



# **A Company of One: Insecurity, Independence, and the New World of White-Collar Unemployment**

*Carrie M. Lane*

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Being laid off can be a traumatic event. The unemployed worry about how they will pay their bills and find a new job. In the American economy's boom-and-bust business cycle since the 1980s, repeated layoffs have become part of working life. In *A Company of One*, Carrie M. Lane finds that the new culture of corporate employment, changes to the job search process, and dual-income marriage have reshaped how today's skilled workers view unemployment. Through interviews with seventy-five unemployed and underemployed high-tech white-collar workers in the Dallas area over the course of the 2000s, Lane shows that they have embraced a new definition of employment in which all jobs are temporary and all workers are, or should be, independent "companies of one." Following the experiences of individual jobseekers over time, Lane explores the central role that organized networking events, working spouses, and neoliberal ideology play in forging and reinforcing a new individualist, pro-market response to the increasingly insecure nature of contemporary employment. She also explores how this new perspective is transforming traditional ideas about masculinity and the role of men as breadwinners. Sympathetic to the benefits that this "company of one" ideology can hold for its adherents, Lane also details how it hides the true costs of an insecure workforce and makes collective and political responses to job loss and downward mobility unlikely.

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