Gender Ideology at the Lowell Boott Mills: A Material Culture Analysis

Carolyn Michelle Ehner

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Gender Ideology at the Lowell Boott Mills:

A Material Culture Analysis

A Thesis
Presented to the Department of Anthropology
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

By Carolyn Michelle Ehner
1999
APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Carolyn Michelle Ehner

Approved, April 1999

Norman Barka

Barbara King

Curt Moye
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this paper to my husband Geoffrey Alan French, as well as to my parents, John and Inge Ehner, my brother John and sister Laura, all of whom gave me encouragement and support throughout these past years. Thank You.
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ABSTRACT

A material culture analysis of the Lowell Boott Cotton Mills provides a unique opportunity to examine female working-class participation in the negotiation of late-nineteenth century industrial ideologies. The changes associated with the transition from a mercantile to industrial capitalist system of production resulted in the emergence of corporate and middle-class ideologies whose foundations relied on the exploitation of industrial labor. Ideology is a complex set of behaviors and attitudes that define and contribute to a way of life. From a Marxist framework, ideology is often 'masked' and not readily recognizable in the cultural environment. As a result, working women at the Boott Mills consciously reacted against the exploitative nature of the dominant ideology, yet subconsciously participated in the 'masked' set of behaviors that defined various cultural norms.

The primary time focus of this paper is from the mid-nineteenth century into the first decade of the twentieth century, when the majority of Boott Mill workers were women of foreign descent. Through an analysis of the Lowell Boott Cotton Mills site reports, performed by Mary Beaudry and Stephen Mrozowski (1987, 1989) and other publications pertaining to the Boott Mills and social ideology, this thesis suggests that immigrant female operatives, during the late-nineteenth century, were important participants in the creation of a working-class ideology that resisted gender- and class-based inequality.

In contrast, the majority of the literature available for the Lowell Boott Mills focuses directly on the second quarter of the nineteenth century, when the work force was primarily local Yankee girls. The site reports for the Boott Mills are unique in that they focus on the immigrant population who worked at the Boott during the second half of the nineteenth century. This study uses the site reports as a foundation and builds upon the strictly class-based analysis of ideological conflict to specifically document immigrant women's resistance, and 'unconscious' contributions, to the dominant ideology that promoted class and gender inequality.

The material culture analysis of four categories of artifacts, recovered from the excavation of a Boott Mills tenement and boarding house backlot, revealed the dichotomy of their symbolic use and the extent of which ideology is 'masked' in day-to-day life. Objects related to personal adornment, alcohol, tobacco and ceramics were used symbolically by workers as ideological tools in gender- and class-based conflicts, but also reflect the 'masked' presence of the dominant ideology.

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Gender Ideology at the Lowell Boott Mills:

A Material Culture Analysis
INTRODUCTION

The city of Lowell, Massachusetts, is located at the confluence of the Merrimack and Concord Rivers in the northern part of the state, near the New Hampshire border. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the city now known as Lowell was a small farming community called East Chelmsford [see figure 1]. "By the second quarter of the nineteenth century, however, many New England towns were already in transition from agriculture and household manufacture to industrialization and the consumption of shop- and factory-made goods" (Mrozowski 1996:1) [see figures 2 and 3].

The transformation of New England’s economy from one based on mercantile capitalism to one rooted in industrial capitalism...involved the transition from small-scale, shop oriented manufacturing to full blown, factory-based industry (Mrozowski 1991:87).

The area of East Chelmsford, with its location near the falls of the Merrimack River, made it an ideal site for a new factory town and in 1825 the city of Lowell was founded by a group of wealthy investors known as the Boston Associates. Shortly thereafter, on March 27, 1835, the Lowell Boott Cotton Mills was incorporated for the manufacture of cotton and woolen goods. The Mills were named after Kirk Boott, an agent for the Boston entrepreneurs who capitalized the company. The company, the mill and the boarding houses occupied a 5.7-acre parcel along the Merrimack River (Shepley et al. 1980:1). The construction of the city and the mills was a "planned venture shaped by the needs of industry and the interests of capital" (Mrozowski 1996:2).
Figure 1. Lowell in 1825, Benjamin Mather, Oil on canvas, 31 3/4" x 46 1/2" (sight) Lowell Art Association; In Lowell Views: a collection of nineteenth-century prints, paintings, and drawings. Lowell Historical Society (Lowell Massachusetts: 1985).

Figure 3. City of Lowell - 1845 - by G.W. Boynton; In A Portfolio of Historical Maps of Lowell 1821-1914, from the Collection of the Lowell Historical Society, Lowell Historical Society (Lowell: Massachusetts 1985).
The change in the dominant mode of production during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century resulted in the emergence of a new urban ideology that defined a strict class-based social order. Braudel (1981:513-514) called this ideology "a new state of mind" and Harvey (1973:203) referred to it as "a way of life." In the urban landscape, this ‘state of mind’ or ‘way of life’ was "predicated on, among other things, a certain hierarchical ordering of activity broadly consistent with the dominant mode of production" (Harvey 1973:203). Inequality was at the heart of the emerging urban ideology that viewed land and resources merely as commodities to be exploited (Mrozowski 1991:86).

This material culture study of the Lowell Boott Cotton Mills intends to view late-nineteenth century, class- and gender-based ideological struggles through women's experiences and viewpoints. To do so, the study seeks to recognize 'ideological meaning' in the material objects working-class women used in the industrial environment.

At the Boott, working women used material culture to resist the inequality of the new social order of industrial capitalism. According to the Marxist notion of false-consciousness, however, "people cannot see the reality of their existence because that reality is hidden from them by ideologies" (Hodder 1986:68). Even though workers resisted the dominant ideology, they unconsciously participated in it when they purchased products that were popular among the middle class. As a result, there was an inherent contradiction among workers in their symbolic usage of material culture.
The Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1971) refers to this as cultural hegemony, or, the acceptance of a middle-class way of life as common sense. The cultural standards which required the possession of certain material objects were inherently rooted in the dominant social order. This ideological framework was 'masked' to members of the working class, and when they participated in these standards they contributed to the social order that promoted industrial exploitation.

This study intends to introduce the worker as an active social agent who was able to penetrate ideologies and was capable of having independent opinions. Hodder (1986:70) suggests that the intentional process of masking social inequality can also reveal social inequality. At the Lowell Boott Mills, working women did penetrate the ideologies of the dominant social order and participated in the construction of a working-class ideology that enabled them to resist class- and gender-based inequality. In order to improve the conditions of their existence, working women symbolically used material resources to challenge existing social relationships and to create solidarity among the working class. Workers participated in the conscious and unconscious manipulation of material resources in the day-to-day negotiation of hegemonic discourse. Such actions reveal workers were aware of the presence of inequality in the industrial environment.
CHAPTER I
CLASS IDEOLOGY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The transition from mercantile to industrial capitalism created a new urban landscape, which was shaped by and contributed to a new class-based ideology (Mrozowski 1991:80). Class-based ideological struggles began to characterize the industrial urban environment when capitalists started treating workers as a renewable and exploitable resource. Workers resisted capitalism through the construction of a working-class culture, and it is the interaction of these ideological frameworks that provide the foundation from which to interpret the archaeological data recovered from the Boott Mills.

An ideology is a system of beliefs and ideas that people accept without being able to state reasons why they accept them (Habermas 1971:311). As a system of ‘accepted’ beliefs, ideology serves to legitimate or extend domination; or, it is the ability of one group in a society to rule over another (Habermas 1974:19). Ideology is capable of legitimating social domination because it "masks, hides, or obscures the real nature of social relations from the people in a society" (McGuire 1992:140; see also Althusser, 1971; Leone, 1986; Gramsci, 1971; Lukács, 1971; Miller and Tilley, 1984).

Ideology may have multiple functions in the negotiation of social relations. No single ideology will exist, and the same set of beliefs, symbols, and rituals may be given different meanings and importance in different sectors of society and at different times. An ideology is both the product of, and prerequisite for, a group attaining a political consciousness and, as such,
always serves to integrate some class or portion of a class in power struggles. In order to maintain dominance, a ruling class needs to be integrated by an ideology and will typically mystify domination by representing their interests as the common interests of the whole society (McGuire 1992:142; see also Marx and Engels, 1970:64; and Larrain, 1983:24-25).

The subordinate classes may accept this ideology, or they may rework it into an ideology of resistance. The ability of the subordinate classes to rework a dominant ideology implies their capacity to identify and recognize ideological inequality. The subordinate classes thus assume an active role in the negotiation of competing ideologies. However, ideology ‘masks’ the reality of social relations and certain aspects of ideological control may remain hidden and intact.

A suitable model for the study of class relations is the notion of 'cultural hegemony' which was adapted from the work of Gramsci (1971). Critical to ‘cultural hegemony’ is the notion that ideology is an active force in social change (Bocock 1986).

[Gramsci] used the term to specify a dominant world view that permeates all facets of society from base to superstructure. It allows the ruling class to go beyond its own interests by winning the consent of a variety of allies to form a social block, and thereby give cultural permanence to the power of the ruling class. In capitalism, where few hold hegemony over many, it not only makes might right, but also makes it common and taken for granted. Such hegemony can be upset only by forging a social block, based on active consent and a collective will, that unites the exploited groups of a society (McGuire 1992:36).

The concept of cultural hegemony has been extensively used by students of British popular culture (e.g., Bennett et al. 1981, 1986; Hargreaves 1989), and provides a framework that encompasses the "complex processes of culture change involving class, ethnic and gender groups" (Cook 1989:213). Individuals perceive and experience this day-to-day, taken-for-granted, reality differentially depending on
their own experience; hegemony is not the same for all members of society. For example: industrialization, for the working class, was an experience of hard labor, degradation and material wants. For the burgeoning middle class, it was an experience of increased wealth, control, prestige and leisure. "These differences are the preconditions for multiple cultures and multiple ideologies" (McGuire 1992:142).

According to Bennett's (1986:xv) interpretation of cultural hegemony, competing ideologies are put forth and used by members of social classes. These ideologies are centered around what a social class perceives to be its own interests. Class relationships are developed through the negotiation of these ideologies in the cultural arena. The negotiation of these ideologies involves the deliberate use and manipulation of symbols by members of different groups (Cook 1989:213). In this process, each group "seeks to negotiate opposing class cultures onto a cultural and ideological terrain which wins for it a position of leadership" (Bennett 1986:xv).

Cultural hegemony provides an important dimension from which to analyze material culture, for it is in the "day-to-day negotiation of hegemony" that the "communicative function" of material culture takes place (Cook 1989:213). Thus, even the everyday, mundane artifacts of working-class life have symbolic, ideological implications that need to be 'decoded'. It is also in the day-to-day negotiation of cultural hegemony that "muted groups," such as the working class, "simultaneously embrace and resist the tenets of a dominant ideology" (Little 1997:226). Notions of correct social behavior are part of a hegemonic discourse in which behavior becomes accepted as common sense; thus workers may actively engage in resistance to the
dominant ideology, yet unconsciously participate in it because they have been
disciplined to accept certain behaviors as cultural standards.

McGuire (1992:105) argues that "material culture gives reality to social
structure, but that reality may, in fact, misrepresent the social structure." McGuire
(1992:105) further argues that material culture "becomes a vehicle for domination,"
because it serves to "reinforce and reproduce beliefs that mask power and domination
from the people of a society."

Foucault (1979; 1980) investigates other means to create consciousness,
particularly submissive consciousness, through the use of disciplinary
technologies on a population. Disciplining a population begins with an elite
notion of correct social behavior, proceeds to develop physical means to bring
about this behavior in others, and ends with the original ideal being grounded
into action. If this reciprocal relationship between an elite ideal and the
population’s behavior happens often enough, the ideal may make an empirical
sense to the population, and the people may adopt the ideal as common sense.
This process of forging common sense may create people willing to act on
their own accord in ways equivalent to the compliance which elites seek to
create (Paynter and McGuire 1991:8).

In a similar approach, Little’s (1992) study of vulgar ideology provides
another useful way to identify material culture ‘taken for granteds’ in hegemony. She
suggests material objects contain meanings that convey vulgar and non-vulgar
ideological messages.

Vulgar ideology refers to subjective knowledge and explanation that serves
some social class. Vulgar ideologies serve to promote, possibly through
distortion, the dominant group’s interests. Vulgar ideology is potentially
obvious and penetrable by members of a culture who can recognize, if not
effectively resist, the ideological ‘arguments’ used to maintain the status quo.
A message of vulgar ideology from a Georgian mansion might be that
material wealth is a legitimization of social power. Such an ideological
message may be questioned but not necessarily overturned. Non vulgar
ideologies, or culturally embedded common sense, arise from the material
structure of society and constitute apparently ‘objective’ knowledge thought to
be beyond question. Non vulgar ideology is much more difficult to penetrate
because it forms the basis for accepted truth, such as supernatural and natural
prescription...Muted groups may well see through dominant vulgar ideology and accept or reject it, but neither muted or dominant groups are likely to perceive explicitly the structure of non vulgar ideology (Little 1997:235).

Therefore, non-vulgar ideological messages are not likely to be readily recognized or rejected by the subordinate classes. According to Wobst, the most effective ideological messages are those received unconsciously, for it is unlikely that they will be questioned if they are unnoticed (1991, personal communication; cited in Hautaniemi 1994:1). The identification of ‘taken-for-granted’ in material culture provides insight into the ‘masked’, or common sense, nature of cultural hegemony. It may be ‘taken for granted’ that a particular object, or social behavior, is inherently rooted in the middle-class ‘way of life’ and by participating in the use of that object, or behavior, the working class is contributing to a ‘way of life’ that relies on worker exploitation.

An analysis of the material culture at the Boott Mills indicates that workers symbolically used objects to identify themselves within a group, create worker solidarity and reject the dominant ideology of the middle class; however, the material evidence also indicates that workers used objects that symbolically reinforced the values of the middle-class. Despite the workers’ conscious attempts to subvert the dominant ideology, they also unconsciously accepted some of its values.
CHAPTER II

GENDER THEORY AND THE IDEOLOGY OF WOMEN

Feminists such as Englestad (1991:118), Harding (1983:312), and Wylie (1991:18) have argued the need for research to include gender as a fundamental cultural construct that structures all social relationships. Women have participated in the structuring of human societies, their histories, ideologies, economic systems, and political structures (Moore 1988:6), and feminists have focussed on promoting theory that argues the analytical concept of gender as central to our understanding of human culture and society (Conkey and Spector 1984:17; Moore 1988:6).

According to Spector and Whelan (1989), a critical area of gender research in archaeology is to identify the formation of gender-based hierarchies. Important to this study of the Lowell Boott Mills is the Marxist-feminist analysis of the rise and impact of capitalism on gender relations and the argument which suggests that changes in gender roles, relations, and ideology within a society are a result of changes in production (Morgan 1989:7).

Hartmann (1975), in her analysis of the historical roots of occupational segregation, claims that gender-based conflicts existed within the classes and that most Marxist-feminist attempts to deal with the problems in Marxist analysis raised by the social position of women seem to ignore these basic conflicts between the sexes, apparently in the interest of stressing the underlying class solidarity that should obtain among women and men workers (Hartmann 1975:167).
Hartmann (1975), thus urges Marxist-feminists to consider the gender-based conflicts that were present in the industrial system. Within the industrial capitalist system of labor, class- and gender-based hierarchies existed to maintain a social stratification. This system of social control was created by the emergence of capitalist economic systems and mediated by industrial institutions that existed throughout the society (Hartmann 1975:138). A radical view, according to Hartmann (1975:139), "emphasizes the role of men as capitalists in creating hierarchies in the production process in order to maintain power. Capitalists do this by segmenting the labor market (along race, sex, and ethnic lines...)."

This chapter will examine gender- and class-based hierarchies to determine how women in different class groups were influenced by industrial ideologies as well as their reactions to those ideologies. Gender hierarchies existed within the working and middle classes and in both instances the result was a devaluation of women’s productive capacities.

The ideological changes that accompanied industrial capitalism influenced the spatial distribution of groups based on class affiliations and dramatically altered the productive responsibilities of women. Urban landscapes were transformed by wealthy capitalists who funded projects which created the first purely residential neighborhoods, a new spatial ordering rooted in the ideology of capitalism (Mrozowski 1991:95). As a result, women’s social and productive roles changed based on class distinctions, defining a working-class and domestic middle-class of women.
The suburbs were home to the new middle class who sought to capture country living within horse-car distance of the city. Two interesting characteristics of these new, middle-class suburban households were that they often relied upon a single, male generated income, and that the yard areas surrounding the dwellings were not designed to allow for much in the way of productive activities. This is probably due in large part to the shifting roles of middle-class women under the influence of industrial capitalism, which involved the replacement of productive activities with a new status, that of moral arbitrator of the domestic domain (Mrozowski 1991:95, see also Cott 1978; Hayden 1981; Strasser 1982; Mrozowski 1988).

The changing economic environment altered the ideologies that shaped women’s lives. The ideological transformation, as mentioned above, for the middle class created a domestic responsibility that effectively prevented these women from entering the industrial environment. According to Hautaniemi (1994:3), the proper role of middle-class women in the industrial capitalist world of the late-nineteenth century was that of domestic provider. The ‘ideology of womanhood’ (Welter 1978:313), as it reflects middle-class women, suggests the ideal woman was "too fragile to deal with the hostile, competitive world of commerce and the market" (Hautaniemi 1994:3). Instead, the middle-class woman’s work was to maintain "the home as sanctuary for her husband and to guard the spiritual, moral, and physical well-being of her family" (Hautaniemi 1994:3).

However, the shift in status and acceptable behaviors for middle-class women had dramatic affects on immigrant women of the working-class. The ability of the ‘ideal’ woman to raise a family, maintain a home and provide for the family’s well being required work. "Since the middle-class wife/mother was so fragile, it seemed that servants were needed to perform the actual labor associated with the role of the idealized woman" (Hautaniemi 1994:3). The wealth that was required to support this type of lifestyle, however, was "the appropriated labor of factory operatives -- many
of whom were European immigrant women and children” (Hautaniemi 1994:3). Furthermore, the middle class explained the paradox that juxtaposed frail women and working women in terms of ethnicity and race. Nineteenth century perceptions of working class and poor women, European immigrants and women of color, characterized them as being more genetically fit for hard work (Preston and Haines 1991:10-11).

Working women also faced a double hierarchy, not only that of class but that of gender. Job segregation, according Hartmann (1975:139), "is the primary mechanism in capitalist society that maintains the superiority of men over women, because it enforces lower wages for women in the labor market." This was achieved because women's jobs were devalued and considered less skilled and were positions that exercised less authority and control (Hartmann 1975:153).

At the mills women could expect to earn less than men and, unlike loyal male employees, women were not eligible for promotions (Cameron 1995:59). The following example of gender discrimination occurred at the Lawrence Textile Mills, located upriver from the Lowell Boott Mills [See figure 4]. After the 1873 depression, mill managers hoped to reduce labor costs and increase productivity. As a result, new production levels and wage cuts were set by management that required workers to produce more cloth while receiving less wages (Lawrence Daily Eagle, March 14, 1882; see Cameron 1995:49). Although the new production level and wage cuts affected both male and female operatives, women could expect a reduction in pay "at a rate far greater than those of male operatives" (Cameron 1995:47).
Female operatives pointed out that it was "the girls in the spinning room who are the hardest worked and the poorest paid of any in the mill, and they can ill-afford to suffer any reduction in wages" (Lawrence Daily Eagle, March 16, 1882; see Cameron 1995:49). Female laborers were faced with the difficult task of "making three dollars out of one," since women have no share in that American privilege which sets in full view of the poorest white male laborer a growing income, a bank account, the possibilities of an Astor, and every office within the gift of the republic if he have the brain and the courage to win them (Nation, February 21, 1867:156 see Cameron 1995:49-50).

Cameron (1995:50), in her analysis of the Lawrence Textile Mills, cites that "management sought to intimidate the operatives both as workers and as women" to prevent worker solidarity and strife over unfair wages. Management intimidated the women by stationing themselves "near the door" in order to "look on" and by walking "up and down the room, watching," and "puffing cigar smoke" at women’s leadership (Eagle, March 14, 1882; Tribune, May 14, 1902; quoted in Cameron 1995:50). Through these actions "management sought to reassert the sexual hierarchy of the shop floor and trivialize workers' complaints" (Cameron 1995:50).

Thus, gender entered working-class politics in ways that repeated the social organization of the shop floor. At work, sexual differences between men and women provided the primary means through which the system of labor was organized. Segmented according to sex, wage labor awarded men greater remuneration and authority than it did to women (Cameron 1995:51).

Middle-class women were also aware of the poverty associated with unfair wages as well as the subsequent disorder it created in urban centers. "Middle class reformers...staunchly defended a woman’s right to equal pay and placed blame for
'Fallen women’ squarely on the shoulders of a system that denied women the ability to support themselves” (Cameron 1995:25).

According to reports from a middle-class reform group known as the Ladies Union Charitable Society of Lawrence (LUCS), the working women’s wage situation resulted in a state of poverty and crime of which women were not responsible. When Margaret Jakes, known as a "mother of thieves," was arrested for child neglect the LUCS helped to fund her defense claiming that Jakes was not to blame (Reports, LUCS 1881, 1885; quoted in Cameron 1995:26). Instead, the LUCS argued, the blame should be placed on "starvation alley" and "traditionalism," which "still lingers to impose its artificial and restrictive economy on women" (Reports, LUCS 1881, 1885; quoted in Cameron 1995:26), and the crime should therefore be viewed as a "failure of society" (Cameron 1995:26).

Middle-class women were also confronted with the inequality of a gender hierarchy and claimed that the shift from an agrarian to an industrial society had devalued women’s domestic work to the point where it had lost the equal status with men’s work that it had enjoyed on the farms (Peirce 1868; see Spencer-Wood 1991:237). Middle-class women soon became bored with the idleness of domesticity (Rodgers 1978:182) and founded reform movements to improve the status of women’s work (Spencer-Wood 1991:231).

Nineteenth century domestic reformers created a positive gender ideology that not only resisted male dominance, but empowered women to develop independent identities and to raise their status by creating female professions (Spencer-Wood 1991:231).
Both middle- and working-class women were subject to "the continuation of male dominance in the culture as a whole" which, "led to the devaluation of women’s work, regardless of the field involved" (Spencer-Wood 1991:235).

Even though middle-class women founded reform movements that improved the quality of life for working women, their intentions are unclear since the reforms were also used to impose social controls on the poor (Spencer Wood 1991:238). In addition, many middle-class women hoped the movement would also introduce order and propriety to urban areas since the industrial system of labor created slum conditions that "bred crime, vice, and gangs that threatened the orderly lives of the middle and upper classes" (Spencer Wood 1991:238-239; Hayden 1981:319 n. 30, 320 n. 54; Ross 1976:34-7; Steinfels 1973: 37-9; Strasser 1982: 195-7).
CHAPTER III
THE BOOTT COTTON MILLS: CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

Capitalist production in late-nineteenth century America was based on the intensification of labor and the lengthening of the working day (Marx 1906). Integral to the maintenance of this type of labor system was the presence of a reserve army of unemployed workers which was constantly replenished by immigration from Europe. One of the main characteristics of this factory work force was extremely high turnover averaging 100% a year (Slichter 1919:16; Nelson 1975:85-6). The capitalist regarded labor, with the exception of a limited number of skilled workers, as a replenishable resource. The capitalist constantly sought to de-skill production and reduce the proportion of skilled workers in the labor force (McGuire 1991:102-103).

The worker’s sense of accomplishment was further reduced by the specialization of the factory system as devised by the [Boott Cotton Mills] and its followers. Each part of the production process was broken down into smaller and smaller segments, each of which required less and less skill, and no one of which could be said to produce a finished product. This careful and extreme division of labor freed the owners from the need for skilled operatives (whether handweavers or mulespinners), permitted them to utilize a short-term work-force, and minimized the opportunity for labor to ‘interfere with’ or exert and have control over, the boss system (and their own lives) (Gross and Wright 1985:16).

Thus, a new urban landscape was formed that was dominated by middle-class ideologies and capitalist exploitation. The City of Lowell was built to accommodate the needs of the emerging middle class and serve as an industrial institution that would preserve the developing social stratification required for a middle-class way of
life. Between 1830 and 1850, Lowell was transformed from an idea and a large expanse of pasture to a thriving city of close to 20,000; the new landscape was expressly suited for efficiency and control of the working class (Mrozowski 1991:87-90).

The founders of the city, known as the 'Boston Associates,' had a vision of an efficient community "dominated by the requirements of capital that shaped work and life itself" (Gross and Wright 1985:15). To achieve this plan the mill complex was constructed so the mill, workers’ housing, and the overseer’s house (the mill agent), were within walking distance of one another. The resulting landscape functioned as a "strict system of moral police" (Miles 1846:128) as well as a means of deriving profits (Mrozowski 1991:90) [see figure 5].

Class distinctions were institutionalized in the cultural landscape in the form of contrasting architectural styles for the mill workers’ housing and agent’s dwelling. In his comparison of the agent’s house and the boarding houses, Mrozowski (1991, 1996) suggests that the landscapes were intentionally created to symbolically empower the factory over the workers. The eight identical blocks of boarding houses that were built between 1835 and 1839 appear to serve the utilitarian purpose of housing factory operatives and reflect the corporation’s intent to create an environment based on “an adherence to strict class distinctions” (Mrozowski 1991:91). The agent’s house on Kirk street, on the other hand, was built in 1845 and was a stately brownstone. The strategic placement of the agent’s house between the mill workers and the rest of the community "was part of the overall plan to use spatial
Figure 5. The Spatial Distribution of Corporate Housing; In Lowell: The Story of an Industrial City: A Guide to Lowell National Historical Park and Lowell Heritage State Park, Lowell Massachusetts, produced by the Division of Publications, National Park Service (Lowell: Massachusetts 1992) 99.

See buildings # 8, the Boott Mill’s Boarding house; #7, the Agent’s house; # 9, the Boot Cotton Mills.
organization to accentuate the hierarchical dynamics of the mill operation..." (Mrozowski 1991: 91).

From the 1820s onward, mill regulations played a pivotal role in the plan of the Boston Associates for the development of the textile industry in Lowell; the "lords of the loom" (Cowley 1868:90) initiated a formal, paternalistic system of control (Bond 1989: 24). Corporate paternalism was "an efficient means of facilitating both for worker and employer a cultural transition from pre-industrial, artisanal production to the world of the mill and a method to manipulate workers’ behavior in the interest of profit" (Bond 1989:24).

Mill management was able to maintain social controls over the work force by enforcing rules which required workers to live in factory housing. This system of social control was justified by the mill owners and accepted by the town of Lowell when it was claimed to be in the name of public interest and concerned for the workers' welfare. Partly in response to concerns over industry’s evolution in Britain and Europe, Lowell’s founders hoped to answer critics with their system of moral police (Bond 1989: 24). At the same time they sought to quell the reservations of the families of the young, mostly female, operatives who were the backbone of the factory system (see Dublin 1979, 1981). Out of necessity, the Boston Associates provided for the physical, spiritual and emotional needs of their employees; the mill owners provided company-run boarding houses, a church, and educational opportunities (Bond 1989: 24).

Reacting to the public's fear that Lowell would be transformed into a gloomy slum, like the industrial centers in England, and inhabited by degraded individuals,
the industrialists assured the public that Lowell would not fall into urban decay (Bond 1989: 24). The Boston Associates took steps to ensure both the workers’ physical and moral well being would be carefully tended. To elucidate these actions to the public, the Boston Associates frequently publicized (e.g., Massachusetts House of Representatives Docket #50 1845; Miles 1846) that mill room overseers, and strict boarding house keepers, diligently supervised the workers’ behavior (Bond 1989: 24).

Despite the benevolent concern the mill owners conveyed to the public, the boarding house system was also designed to prevent working-class solidarity, a situation that had led to labor clashes throughout England and Europe. “The issue was not so much avoiding the growth of working-class slums as it was eliminating the possibility of labor unrest that might arise in a stable work force” (Beaudry 1989:20). Beaudry (1989:20) has also suggested that by enforcing rules that required workers to live in corporate housing, the Boott Mills established a system of control that gave overseers 24-hour surveillance over the work force. The system of corporate paternalism was thus established to accommodate a transient, “self-renewing pool of inexperienced, docile, unorganized labor” (Gross and Wright 1985:13-14). For the Boston Associates, the intended outcome of corporate paternalism was an environment that would prevent workers from recognizing their “exploitation at the hands of investors” (Gross and Wright 1985:14). Corporate policy wrapped workers in “a complex social matrix so thorough that it left no significant decision, day or night, to the workers” (Gross and Wright 1985: 14). As a result, the Boott Mills’ policy of corporate paternalism remained profitable, and intact, throughout its history.
CHAPTER IV
TRANSITION FROM LOCAL MILL GIRLS TO IMMIGRANT WOMEN

The Lowell Boott Mills offers a unique opportunity to examine the active role of working women in the construction of a working-class culture since working women outnumbered men at the Boott throughout the nineteenth century.

When the Lowell boarding houses were first built the workers were primarily New England born mill girls. Although the manuscript census data for 1840 are incomplete, it is apparent that the residents of the Boott boarding houses were predominantly women (Dublin 1979). In 1842, the Boott employed 950 females and 120 males (Shepley et al. 1980:1-2). By 1868, employees numbered 1200 females and 310 males and by 1878 the Boott employed 1300 women and 500 males (Shepley et al. 1980:3). Bond (1987:54) however, in her report on demographics at the Boott, indicates that by 1900 male residents outnumbered female residents. The tenements, on the other hand, appear to have housed couples and male employees and their families throughout the mills’ history (Bond 1987:37).

During the early years (1830-1850), the work force was predominantly local Yankee girls. These local women were educated and literate and held middle-class ideals (Beaudry 1993:98). For them, life in the Lowell Mills during the 1830’s and 1840’s was hard, and most mill girls usually worked there for a short period of time, four or five years, to acquire some financial stability, independence or maybe a dowry (Rybicki 1990: 10).
The mill girls worked a seventy-three hour week: "a total of thirteen or more hours a day, Monday through Friday, with a short eight-hour shift on Saturday" (Rybicki 1990:10). The long hours and unhealthy working conditions, along with the system of social control, were resented by the Yankee girls and is well documented in *The Lowell Offering*, a newspaper that was published by the mill girls between 1840 and 1845 and the *Voice of Industry*, a weekly paper that was published in Lowell, Massachusetts between 1845 and 1848 [see figure 7]. In addition, some women published tracts with the Female Labor Reform Association (FLRA) to protest working and living conditions.

In 1845, ‘Julianna’ sent a letter of protest to the Female Labor Reform Association (FLRA) stating that “All is hurry, bustle and confusion in the street, in the mill, and in the overflowing boarding house” (FLRA 1845:3). ‘Julianna’ also protested that the women were “crowded into a small room which contains three beds and six females…they are confined so long in close, unhealthy rooms that it is a great wonder that they possess any life or animation, more than the machines which they have watched so unceasingly!” (FLRA 1845:3).

Other protest letters that were received by the Female Labor Reform Association indicated the workers’ opposition to the corporation’s control over their lives beyond the mill:

Her footsteps must be dogged to see that they do not stray beyond the corporation limits, and she must, whether she will or no, be subjected to the manifold inconveniences of a large crowded boarding-house, where too, the price paid for her accommodation is so utterly insignificant, that it will not ensure to her the common comforts of life; she is obliged to sleep in a small comfortless, half ventilated apartment containing some half a dozen occupants each (FLRA 1845:6).
Figure 7. *The Lowell Offering*, August 1845; In Lowell: the story of an industrial
city: a guide to Lowell National Historical Park and Lowell Heritage State Park,
Lowell Massachusetts, produced by the Division of Publications, National Park
Service (Lowell: Massachusetts 1992) 52.
Another woman, whose anonymous protest letter was signed ‘An Operative,’ objected to the corporate rule that required operatives to live in company-run houses because it conflicted with “our rights as rational beings” (FLRA 1845: Extract from Factory Tracts No. 2). This letter, sent by ‘An Operative’ and published in the FLRA, was also published in the November 1845 issue of the *Voice of Industry*:

We are told by those who contend for corporate rules, that the Operatives of Lowell, are the virtuous daughters of New England. If this be true, (and we believe it is with few exceptions,) is it necessary to shut them up six in a room, 14 by 16 feet with all the trunks, and boxes necessary to their convenience; to keep them so? (FLRA 1845: Extract from Factory Tracts No. 2, np).

The overcrowded conditions also made it impossible for the women to maintain their standards for personal cleanliness and prevented “frequent bathing so necessary to health” (FLRA 1845: Extract from Factory Tracts No. 2, np). According to the anonymous letter written by ‘An Operative,’ the girls were unable to bathe once a day, a situation which caused them to “violate the physical laws of God” (FLRA 1845: Extract from Factory Tracts No. 2, np).

The tracts also indicate the crowded conditions and long working hours made it impossible for the operatives to continue their education and improve their minds, as ‘Julianna’ objects in her letter dated October, 1845:

> few [women] have the moral courage and perseverance to travel on the rugged paths of science and improvement, amid all these and many other discouragements. After thirteen hours unremitting toil, day after day and week after week, how much energy and life would remain to nerve on the once vigorous mind in the path of wisdom? (FLRA 1845:3).

The concerns expressed in these letters of protest indicate the young mill girls placed value on their rights to personal space, privacy and cleanliness; values that were shared with the middle and upper classes, especially among reform-minded
individuals (Spencer-Wood 1991; Beaudry 1993:98). According to Beaudry (1993:98), "they had absorbed much of the ideology of domestic science and found its application in the boarding houses wanting."

For the mill girls, the final act of resistance against the social controls, living conditions and continual wage cuts was their decision to leave the factory and return home to their families. "Beginning after 1840, the New England born mill women, protesting wage cuts and hours of labor, began to leave the Lowell mills" (Bond 1989:25) and simply stopped applying for the jobs (Cameron 1995:xv).

The mills, however, weren't faced with a shortage of labor since New England had become a "international magnet for the textile operative" (Cameron 1995:xv). By the 1850's most of the mill girls had left the factories, to be replaced by Irish and French Canadian immigrant workers and Eastern European workers after 1900 (Bond 1989:25).

With the arrival of immigrants who were eager to find work, the mill owners became "less dependent on Yankee girls and women whose labor had always stirred controversy and whose protests had jeopardized popular support for the new industrial order" (Cameron 1995:28). According to Ware (1931: 234-235), the immigrant labor supply entered New England's mills and cities "unnoticed and unopposed." By 1852, "half of all factory operatives in New England mills were already foreign-born" (Kessler-Harris 1982: 64).

The largest numbers of immigrants to enter the mills were of Irish descent. "Between 1845 and 1860, over one-third of Ireland's populations emigrated, driven
out of Ireland by famine, unemployment, and a series of mass evictions generated by decades of English control" (Cameron 1995:29).

Not surprisingly, management’s control of the workforce continued; however, the quality of control had changed. Management continued to convey to the public that the mills provided an orderly and morally correct environment but with the arrival of immigrants, and the increased economic pressures of textile production, the formal structure of the mill owners’ paternalism faded (Bond 1987:25). Any attempt at “moral sheltering was dropped for the benefit of increased output” (Scranton 1984:245).
CHAPTER VII

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

The excavation and interdisciplinary study of the Lowell Boott Mills was performed under a cooperative agreement between the North Atlantic Regional Office of the National Park Service and Boston University’s Center for Archaeological Studies. In the fall of 1986 the excavation of two complete backlots at the Lowell Boott Mills began. Boott unit #45, a ‘typical’ boarding house backlot, and Boott Unit #48, an end tenement for supervisory personnel, were chosen for excavation (Beaudry and Mrozowski 1989:60) [see figures 6,7,8].


The archaeological evidence provides a context to understand how the working class lived their lives; most importantly it provides clues to understand how working women, living in the context of corporate- and middle-class oppression, used material objects in the creation of a working-class culture that allowed them to participate in ideological class struggles.

The archaeological evidence of corporate neglect provides a strong contextual example of the decline and deterioration of working-class living conditions.

The dashed lines represent the footprints of two demolished boarding houses.
Even though the “corporation efforts to provide for the health and well being of workers were much publicized aspects of the policy of corporate paternalism,” (Bell 1987; cited in Beaudry 1989:27) the archaeological record reveals this concern for propriety did not extend to areas beyond the public’s eye.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Harriett Robinson (1898: 209, quoted in Huggins 1985:6), a former resident of Lowell, described the dilapidated state of the Boott Mills' corporate housing. She wrote that the houses were

[no longer] kept clean and in repair as they used to be. In Lowell, when I last walked among the "blocks" where I lived as a child, I found them in a most dilapidated condition—houses going to decay, broken sidewalks and filthy streets; and contrasting their appearance with that of the corporation as I remember it, I felt as if I were visiting the ruins of an industry once clean and prosperous (Harriett Robinson 1898: 209; quoted in Huggins 1985:6).

The soil analysis of the boarding house yard and the excavation of the boarding house privy provide two examples of corporate neglect.

The result of soils, pollen, macrofossils, and opal phytolith analysis (Kelso et al. 1987:93-128) at the boarding house supports an interpretation of changing yard conditions from the years of the mill girls up into the late-nineteenth century. An exploratory botanical analysis indicates that during the early years of occupation, the yard was dominated by grass; this, however, gave way to “a landscape increasingly dominated by weeds and vines” (Mrozowski and Kelso 1987:151). According to Mrozowski (1991:93), Night shade (Solanum sps.), which actively colonizes continuously disturbed soils, was prominent in both the pollen and macrofossil remains. Furthermore, a brick feature that was identified as a terminal box downspout, also produced large quantities of Solanum seeds (Beaudry 1987:98). The evidence thus suggests that “vines of nightshade were probably growing on
drainspouts as well as walls and fences” (Mrozowski 1991:90-93). In addition, both the pollen and macrofossil samples identified weeds called ruderals, which are commonly found in continuously disturbed soils, thus further indicating that the boarding house yards were intensively utilized (Mrozowski 1991:90-93).

The trend evidenced at the boarding house, from a well-maintained grass yard to one characterized by weeds, can be interpreted as a progressive lack of interest in the living conditions of mill operatives (Mrozowski 1991:93).

Always interested primarily in economic advantage, the corporations evolved from a public ‘benevolent’ paternalism through a begrudging paternalism to a time when they no longer took responsibility for the housing of their workers (Bell 1987:68).

These changes were manifest in a variety of areas. The drinking water provided for the operatives was supplied both by the polluted wells and canals of the Boott Mills. The archaeological evidence indicates that disease stemming from contaminated water supplies may have been at least partially caused by the continued use of wells and privies at the boarding houses after the Lowell Board of Health ordered them to be removed (Bell 1987:63-4). By 1890 the Lowell Board of Health ordered all corporations to remove all privies from their property and replace them with water closets that were hooked up to city sewage lines (Lowell Board of Health 1888-1893: 1 April 1890).

Voted
That the Agents of the following Corporations, --The Launnance [Lawrence] Mfg. Co. The Merrimack Mfg. Co. The Boott Cotton Mills The Massachusetts Cotton Mills and the Lowell Machine Shop be notified to remove the [privy] vaults on their property within 60 days from the time of notice thereof (The Lowell Board of Health 1888-1893: 1 April 1890).
The archaeological evidence recovered from the two excavated privies indicates the Boott Mill corporation did not comply with these laws. The two privies in the boarding house back yard contained over 700 machine-made bottle fragments (Mrozowski 1996:52). Since the process for making machine-made bottles was not put into use until 1910, the evidence indicates the privies were not abandoned and filled until at least 1910, a full twenty years after the Lowell Board of Health required the corporation to do so (Mrozowski 1996:52).

Even though the archaeological evidence for corporate neglect provides a rich contextual background from which to view the lives of mill workers, it is the archaeological data that links worker resistance (i.e. consciousness) to the post-1880 time period that provides this study with the evidence to suggest foreign-born women participated in class-based ideological struggles. During the post 1880 occupation of the Mills, the demographic evidence identifies the workforce was predominantly foreign born women. Therefore, if the material culture recovered from the backlots is dated to the same time period these women occupied them, the evidence would suggest the foreign-born women were active participants in resistance strategies and in the creation of a working-class culture.

In fact, most of the artifactual evidence recovered from the tenement and boarding house backlots dates to the late-nineteenth century occupation of the sites, and very little evidence was recovered that dates to the early mill girl era. Although the mill girls left ample testimony in the form of personal accounts, it was the later nineteenth century workers, chiefly Irish, French Canadian, and Eastern European
immigrants, who deposited the artifactual evidence of everyday life in the archaeological record (Beaudry 1993:91).

Bottle glass and ceramic vessels were used as the primary indicators for dating the boarding house and tenement sites and features. Ceramic vessels were dated based on decorative styles and elements as well as identifiable manufacturers’ marks. The ceramic vessels were also used in conjunction with dated glass vessels to arrive at *terminus post quem* (TPQ) dates for appropriate features (Dutton 1989:90).

The bottle glass identification and dating was performed by Kathleen Bond (1989), and the ceramic analysis and dating was performed by David Dutton (1989), as part of the Interdisciplinary Site Reports of the Lowell Boott Mill excavations.

The excavation of the boarding house and tenement backlots recovered a total of 169 medicine, alcohol and soda bottles. Of the 169 vessels, 84 were medicine bottles, 72 were alcohol and 13 were soda bottles; 60 vessels came from the tenement and 109 came from the boarding house (Bond 1989:121).

Of the 165 datable glass vessels, 8 (5%) were mold- or free-blown prior to 1880. One hundred and six (64%) were mold-blown between 1880 and 1920, and 41 (24%) were machine-made after 1904. Another 14 (9%) could be no more closely dated than to after 1860 (Bond 1989:122).

Ceramic *terminus post quem* dates were calculated for features with four or more vessels present. Dates were based on decorative styles, such as molded patterns, in addition to manufacturers’ marks found within the associated feature (Dutton 1989).
Four features uncovered in the tenement backlot were assigned *terminus post quem* dates and the boarding house backlot produced only 3 features that had 4 or more vessels [see table 1].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature #</th>
<th>Feature type</th>
<th>TPQ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tenement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature 25</td>
<td>Wall disturbance</td>
<td>1880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature 27</td>
<td>Planting hole</td>
<td>1900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature 43</td>
<td>Well</td>
<td>1881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature 45</td>
<td>Privy</td>
<td>1880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boarding house</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature 7</td>
<td>Wall disturbance</td>
<td>1880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature 61</td>
<td>Privy</td>
<td>1900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature 65</td>
<td>Planting hole</td>
<td>1830</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Dutton 1989:104

Based on the bottle-glass manufacture dates and the *TPQ* dates for features, the ceramic and bottle glass recovered from boarding house backlot #45 and tenement backlot #48 identified a strong link between the artifacts and the post 1880 occupation.
CHAPTER XIV
PERSONAL ADORNMENT

The artifacts associated with personal adornment "were some of the very few items that [female] workers purchased for themselves" (Mrozowski 1996:75) since most of the material objects of day-to-day life, such as home furnishings, cutlery, tableware and food, would have been provided by the corporation or boarding house keeper (Ziesing 1989: 141). The evidence for personal adornment, side and back hair combs, barrettes, buttons, beads, jewelry and cosmetics was attributed to exclusive female usage (Mrozowski 1996:78). In contrast, none of the personal effects can be associated exclusively with male use (Ziesing 1989:166).

In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, American women began to participate in a commercial beauty culture (Peiss 1994:372), that popularized the democratic idea that beauty could be achieved by all women if only they used the correct products and treatments. The mass production, distribution, marketing and advertising of the cosmetic industry rendered new social meanings about female identity and made them compelling to female consumers (Peiss 1994:372). Beginning in the 1880s, beauty culturalists popularized the rituals for beautification through the introduction of beauty salons for middle- and upper-class women. In addition, the beauty culture was also available for, and targeted towards, women of modest means (Peiss 1994:375). As one manufacturer's pamphlet observed:
you can select 10 ordinary girls from a factory and by the skillful use of...proper toilet articles...you can in a short time make them as attractive and good-looking as most any ten wealthy society girls...it is not so much a matter of beauty with different classes of girls as it is how they are fixed up (Kijja manufacturer’s pamphlet, cited in Peiss 1994:385).

The recovery of cosmetics and decorative hair ornaments from the Boott Mills suggests working women made a concession to the beauty culture that was both practical and economically feasible for them. The evidence of cosmetic and cologne containers was minimal, with only four toiletry and/or perfume containers recovered. The fragrances, however, may have served a practical purpose if they were used as a replacement for a daily bath.

Perhaps the greatest indicator of the participation in a beauty culture is the quantity of decorative hair ornaments recovered during the excavation. This interpretation considers the economic constraints of female workers as well as their acceptance of the dominant ideology. When working women purchased consumer objects that were deemed fashionable by the middle class they participated in the dominant social order. Since workers could not afford the ‘real thing’ they opted instead to purchase objects that were inexpensive substitutes, thus suggesting workers emulated the consumer choices of the middle class.

The excavation yielded more than forty hair combs and ornaments; some were utilitarian but most of them were decorative combs that were used in women’s hair. From the late 1800s up till the 1920s, women wore their hair long and used barrettes and combs to keep it up and away from their faces (Mrozowski 1996: 78). "This was especially important for female textile workers, who risked injuries if their hair
became entangled in the moving parts of looms, belts, or spinning machines" (Mrozowski 1996: 78).

Due to the necessity of combs and barrettes in the work place, and the financial limitations of factory workers, hair ornaments may have been the most cost-effective way for working women to decorate themselves. As such, the presence of barrettes and combs doesn't indicate an acceptance of the dominant ideology, but rather it is the 'style' of the hair pieces that indicates acceptance and emulation.

The combs and hair ornaments used by the workers were made from inexpensive materials that were manufactured to imitate the expensive items that were considered fashionable. For instance, most of the decorative pieces were made of plastic and looked very much like real tortoise shell, which was expensive (Mrozowski 1996: 78) and popular with the middle class.

The price differences between the imitation and real items could be very dramatic. The 1895 Montgomery Ward Catalog advertised fashionable hair ornaments that were available in both real and imitation tortoise shell. The Catalog (Montgomery Ward Catalog 1895:183) also sold "Real Shell Side Combs" for 48 cents per pair, while the "Imitation" combs sold for 10 cents per pair. Likewise, the Catalog (Montgomery Ward Catalog 1895:183) also had a pair of "Fancy Top Shell Side Combs" on sale for 50 cents while a pair of "Imitation" combs was only 20 cents.

The recovery of copper brooches, a rhinestone pin and various beads also give evidence that the working women made deliberate choices to buy and wear less costly imitations of expensive jewelry (Ziesing 1989:168). As Mrozowski (1996:78) notes,
"the female boarding house residents wanted to look fashionable while purchasing accessories that were within their means." For instance, black glass buttons were used as a substitute for 'jet', which was expensive and rare; plastic and rubber hair ornaments were substituted for real tortoise shell; paste substituted for diamonds and green glass substituted for emeralds (Ziesing 1989:168).

Dutton (1989:83), however, warns that "it must...always be remembered that the price or value of the...item is only one factor that is involved in the complex web of consumer choices." Despite the availability of a variety of mass-manufactured buttons during the nineteenth century, there is a relative absence of variety in buttons recovered at the boarding house and tenement (Ziesing 1989:166).

There was a wide range of goods available at the end of the 19th century and a proliferation of materials used to make them...The variety of materials and styles available in buttons was greater in the mid 19th century than it ever had been (Epstein 1968:49).

However, 86 (71%) of all the buttons and studs recovered from the tenement and boarding house are made of white porcelain. Of those 86 white porcelain buttons and studs, 73 of them (60% of the total) are completely undecorated. In addition, no painted or transfer-printed porcelain buttons and studs were recovered (Ziesing 1989:166), despite their popularity from the 1860s on (Epstein 1968:50).

If, as Little (1997:236) suggests, material culture was used to express culturally appropriate behaviors within the dominant ideology, then an alternative would be to own no appropriate equipment with the result of being defined as culturally 'other'. Leone et al. (1997), in research done in Annapolis, Maryland, suggest consumer choices that consciously reject capitalist culture, and the intentional
marking of a self-created, separate identity, may very well be subtle resistance that is disguised as economic necessity (cited in Little 1997:236).

The lack of variety in the button assemblage, despite the abundance of variety in the nineteenth century, indicates working class consumer choices may reflect resistance through the creation of the 'other'. Material objects, such as those used for dress and bodily adornment, can be used as visible symbols to create the appearance of the 'other' and the "cultural significance...depends on the artifacts meaning within a given social context" (Praetzellis, Praetzellis, and Brown 1987: 42).

Cook (1989:211) indicates that "style...communicates subculture," and is fundamental to class definition when it is used as a "tool to identify those who belong." Despite the fact that workers had limited finances, there is evidence of adaptive behavior and the creation of a subculture.

Although it is difficult to decode the complexities of consumption within consumer culture, it is critical for an understanding of the muted group’s ideology. At the Lowell Boott Mills, workers had very few avenues for self-expression since they lived in a landscape that 'provided' for them. Not only does this limit the consumer choices available for the worker, but it limits the ability of the archaeologist to observe consumption patterns.

In nineteenth- and twentieth-century North America, the dominant culture's Enlightenment values, expressed in the consumer culture produced by the industrial revolution, obfuscate the diversity in the life of a city by imposing a coherent set of cultural constructs and a consistent material culture. Mass-manufactured goods imply mass-manufactured culture...Muted groups' ideologies cannot fully express their ideologies in ways that can be understood by the dominant groups. Such a situation presents a challenge to archaeologists, who must learn to interpret variable artifact assemblages and data that do not 'fit' expectations as something meaningful rather than just 'noise' in a pattern (Little 1997:228).
The question for this study is whether the consumer choices the workers made in the consumption of personal effects were purely economic decisions, or were they the decisions of people refusing to participate in (i.e., resisting) the dominant ideology.

The evidence from the buttons alone does not provide ample evidence for the creation of a subculture, it is just one area in which the working-class 'style' may have been expressed. The process of 'decoding' the artifactual evidence requires the analyzer to ask and answer questions. The artifact assemblage does not reflect the availability of mass produced goods that were of similar cost to the plain buttons recovered. Why? Why did the workers choose plain buttons over decorated ones? To answer this question, the analyzer must look beyond the obvious answer of economic necessity. Workers made consumer choices that articulated symbolic meaning in social contexts. Unfortunately, as Cook (1989:211) indicates, these motivations are not easily quantified.
CHAPTER XV

TOBACCO

Tobacco use can be viewed as an element of hegemonic discourse between the classes. Since the archaeologically excavated clay pipes have no gender-specific attributes, it is difficult to discern if the women at the Boott participated in this discourse. The documentary evidence, however, for tobacco use in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries does indicate that women smoked in both Britain and America (cf. "St. Swithin" 1909; Hodgkin 1909; Heimann 1960: 89). There is also no evidence, before the 1850s, to suggest smoking was considered disgraceful for women; nonetheless, after mid-century, smoking among women began to decline in both Britain and America (Heimann 1960: 90). It should be noted, however, that the evidence is based on information concerning the middle and upper classes in urban contexts and may not be a reliable indicator for working-class behaviors.

By the late-nineteenth century, middle-class values deemed smoking to be an unacceptable behavior for all women and considered smoking in public to be socially unacceptable for both men and women of all classes (Cook 1989). Among the working class, however, documentary evidence exists to indicate that not only did women smoke, but they also smoked in public [see figure 11].

According to an account printed in The New York Times on January 21, 1908, the 'Sullivan Law' was passed and it prevented women from smoking in public places. The law was named after New York Alderman Timothy Sullivan who pushed
Figure 11. Nineteenth century illustration of a woman seated and smoking a pipe; In Mrozowski et. al., Living on the Boott: historical archaeology at the Boott Mills boardinghouses, Lowell, Massachusetts. University of Massachusetts Press (Amherst: 1996) 69.
for it. The validity of the law was immediately questioned and the Mayor of New York set it aside in early February (New York Times, 21 January 1908: 1; 4 February 1908: 1). However, two days after the law took effect, 29-year-old Katie Mulcahy was arrested for lighting a cigarette on New York’s Bowery (New York Times, 23 January 1908: 1; cited in Cook 1989).

Workers chose to smoke clay pipes for a variety of reasons and economic factors certainly played a role in this consumer choice. The middle class smoked Spanish cigars and moderately priced brier pipes, and the wealthiest smokers used the expensive meerschaum pipes that were made from a rare mineral found in Asia Minor (Cook 1989:215). Clay pipes, in contrast, were the least expensive and by the 1880s were solidly established as the workers’ preferred mode of smoking (Cook 1989:216).

For example, “in 1869, clay pipes cost between 50 cents and $1.20 per gross, briers cost between $5.00 and $25.00 per gross in Europe, prior to being shipped to America (where they were certainly more expensive)” (Cook 1989:218). The price of meerschaums was “always comparatively high and may reach fabulous, or ‘fancy’ prices” (Anonymous 1869, quoted in Cook 1989:218). In comparison, in 1883, clay pipes could be purchased in Boston for as little as one and two cents each (Walker 1983:39).

The cost, however, was not the sole motive behind the workers’ preference for clay pipes. Cook (1989:218) suggests workers symbolically used clay pipes to signal working-class identity and pride.
The tensions between dominant and subordinate groups can be found reflected in the surfaces of subculture- in the styles of mundane objects which have a double meaning. On the one hand, they warn the 'straight' world in advance of a sinister presence - the presence of difference - and draw down upon themselves vague suspicions, uneasy laughter, 'white and dumb rages.' On the other hand, for those who erect them into icons, who use them as words or curses, these objects become signs of forbidden identity, sources of value (Hebdige 1979:2-3).

Even though tobacco use was a source of class conflict it should be recognized, however, that the act of smoking and the expression of class differences through pipe preferences was not a source of conflict. Rather, "the clay pipes are present more as a visible symbol of the class differences that underlie the conflict, rather than as objects of contention in and of themselves" (Cook 1989:219).

For example, in July 1889, the following excerpt was printed in the Worcester Sunday Telegram in reference to the rental of a duplex on Worcester's fashionable West Side.

At one time a family of French [Canadian] people lived in the house. The men folk sat around the house and on the front doorsteps in their shirtsleeves and smoked white clay pipes, and of course that did not tend to soften the feeling of discontent among the neighbors that the Harringtons were lowering the tone of that particular section of the city (Worcester Sunday Telegram, 7 July 1889, p. 6; quoted in Cook 1989:216).

Cook (1989:216) suggests that "it was probably the deshabille of the offenders in such a public setting and the fact that they took their leisure in full view that upset their neighbors." As such, the white clay pipes were not the source of conflict, but rather it was the visible presence of the working class, smoking in public, in a middle class neighborhood that caused the class-based conflict.

According to Beaudry (1993:93), "white clay pipes...became emblematic of class membership because merely smoking them in public- out of their proper context
according to middle class mores- workers signaled their group affiliation while flouting rules imposed on them by others. In order for the expression of class membership through tobacco use to be meaningful, it had to be public (Lauren Cook 1990, pers. comm.; cited in Beaudry 1993:93).

In addition, workers publicly expressed class affiliations by smoking from modified white clay pipes (Cook 1989:216). It appears that the Boott smokers were breaking off the factory-made mouthpieces, and portions of the stems, before smoking from the pipes. This interpretation is based on the analysis of 32 factory-made mouthpiece fragments recovered during the excavations. Of these 32 fragments, only six show any evidence of toothwear. In contrast, 14 broken stem fragments, rather than mouthpieces, show evidence of toothwear. According to Cook (1989:227), some of the broken stem fragments exhibited extreme wear and others exhibited intentional modifications, "such as whittling or grinding the stem to convenient dimensions for gripping between the teeth." In addition, one stem fragment had been scored with a knife and snapped off at the score (Cook 1989:227). The evidence suggests the workers intentionally modified the pipes by shortening the stems prior to use.

The use of short-stemmed clay pipes by working people was not solely a function of economics, but rather partook of aesthetics as well...if the pipes that were available were not short enough, they could easily be made suitable (Cook 1989:227).

The immigrant work force resisted the tenets of the middle-class ideology by publicly participating in leisure activities. The breaking of the pipe stem facilitated the workers' ability to smoke in public; the short stem style thus "consisted of the intentional breaking of middle-class rules that dictated the proper places to smoke"
(Cook 1989:220). The workers’ ‘style’ can also be viewed as a direct opposition to the symbolic ‘style’ of the middle-class preference for longer pipes, what Veblen (1899:43) called "conspicuous leisure." Their presence was surely felt by a social order that considered public smoking to be inappropriate and not within the realm of decent middle-class behavior. The public act of smoking a short clay pipe was thus a ‘conspicuous’ expression in the negotiation of class- and gender-linked hegemonies, "serving as an expression of identity and intrusive presence" (Beaudry et. al 1991:168).
CHAPTER XVI

CERAMICS

Through the comparative analysis of tablewares recovered from the Boott Mills’ boarding house and tenement backlots, this chapter suggests the tenement household symbolically used ceramics to imitate and subsequently participate in the dominant social order. The study of ceramics in identifying ideological expression is appropriate because they indicate more than functional use; they are indicators of symbolic interaction and group competition (e.g., Burley, 1989; Shackel, 1987, 1993; Wall, 1991, 1994; Yentsch, 1991a,b; cited in Little 1997:229).

To be able to identify the ideological expression of consumer choices, the ceramic assemblages from the two backlots must be considered separately. The tenement was the home of a single nuclear family, probably that of a skilled male worker, with one primary income, while the boarding house, on the other hand, was the home to many single workers who were provided for by the boarding house keeper (Dutton 1989:86-87). The tenement and boarding house residents were probably operating under similar economic conditions, but tenement dwellers had more freedom of choice for making purchases (Dutton 1989:88).

Yentsch (1991a) argues that the symbolism of ceramics is a consequence of "(a) the social rank of the people who use the vessels, (b) the social space wherein the vessels are used and/or stored, and (c) access to them.” Based on these criteria, the assemblage from the boarding house is unlikely to reflect ideological style. The
boarding house keepers, it appears, were more concerned with providing sufficient quantities of food for workers than attending to middle-class dining rituals.

At the boarding house...the keeper provided only the basics for food service and consumption. Complete meals were served to individuals on a single plate with little in the way of accessories (e.g., vegetable dishes, bread plates, and salad plates) (Dutton 1989:120).

As Beaudry (1993) has indicated, workers were quite satisfied with meal times at the Boott because they were provided with a sufficient quantity of food. According to an admitted apologist for the mills, boarding house residents viewed their diets as "substantial and wholesome...neatly served, and in sufficient abundance" (Miles 1846).

Local merchants also targeted boarding house keepers in newspaper ads that advertised "leftover merchandise" and "factory seconds" (Dutton 1989:87) [see figure 12]. Based on this information, it is unlikely the ceramic assemblages from the boarding house will have 'hidden' symbolic undertones. Tablewares, in this instance, seem to reflect solely the economics of boarding house keeping.

What is intriguing about the comparison of the two assemblages is that aside from tea- and coffeewares, they were remarkably similar [see tables 2 and 3]. The ceramic assemblages reflect two late-nineteenth century working-class households in similar economic circumstances but with different household composition. Undecorated whitewares dominated the assemblage for both groups. Transfer printed and handpainted wares were also present but in smaller percentages. According to Beaudry et al (1991:170), "the increased availability of ceramic tableware types and forms in the late-nineteenth century lessens the number of observed differences between ceramic assemblages of households with similar financial means."
ODD PIECES.

We have a small quantity of odd pieces of Crockery, some belonging to dinner sets, and odds and ends of other kinds. They are all desirable, and will help out a broken set in fine shape. Here's a

Great Chance for Restaurants or Boarding-House Keepers.

Tea Plates, 5c.
Breakfast Plates, 6c.
Dinner Plates, 7c.

This is cheaper than the white ware can be bought for, and besides these odd pieces are all excellent quality, nicely decorated and fine shapes. They cannot be duplicated in this city or elsewhere for these prices. In the lot are

Cups, Saucers, Dishes

Of various kinds, and other things of value. They are all put into the low price list for next week.

Anyone who keeps house, and especially owners of restaurants, boarding-houses, etc., should not let this opportunity slip.

French & Puffer,
127 to 131 Central Street.

### Table 2  Summary of ceramic vessel count by ware type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ware Type</th>
<th>Tenement</th>
<th></th>
<th>Boarding house</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bennington</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creamware</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earthenware</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearlware</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porcelain</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.79</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redware</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13.95</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stoneware</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiteware</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>65.11</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>78.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellowware</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>86</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Dutton 1989: 90*

### Table 3  Summary of ceramic vessel count by decoration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decoration</th>
<th>Tenement</th>
<th></th>
<th>Boarding house</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dipped</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edged</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.97</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilded</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.46</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handpainted</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.46</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead glazed</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.97</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molded</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.46</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>15.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overglazed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt glazed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponge</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer print</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13.95</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>16.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecorated</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>32.55</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>38.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wash</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>86</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Dutton 1989: 92*
Mrozowski (1988) has suggested that women, in nineteenth century America, were the primary purchasers of ceramics for the family. And, during this time, women had a wide variety of ceramic choices available for purchase (Dutton 1989:84).

By the 1850s, tableware services were larger and more functionally specific than ever before. Technological innovations in the ceramic industry, such as mechanically decorating earthenwares by means of transfer printing, dramatically lowered the price of tableware while at the same time increasing the range both of form and decoration. Because of the ceramic industry’s expanded production capabilities and distribution networks, the last half of the 19th century was characterized by a wide selection of dinner, tea, glass, and flatware services that were available to all socioeconomic levels (Dutton 1989:84).

Based on the presence of teawares and a large assortment of tablewares in the tenement assemblage, it appears that the residents participated in the dominant social order.

The tenement residents sought to emulate middle-class dining habits by including more vessels in a table setting per person even though these were unspecialized in function. Hence the tenement household emulated mainstream middle-class dining rituals by adapting its limited ceramic assemblage to reproduce as closely as possible a middle-class table service (Beaudry et. al. 1991:170-171).

Dutton (1989:88) has suggested the tenement residents purchased expensive English manufactured table- and teawares [see table 4] and used them as status symbols "in an effort to display to the public the family’s upward mobility and to distinguish them from their neighbors in the boardinghouse." The tenement ceramic assemblage should therefore contain matching tablewares and status related items such as teawares.
Table 4  Summary of ceramic vessel count by vessel form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vessel Form</th>
<th>Tenement</th>
<th></th>
<th>Boarding house</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ale bottle</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowl</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20.93</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>26.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber pot</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crock</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cup</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15.11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flower pot</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gravy boat</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jar</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jug</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.62</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platter</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pot</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saucer</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20.93</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>18.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea pot</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wash basin</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unidentified</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.79</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Dutton 1989: 92

On the contrary, the assemblage indicates the tenement residents did not purchase ceramics in sets since none of the identifiable patterns matched (Dutton 1989:119). It does appear, however, that attempts were made to make purchases that had similar colors or patterns. For instance, "of the ten printed [tea] saucers, nine exhibit floral patterns," suggesting that "efforts were made...to acquire tea- or coffeeware of a similar pattern" (Dutton 1989:97). In addition, two serving bowls displayed a similar blue sponge design, table bowls displayed similar floral designs and serving platters displayed similar transfer printed designs (Dutton 1989:98). The ceramic assemblage is evidence that the tenement family made efforts to reproduce a middle-class table service that was beyond their economic means.
Dutton (1989) also produced mean manufacture dates for both European- and domestic-made ceramics based on the dating of manufacturers’ marks and backmarks from the ceramic assemblage: the mean manufacture date for European-made ceramics is 1868.5 and the mean date for domestic-made wares is 1885.5. The differences between the two dates should be viewed as a result of the types of wares available at the time of purchase (Dutton 1989). These dates are entirely consistent with the development of the American pottery industry in the 1880s and 1890s, and the decline of the British in the American ceramic market (Dutton 1989).

Based on the mean manufacture dates, Dutton (1989:118) also suggests "that prior to the 1880s the residents of the tenement purchased English refined earthenwares for use as tablewares" (Dutton 1989:118). Once the American ceramic industry "had established itself as a serious competitor in the ceramics market in the 1880s, residents then opted for the purchase of domestic manufactured wares" (Dutton 1989:118). These decisions suggest "an effort of economizing, as far as the purchase of everyday tableware was concerned," since U.S.-made ceramics would have been less expensive due to decreased shipping and handling costs as well as increased availability (Dutton 1989:118). However, the presence of an English manufactured Sampson, Bridgewood & Son (Ltd.) vessel, identified as a small bowl and produced between 1885 and 1891, "indicates that the occupants of the tenement continued to purchase limited amounts of English manufactured ceramics, possibly for special function items such as teaware or display pieces" (Dutton 1989:118).

The tenement residents participated in the dominant ideology through the adoption of middle-class table service standards. Even though the tenement residents
could not afford to purchase ceramics in sets, they imitated middle-class dining rituals when they purchased ceramics that had similar patterns and design elements. This implies that the tenement household was striving toward middle-class status through the adoption of middle-class standards for polite entertaining and social display. The use of teawares and the large assortment of tablewares as well as the presence of an English manufactured vessel, reflects the tenement dwellers unconscious 'common sense' acceptance of middle-class standards and the dominant social order.
CHAPTER XVII

ALCOHOL

The hegemonic goals of the corporation and middle class were similar, both attempted to prevent working-class alcohol consumption through the establishment of an ideology that disapproved of such behavior. Alcohol consumption was made responsible for most of society's ills, including crime, insanity, poverty and economic uncertainty (Johnson 1978:55; Levine 1979:34; Bond 1987:29). Such reasoning would suggest the poverty of working-class immigrants, according to the middle class, was a result of their drinking. The social controls implied with this aspect of middle-class ideology was not intended to prevent poverty for the working class, but rather to prevent the degraded urban conditions that disturbed the middle-class sense of order and propriety.

The negotiation of hegemonies between these groups allows for the symbolic interpretation of workers' actions. Workers simultaneously resisted both the middle-class and corporate ideology prohibiting alcohol consumption. However, the consumption of alcohol at the Boott was a serious offense to the corporate rules and workers using alcohol were subject to immediate dismissal. As a result, the consumption of alcohol was not used to publicly resist ideologies, but was done secretly instead.

Most of the alcohol-related artifacts from the Boott boarding house backlot was dated to after 1880. In addition, the Boott Mills’ correspondence book contains a
series of letters written between 1888-1891, by James G. Marshall, paymaster for the Boott Mills. Although most of the letters pertain to the sale and transport of cotton, 60 of them were written to Boott boarding house keepers, overseers, and mill workers (Bond 1989: 23). In addition, some of the letters were written to keepers and/or residents who lived in the units that were investigated archaeologically (Bond 1989).

The documentary data indicate the continuous problem of workers’ alcohol use. Based on the 16 letters that complained of alcohol use, it appears that workers’ inebriation was considered the most serious offense (Bond 1989: 29). Drunken employees would have slowed production and therefore profits; but the corporate policy toward alcohol was also in keeping with the middle-class morality of the day.

In 1889 Marshall wrote to boarding house keeper George Kittredge in complaint of one of his boarders, Annie Driscoll.

We are informed that Annie Driscoll who has been working with Mr. Dearborn-has been drunk at your house all week-You probably know that this is contrary to your order from agt. and that all cases of drunkenness must be reported to the counting room. You will at once dismiss Driscoll from your house and look out for any further violation of the rules (Boott Mill Correspondence Book 1888-1891).

Another letter was also sent to Mr. Houston, an overseer, about the behavior of one of his mill hands who lived under the supervision of boarding house keeper Enoch Hutchins.

Mr. Hutchins reports that last night David O’Hara was drunk in his house and making disturbances and brought bottles of liquor into the house. You will please discharge him and not again employ him (Boott Mill Correspondence Book 1888-1891).
In total, Marshall sent out 9 letters that reprimanded operatives for alcohol use. In October of 1890, keeper Enoch Hutchins received the following letter about Annie Pierce, who was one of his boarders.

Report also comes that you have a great deal of drunkenness in your house and don't report it in counting room. You must be careful to run your house a little more strict and not allow any drunkenness in it (Boott Mills Correspondence Book 1888-1891).

The artifactual evidence that was recovered from backlots #45 and #48 supports Marshall’s allegations. The excavation of these backlots revealed large quantities of medicine, alcohol, and soda glass. According to Bond (1989:137), the relative amounts were probably under-represented due to municipal refuse collection and bottle deposits. In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century the recycling of glass containers, particularly those that were embossed, was done largely for economic reasons (Cheney 1982; Busch 1987; cited in Bond 1989:137).

Of the glass artifacts recovered from the boarding house excavations, 45% of the assemblage was proprietary medicines. It is not surprising to find medicine bottles in the backlots since the mills were poorly ventilated, which resulted in problems with lung disease (Bell 1987:67). In order to maintain the correct environment for spinning and weaving cotton, steam was constantly released into the work-rooms; with the windows sealed shut to keep the humidity in the temperatures hovered between 90 and 115 degrees (Rybicki 1990:11). Cotton fibers also hung heavy in the air along with other pollution, creating an un-healthful environment that created the disease now known as "brown lung" (Rybicki 1990:11).

Bond (1989:138) suggests "workers must have felt debilitated much of the time from the over-heated, under-ventilated mill rooms and, along with everyday
aches and pains, the unhealthful environment no doubt contributed to the heavy consumption of proprietary medicines by the Boott residents." These medicines, however, contained alcohol and potentially addictive drugs, and this may have played a part in their purchase as well. By 1900 some brands required a liquor license for their sale because they had such a high alcohol content (Ketchun 1965: 90). In addition, many cures also "contained harmful amounts of codeine, cocaine, morphine, heroine, cannabis indica and Phenobarbital" (Berkow, quoted in Baugher-Perlin 1978: 146).

However, these cures tended to be more expensive than alcohol (Bond 1989:138). By the mid-nineteenth century, medicines cost on average one dollar a bottle; although the size of the bottle is not mentioned, medicines were commonly sold in sizes up to a quart (Munsey 1970:69). Whisky, on the other hand, could be bought for 25 cents a gallon (Williams 1980:559). Why then, if medicines were more expensive than alcohol, would workers purchase medicines for their alcohol content? First of all, it must be considered that workers did purchase medicines to remedy their ill health. Certainly, the archaeological evidence has indicated workers drank from polluted canal waters and worked in an unhealthy environment (Beaudry 1993; Beaudry et al. 1991; Bell 1987). However, due to the strict corporate regulations regarding alcohol use, and social stigma attached to alcohol use by the temperance movement, workers may also have used medicines to hide, or make socially acceptable, their alcohol consumption (Bond 1989:138).

As Bond (1989) further suggests, women in the nineteenth century may have been targeted for such consumption. According to Mendelson and Mello (1985:47),
the majority of opium addicts during the nineteenth century were women and this was probably due to the fact that women were often prescribed morphine-based patent medications to treat "female complaints," along with headaches, fatigue, and anxiety. In addition, Lender and Martin (1982:118) have estimated that after the Civil War one out of every ten women was a "hidden alcoholic." Bond (1989:138) further suggests that many women drank privately during the nineteenth century due to the number of women involved in the temperance movement. "The substitution of medicinal nostrums for beverage alcohol afforded women a socially acceptable means of alcohol consumption" (Bond 1989:138). In addition, the boarding house that was excavated archaeologically housed only women until about 1890 (Bond 1987).

Alcohol consumption was also prohibited according to Boott Mill regulations and considered grounds for dismissal (Bond 1989:29). Such a prohibition would require workers, since they were consuming alcohol on company property, to drink in secrecy [see table 5]. The archaeological discovery of feature 46, a bottle cache, that was located near a woodshed and filled with whole and unbroken medicine and alcohol bottles, suggests that the woodshed may have provided a place to consume alcohol "away from a keeper’s or agent’s watchful eye" (Bond 1989:139).

An intriguing aspect of feature 46, the bottle cache, is the presence of a medicine bottle manufactured between 1884-1885, from the Campbell Glass Works of Berkeley, California. The presence of the bottle in feature 46 suggests that workers found occasion to hide their consumption of medicines. The presence of a 'hidden’ medicine bottle gives evidence that workers’ consumed it as an alcohol substitute.
The size of archaeologically recovered bottles may also indicate a desire to keep consumption hidden. "The majority of alcohol containers were pint or half-pint flasks rather that cylindrical fifths" (Bond 1989:139). Although workers’ income may have necessitated the purchasing of smaller containers, a smaller flask would have been easier to conceal (e.g., in a pocket) (Bond 1989:139).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Tenement</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Boarding house</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medicinal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proprietary</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toiletry</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>50.0</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>49.5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liquor</td>
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<td>30.0</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wine</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beer</td>
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<td>6.6</td>
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<td>48</td>
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<tr>
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<td>109</td>
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Source: Bond 1989: 122

Patterns of alcohol and patent medicine consumption illustrate some of the complex decisions made by workers who lived in a regulated urban landscape. Consumer choices made by workers reflect the cost of products, personal preference and social values. Overarching all of these factors were corporate policies regulating leisure behaviors such as alcohol consumption. The large quantities and small size of alcohol and medicine containers, and the location where they were recovered, suggests workers made choices that not only violated corporate policies, but also violated the dominant morality of the times.
A change in the dominant mode of production during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century resulted in the emergence of a new urban ideology that defined a strict class-based social order. In the urban landscape, this new social order was predicated on the hierarchical organization of labor. The new industrial system de-skilled the production process and relieved factory owners from their reliance on skilled workers. In addition, the surplus of immigrant workers in the mid- to late-nineteenth century enabled capitalists to exploit what they considered to be a replenishable labor force. As such, the capitalist system of production created a dominant ideology, structured by the inequality of the new class-based social order.

Inequality structured social life beyond the factory system and imposed class- and gender-based controls on all women and the growing population of immigrant workers. The system of controls was intended to maintain, and secure, the so called ‘superiority’ of the American male over women and immigrants through the devaluation of their productive responsibilities. Among women, this dominance extended beyond class distinctions. For middle-class women, the new concept of a one-income family devalued domestic work to that of a male status symbol (Mrozowski 1991:97). For working women, the factory system offered positions that denied authority and paid low wages. For both classes of women, the new social order was structured to maintain class- and gender-based control and inequality.
A common theme drawn from the analysis of the material record is that working women symbolically used material objects as ideological expressions of resistance. The relationship of behavior to the material world is far from passive and through the analysis of consumer choices this study has identified how women consciously and unconsciously expressed their social identities and attitudes.

Although working women resisted the obvious inequalities of the social order, they unconsciously accepted middle-class cultural norms that were hidden within the dominant ideology. The middle class created cultural standards which defined class boundaries through the possession of certain material objects. When working women made consumer choices that emulated these standards, they contributed to their own degenerated state by supporting a cultural system that relied on the exploitation of a working class. The recovery and analysis of objects related to ceramics and personal adornment provided the most revealing material evidence to support the above conclusions.

The analysis of ceramic tea- and tablewares offers an example of how an immigrant tenement family may have unconsciously contributed to the dominant ideology. Middle class dining rituals in the nineteenth century involved the use and competitive display of specialized tablewares, such as teawares, serving plates, platters and bowls.

Dutton (1989:119), in his analysis of the ceramic assemblage from Boott tenement #48, suggests that the tenement dwellers purchased a large assortment of tablewares in an attempt to assimilate and display middle-class values. They did this to distinguish themselves from their neighbors in the boarding house as well as to
improve their social status within the community (Dutton 1989:88). According to Steinberg (1981), foreign born workers chose to adopt middle-class behaviors because the retention of ethnic traditions often resulted in the preservation of class differences associated with immigrant status. Based on the presence of teawares and a variety of serving bowls and platters in the ceramic assemblage, it seems likely that the tenement dwellers accepted and emulated middle-class notions regarding competitive display and increased wares at the table.

The purchasing pattern displayed by the tenement family, however, indicates they were limited in their ability to participate in these rituals. Due to economic constraints they were unable to purchase ceramics in sets. Instead, the family made financial decisions to purchase individual pieces that had similar design elements, patterns and colors (Dutton 1989:97). This pattern indicates the tenement family made attempts to emulate dining rituals that would otherwise have been beyond their means.

This type of evidence is also consistent with information gained from the analysis of the artifacts of personal adornment. The jewelry and hair ornaments recovered from the boarding house and tenement backlots were inexpensive imitations of styles purchased by the middle and upper classes. Although economic necessity required the women to purchase less expensive substitutes, the fact that they chose to imitate the popular fashion suggests the workers accepted the ideology that deemed them fashionable. This tactic allowed them to compete in the 'cultural arena' with the middle class.
The analysis of ceramics and personal adornment provides a unique opportunity to see how material culture was used to express culturally appropriate behaviors within the dominant ideology. At the Boott Mills, even though workers were aware of social inequality and corporate oppression, they strove to make purchases that would allow them to express the 'appropriate' behaviors of the middle- and upper-classes. When they did this, the workers embraced the cultural values of the dominant social order.

In contrast, the majority of the archaeological evidence from the Boott Mills indicates workers were aware of the dominant ideology and used objects of material culture to resist it. This behavior allowed them to participate in class- and gender-based ideological conflicts. The evidence that provides the strongest argument for an ideology of resistance are the hundreds of bottle glass and tobacco pipe fragments recovered from the backlots. The artifacts confirm that the working class actively partook of these leisure activities despite the corporate prohibitions against alcohol consumption and middle-class outrage at the public use of tobacco.

The evidence from the Boott indicates that workers resisted the American middle-class prohibition against alcohol consumption. Drinking was a behavior that workers chose for themselves. During the late 1800s most of the Boott workers were immigrants who may not have shared the American middle-class view of alcohol. When they came to America, a behavior that had been considered normal was transformed into something that had to be hidden (Mrozowski 1996:74). The large quantity and small size of alcohol and medicine containers recovered at the Boott
indicates workers hid their alcohol consumption and made choices that violated both corporate policy and middle-class values.

Although tobacco use was not, by itself,’ a source of class-based conflict, the clay pipes preferred by the working class were used as "visible symbols" of class differences (Cook 1989:219). Workers modified the long stemmed clay pipes that were available in the late-nineteenth century to contrast themselves stylistically with the middle- and upper-class men who preferred long stemmed pipes and cigars.

The middle-class satirist, Arthur Machen, writing in the 1880s, commented that short clay pipes were "light and easy to be carried in the mouth," and become "saturated with tobacco, and so excellently sweet" and that they were an insult to 'decent society' - I considering 'decent society' as a filthy and obscene harridan which every man does well to trample on and defy (Machen 1884:54, emphasis in original cited in Cook 1989:218).

Machen (1884) further suggests that short clay pipes were most appropriate "to be used in the parks and public places for the annoyance of fools" (Machen 1884:55).

The extent to which the middle class was disturbed by public smoking is also evident in the number of nineteenth century writers who were often offended by "the idle loitering on the part of working class people - sitting on their front steps in shirtsleeves, smoking clay pipes and/or drinking in public, etc" (cf. Cook 1989b cited in Beaudry 1993:92). Whitehill (1968: 119-120) mentions that the sight of a man in shirtsleeves on a front doorstep would have been reason to sell one's house and move to a better neighborhood. Due to the friction created by conflicting notions of proper public behavior, the middle class legislated their concepts of correct social behavior,
which resulted in the residential segregation that characterized the industrial city (cf Rosenzweig 1983, cited in Cook 1989:219).

Conflict between the Lowell workers and the middle class arose out of inconsistencies between ideologies (McGuire 1992:142). The workers publicly participated in leisure activities that conflicted with the middle-class standard for such behavior. Working class leisure often involved drinking and smoking in public places, such as streets, saloons, and public parks, while the middle class preferred such activities to be confined to private places (Cook 1989:219).

Jones (1977), a social historian, suggests that most of the information on working class popular recreation and leisure comes from the writing of reformers and other "purveyors of minority causes, distasteful not only to workers but to the bulk of the middle class" (1977:165), leaving "our knowledge of these ideologies and the material situations which they articulated...in...an extremely primitive state" (1977:163).

It should not be surprising to find workers, after the long and arduous workdays of a textile mill, enjoying time outside and away from the confinements and regulations of the mills. Even though the archaeological evidence indicates workers spent considerable amounts of time in the backlots, they also spent their time in public parks. The backlots may have served as a reminder of the controls and degraded conditions of working-class life and as such workers may have looked elsewhere to pursue leisure activities.

The archaeological evidence has also indicated the conditions of the backlots deteriorated over time from neglect (Beaudry and Mrozowski 1989), thus further
encouraging workers to 'go elsewhere' to escape the reminders of poverty. In addition, the evidence from a bottle cache hidden in a backlot shed also indicates workers were hiding from the 'watchful eyes' of corporate overseers.

By partaking in leisure activities in public, workers contributed to the 'disorder' that disrupted middle-class lives. The middle class, along with Boott Mill management, attempted to prevent working-class alcohol consumption through the establishment of an ideology which disapproved of such behavior, a behavior which disturbed the middle-class sense of order and propriety and decreased corporate profits. In addition, women smokers were quite effective in creating disorder through public smoking since middle-class men not only disapproved of this public behavior, but also considered smoking to be an exclusive male activity (Cook 1991 cited in Beaudry 1993:93).

It was through these actions that workers were able to signal their group affiliation while penetrating the rules imposed on them by the middle class. Working women and men successfully penetrated the dominant ideology in the negotiation of public leisure behavior. By the mid-twentieth century smoking in public had become an acceptable behavior. This class-based behavior had become hegemonic, thus illustrating the ability of working-class culture to negotiate some of its practices into cultural dominance (Cook 1989:220).

As mentioned earlier, the Marxist view of the industrial environment often neglects gender-based conflict and places most attention on class-based conflict (Hartmann 1975). However, women participated in gender based conflicts and the analysis of tobacco use and public smoking provides an opportunity to identify
middle- and working-class women’s resistance to gender inequality in the industrial environment.

Despite the social restrictions against smoking during the nineteenth century, this behavior was prevalent among middle- and upper-class women, where "so many keep their [smoking] habit as secret from members of their own sex as from men" (Hunting 1889-1890: 220-222).

In the urban Northeast, the act of smoking had ideally become exclusively male, practiced alone or in the presence of other men, in places set aside for the purpose and off-limits to women - clubs, smoking rooms, and smoking cars on trains. Hegemonic behavior required female abstention from tobacco, especially in public (Cook 1989:224).

As a reaction to male dominance, middle- and working-class women’s tobacco use took on a new symbolic meaning that challenged male authority. "Women’s agitation for the right to smoke in public coincided with a general revolt among bourgeois women against what many perceived as the overly restrictive appearential ordering of the Victorian Era" (Cook 1989:225). By 1910, attitudes began to change in the Northeast and the "repugnance of seeing women smoke in the presence of men had begun to diminish" (Cook 1989:225).

This behavioral shift among middle-class women, regarding tobacco use, also coincides with the suffragist movement in America. Women justified their right to smoke in public in terms of being granted the same rights as women in other societies, where smoking was a socially accepted behavior. Their insistence for the right to smoke "coming as it did at a time when suffragists were agitating for the right to vote, was interpreted as a desire for equal rights with men in their own society" (Cook 1989:225).
Through the symbolic behavior of public smoking, middle-class women were visibly resisting the limitations of Victorian conceptions of the women’s sphere... (Cook 1989:225).

Both middle- and working-class women used tobacco and public smoking to resist gender inequality. As mentioned earlier, twenty-nine year old Katie Mulcahy was arrested in 1908 for breaking the ‘Sullivan Law’ when she lighted a cigarette in public on New York’s Bowery. When she was sent off to jail, "carrying her package of cigarettes," she told the judge that "No man shall dictate to me" (New York Times, 23 January 1908:1; cited in Cook 1989).

Katie Mulcahy’s parting words to the judge provide a context to understand working women’s conflict against male oppression. Even though Mulcahy was arrested for breaking the law, her conflict was about gender inequality and the apparent ability of men to control the legal system. This also appears to be the case when Mary McCabe defended her right to be inebriated. The April 28, 1877 issue of the Lawrence Eagle quoted that Mary McCabe defended her actions to a court of law with "her assertion of a women’s right to do what she please--even to getting drunk" (Eagle April 28, 1877; quoted in Cameron 1995:26).

In addition to the obvious conflicts that arose through public tobacco and alcohol use, the artifacts provide evidence for more subtle ideological resistance to the dominant ideology. Workers made consumer choices that consciously rejected capitalist culture. These choices, when used to publicly define oneself as ‘other,’ may very well be subtle resistance that is disguised as economic necessity (Leone et al. 1997; cited in Little 1997:236). Working women’s choices for garments and public appearance may reflect the intentional marking of the working class. The buttons
recovered from the excavations suggest workers were socially, and publicly, identifying themselves as a subculture. Despite the availability of a variety of mass-manufactured buttons, there is a relative absence of variety in buttons recovered at the boarding house and tenement (Ziesing 1989:166). The buttons were popular on "wash frocks and other utility dresses" (Albert 1941:47) and if worn in public, would signal the presence of working-class women.

Workers had little spare money to purchase clothing (Dawley 1976:168) and based on the types of buttons recovered at the Boott, the evidence indicates working women wore work frocks and utility dresses outside of work. Based on the argument of Leone et al. (1997), the women's appearance may be indicative of the creation of a working-class culture.

Public appearances by the working class created disorder for the middle class. Public areas were the medium where workers could express their dissatisfaction with poverty; the visibility of a working class of degraded individuals who publicly drank and smoked drew the attention of the middle class. As such, the strength and success of working-women's contributions in ideological conflicts can be gauged by the reactions of middle-class women. Domestic reformers reacted against the corporate oppression of working women. Female workers lived in poverty due to unfair wage discrimination and job selection. Middle-class reformers recognized this as a failure of society, and linked unequal pay with the evils of the nation (Cameron 1995:26).

Even though ideological inconsistencies existed between the classes of women, middle-class reformers took a proactive approach to improve the status of working women, and in doing so created a professional environment for themselves.
The impetus for their role in improving working-class conditions was undoubtedly a reaction to the visibility of working-class women in the streets and parks partaking in behaviors that violated middle-class norms.

This study of working-class women at the Lowell Boott Cotton Mills demonstrates women’s active role in the construction of a working-class culture during the nineteenth century. Working women reacted against the inequality of the social hierarchy and challenged class- and gender-based discrimination. In acts of resistance, working women rejected middle-class social standards and created and followed their own notions for acceptable public behavior. Through the successful negotiation of ideological conflicts, women were able to penetrate the dominant social order. Working women symbolically used material objects in the creation of a working-class culture that publicly resisted class- and gender-based inequality.
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VITA

Carolyn Michelle Ehner


In September 1995, the author entered the College of William and Mary as a graduate student and graduate assistant in the Department of Anthropology.