These regulations and their effects are what is referred to as the factory or industrial regime.[35] The factory regime also contained the sociability guidelines that governed relations between workers. Consequently, the factory as a productive space reproduced the class relations that existed in society.

Workers' sociability was determined by cultural elements built inside the factory.[36] Certain factors involved in the production process influenced the construction of workers' self-esteem. Positive characteristics built *within* a group of workers at a factory related to how they understood their work.[37] In Santa Rosa, the production process was the material basis on which a hierarchy among workers was established. This occured both in Steelworks and in all sections where there were furnaces; indeed, high temperatures reached during production affected relationships between workers. However, the heat was seen not as a problem but as another characteristic of the work in this factory:

> *Ramón:* Furnaces are red hot, steel melts and runs like water. In summer, you have to be inside a refrigerator (…) because of the temperature.
> *Interviewer:* It made you sick…
> *Ramón:* It made some sick, I endured it well.[38]

This way of perceiving work was related to prestige: workers who had to deal with the heat every day were highly regarded. In the social hierarchy built by Santa Rosa's workers, working in the hot area was a positive factor. The salaries of those who tolerated working in the heat reflected this value, with a percentage increase that depended on the number of hours a worker was exposed to the heat and the temperatures that worker had to withstand. This benefit did not exist for cold area workers.

The strategic importance of each sector to the factories' overall production also marked a difference in the way workers were valued. The hot area ran continuously for 24 hours a day, divided into three shifts. Santa Rosa's furnaces had to be on all day to avoid any solidification of the steel or delays in production owing to the time needed to reach the right temperature whereas the cold area did not need to be continuously in production. The productive space not only informed the value of the work, it also impacted relationships and sociability between workers in each area. For example, in the Rolling section of the hot area, each worker contributed to the roughing of the metal until it ended in sheet metal, bar, or wire rod. The ingot entered and advanced by train, a journey of approximately 200 metres, and each worker contributed to its roughing. It was a collective work process. The distribution of workers in the space along these 200 metres was evidence of the collective nature of this work. On the other hand in the cold area, in the Steel-Cable section, a worker produced a specific cable as required by each machine. "Everyone had their machine, [the worker] was the machinist of his machine."[39] These material determinations also influenced the relationships workers had with employers. As a former cold area worker said, "We were all the same but they were two factories in one. The hot area and the cold area. It was two factories in one, but not bad camaraderie or anything like that. It was the system, it was all different."[40]

The hot area workers had greater bargaining power with the employer in comparison to their cold area peers owing to its strategic importance in the whole factory's production process and the way workers united over their collective work. In this way, it is possible to assume that the workers of the hot area would exert an influence on politics and trade unionism, over those of the cold area.

> Sometimes in the cold area, we were working normally. Then, there came a hot area order: "you must stop working." We stopped and we didn't know why. Sometimes we stopped because the supervisor gave an operator a bad look, but the order came from above, and descended, descended, descended. And in [the cold area] we stopped, and we did not know why we stopped. (…) We had one comrade who was called The Elephant (*El Elefante*) and he didn't want to stop; the order to stop came from [the hot area], from Rolling, I don't know why it was, and he didn't want to stop. One guy from Rolling came in, "stop or you are a dead man", "Yes, yes, I stop." (…) we called him The Elephant because he was about two meters tall, and he didn't want to stop, "stop the machine!" He stopped it.[41]

Apart from the heat, knowledge of the trade also established a hierarchical division among Santa Rosa's workers. As in many other factories, trade skills were valued and respected. When starting work in Santa Rosa, workers learned and ad-

vanced: "you go climbing, you enter as operator and leave as multiple-officer."[42] Upgrading often meant a corresponding salary increase. Workers had great respect for colleagues who had been there for a longer time and had a greater command of the trade. When possibilities to accumulate more knowledge and experience arose because, for example, a partner missed work, replacing him was an important event in a worker's life, "… because it changes you, it changes the way you work. You feel different, with a category and that rewards your salary."[43]

In 1965, Establecimientos Metalúrgicos Santa Rosa initiated an expansion plan. The expansion was prompted by two major changes in Argentina: the opening of a blast furnace in the country which provided cheaper raw material than what could be obtained in the international market, and the economic changes made by Frondizi's administration that expanded the national industry. This expansion accompanied a deluge of hiring by the factory in 1968 and 1969.[44] Interestingly, older workers trained new workers and freely shared their knowledge of the metallurgical industry.[45] Therefore, at least in this respect, a clash between the experienced workers and the newcomers did not exist; on the contrary, some of the oldest workers integrated the newly admitted into the trade and into the existing factory policy:

> At that time there was (…) a very important growth of the enterprise as a company (…) And that led to the entry of many young people of 20, 22, 25 years who (…), when entering the factory, we had a great influence of the old comrades who were in the [Peronist] Resistance, including some that came (…) from the Spanish Civil War. We began to be taught, let's say, in the political and trade union aspects.[46]

Ideological, productive, relational, and cultural patterns were transmitted from one generation of workers to the next. The newcomers' origins strengthened this transmission, as most of them came from Entre Ríos in the Argentine countryside, because the company had a policy of not hiring workers from the area.[47] The employer tried to maintain a harmonous relationship between classes inside the factory by strengthening the workers' feeling of belonging to the company in a paternalistic way, with a reciprocal relationship.[48] Workers were proud to work at Santa Rosa. It was the most important metallurgical factory in the area and paid very good salaries. Many shops in the neighbourhood gave credit to the workers when they saw the company card. It also provided workers with free care in two hospitals, the possibility of completing education, or the ability to play on a soccer team in inter-factory tournaments.

Workers who came from places without an industrial tradition developed a sense of belonging to Santa Rosa. This relationship represented the values associated with class harmony proposed by Peronism. The feeling of belonging constructed expectations and notions of justice for the workers who had fewer

alternatives to propose to what the company's management dictated. At the same time, networks and bonds of solidarity were created between the workers, both inside and outside the factory walls:

> It was a motive of pride for everyone (…) when there was a colleague who was constructing his house (…), it was even determined on a Sunday, five (…) comrades, those who did not work, would go (…) fundamentally when they filled the roof, so everyone was going to help him because that is a job that must be done and finish [ed].[49]

The factory was located in a neighbourhood that grew at the pace of industrial development driven by the arrival of new inhabitants. They built their neighbourhood, either by doing it themselves or by mobilizing to ask the authorities to do so. As in many other cases, belonging to the neighbourhood and helping eachother with the construction of their houses contributed to building bonds of friendship and loyalty within the worker's group.

This analysis shows that the workers who entered Santa Rosa at the end of the 1960s joined a workers' group with whom they were immediately connected and integrated. The transfer of knowledge from the old to the new workers, whether in professional or political training, strengthened the bonds of fellowship between them. Workers were uprooted and moved into a new community of industrial workers that extended this bond outside the factory walls. But the production process limited the scope of workers' sociability to their section. Therefore, workplace union organization union held a prominent role in constructing a workers' collective that involved the whole factory.

IV.

The union played an important role in the construction of workers' identity in Argentina. Argentine unions had a strong presence in the factory owing to the roles held by shop steward delegate Bodies (CD for *Cuerpo de Delegados*), and Internal Commissions (CI by its initials in Spanish, *Comisión Interna*). These workplace organizations used direct representation to allow for democratic coordination, deliberation, and decision-making. To be elected as a shop steward, a worker had to be affiliated to the union in his or her industry that had national union status. In the case of Santa Rosa, worker who wanted to run as a shop steward for his section needed to be affiliated with the Metallurgical Workers Union (UOM for *Unión Obrera Metalúrgica*). The UOM is only recognized at the national level. Its presence at a regional or local level is through sectionals that depend on the central union. In this case, a worker who wanted to run as a shop steward had to be affiliated with the local union, the UOM La Matanza sectional. The CD was composed of all factory shop stewards. The CI, on the other hand, only integrated a small number of shop stewards, but was responsible for representing all factory workers before the em-

ployers. In the UOM, since the CI members were elected by the CD, it is possible to say that the hierarchies established among workers affected the CI's composition.

The CI and CD were incorporated into the union structure, transcending the walls of each workplace, to be integrated into a union that operated at both a local level—grouping together all the workers of the same industry who were in that region—and a national level. The factory-based union organization held extensive power because it could interrupt production at any time, which became an important tool in the dispute over control of the productive process. Because of this, the government and employers sought to limit the union's power. At the same time, these workplace union organizations were central to the construction of union hegemony and identity. They were the nexus between union initiatives and the workers. It was through them that demands were channeled and transmitted to factory workers.

The Argentine union structure played a key role in the construction of workers' identity at the workplace because it operated both in large manufacturing plants with thousands of workers and in small neighbourhood workshops, for unionized workers, and those not affiliated to the union. Argentine unions in the second half of the twentieth century were a fundamental part of workers' identity; as Pablo Ghigliani affirms, the organization mediated workers' perception of reality and how it might change.[50] In this sense, union leaders were an integral part of the worker's interests.

Unions, as a reflection of class conscience and praxis, were also a reflection of class struggle. Considering the regulations that Law 14.455 and the Law of Collective Bargaining imposed on relations between workers and employers (and on union practices), it is easy to understand how unions influenced workers' identity. We must also take into account that these laws were a result of the class struggle. By considering this we avoid an analysis where class consciousness becomes an ideal that workers should attain rather than a consciousness that is forged through struggle and not simply acquired. It is important to highlight, as Georg Lukács does, the dynamic and contradictory aspects of the working class's constitutional process as a conscious subject. Lukács points out that the development of working-class consciousness is a "dialectic journey," in other words, a process.[51] Therefore, the organization of workers is a process tied to multiple social and industrial work-based factors that act as a determinant of the working group. In Argentina, this extended especially to the CI and CD. The relations between and within classes—governed by the logic of capitalism—influenced individual actions. As a result, the bureaucratization process undergone by unions in the 1960s must be reconsidered. Was it the passivity of the rank and file that made it possible? Or was it a communion of interests between the rank and file and leadership? The common and collective construction of those interests inside the class, the unions, and the workplaces made the bureaucratization process possible.

Union organization at the factory functioned as an assembly, that would ensure democracy among workers. However, the notion of democracy must be problematized because there are also power relations and conflicts between workers of the same factory since they do not form a homogeneous group. In this way, union organization within the factory was an object of dispute among workers. In a factory like Santa Rosa, where the production process fragmented the workforce, it was almost impossible to hold assemblies in which every worker could participate. Therefore, direct democracy that was theoretically guaranteed by the assembly would be replaced with the deliberations made by the workers' representatives, that is, the section shop stewards. However, their interpretation of events could determine how their peers perceived union negotiations, relationships with the employer and workers in their neighbourhood, and the need for a confrontative strategy. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the processes of leadership construction from above.

V.

Santa Rosa's industrial development was based on two elements: on the one hand, a incessant renovation and modernization of the machinery and, on the other, the uninterrupted workflow of its workers, the latter the source of most of the conflict in the plant. In 1968, the employer decided to extend the so-called "American shift" model to two sections of Rolling. This type of work organization consisted of work teams carrying out an uninterrupted rotation of shifts, working eight hours per day, for five days, and resting for two days. Rest days did not necessarily coincide with weekends. Shifts and free days changed every week. The unpredictability of this rotation made it difficult for workers to rest and impossible for them to establish a routine, which damaged operators' health. Work teams did not work the same shift two weeks in a row. As a result, work hours allocated through inconsistent schedules determined leisure time and erased the boundary between them. As Paula Varela pointed out, the factory ended up administrating the worker's life.[52] The "American shift" was used to ensure that the factory would run 24 hours a day and the use of rotational shifts allowed the employer to maintain a pace of production that justified the investment in machinery. It also saved the costs associated with paying the night shift extra since all work teams were paid the same.

Workers of the Rolling section faced the imposition of these shifts without the ability to object. Luis Kergaravat, a worker at the factory, stated:

> They imposed it in '68. (…) There was resistance, but there was a military government, we couldn't do much because we were all new (…) the company had no trouble getting you out of the way and bye. And the old men who were almost at the end of their ... finally there was an assembly and it was accepted. There was resistance in this regard, [but] what happens is that (…) from having a salary of 1,000 pesos, I went on to collect 1,500, a 50% increase, out of pocket.

> Then, there was a notable difference in salary, it was important.[53]

In this testimony, it is possible to observe that there were workers who tried to resist and others who were satisfied with the salary increase applied when the new system was established.

In 1966, a military dictatorship took power that sought to expand Frondizi's economic model by creating a vanguard sector in the economy rooted in the new industries operating in the country since 1958. To achieve this goal, the dictatorship established an authoritarian regime that suspended political activity and collective bargaining. Without collective bargaining, trade unionism was unable to negotiate or apply pressure by threatening to stop work throughout the whole country. Furthermore, collective agreements could unite all workers in an industry, through the organic and organized unity of unionism with the consolidation of the dictatorship, unions were unable to apply pressure that forced negotiations. This meant that union leaders started to become ineffective because they did not have entities to negotiate with. During the dictatorship, the union model that had been in place since 1958 went into crisis.

During this time, as union leaders became less effective, the "American shift" was adopted in Santa Rosa. Disagreements with the employer over the use of the shift evolved into a confrontation with the CD and the CI of the factory, as both organizations agreed with the imposition of the new system despite the workers' oppositon. This event was especially important because it caused a crisis of representation: "we [realized] that we could not expect (…) any kind of help from the UOM [union], neither local nor at a national level."[54] The agreement between the employer, the shop stewards, and the CI disregarded the workers' demands against the "American shift," producing a conflict of interest between the union and the Santa Rosa workforce. The workers also saw that their claims clashed with those supported by the union. The immediate collective interests of these workers did not coincide with the ones established by the union.

This crisis of representation forced the resignation of five members of the CI and, later, the entire CD resigned in solidarity. The crisis also affected other factories in the area that had similar economic conflicts. As a result, some workers at Santa Rosa—along with other metalworkers in the area—issued a document demanding that the director of the local union resign. This had an important effect on the union since the workers of Santa Rosa took their claim to the most-read national newspaper, *Crónica*. Although this movement did not come to fruition, this event was a significant milestone that constructed an alternative identity in Santa Rosa. It showed how a crisis of the union representation model in one factory extended to neighbouring factories.

In summary, the peculiarities of the production process together with the growth of Santa Rosa established an industrial regime that was based on a paternalistic and reciprocal relationship between workers and employers. These values

were consistent with those of class conciliation propagated by the local union. The production process imposed a form of sociability founded on belonging to a working section and a hierarchy that gave more prestige to hot area workers and to those with greater trade skills. With the entry of new workers and the imposition of a more intense production pace (the "American shift"), this factory regime entered into crisis, revealing the non-reciprocal relations between classes and the political and ideological differences within the workforce. This, in turn, resulted in a crisis of representation within the union that had local repercussions and political undertones and brought about a new workers' identity in Santa Rosa.

VI.

When Santa Rosa hired a number of new young workers who lacked metallurgical or union experience, the workforce became divided. However, this had been happening for years. Kergaravat's testimony highlights a difference between the older workers and the new ones. This difference was not a consequence of exclusion from the union model that directly affected younger workers (as Mignon did detect in the case of the Cordoba automakers).[55] Santa Rosa's new workers did not feel marginalized by the metallurgical work ladder, by the hierarchies of sociability in the workplace, or by the salary that corresponded to their knowledge of the trade. Rather, the generational difference in the Santa Rosa workforce was related to the traditions and conceptual framework workers used to understand their lives, their relationships, their actions, and the actions of other people. The union model established in 1958 experienced a structural crisis because it was difficult to use the wage claim as an escape valve for other workers' demands. Other traditions emerged through this gap that already existed in the Argentine labour movement but, owing to the strong Peronist identity of the working class, remained on the sidelines. In Santa Rosa, for example, left-wing activists were active. They distributed a Trotskyist publication in which they pointed out other complaints, apart from salaries and denounced the CI for not acting according to workers' interests.[56] Thus, the new workers were able to expand their union practices within a broader tradition and ideology than those proclaimed by the union. A similar crisis of representation in workplace union organization was also taking place in many other Argentinian factories.[57] A drop in wages, a decline in purchasing power, and the intensification of production and its rhythms generated intense unrest among workers in a context of growing authoritarianism.

The authoritarian regime established in 1966 implemented regulations that removed traditional channels that institutionalized the capitalist class struggle. It abolished political gatherings, wiping out the chance for civil society to organize and settle conflicts.[58] Guillermo O'Donnell argued, "for a large part of the bourgeoisie, the promotion of [the 1966] coup [d' Etat] was aimed at solving the great problem of finding a state that would organize more stable conditions for accumulation and more firmly guarantee its class domination."[59] Owing to its political power

and its great capacity for both mobilization and intervention in the productive process, Argentine unionism became the main obstacle to capitalist accumulation.

The struggle between classes and within classes grew, generating different alliances. These alliances changed based on relationships between different social groups, who was able to participate, and the objectives and strategies they were able to establish. These changes became more noticeable within the labour movement and marked the beginning of a dispute over the meaning of the union, its obligations, the role of its representatives, and its forms of action. In this dispute, the influence of leftist and/or combative Peronist militants was significant. The conflict spanned all levels of union organization. Moreover, the struggle for control of workplace organizations was extremely important to the class struggle in general; actions or conflicts that occurred in the factories could—and indeed did—directly affect capitalist production.

Different scholars have focused on disputes between workers and union leaders when analyzing the increase in union centralization and bureaucratization.[60] However, restricting this analysis to a binary opposition between the rank and file and the leadership limits our ability to see the process as a whole. First, because not all the workers opposed their leaders—many of them continued to support them over the years. Secondly, this binary perspective does not focus on the arguments themselves, which then blurs the different dynamics and people involved with the process. Thirdly, focusing on the opposition obscures the common elements between union leaders and workers. And fourthly, as binary analyses tend to homogenize the rank and file, the radicalization process becomes more difficult to understand.

Members of the union disputed how to undertake the class struggle. Therefore, we must understand how conflicts developed within the union, looking at the problem of representation and not at the representatives themselves. Changing the leader in question did not resolve growing complaints because union members disagreed over the concept of representation. Furthermore, since the working class had evolved a specific notion of citizenship, this crisis of representation must also be understood as ideological. Argentine trade union practices in the second half of the twentieth century were influenced by Peronist ideology and its proposal for class harmony. With the banning Peronism, unions remained the only legal means of organization of that political movement. Consequently, during the few periods in which the democratic system was restored, it was partial and lacked legitimacy.[61] Therefore, Argentine trade unionism was the virtual political representation of the Peronist segments of the population, which allowed it to develop great political power. As a result, striking became a tactical device to influence governments. This strategy transformed unions into decisive actors in the conflict between different fractions of the bourgeoisie.

Workers' understanding of the movement and of what it meant to be a Peronist differed. Their understanding was influenced by the characteristics of each

factory regime because workers' identity and their perceptions of reality were built in the workplace. Argentine democracy after 1955 determined how the notion of citizenship was constructed among workers.[62] In the post-1955 context, owing to the role that trade unionism adopted with the proscription of Peronism, workers' political participation consisted of rank-and-file organizations—both CD and CI.[63] Argentine workers' civic participation was not related to the liberal notion of a citizen, or a vote, or to parliamentary representation. It was based on the power of association, on a vote amongst peers. This process built an identity and a specific sense of belonging. The construction of citizen culture and the identity of workers in Argentina was rooted in trade unionism during a time of democratic instability. Workers' class-based citizenship was formed in a dialectical way, mixing, on one side, elements of liberal representation and democratic citizenship, and, on the other side, elements of corporate association, assembly, direct democracy, and mobilization. As a result, citizenship was understood and exercised collectively.[64]

Workers became separated when Santa Rosa's workplace union organization and the local union did not support rank-and-file members' actions against the "American shift." Different ideas about what a union should represent emerged within the workforce. This dispute over worker and union identities was evident in factories startup in 1968.

VII.

A rank-and-file movement emerged from this representation crisis over control of workplace union organization. This happened in other factories as well, but each dispute was unique.[65] The rank-and-file movement gained vitality after the Cordobazo events, when a mass labour uprising took place in the city of Córdoba on May 29, 1969. Workers from metalworking factories mobilized with students and took over the city for two days, acting autonomously from their leaders.[66] The Cordobazo is remembered as the start of a surge in protest actions that went beyond the traditional channels and direction of union organization. However, in December 1968, although with slightly less intensity, metallurgical workers from La Matanza protests had shaken local union bases. James mentions a series of elements that made classism viable in Córdoba's trade unionism underlining the displacement of negotiations on wages and working conditions at the company level, and suggested that rank-and-file members were better able to oppose union leaders in workplace unions than in traditional unions.[67] He also highlights the special assimilation of the factory in Córdoba and its capacity to influence the population, which, according to him, was much greater than it was in the area around Buenos Aires.[68]

It was possible to find the features that James lists in many factories throughout the Buenos Aires area during the period. First, the suspension of collective bargaining in 1967 meant that the dispute over wages and working conditions was transferred to the factories, which took it away from the national and local union leadership. Second, although the capacity to oppose union leaders in work-

place unions was greater than in traditional unions such as the UOM, we must consider how the dictatorships' labour policy weakened unions and opened the door to opposition. Finally, La Matanza was a neighbourhood built by workers, abandoned by the State, and governed by industry practices, so it did not diminish workers' solidarity. However, even if a conflict in a factory in this neighbourhood did not escalate to become a local or civil rebellion—as happened in Córdoba with the Cordobazo—the bonds of solidarity formed both inside and outside the factory, between co-workers, family members, and neighbours, could provide the necessary support to face a situation of prolonged labour conflict. In short, it is impossible to ignore the existence of dissention among rank-and-file members in the Buenos Aires suburb, their opposition to the union leadership and the way they confronted employers. However, the level of opposition and confrontation in La Matanza was lower in comparison to that in Córdoba. Therefore, we must consider the structural conditions that framed and favoured the growth of confrontation along with the presence of trade union opposition that had been established years before.

The Cordobazo events and the development of an opposition affected union leadership's attempts to centralize and control the union. For example, the La Matanza UOM leaders opened a trade union training school to spread its vision of politics and unionism among the young workers. Nestor Mazzone, an old worker, was the head teacher of this school. Mazzone's extensive background in combative union political strategies was a key factor in the generational transmission of political, union, and combative labour matters. As a teacher, Mazzone integrated young workers into a political tradition of struggle and direct action, one based on factory organization such as that held during the Peronist Resistance. Following the imposition of the "American shift" in two sections of Rolling, a group of young workers from Santa Rosa along with metallurgical workers from neighbouring factories started to attend this school. A worker and student at the school stated:

> The union, they put an advisor on us so that (…) trying to influence the shop stewards to lower down a bit. In reality, it was the opposite because the man who came, Néstor Mazzone (…) was from the old school, from the school of the 1950s, who was used to the struggles of the 1950s, even before. He was a grown man, old, I think that when he was with us he must have been 60 years old…[69]

The opening of the trade union school, the election of Mazzoni to lead it, and the organizational and political principles it fostered among young workers demonstrate how rich this stage of political and ideological convergence was.

The school was established to continue the dissemination of political and identity-forming traditions built by the union. Initially, its purpose was to include younger workers in this identity. However, the reinterpretation of historical mile-

stones that these workers were creating ended up placing them in opposition to the union. Consequently, the creation of the trade union training school sought to channel the youngest workers into the union's official line of action to distance them from the oppositional tendencies of both the left and the older workers. However, this was not the outcome. A space for the rich exchange of ideas was opened up, one that favoured forging links and networks outside the union. Leftist groups had also tried to do this since the mid-1960s.[70] Descamisados, a group of Peronist Youth with urban guerrilla tactics that worked in different neighbourhoods, had actively participated in the trade union school as well.[71] As a former Santa Rosa worker explained: "There were a lot of boys together, young people, not only from Santa Rosa but from other factories as well, and we were getting in touch with the other colleagues from the other factories."[72] With this confluence of workers, the idea of creating an inter-factory group to challenge local union leadership emerged.[73]

VIII.

In May 1973, the Peronist movement returned to government with the election of Héctor Campora as president. The era of social unrest that had started in 1955 had weakened state institutions and increased the amount of violence in society, including in unions and politics. As a result, the new government worked towards strengthening the state. It implemented economic policies—agreed upon by the State, the unions, and the employers—that controlled wages and prices and contained intersectoral bids for the distribution of income. This policy was meant to "discipline the conflicts between capital and labour" by institutionalizing the class struggle.[74] Consequently, it implemented a Social Pact (Pacto Social) based on the empowerment of legitimate political actors that could contain the class struggle. Corporate associations had toguarantee that their members would comply with the signed agreement. This meant that unions had to be strong, united, and internally in agreement. These policy changes shone light on the crisis and contradictions of political forces in society and within the Peronist Movement.

Traditional Peronist unionism had serious difficulties containing and institutionalizing the class struggle. The union was a key organization in the government's political design and was one of the main spaces where social tension was manifested. This tension increased with the emergence of new political identities and new collective actors that re-signified the image of the first Peronism, associating it with new meanings and charging its return to government with expectations far away from Perón's political project. Consequently, the crisis of Argentina's union model in 1970 was incorporated into the Peronist Movement, making the existing class struggle even more complex.

At the time, *Montoneros*, the most important Peronist urban guerrilla, founded the Peronist Working Youth (JTP for *Juventud Trabajadora Peronista*), an organization that sought to renew the unions that had stripped them of bureaucratic practice.[75] The JTP had a different conception of Peronism than that expressed by

union leadership. And, although the JTP agreed with traditional union leadership about the reconciliation of classes, it had a different notion of workers' rights and fair practices allowing them to fight for workers.

In September 1973, the inter-factory metalworkers' group from La Matanza emerged as a union group named Mussy-Retamar in honour of two metalworkers from La Matanza who had been killed by police repression in 1965. Mussy-Retamar declared itself a member of the JTP, although not all of its members were Peronists. Its main objective was to control all of the workplace union organizations in La Matanza's metallurgical factories. Their representatives within Santa Rosa ran for shop steward elections, but the local union executed various maneuvers to obstruct the election of shop stewards who were not loyal to it. For example, the election took place in the union building and workers were called to vote at very inconvenient times. Furthermore, since the vote was not anonymous, many workers feared that the employers or the union would retaliate against them for voting against union shop stewards. However, some workers still voted for shop stewards with ties to union leaders because they did not want to confront an employer that they appreciated:

> There is a time in which (…) Santa Rosa, the time of 66 or 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, were times of glory for us (…)because to begin with I earned very well (…) you had a lot of overtime, you worked full, full time, uh (…) I had no drama at all (…) the quality of people was different because (…) 73 onwards was totally a radical change.[76]

As a result, by 1973, when Peronism returned to the presidency, Santa Rosa workers' opinions on their immediate union leaders were divided. Former worker Francisco Calvo explained:

> At that time there were two factions, (…) the official White List (…) and us who were young boys, twenty shop stewards, out of a total of sixty (…). There were permanent internal confrontations and we lost by twenty votes in the Shopstewards' Body when voting (…) then we came to negotiate for "*el Ruso*" [Carlos Gdansky] to enter the CI (…) because he was clear in his proposals and was more conciliatory with the White List.[77]

In June 1973, for the first time, representatives of Mussy-Retamar won all of the factory's CI positions and implemented a new dynamic for calling assemblies to counteract the division among workers generated by the productive process. This meant that "every time there was a problem, to avoid delays if it was not possible to gather the CI at that time, an 'internal representation' that replaced the CI with the shop stewards that were there was constituted."[78] Since Santa Rosa was the biggest metallurgical factory in the neighbourhood, the success of an oppositional

CI was a great challenge to the local union.[79] The majority of the union's delegates worked at Santa Rosa and became a key force in the local union and for all the factories in the area. The combative new CI in Santa Rosa undertook different protest actions against the employer. However, some workers associated protest actions with not wanting to work. Even with the CI in the Opposition's hands, the dispute over workplace union organizations continued and, by 1974, the CI was composed of five members who were union supporters.

The factory regime determined Santa Rosa workers' support—or lack thereof— for the union opposition. Basualdo argued that the working class did not have a single response to the offensive against the workplace union organizations carried out by the employers and the state.[80] She suggests that two main strategies within different sectors of the working class became increasingly visible on the shop-floor: firstly, a strategy that did not question structural relations and sought to negotiate with the employers and the government, and secondly, a strategy that promoted confrontation and open struggle to achieve radical transformation.[81] Basualdo, however, argues convincingly that political division is not sufficient to explain this. She analyzes the evolution of shop-floor militancy and organization in two case studies (the Alpargatas textile factory and Acindar the steel mill), associating them with the strategies described above, asking why different union positions were supported by workers. Although the elements that Basualdo lists as reasons for the consolidation of each position are pertinent and clearly justified, the fact that these cases are from two different industries suggests that labour and union positions were closely related to the industry to which workers belonged much more than the other factors that she lists, such as the history of rank-and-file organization and combativeness in each workplace. By this, I am refering especially to the differences in their industrial regimes beyond the fact that they produced different goods.

Industrial regimes determine, among other things, the construction of workers' subjectivity. The relationship with the employer, in this sense, is very important. This relationship helps explain the predisposition of a group of workers towards confrontation or combativeness instead of conciliation in the workplace. Basualdo affirms that different views on class identity (confrontation or conciliation) and the relations between workers and employers were present within each individual. That such opposing perspectives in the working class existed underscores Basualdo's definition of class relations that combined opposing interests with mutual interdependence. Basualdo states that because the classes are defined by each other, worker identity was forged by capital. Workers' identity was dependent on whether or not they felt a sense of belonging when working in the factory. I argue that we must expand this argument to account for the possibility that workers' identity, and the political and union perspectives of the working class, were *collectively* constructed *within* the workplace, resulting in something more than the addition of differentiated goals. Similarly, although different production processes' influence on workers' identity is undeniable, it should be noted that the factors associated with production are

not immutable, but are a historical phenomenon in a state of constant change. Finally, while the factory constitutes a specific social order, it is not an isolated entity it was inserted into a territory with quite diffuse borders where it also played a key role in building worker identity.

IX.

In Santa Rosa, employers' implementing of the "American shift" revealed to some workers the non-reciprocal relationship between social classes. For others, in contrast, stopping production was wrong because doing so harmed the enterprise with which they connected their own value. However, in November of 1974 a conflict broke out that lasted more than twenty days and garnered the support of all factory workers. Although union policy divided the workers, they were eventually united by their dissatisfaction over the salaries proposed by the employer. The production process was different in each area and section of the factory, and many workers still supported traditional union leaders.

The conflict of November 1974 began with a dispute over the application of the new Labour Contract Law that established new parameters regarding salaries and days of rest. Workers did not think that the remuneration they received for their work was fair. They believed that the company had dismantled their reciprocal relationship by not compensating their efforts accordingly. A letter on October 23 from the Secretary-General of the local union to the Minister of Labour made it clear that the majority of workers endorsed this claim. In the letter, he urgently requested the definition of the scope of the law since "the restlessness existing in the personnel of the factory (…) is skillfully being agitated by the professionals of the discord and the division."[82] Following the receipt of this letter, an investigation was opened by the Ministry of Labour during which the employer, citing the 1968 agreement with the CI, explained that the application of the new law was not valid. On Thursday, November 7, the Ministry of Labour notified the employer, the union, and the workers that there would be an inspection the following week to settle the matter, and asked them to keep everything in its current state. However, on Saturday, November 9, the Wire-Drawing section initiated a strike, "because they did not want to pay the hours. After 1:00 p.m. they had to pay 100% (…) the conflict erupt[ed] automatically in the entire factory."[83] The strike began just before the shift changed at 2:00 p.m., which allowed the workers of the two shifts to hold an assembly. "Then assemblies were made by sectors and in all the assemblies, the employees supported the strike. On Monday a general assembly of all workers was made and it was decided that all sections were going to join the strike."[84] The strike was carried out inside the factory without any tasks being performed. Starting the strike at the end of the morning shift was intentional; the shop stewards of this section—who sympathized with the Mussy-Retamar group—considered the proximity of the shift change which enabled the gathering of many workers. The strike also began at a time when many of the members of the CI were not working, al-

lowing the shop stewards belonging to the Mussy-Retamar group to immediately activate the new organizational dynamics, forming the internal representation as an alternative to the CI.

The "American shift" continued to be important to Santa Rosa workers for at least six years. During thie 1974 strike, demands were framed within the parameters of one of the recently sanctioned laws, demonstrating that the workers and their leaders understood the new regulation. This strike also showed the importance of the relationships between workers and political groups, the presence of political activists in the factory, and the important links with other metalworkers in the area. For example, in March and July of that same year, workers from two neighbouring metallurgical factories—Insud and Martín Amato—also entered into conflict without the support of the union and triumphed.

On November 12t, Santa Rosa workers' level of combativeness was evident when the employer denounced that the morning shift staff had forced them to turn off the furnaces and to incapacitate the plant electrical services.[85] However, on November 13, the Minister declared the strike illegal because it was neither decreed nor approved by any organic body of the union.[86] As well, the Santa Rosa CI, two days after the start of the conflict, ratified everything that the union had negotiated in order to proceed with the claim using administrative means and not direct action. The differences between the workers and the local union are very apparent. This is important to analyze because it outlines how Santa Rosa workers experienced the disparity between their immediate collective interests and the interests of their union representation during the course of events. Additionally, on November 15, a statement from the local union urged workers to end the strike. Clashing perceptions within the union about what was fair and what was not forged specific aspects of Santa Rosa workers' collective identity in November 1974.

The political formation and militancy of some workers surely shaped their actions and decisions during the conflict. However, analyzing the development of events, it becomes evident that the actions of workers were a consequence of internal factory processes. According to the magazine *Evita Montonera*, the Mussy-Retamar group of Santa Rosa distributed a flyer inside the factory in which they called on workers to form a Fight Committee, following an example set by the workers of the Martín Amato factory.[87] The flyer, did not criticize the attitude of the union. These activists were able to see that among the workers there was still a consensus about the direction of the local union and that linking the conflict with intra-union relations would decrease its force.

After one week of the strike, the police evicted workers from the factory. Next, the striking workers decided to hold a massive demonstration outside aimed at the union where, after assembling, they found no support. The striking workers then resorted to asking the Peronist party for support. However, the Peronist party also did not support their cause. The striking workers sent emissaries seeking workers' solidarity from other factories, which soon arrived.

The conflict finally concluded on December 6, with an agreement between the parties. The employer recognized all workers' claims and promised to pay for the days not worked. This was a great triumph for the workers of Santa Rosa. The most important part of this agreement, however, was establishing new leadership in the factory. As former worker Calvo stated:

> The people provoked a coup d'etat and we achieved the resignation of all the shop stewards when we return[ed] from the strike, when we were negotiating, we achieved the [payment of the] non worked days, and the people in an assembly of the whole factory requested the head of all the shop stewards, of course, that [was] prompted by us ... all shop stewards resigned (…) and the twenty young boys put together a list and [won] in all sections.[88]

Therefore, it is possible to conclude that—during the conflict—the immediate collective interest of the workers of Santa Rosa was extended to include strong critics of the union leadership. For this reason, new representatives in the rank-and-file organization were elected. Those who gained respect as leaders during this conflict later became members of the CI that prioritized these new collective interests. Although some of them were already leaders of their section colleagues, they became leaders of the factory thanks to the new workers' identity produced by the events. Many of these leaders had previous militant labour and political experience outside the factory. Nevertheless, it was only the internal process involving all Santa Rosa workers that had allowed them to become workplace leaders.

Conclusion

Looking at the forming of the Santa Rosa workers' collective bodies and identity during the second half of the twentieth century has shown the way in which the industrial regime determined how class was constructed in each workplace. The production process shaped how workers related to each other and with the employer, which in turn affected the construction of hierarchies and perceptions of reality that were always determined collectively.

In the case of Santa Rosa, the reciprocal relationship established with the employer stopped some workers from adopting a confrontational attitude. But, with the introduction of a new shift system, some of these workers understood that this reciprocal relationship was over. The new 'American shift' system produced a crisis of representation for shop stewards and the local union thereby consolidating an oppositional movement inside the factory. This movement could only achieve the support of the entire workforce once differences between the workers, the union, and the employer's interest became evident to the workers.

Analyzing how the workers' collective identity was constructed in the

workplace has enriched our understanding of trade unionism and the Argentine working class in that period. Through this analysis, it became evident that rank-and-file members were not a homogeneous group, a finding that helps us detach from a binary analysis of unionism that sees it only as a dichotomous opposition between rank-and-file members and leadership. This relationship was not in fact only governed by confrontation. Thus, we can better understand how the working class radicalized in the late 1960s by observing many workers' attempts to change the union system alongside many other workers' attempts to preserve it.

NOTES

[1] Ministerio de Hacienda y Finanzas, *Información Económica de la Argentina* 57 (January, 1973), 35.
[2] Luis Kergaravat, interview by the author, La Matanza, June 2018; Carlos "*el Ruso*" Gdansky, interview by the author, La Matanza, December 2017; and CPM-FONDO DIPPBA División Central de Documentación, Registro y Archivo, Mesa B, Factor Gremial, Carpeta Varios, Legajo 133.
[3] For more information see Eduardo Basualdo, *Estudios de historia económica argentina. Desde mediados del siglo XX a la actualidad* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2013).
[4] Marcos Schiavi, *La Resistencia antes de la Resistencia. La huelga metalúrgica y las luchas obreras de 1954* (Buenos Aires: El Colectivo, 2008).
[5] Victoria Basualdo, "Labor and structural change: Shop-floor organization and militancy in Argentine industrial factories (1943-1983)" (PhD diss., Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Columbia University, 2010).
[6] Basualdo, "Labor and structural change," 72.
[7] Basualdo, "Labor and structural change," 72.
[8] Louise Doyon, "La organización del movimiento sindical peronista, 1946-1955," *Desarrollo Económico* 24 (July-September, 1984), 203-234.
[9] Basualdo, "Labor and structural change," 40.
[10] Schiavi, *La Resistencia antes de la Resistencia*, 9.
[11] Eduardo Elena, *Dignifying Argentina: Peronism, Citizenship, and Mass Consumption* (Pittsburgh, PA.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011), 7.
[12] Daniel James, *Resistencia e Integración. El peronismo y la clase trabajadora argentina 1946-1976* (Buenos Aires: 1990, Editorial Sudamericana), 32.
[13] Elena, *Dignifying Argentina*, 7.
[14] James, *Resistencia e Integración*, 55. With the Peronist movement, the demonstration became a citizenship practice in Argentina. On October 17, 1945, thousands of workers mobilized to the Plaza de Mayo, Buenos Aires' main public square where the headquarters of national political power is located, demanding the release of Juan Domingo Perón, who had been arrested a few days earlier. In the face of these events, Perón was released and went to the *Plaza de Mayo* to ask the workers to return peacefully to their homes. That day, known in the Peronist liturgy as the "Loyalty day" (Día de la Lealtad), began a very special bond between the leader and the movement that materialized in these mass gatherings in the Plaza de Mayo. Likewise, this day began a citizen practice characterized by the occupation of public space and the mobilization around the headquarters of national political power either as a form fof support or protest against the government.

[15] James, *Resistencia e Integración*, 74. The "Peronist Resistance" was a protest movement generated in response to the attack on unions and rank-and-file organizations from the military dictatorship that took power in 1955. This movement was integrated by different organizations (unions, youth, guerrilla, religious, student, neighbourhood, and cultural) that acted autonomously, without any declaration or centralized leadership, with the common objective of Perón's return to the country and the holding of free elections without proscriptions. For more information about the Peronist Resistance see, for example, Ernesto Salas, *La Resistencia Peronista. La toma del frigorífico Lisandro de la Torre* (Buenos Aires: Punto de Encuentro, 2015), and Julio César Melón Pirro, *El peronismo después del peronismo. Resistencia, sindicalismo y política luego del 55* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2009), among many others.

[16] This was also highlighted by Basualdo, "Labor and structural change," 72.

[17] Alejandro Schneider, *Los compañeros. Trabajadores, izquierda y peronismo (1955-1973)* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Imago Mundi, 2006), 91.

[18] Schneider, *Los compañeros*, 77 and 84.

[19] James, *Resistencia e Integración*, 107.

[20] James, *Resistencia e Integración*, 107.

[21] After the overthrown of Perón in 1955, Argentina entered into a deep political crisis. Following the September 1955 coup d'etat, the military dictatorship called Revolución Libertadora (Liberating Revolution) had two presidents: first Eduardo Lonardi, who was removed after internal differences, and then, in November of 1955 Pedro E. Aramburu became president. In 1958 Arturo Frondizi assumed the presidency after elections in which Peronism was banned. In 1962, a new coup d'état removed Frondizi from office, and José M. Guido, then provisional President of the Senate, took office.

[22] The protests involved metalworkers, railway workers, and bank tellers, although the one carried out by the workers of the Lisandro de La Torre meat-packing plant, which included a takeover of the factory and had the strong support of the surrounding neighbourhood, became the symbol of that time. The repression unleashed to stop this protest was brutal. For more detailed information see Salas, *La Resistencia Peronista*.

[23] As Basualdo has explained: "repression against workers increased noticeably at the turn of the decade (…) formulation of the doctrine of the 'internal enemy' by the armed forces in the CONINTES plan (State's Internal Conmotion), in 1960, which sanctioned the detention of hundreds of militants and activists." Basualdo, "Labor and structural change," 88.

[24] Ralph Darlington, "Agitator 'Theory' of Strikes Re-evaluated," *Labor History* 47, no. 4 (November 2006), 502, https://doi.org/10.1080/00236560600899024

[25] James, *Resistencia e Integración*, 157-164. "Structures of feeling" is a concept

coined by Ramond Williams in *Preface to Film* (London: Film Drama, 1954).
[26] James, *Resistencia e Integración*, 168.
[27] James, *Resistencia e Integración*, 174.
[28] James, *Resistencia e Integración*, 195.
[29] Schneider, *Los compañeros*, 134.
[30] Basualdo, "Labor and structural change," 89.
[31] Basualdo, "Labor and structural change," 92.
[32] For an analysis of the forms of struggle according to associational or structural power, see Beverly Silver, *Fuerzas de trabajo. Los movimientos obreros y la globalización desde 1870* (Madrid: Ediciones Akal, 2005).
[33] Ministerio de Hacienda y Finanzas. Servicio de prensa y publicaciones, *Información Económica de la Argentina* 57 (January, 1973).
[34] Michael Burawoy, *Manufacturing Consent: Changes in the Labor Process under Monopoly Capitalism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979).
[35] Carlos Mignon, *Córdoba obrera. El sindicato en la fábrica 1968-1973* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Imago Mundi, 2014).
[36] Federico Lorenz, *Algo parecido a la felicidad. Una historia de la lucha de la clase trabajadora durante la década del setenta (1973-1978)* (Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2013).
[37] Lorenz, *Algo parecido a la felicidad*, 78.
[38] Ramón, interview by the author, La Matanza, May 31, 2019.
[39] Victorio Prieto, interview by the author, La Matanza, May 31, 2019.
[40] Prieto, interview by the author, 2019.
[41] Prieto, interview by the author, 2019.
[42] Prieto, interview by the author, 2019.
[43] Prieto, interview by the author, 2019.
[44] As can be seen from the interviews with Carlos Gdansky and Luis Kergaravat held by the author.
[45] For example the automobile factories in Córdoba studied by Mignon, *Córdoba obrera*.
[46] Luis Kergaravat, interview by the author, La Matanza, June 2018.
[47] The province of Entre Ríos is in the eastern region of Argentina. It is a rural region with little industrial development.
[48] Paula Varela, *La disputa por la dignidad obrera. Sindicalismo de base fabril en la zona norte del Conurbano bonaerense 2003-2014* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Imago Mundi, 2015).
[49] Carlos "el Ruso" Gdansky, interview by the author, La Matanza, December 2017.
[50] Pablo Ghigliani, *The Politics of Privatisation and Trade Union Mobilisation: The Electricity industry in the UK and Argentina* (Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang, 2010),

http://www.memoria.fahce.unlp.edu.ar/libros/pm.646/pm.646.pdf

[51] Georg Lukács, *Historia y conciencia de clase. Estudios de dialéctica marxista* (Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires: Ediciones Ry, 2013), 340.

[52] Varela, *La disputa por la dignidad obrera*, 116.

[53] Luis Kergaravat, interview by the author, La Matanza, April 2019.

[54] Kergaravat, interview by the author, 2019.

[55] Mignon, *Córdoba obrera.*

[56] *El alambre de púa* was a flyer written by Trotsky's workers of Santa Rosa in 1966, who signed each number as "the revolutionary group of Santa Rosa's workers;" *El alambre de púa*, nº 2, 9 de marzo de 1966, available from Fundación Pluma http://fundacionpluma.info:8080/xmlui/. Also the Buenos Aires provincial police indicated there were communist workers in Santa Rosa in the 1960s. CPM-FONDO DIPPBA, División Central de Documentación, Registro y Archivo, Mesa B, Factor gremial, Carpeta 78, Legajo 48.

[57] In La Matanza there were many metallurgists who were facing the same problems, for example those at MAN, SIAM Electromecanic, and Cegelec.

[58] Mónica Peralta Ramos, *La economia politica Argentina: poder y clases sociales (1930-2006)* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2007), 119-120 and 129.

[59] Guillermo O'Donnell, *El Estado burocrático-autoritario: triunfos, derrotas y crisis* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Belgrano, 1996), 83.

[60] For example Schneider, *Los compañeros*; Ruth Werner and Facundo Aguirre, *Insurgencia obrera en la Argentina 1969-1976. Clasismo, coordinadoras interfabriles y estrategias de la izquierda* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones IPS), 2006; Basualdo, "Labor and structural change"; and James, *Resistencia e Integración* among many others.

[61] After the overthrow of Perón in 1955, Argentina entered into a deep political crisis. From 1955 to 1973 there were only eight years of democratic government. The democracy, however, was partial: Peronism was banned so its followers could not participate in the elections. In 1962, Arturo Frondizi was removed from the presidency by a coup d'état and replaced with José María Guido, until then provisional President of the Senate.

[62] I use the concept of citizenship to mean the way in which people participate in the political life of their country.

[63] Adolfo Gilly, "La anomalía argentina (Estado, sindicatos y organización obrera de fábrica)," (Seminario sobre la teoría del Estado en América Latina, Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales, UNAM, 1984).

[64] Mariana Stoler, "'Compañeros conscientes de sus deberes de hermano de clase': una identidad ciudadana para la clase obrera", in *Del siglo XIX al XXI. Tendencias y debates: XIV Congreso de la Asociación de Historia Contemporánea, Universidad de Alicante 20-22 de septiembre de 2018,* ed. Rafael Fernández and Rosa Ana Gutiérrez Lloret (Alicante, Spain: Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, 2019).

[65] Schneider, *Los Compañeros* observes a revival of factory conflicts in the suburbs of Buenos Aires in the second half of 1968.
[66] See for example James P. Brennan, *El Cordobazo. Las guerras obreras en Córdoba, 1955-1976* (Buenos Aires: Waldhuter Editores, 2015 [1994]); and César Tcach, *De la Revolución Libertadora al Cordobazo. Córdoba, el rostro anticipado del país* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2013), among many others.
[67] James, *Resistencia e Integración*, 299-301.
[68] James, *Resistencia e Integración*, 302.
[69] Kergaravat, interview by the author, April 2019.
[70] Since 1967 different Trotskyist groups modified their way of approaching the working class. Thus, a process of proletarianization of its militants began; this also included the publishing of union flyers analyzing factory conflicts, and militants' participation in them. See for example Laura Kohn, "Historia de Política Obrera," *En defensa del Marxismo* 8, no. 24 (June/August, 1999), and Martín Mangiantini, "Itinerarios militantes entre dictaduras y conflictividad social. Del Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores al Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (1965-1976)" (PhD diss., Universidad de Buenos Aires, 2017), among others.
[71] See for example Aldo Duzdevich, Norberto Raffoul, and Rodolfo Beltramini: *La Lealtad. Los Montoneros que se quedaron con Perón* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2015).
[72] Kergaravat, interview by the author, April 2019.
[73] Workers from Santa Rosa, Siam, Cegelec, Roura La metal, Martín Amato, and MAN, among other metallurgical factories in the area, participated in this group.
[74] Liliana De Riz, *Retorno y derrumbe. El último gobierno peronista* (Buenos Aires: Hyspamérica Ediciones Argentina, 1987), 85.
[75] Descamisados decided to join Montoneros in 1972.
[76] Oscar Trentini, interviewed by Universidad de La Matanza, Secretaría de Extensión Universitaria, Junta de Estudios Hitóricos de La Matanza. Archivo de la Palabra. Fondo: Archivo de la Palabra Municipal. Código: 10.
[77] Francisco Calvo, interviewed by Hernán Bernasconi. Hernán Bernasconi, *Trabajadores metalúrgicos de La Matanza: breve historia del movimiento obrero argentino* (Buenos Aires: De la Orilla, 2010), 273-274. Carlos "el Ruso" Gdansky was the most important leader of Santa Rosa. Peronist, young worker in the hot area Rolling section, he had very good public speaking ability and great analytical capacity; he knew how to gain the confidence of his comrades. Years later he would be elected General Secretary of the local union, UOM La Matanza.
[78] Kergaravat, interviewed by Bernasconi. Bernasconi, *Trabajadores metalúrgicos*, 272.
[79] At that time, the metallurgical union of La Matanza had 20,000 members out of a total of 25,000 metalworkers in the area. There were 1,500 factories, but

only 25% of the workers worked in four of them. Santa Rosa had about 3,000, followed by Martín Amato with 1,300 workers, Siam Electromecánica with 1,200 and Yelmo with 800, *Evita Montonera* I, nº 2 (January-February, 1975).

[80] Basualdo, "Labor and structural change."

[81] Basualdo, "Labor and structural change," 79.

[82] Letter from the UOM La Matanza's general secretariat to the Minister of Labor, October 23, 1974. In the Union Obrera Metalúrgica de La Matanza archive.

[83] Kergaravat interviewed by Gabriela Medina. Gabriela Medina, "La formación de la Agrupación Mussy-Retamar y la huelga de 1974 en los establecimientos metalúrgicos Santa Rosa", in *Si trabajo me matan. Las huelgas metalúrgicas en La Matanza en 1974: Insud, Martin Amato y Santa Rosa,* ed. Darío Dawyd (San Justo: Universidad Nacional de La Matanza, 2017), 129.

[84] Kergaravat, interviewed by Bernasconi. Bernasconi, *Trabajadores metalúrgicos*, 218.

[85] Letter from Establecimientos Metalúrgicos Santa Rosa to La Matanza's Labour Delegation, November 12, 1974. In Union Obrera Metalúrgica de La Matanza archive.

[86] La Matanza's Labour Delegation resolution, November 13, 1794. In Union Obrera Metalúrgica de La Matanza archive.

[87] *Evita Montonera* I, no. 2 (January-February, 1975), 13.

[88] Calvo, interviewed by Bernasconi. Bernasconi, *Trabajadores metalúrgicos*, 274.