Bethlehem Steelworkers: Reshaping the Industrial Working Class.

by

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Abstract

BETHLEHEM STEELWORKERS: RESHAPING THE INDUSTRIAL WORKING CLASS

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This ethnographic dissertation examines the long-term experience of a cohort of steelworkers who entered the Bethlehem, PA steel mill at the height of Fordist gains. Their experience and expectation of a more egalitarian capitalism was soon challenged by post-Fordist processes of disinvestment and deindustrialization leading to the closing of the Bethlehem steel mill, the bankruptcy of the corporation, and the displacement and dispossession of steelworkers. This project examines the complex dynamics of this thirty-year shift from a Fordist to a post-Fordist order as it affects steelworkers. In so doing, it reveals Fordism as more fragile, provisional, and short-lived than is commonly understood.

Fordist work has been represented as monotonous and alienating, portraying a quiescent working class as agreeing to deskilled, unfulfilling work in exchange for the rewards of middle class consumption. I challenge this, finding that meaningful work was shaped in the steel mill through crew work and a complex division of labor that built a moral economy in which principles of seniority, solidarity, and citizenship validated worker dignity, constructed collaborative social relations, and imbued work with powerful significance.

The Fordist organizations, practices, and ideologies through which an industrial working class was built, however, included fragmentations and exclusions that undermined broader solidarities. Solidarity built around shared meanings of whiteness and masculinity excluded race/ethnic, regional, and gender groups, and inter-plant competition contributed to working-class fragmentation. These limitations undermined broader collective resistance to the restructurings, plant closings, and bankruptcies that we call deindustrialization.

Processes of deindustrialization stripped steelworkers of power, assets, and prestige. Often represented as a teleological transition to post-Fordism, these processes are actually very

uneven, contradictory, and confusing. Internal restructuring, new management regimes, transfers to other mills, and the bankruptcy process undermined solidarities and exacerbated schisms. Workers struggled to respond through individual strategies, but found it difficult to control broader processes, leading to self-blame and second-guessing. The robust, post-Fordist Bethlehem labor market offered diminished opportunities and a de-valuing of workers' skills, attitudes, and experience. While steelworkers are critical of this, the long assault on the U.S. working class destroyed many of the organizations and practices through which workers build strength.

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INTRODUCTION

This ethnography studies a core segment of the U.S. industrial working class – steelworkers. I explore the ways that this predominantly white, male working class experienced a thirty year period of socioeconomic transformation in the U.S. from a Fordist to a post-Fordist order. This project examines these complex processes in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, the headquarters of once the world's second largest steel company, Bethlehem Steel, and home to Bethlehem's historic, "flagship" steel mill.

Much has been written about steel work and much about deindustrialization, but in this work I will build on this literature by using an in-depth, long-term, ethnographic focus. I examine the experience of one cohort of steelworkers, those hired from the mid-1960s through the late 1970s at the Bethlehem plant. This cohort of workers started their work in steel production in a vibrant, robust steel mill in which work was ordered through the internal union-governed state and was respected by a regional and national discourse that valued the important work of industrial workers and their role, as middle class consumers, in fueling U.S. economic growth. These workers moved into "careers" at the steel mill that they saw as secure, respected, and well-protected by the internal structures laid out by the collectively bargained union contract and administered by the grievance system, and by an external legal, political and social system that recognized their rights as workers and citizens. Workers anticipated that their jobs at the mill would support a middle class standard of living and a comfortable retirement. They expected that union membership would facilitate their representation, through advocacy with the Democratic Party, in the broader political system. They believed that the hard, dangerous work they did would be valued in a social and economic order in which steel was a key industry.

But, by the time these workers left the mill in the 1990s, often transferring to other mills then dragged through the experience of corporate bankruptcy, they left a restructured, downsized, and eventually closed mill and a bankrupt and defunct company. They left with eroded citizenship rights (both within and outside of the mill), limited retirement options, enormous health care concerns, de-valued skills, and an uncertain future. They left in the context of a wider discourse praising the knowledge/information sector, high-tech industry, and the

financial sector (and the "flexible" workers in these sectors) as the growth engines of the U.S. economy, while simultaneously attributing the failure of large industry to the arrogance, overly confrontational style, recalcitrance, and lack of foresight of what are now represented as out-moded unions and out-dated unionized industrial workers.

In focusing on this specific cohort of steelworkers--those workers hired in the period from 1964 through 1979 who continued to work at the Bethlehem Steel plant until some time in the 1990s--I hope to reveal the complex dynamics of this shift from a Fordist to a post-Fordist order and their effects on steelworkers. Steel was a key industry in developing U.S. economic strength, and a core industry in postwar U.S. hegemony, developing technological, organizational, and managerial techniques central to the growth of U.S. advanced capitalism. In participating in the "labor-capital accord" of the postwar U.S., the steel industry set precedents for broader labor relations in which large corporations (like Bethlehem Steel), encouraged and compelled by the state, recognized the rights of increasingly bureaucratic unions to collective bargaining, resulting in rising working class wages and benefits, and increased consumer demand. This accord fueled U.S. economic growth in the postwar period.

But while the U.S. steel industry was a core Fordist industry, and steelworkers a core fraction of the U.S. industrial working class, the steel industry later became a trendsetter in processes of deindustrialization. The steel industry attempted to restore high rates of profitability, from the late 1970s on, through reorganizing plants, restructuring labor relations, undermining union strength, extracting concessionary contracts, pursuing capital mobility, and ultimately reporting to the bankruptcy courts to eliminate working class assets, and sell the remaining Bethlehem Steel mills to a vulture investor, who then re-sold these leaner and meaner mills to Mittal Steel for a hefty profit. While these processes restored profitability to the vertically integrated steel industry, through re-shaping the geography and management regimes of steel manufacturing, they wreaked havoc on the lives of steelworkers as plants like Bethlehem closed and companies like Bethlehem Steel went bankrupt.

Through workers' own accounts, I explore and elucidate the experiences, meanings, and effects of these changes for this sector of the industrial working class, as lived and understood

through work. Ethnographic analysis allows me to explore, in detail, the nuanced meanings of this transformation for Bethlehem steelworkers. Through open-ended interviews, ranging from 1 ½ to 3 ½ hours each, with 85 steelworkers, sometimes including wives/spouses, I collected detailed information on workers' understandings of their work experiences. Although the majority of my interviews were with white men, I also interviewed Latino, women, and African American steelworkers. I selected interviewees through referrals from union officials, job training personnel, community leaders, ex-managers, Steelworkers' Archives' members, interviewees, and newspaper references. In addition, I conducted many interviews that extended long beyond 3 ½ hours, requiring multiple visits. I also spent dozens of hours working with steelworker/author Frank Behum on his book *Thirty Years Under the Beam*, editing and discussing over 50 interviews he conducted with Bethlehem plant workers. Our discussions of his interviewees' experiences of work, of the processes of deindustrialization and restructuring, and of workers' experiences after they left the steel industry contributed enormously to my understanding of steel work. My work with the Steelworkers' Archives, a non-profit group directed towards collecting oral histories of steelworkers, gave me access to more than thirty additional interviews with Bethlehem workers as well as numerous hours of steel talk. And my dozens and dozens of hours of work with steelworker Richie Check, documenting his life history, gave me a rich insight into one worker's life.

In addition, I conducted participant observation in the Lehigh Valley, focused around activities and events related to steel and to the former steel site. Although I met many workers in their homes, steelworkers in Bethlehem do not live in a circumscribed working class community. Instead they are dispersed far and wide around the city of Bethlehem, the wider Lehigh Valley, and up north in the coal country. I did not, for the most part, follow families into their churches, on family outings, or through the daily trajectories of their lives. Instead, my participant observation was focused on steel-related events, rituals, and activities. I went to worker memorial rituals, Labor Day parades, union picnics, union meetings, archives meetings, reunion breakfasts and picnics, union demonstrations, and even funerals. I attended political events related to the redevelopment of the Bethlehem works site – political protests, City Council meetings, community

coalition meetings. I attended numerous public events at farmers markets, festivals, malls, and nursing homes where the Steelworkers' Archives hosted displays, and in these milieux I talked to ex-steelworkers about work, and I listened to and participated in steel conversation. I found that in many of these settings talk centered on steel work, on the demise of Bethlehem Steel, and on the state of what was often defined as a U.S. economy worse off for the decline of the steel industry.

I tried to keep in mind that many of these settings for steel talk attracted white, male steelworkers. Women steelworkers were often excluded, or chose to exclude themselves, from steel camaraderie outside of the mill, and this continues to be true of breakfasts, reunions, and picnics. Puerto Rican and African American men tend to be more explicitly included in these contexts than women, but they are often under-represented. I consciously reached out to women, Puerto Rican, and African American steelworkers, in order to better understand the ways that exclusions based on gender and race/ethnicity fragmented broader working class solidarity while simultaneously contributing to the construction of white, masculine solidarities.

This study analyzes the restructuring of the steel industry in the U.S. and globally as a long-term process that included expanded reproduction – a reorganizing of the steel industry through introduction of new management regimes and new technologies to increase productivity and restore profitability – as well as accumulation by dispossession – mechanisms that dispossess workers and citizens of their assets, of their very means of social reproduction (Harvey 2003). It examines the effect of this restructuring, that on the one hand produced a more centralized, concentrated, and "leaner" U.S. steel industry, and on the other displaced steelworkers, dispossessing them of jobs, benefits, and ways of life. These processes – restructuring capital accumulation to resolve contradictions and restore profits and resorting to processes of accumulation by dispossession to generate cheap inputs to production as well as to redistribute power and assets – are not separate and distinct. Instead, as David Harvey points out, "the 'organic relation' between expanded reproduction on the one hand and the often violent processes of dispossession on the other have helped shape the historical geography of capitalism" (2003:142). By delving into the experience of one cohort of workers, in a specific

industry, over a long period of time, this study is able to examine the relationships between processes of expanded reproduction and accumulation by dispossession, and how they affect workers. This research examines the function of, for example, legacy benefits such as enhanced pension promises to motivate workers to accede to transfers, reorganizations, and redefinition of work skills; to agree to speed up; and to refrain from broader political action, in an effort to gain a secure retirement. But, these legacy benefits came to be redefined as “legacy costs” once their costs to corporate profit outweighed their benefits, and they were then simply shed, through a legal regime and political structure that supported and legitimized these mechanisms of accumulation by dispossession. These seemingly contradictory processes played themselves out unevenly and confusingly across the lives and experiences of steelworkers, generating both consent and resistance.

There has been a tradition of anthropology of North America that has brought a critical and nuanced analysis to these processes of social transformation, from a Fordist to a post-Fordist political economy in the U.S. Ethnographies, as early as the 1980s, highlighted the effects of processes of deindustrialization and political and economic transformation on workers, working class families, and entire communities. Early studies located these effects within specific communities such as Pittsfield, MA; Barberton, OH; and Brooklyn, NY examining the devastating effects of industrial restructuring and deindustrialization on working class Americans, as well as exploring individual and collective responses to these processes (Nash 1989; Pappas 1989; Susser 1982). Analyses in the 1990s built on these early ethnographies to examine the relationship of the “newly untrammeled capitalism” of globalization to emerging industrial working classes abroad and to deindustrialization at home (di Leonardo 2008:18; Salzinger 2003; Collins 2003). Anthropologists analyzed the ways processes of deindustrialization and socioeconomic transformation produced new patterns of poverty and inequalities in large urban centers (Bourgois 1995; Sharff 1996) as well as in smaller cities (Winson and Leach 2002; Lem 2002). Recent collections exploring the contemporary effects of neoliberalism on the American working class examine the effects of increased insecurity, inequality, the withdrawal of the welfare state and rise of a punitive state, the shredding of citizenship rights, the increasing stresses on

American workers (on the job in terms of reduced wages and benefits, less control over work, and less safety and off the job with reduced state supports and heightened debt burdens) (Goode and Maskovsky 2001; Maskovsky and Susser 2009; Gusterson and Besteman 2010; Collins et al. 2008). Anthropologists map out shifting class relations, new class formations, and new fragmentations, hierarchies and fractions within the working class. They document the financialization of daily life, and the pervasive use of debt and predatory lending to redistribute assets and enforce social discipline. They highlight the effects of the "consolidation of corporate control" in a neoliberal system that prioritizes the "aggressive drive to maximize corporate profit" above all else on middle and working-class Americans (Gusterson and Besteman 2010:14).

In studies of the North American industrial working class, anthropologists have documented the complex and uneven ways neoliberal processes play themselves out through deindustrialization. They have challenged analyses constructing dichotomies between working/middle-class Americans and the poor or "underclass," showing how neoliberal processes undermine middle-class lifestyles, producing new poverties and new geographies of poverty (Sharff 1996; Bourgois 1995; Susser and Maskovsky 2009), increasing inequalities, and undermining communities (Winson and Leach 2002; Modell 1998; Doukas 2003). They have studied new fractions of the industrial working class – especially examining immigrant and women workers, paying attention to how new class relations interact with race, gender, age, ethnicity, and geography (Lamphere et al. 1994; Kwong 2010; Zavella 2001). Anthropologists have also examined the effect of new regimes of flexible accumulation in industry, and how workers both consent to and contest these transformations (Kasmir 2001; Leach 1998; Mathur 1998, Collins 2003), as well as examining the ways that different factory regimes are implemented in different kinds of industry. Some recent ethnographies analyze the interaction of these processes in industry, as displacement generates cheap labor and a "low road" manufacturing economy that interacts with both the informal economy and the core industrial sector (Mollona 2009; Collins 2003; Leach 1998). This study examines the interaction of these processes in the restructuring of the steel industry, analyzing the confusing and seemingly contradictory ways in which these processes play themselves out in steelworkers' lives. In addition, while most studies of

deindustrialization have focused on the short-term impact of plant closings, examining the cultural meanings and the meaning for communities of these closings (Dudley 1994; Doukas 2003), the community representations and responses to deindustrialization (Modell 1998; Linkon and Russo 2003), and workers' political responses to these processes (Weinbaum 2004; Dudley 1994), this study uses a long-term focus. Through exploring the long careers of steel workers in a restructuring industry, I chart ongoing processes of deindustrialization that continue in a post-Fordist society, processes that are more subtle and contradictory than is commonly recognized.

For the steelworkers, the Bethlehem mill was more than just a mill. It was symbolic of a much broader cultural commitment in American society – a commitment to the ethos of manufacturing production, a legitimation of the importance of the industrial working man, and a recognition that industrial workers had earned the right to a middle-class standard of living, dignity at work, and broadly-defined citizenship rights. Working for a core company, Bethlehem Steel, in a core industry, the steel industry, meant that these workers were seen as important, indeed vital, in the construction of U.S. economic power and strength at home and abroad. Bethlehem was the headquarters of a gigantic multinational corporation, the second largest steel company in the world, and it was the "home" plant to these workers, the historic "flagship" mill where the Bethlehem Steel corporation began its existence in 1901. This made the small city of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania a big city on the map of the U.S., a central node in the political economy of the nation, and a place that everyone had heard of. Bethlehem Steel was an enormous, multinational company and a key, core industry in the post WW II "Golden Age" of U.S. hegemony. Workers lived in a "global" city, a central node in the global economy: they worked making steel products used in the war materiel, infrastructure, skyscrapers, and autos that built American hegemony, and, by 1965, workers worked in the mill in a labor setting in which they had been empowered by their predecessors' battles for organization. Workers had gained power inside and outside of the workplace, and this power was recognized by the formal institutions of the wider society—the courts, federal government agencies, the Democratic party. An entire private/public system of benefits had been legislated and enacted to ensure work stability and worker retirement (Medicare, Social Security, employer-provided health plans, employer-provided pension plans,

unemployment payments, supplementary unemployment pay). Workers coming into the mill in the mid-1960s saw their place in the American economy and society as crucial, central, and legitimate – understood as affirmed and recognized by the wider society.

This fifteen year period, from 1965-1980, represented a specific, powerful moment in American history, and in the history of the American working class. This was a moment when workers began their careers in an institutional milieu in which they anticipated having rights, were willing to challenge their union bureaucracy in an attempt to ensure dignity on the job, and began to incorporate understandings and critiques from broader social movements in their analyses of conflicts at work. This generation of workers was the inheritor of the hard-fought gains won through the struggle of their predecessors—a struggle that had produced the Fordist regime of accumulation. Fordism was, as June Nash puts it, a "product of labor struggles" that generated the labor reforms of the 1930s. The strikes throughout the steel industry in the 1940s and 1950s around issues of wages, benefits, working conditions, and job expectations produced increasingly improved contracts in each round of negotiations. In the steel industry, this finally resulted in a more stable and better-paid workforce in the 1960s. The steelworkers that I spoke with were the first cohort of steelworkers to enter work at the mill under a regime of middle-class wages. When these workers entered the mill a male steelworker anticipated making family breadwinner wages in a life long "career" in steel that would enable him to live what he defined as the "good life." His wife could stay at home while the children were young, the family could purchase a house in a middle class residential neighborhood, the family would have good medical and dental care and financial security even in health crises, they could send their children (should they so desire) to college, he could buy a new car when needed, his family could vacation together, and he could look forward to a secure retirement in his old age. For the first time, in the 1960s, this cohort of workers was better-protected against the cyclical layoffs of the industry, as union-negotiated supplementary unemployment benefits ensured temporarily laid-off workers a living wage. These protections enabled this cohort of workers to believe they could plan a "linear life narrative" that would not be knocked off course by periods of strike, layoff, and unemployment. This group of steelworkers did not expect lives of excess, luxury consumption, or heady affluence. Instead

these gains were expected to enable workers, through hard work, to provide a middle class standard of living for their families. This cohort, for the first time, entered the steel mill with the expectation of realizing the hopes, aspirations, and possibilities that earlier generations of steelworkers had fought for.

However, even as this generation of workers entered the work force with greater confidence, more institutional supports, and a wider moral affirmation of their expectations, in reality "post-Fordist" processes were already beginning to undermine the Fordist gains of the working class. The Fordist period is often represented in the literature as a stable period, in which an accord between business, labor, and government ensured a steadily growing economy. This analysis shapes our understanding of the post war U.S., but does so by representing this period as more solid than, in reality, it was. Recent analyses point to the contradictions and contestations within the labor-capital accord. Mike Davis (1986), for example, describes the labor-capital accord as an "armed truce" between business and labor (mediated by government), and Winslow represents the accord as "a truce between business and business unionism" that was "partial and temporary" (2010:12). This labor-capital accord was predicated on robust economic growth, and was more fragile, provisional, and short-lived than is often recognized. Ethnographers in the 1980s already pointed to the "fragile affluence" of the industrial working class (Pappas 1989), and the erosion of the labor-capital accord through government encouragement of overseas investment (Nash 1989). Cowie, in his study on RCA, shows that early-on, industry's movements of capital show that "management may have been significantly less committed to its end of the [Fordist] bargain" than is commonly represented (Cowie 1999:6). Thomas Sugrue, in his study of deindustrialization in Detroit, also finds that in the post war affluent society, processes of deindustrialization began much earlier than is normally represented in the Fordist model, arguing that "the rusting of the Rust Belt began…in the 1950s" (1996:6). Uneven economic development meant that some industries--such as coal and textiles--went through processes of deindustrialization earlier than steel. In the Lehigh Valley deindustrialization in the anthracite coal mines to the north in the 1950s and 60s displaced miners, leading to community stress, family upheaval, and migration. Deindustrialization in coal generated "hard

working" male labor for the steel mill, as displaced mine workers and their sons migrated or commuted to the Bethlehem mill. And even expansion in the steel industry in the 1960s was often predicated on uneven regional development, contributing to processes of deindustrialization in the urban centers of the Midwest and Northeast. Minimills began to be built in the South early on, in the 1950s, taking advantage of tax breaks and non-union labor to shift the geography of steel production. And even within the vertically integrated steel industry, new works industrialized some areas, while contributing to deindustrialization in others. Bethlehem Steel built its greenfield Burns Harbor, Indiana plant in 1962, contributing to early downsizing and layoffs at the company's Lackawanna, NY plant. These uneven processes of development were already creating instability for some industrial workers, undermining unions in urban and coal areas, while simultaneously generating labor for growing industrial centers, as well as the expectation of stability for other industrial workers.

In addition, although the Fordist period is represented as a long post war period, this Fordist "affluence" and the confident attitudes that went with it, actually, for workers, encompassed only a very brief period of time. When this cohort of workers began working at the mill, they speak of an "older generation" of workers who were more reluctant to challenge authority, less confident of the protection of the union, who held on to many practices that preceded unionization (for example, protecting their knowledge and skills from younger workers, being more circumspect in the workplace, and advising workers not to become too confident about the security of their jobs). In the Bethlehem steel mill it was the 1964 cohort and later, that had the reputation of being more confident, empowered, and assertive. Curt Papp, who started at the Bethlehem plant in 1964, describes this: "our forefathers, my father, worked in the blast furnace. Most of those people were under the conditions that nobody would want to work, and they survived. Because of them, when we came in, they called us the hippie generation, we started taking on all these issues: the safety." Jefferson Cowie, in his recent study of working class activism agrees, quoting a Lordstown plant union treasurer as saying in the early 1970s, "it's a different generation of workingmen. None of these guys came over from the old country poor and starving, grateful for any job they could get…they've been exposed…to all the youth

movements of the last ten years…They're just not going to swallow the same kind of treatment their fathers did. They're not afraid of management….They want more than just a job for thirty years" (2010:45). Attitudes of this younger generation of workers, this particular cohort, were different than those of their fathers. These workers expected these good benefits and demanded just working conditions as a fair due and entitlement of their important, difficult, and skilled work, in a way that the older generation did not.

Second generation Puerto Rican workers, who started at the Bethlehem mill in the mid 1960s or the early 1970s, also describe having a different attitude than their fathers. Danny Moreno said his father's generation, most of whom began working in the coke works in the early 1950s, was not as confrontational and assertive at work. He attributes this, in part, to their lack of education as rural migrants, "they did their job well, they worked like burros, but as far as education-wise, they didn't have that much." Marc Ortiz describes his father's generation as "yes men," "Whatever the boss says, you do it, you don't question it." Marc described the older generation as "hobnobbing with the boss, bring him wine, whiskey. They cultivated relationships, everyone did that with the boss. The boss had to have this. Give him this and that. Our generation came along and said baloney!" This description of their father's generation is not a description of pre-union workers, as the older generation began work in a unionized Bethlehem plant. When their fathers were hired, in the early 1950s, the Bethlehem plant had been unionized for more than a decade. But the union was not as strong in some parts of the plant (such as the coke works) as it was in others, and the power of the union had not grown, to its full extent, within the entire plant. Many workers described their Puerto Rican steelworking fathers as having a different attitude, "they thought they're lucky to have a job," and they contrast the second generation of Puerto Rican steelworkers to that: "I didn't want anyone controlling me. I like to do my own thing." Second generation Puerto Rican steelworkers attribute that to their confident attitude about their rights within the plant, but they also allude to their growing assertiveness as Puerto Ricans in the context of the Civil Rights movement.

Although the earlier generation had been active in forming the union, and had been politicized through their participation in a series of post war strikes, the "affluent" level of wages

and benefits in steel that generated a seemingly secure, middle class standard of living did not result immediately upon union recognition post WW II. In fact, for workers, "affluence" only developed gradually and much later, in the 1960s and 1970s. While Bethlehem Steel recognized the union and signed its first union contracts in 1942 (after a 1941 steel strike), those initial contracts did not include tremendous increases in wages and benefits for steelworkers. Wage and benefit increases, as well as improved working conditions, had to be fought for through a series of steel strikes in 1946, 1952, 1956, and ending with the famous last 116 day steel strike at the Bethlehem plant in 1959. Although each strike resulted in wage and benefit improvements (which the steel companies passed on in higher prices to consumers), it wasn't until the 1960s, with the COLA increases of the 1956 contract and the pay and benefits increases of contracts in the 1950s, that "for the first time union workers got wages that took them out of the working class into a decent quality of life and gave them the promise of cradle-to-grave security" (Assad et al. 2010:113). It was in the late 1960s and 1970s that steelworkers' wages moved them securely into a middle class standard of living, and it wasn't until the 1960s that worker security during layoffs, during family health crises, and in retirement (through improved pension benefits) were assured.

Each set of gains won through strikes improved the life of steelworkers and their families, but did so incrementally. Jack Metzgar describes the 1950s as a period in which steelworkers had faith in "the direction we were going…a rising tide was lifting all boats, raising everybody's prospects and expectations" (Metzgar 2000:42) Steelworkers, like Metzgar's father, saw these gains as progress—a steady bettering of their lives and the lives of their children, and an opening of possibilities and opportunities. In contrast, the next generation, the one that I study, defined those possibilities as a social reality, as a newly established and recognized social order. The most senior workers in the cohort I interviewed found their jobs in the wave of hiring in 1964/65. They came into a work environment that for the very first time promised stable work, a middle class standard of living, and strong work rules overseen by the union. And steelworkers were, finally, some of the very best-paid industrial workers. With this cohort, in the 1960s, for the very

first time, "unionized steel employees were better paid than any other blue-collar group in the nation except the coal miners" (Reutter 1988:424).

But, this expectation of "affluence," this imaginary of what we call a Fordist social order, was extremely short-lived, as processes of deindustrialization and restructuring in the steel industry and at the Bethlehem plant initiated a long period of instability for workers. Workers hired in 1964/65 enjoyed only ten to fifteen years of this order before processes of transformation to a neoliberal regime, including deindustrialization in steel, became evident. In fact, recent examinations of the "long 1970s" critique representations by scholars and the popular media of an "ignorant, passive, and conservative" blue collar working class of this decade, of a working class coopted by their own affluence. Instead, recent analyses (Brenner et al. 2010; Cowie 2010; Stein 2010) describe the many ways that large portions of this cohort were "engaged, mobilized, connected to each other, and motivated not just by wages and working conditions but by belief in expansive versions of industrial and union democracy" (Brenner 2010:xiii). These analyses examine progressive rank-and-file movements during this period, including Ed Sadlowski and the Steelworkers Fight Back campaign in steel, fueled by a young generation of workers who were critical of bureaucratic business unionism and assertive about their right to improved working conditions and middle class wages and benefits. Analyses point to a dialectic between a corporate offensive beginning in the period of 1965 to 1973, eliciting a response from rank and file, younger generation workers, a challenging of bureaucratic unionism; and a push for more democratic working conditions, to which, in turn corporate power responded (Brenner 2010). The political power of an emboldened new generation of industrial workers clearly presented a political and economic problem, an enormous obstacle to be confronted by corporate power, in part because this generation of workers expected and believed in the promises of the Fordist compact, of a new, more egalitarian capitalism. Rather than an "armed truce," for this cohort of workers the possibility of a more equal America seemed to be a new reality.

The last major hiring at the Bethlehem plant was in 1978/79. For these young workers, the tail end of the cohort I study, a career in the steel mill was changing dramatically. Bethlehem coke worker Marc Ortiz explains that "being hired in 1978 was a different thing. Those workers

had much more insecurity throughout their career." This last cohort hired at the Bethlehem plant were hired after Bethlehem Steel's 1977 Black Friday layoffs sent shock waves through the community, symbolizing the vulnerability of a company felt, so recently, to be indomitable. Although Black Friday had a much greater impact on the corporate salaried, rather than on the hourly plant workers, Tyler Wright, a salaried sales manager, told me "from 1977 on, there wasn't a week go by that you didn't worry about losing your job." Many, many workers hired in 1978/79 lost their jobs in the plant in the recession of 1982-83, a period during which Tyler says "Bethlehem Steel came within weeks of going bankrupt."

In this research, in focusing on the specific cohort of workers that held on to steel mill jobs into the 1990s, I do not include many of the steelworkers that were initially hired in 1979. Many of these workers lost their jobs in layoffs in the 1980s, and did not continue working at the Bethlehem plant into the 1990s. And, within this group of permanently laid off workers, women workers were disproportionately represented, as the majority of women mill workers were hired in 1979. These workers laid off in the 1980s, for the most part, never returned to steel work. And they often had a difficult time finding footing in the changing Lehigh Valley labor market of the 1980s, as local employers often failed to recognize these steel layoffs as structural, long term transformations. Regional employers expected that these Bethlehem Steel employees would be only short-term employees at their new jobs, who would leave as soon as Bethlehem Steel called them back from what was defined as another cyclical layoff at the Steel. Lisa Szarko, who was hired as a laborer at the Bethlehem plant in 1979 and laid off two years later, describes the challenge of finding work after Steel, in the 1980s, in the Lehigh Valley:

> You never want to be a steelworker and get laid off. You can't find a job. Nobody wants you. You put Bethlehem Steel on your resume, nobody wants to hire you. Their mindset is--well when the layoff is over with and Bethlehem Steel decides to hire these people back, where are they going to go? They're not going to stay with us. They're going to go back to the steel. Which I would not have!" (Steelworkers' Archives)

In addition, as almost no workers were hired at the Bethlehem plant after 1979, this research does not examine the effect of these exclusions—the unavailability of steel work--on younger Lehigh Valley workers.

This long process of restructuring of the Bethlehem Steel corporation and the Bethlehem mill dominated the work lives of the workers I interviewed. Tyler Wright describes the process of selling off Bethlehem Steel assets that “began in a small way” in 1975 when Bethlehem Steel “shut down fabricated steel and the alloy tool steel division” and continued until 2003, when the company was sold to the International Steel Group. According to Tyler “we were constantly downsizing from 1975 to 2003.” This is a period of almost three decades of restructuring, downsizing, disinvestment, the closing of the Bethlehem mill, bankruptcy, and, ultimately, the demise and sale of the company. These decades dominated the lives and careers of this cohort of steelworkers, showing them quite explicitly how very short-lived and fragile Fordist “affluence” and security actually were, undermining workers’ imaginary of a more egalitarian capitalism, and generating both consent and resistance to post-Fordist restructuring. This was a “Golden Age” that was “less stable and uniformly prosperous than often represented” (Cowie 1999:6), where steelworkers did not feel the full benefits until much later than commonly represented, and which began to be eroded by processes of capital accumulation earlier than posited.

This leads us, then, to the question of why this brief, fragile “Golden Age” has so much weight, significance, and meaning in our national discourse; in academic representations; and, especially, in working-class understandings, expectations, and imaginaries of American society. Perhaps there is real power in a moment of more egalitarian possibilities; a moment in which the value of workers’ work is recognized by the wider society; the dignity of work is enforced by union-legislated rules for the conditions of the workplace; the respect for skills is codified in legally-recognized values of seniority and citizenship rights to a middle class wage, job security, health care, retirement, and to inhabit the space of the mill. Perhaps the potential of this moment, realized in the social institutions, the legal system, the moral economy, and the “structure of feeling” of this cohort of workers, is enormous, generating cultural meanings that extend far above and beyond the very short, limited, and fragile period in which some of these possibilities were realized. Although for corporate power, this “compact” may always have been approached as contingent and temporary, a necessary accommodation to control labor in a growing economy, for workers this imaginary was real, offering the promise of a more egalitarian America.

If we examine or approach this short period as a moment of possibility, we can better critique the notion of an affluent, coopted, white industrial working class, rendered quiescent and malleable by consumption and home ownership. A more egalitarian capitalism, a hegemonic order which values industrial labor, recognizes workers' citizenship rights, and supports participatory democratic processes, may empower workers to demand further change, as this generation of industrial workers did do in many of the rank and file movements of the 1970s. The older generation were headed to retirement, satisfied with the gains they made, and looking forward to the pension and health care benefits they had earned. But this younger, assertive generation, growing up in families with heightened expectations, and coming-of-age in a steel mill in which those expectations were formally recognized, was not willing to cede control of the workplace to management, nor to understand themselves solely as middle-class homeowners and consumers. This makes it all the more necessary to understand the ensuing processes of disempowerment of the industrial working class, of the deconstruction and destruction of this powerful segment of the working class, that occurred with deindustrialization and the transformation to a post-Fordist order. The experience of this cohort of industrial workers, their inheritance of confidence, power, and assertiveness within the workplace and outside with the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, followed by long processes of erosion, decimation, and dispossession of this segment of the working class are crucial to understand. The very strength of this generation of workers, manifested in their political activism in the 1970s, highlights the political necessity, for corporate power, of undermining that strength. But, how was corporate power able to strip workers of this power, to convince workers to pitch in to expanded reproduction even as their mill was being phased out, to diffuse or derail protest against processes of accumulation by dispossession, as workers were stripped of their jobs, their skills, their benefits, and their very identities? By following these workers over this long, extended process, this research hopes to offer some insight into these questions.

In addition, this research points to the continuing significance of work, and of industrial work, in giving meaning to people's lives, and in shaping class relations. I show that an interpretation of blue collar workers as alienated from work, but well-paid and coopted by the

resulting middle-class standard of living generated through the labor-capital accord, fails to understand the importance of work space, work time, the social relations of work, the meaning of work, and the struggle for control over one's own labor to working people. While social relations constructed at the point of production, through the labor process, incorporate social relations formed by the family, in the community, and in the context of a broader social order, work itself is also crucially important in shaping social relations, building values, and forming broader identities. The factory is more than a factory – within the factory identities are constructed, social relations built, and meanings generated that are about more than exploitation and extracting profit, and are broader than simply the "economy." Within the factory--working with their coworkers, learning and applying the skills of steel making, struggling with management, and inhabiting the spaces of the mill--workers also can find dignity, fulfillment, self-realization, and creativity. The point of production is an important social, cultural, political, and economic site with broad implications that extend far beyond the gates of the mill. Recognizing the importance of work, and of the factory, points to the importance of studying the changing conditions and organization of work and work places, and understanding the enormous impact of increased disciplining at work, of the loss of work, and of the de-valuing of the skills and knowledge built in the workplace.

We also have to be aware of the potentials, within the very possibilities of a more egalitarian order, for the undermining of the Fordist compromise. Even as enormous steps were being made to build a more diverse working class within the steel mill (with changes initiated by the Consent Decree), disinvestment and downsizing threatened newly developing solidarities; accentuating fractures along lines of race, ethnicity, gender and age; and undermining solidarities needed to effectively confront processes of deindustrialization. A bureaucratic, business unionism, focused on wages and benefits and ceding control of decisions related to disinvestment, rendered the union less capable of fighting plant closing, instead opting to pursue pensions and benefits for retiring workers. A union focus on local plant and company survival contributed to expanded reproduction, increasing plant productivity even as large numbers of workers were laid off. And the local unions' focus on "home" plant workers made company or industry-wide opposition difficult. In addition, the failure of the union to encompass broader

swathes of the working class, to unite with other social movements to build a broad working class social movement, hampered a more comprehensive opposition to processes of accumulation by dispossession. Yet, the importance of this period in the lives of the steelworkers I spoke with, the powerful "imaginary" of a Golden Age, demonstrates the tremendous power of a vision of and belief in the potential and possibilities of a more egalitarian capitalism.

This research also challenges too neat a conception of the American political economy, one that represents too absolute a rupture with or transition from Fordist stability to post-Fordist deindustrialization and flexible accumulation. In examining this post-Fordist period of insecurity, disinvestment, and deindustrialization at the Bethlehem plant, my research points to a period which is less clearly defined, more confusing (for workers), and more contradictory than much of the research suggests. Post-Fordist changes have been characterized by the strategies of capital to lower labor costs through attacking unions, downsizing firms, relocating manufacturing, relying more heavily on subcontracted and contingent labor, and fueling the development of the service and financial sector at the expense of manufacturing. Post-Fordist state practices are characterized by a diminution of the welfare state through rollbacks, privatization, and deregulation; an increase in surveillance and punitive mechanisms directed at working class people; and political demobilization through the dismantling of civil rights and anti-poverty programs, all under the ideology of "free market fundamentalism" (Gusterson and Besteman 2010; Susser and Maskovsky 2009; Collins et al. 2008). But, in reality, post-Fordist orders also contain continuities with Fordist regimes, with Fordist techniques often occurring side-by-side with the instituting of new strategies, regulatory systems, and ideologies. Recent research, for example, points to the uneven development and implementation of factory regimes in the post-Fordist economy, showing that hegemonic regimes can operate side-by-side with despotic regimes of labor control, and that local labor market segmentation, the relation of contingent to permanent labor, the technologies of production, and the interaction of a new and an established working class all influence the development of post-Fordist manufacturing (Lee 2007; Collins 2003; Milkman 2006; Ngai 2003; Salzinger 2003). This research points to the confusing and contradictory nature of this large-scale transformation. Even as the steel industry was shutting

down shops and departments, and closing entire mills, steel companies like Bethlehem Steel were also investing in new machinery and technologies, contemplating mergers, and acquiring new properties. And in processes of restructuring at the mill, steelworkers interpreted policies and responded to managerial decisions and demands through the perspective of a moral economy that was, in part, shaped in a Fordist steel mill. In a conceptualization that represents too organized and teleological a transformation from Fordism to post-Fordism, steelworkers might be represented as naïve for not more actively planning out their transition to a knowledge-based economy through, for example, pursuing formal educational credentials that would pay off in more lucrative primary sector jobs. But, in reality, steelworkers often "read" the language of capital investment in mills to implement strategies of holding onto steel jobs, with the accompanying hard-won middle-class wages and benefits. This strategy may have benefited many steelworkers and their families, in the long run, given the very long trajectory of restructuring, and the accompanying post Fordist erosion of the security, wages, and benefits of many "new economy" primary sector jobs. But although these individual and familial strategies of using the remaining system of union rules to hang on to legacy assets, whether through saavy "manipulation" or access to "transfers" available to a subgroup of "home" plant workers, resulted in some (ultimately reduced) pension benefits for a few, it also undermined broader collective action confronting corporate strategies of plant closings, the use of the bankruptcy court, and the sale of the company.

Finally, the erosion of these rights earned by workers, the construction of a new "regime" of advanced capitalism—a post-Fordist regime -- was a long-term project and process. Although many interpret this process as teleological – a deindustrialization that must necessarily accompany further economic development, a process leading to a defined end of a new economy--steelworkers did not experience it in this way. Although this process had many "shocks" along the way – the "shock" of Black Friday, the "shock" of sudden departmental closings at the steel plant, and the "shock" of what was once the second largest steel company in the world entering the bankruptcy court, much of this process of restructuring did not take the form of a sudden "shock" nor was it codified into emotionally moving rituals (such as the last cast

ceremony at the Bethlehem mill). Much of the literature on deindustrialization has focused on worker and community reactions to these "shocks," experiences that can mobilize community and worker response, reflection, and analysis (Dudley 1994; Pappas 1989). This project finds, instead, that many of these processes were unmarked, a long trajectory of uneven social processes that were less-recognized, more uneven, highly contradictory, and for steelworkers, often more confusing. While a shock marks an evident rupture, these more contradictory, long-term processes were less explicit, more enduring, ongoing, and, for steelworkers, less comprehensible. Within the mill, these uneven processes playing themselves out disparately and seemingly arbitrarily along lines of gender, age, and department or division, punctuated, at times, by sudden "shocks," could produce alienation, disorientation, fragmentation, and a kind of nagging regret and self-doubt.

At Bethlehem Steel's flagship plant, from the 1977 Black Friday layoffs onwards, the plant underwent downsizing and restructuring until steel production at the mill ended in 1995, and the last department closed in 1998. Steelworkers at the plant transferred internally, transferred to other plants, took early retirement, or moved into other jobs as the plant closed. Steelworkers were then hit by the shock of the 2001 bankruptcy of what was once the world's second largest steel company. In bankruptcy, the corporation eliminated its health care obligations to retirees and handed its pension plan over to the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, a public-private entity that insured corporate pensions, decimating the benefits steelworkers had long fought for. This research examines the effect of this long and convoluted transformation of the Bethlehem steel mill, the Bethlehem Steel corporation, and the U.S. steel industry on this cohort of workers.

In Chapter One, I analyze processes of deindustrialization as a part of a broader political project, incorporating both processes of accumulation by dispossession and expanded reproduction, to undermine unions, attack worker power, and shift resources from workers to corporate elites. Class struggle moved along two trajectories. On the one hand, corporate power sought to restructure capitalist labor relations in the steel industry so as to reduce labor costs and increase productivity, strategies that required the undermining of union power. The very strategies implemented to effect this, however, exerted pressure on industrial elites to implement

processes of accumulation by dispossession, to annihilate those collectively organized mechanisms that ensured worker security. The processes of restructuring the steel industry were, however, often contradictory and confusing. In the Bethlehem steel mill, disinvestment occurred side-by-side with major capital investments, and layoffs and downsizing occurred simultaneously with the introduction of new participatory management regimes oriented around increasing productivity. These contradictory processes were very difficult for workers to read. Even as workers fought to keep their home plant open, acceding to speed-up, improving efficiency, and agreeing to concessionary contracts, they also became disillusioned with corporate commitments to maintaining steel production in Bethlehem.

In Chapter Two, I explore the labor process at the Bethlehem plant, arguing that the complex division of labor, the uneven capital investment in new technologies, and the reliance on crew work make the labor process within the steel mill very different from the Fordist model derived from automobile factories. Even within core U.S. industry, there is an uneven geographic development of factory regimes, as different industries have different forms of management, different technologies, and recruit in different labor markets. Burawoy's research on worker consent points us towards the importance of analyzing how both consent and resistance are generated at the point of production (in the steel mill), and complicates the concept of consent by focusing on the construction of a working class culture of the mill. This culture is complex, in some ways supporting intensified production (generating consent), but in other ways constructing solidarities that are mobilized in support of broader worker interests. The union-regulated internal state while individualizing workers' concerns and narrowing issues subject to collective bargaining, also does support collective solidarities, encourages worker voice, and empowers workers as citizens. While much labor process research argues that internal labor markets generate consent to production regimes, my research shows that in this complex division of labor internal labor markets produce differing strategies, and there is an interaction between internal labor market strategies and a gender-based division of labor in the household. In addition, racialized, ethnicized, and gendered constructions produced both within and outside the plant

structure the steel mill's division of labor and internal labor markets, and situate workers in different positions vis a vis processes of deindustrialization.

In Chapter Three, I examine the moral economy of the Bethlehem plant, the web of relationships of exchange and redistribution "that are governed primarily by morality…or by ethics governing a particular vision of the good life" (Ong, 2006: 199). I understand the massive steel mill as a "city within a city," with its own complex division of labor, its own built environment and "natural" landscape, and its own language, culture, and moral economy. I argue that the relationships forged in the masculine space of the mill and in the relations of making steel, produced a culture rich in meanings and moralities that shaped steelworker experience. This chapter examines the construction of principles of citizenship, solidarity, and seniority within the mill, and the ways that these principles validated worker dignity, constructed social relations, gave meaning to work, and allowed workers to live a "good life." Workers not only earned the "economic citizenship" embedded in the family wage that a core industrial job provided and that was realized in their families and communities, they also earned citizenship rights at work as members of the union, and rights to the spaces of the mill through creatively inhabiting these spaces. The principle of seniority invoked values about work and skill, structured access to jobs, and organized social relations within the plant. And solidarities were built through a learned morality of crew work and of shared union citizenship.

In Chapter Four I discuss the ways in which the moral economy of the mill, and working class solidarity, was constructed partially through exclusions of blacks, Latinos, coal country, and women workers. Solidarity, citizenship, and seniority were formed, in part, through an emphasis on shared constructions of masculinity and whiteness built inside and outside the plant. This chapter explores how racial, ethnic, and gendered exclusions in hiring (i.e. exclusions from jobs in the steel plant) as well as in the internal labor market contributed to building a white working class. Some workers had more access to the security and benefits of the Fordist compromise than others, and this was shaped through gendered and racialized understandings of citizenship and of skills. These hierarchies were then reproduced inside the mill through a variety of mechanisms, including a union-defined departmental seniority that restricted racialized workers to

less desirable departments. In a moral economy in which seniority was a measure of value – of skills, wages, and experience, and status -- those departments with limited promotional tracks devalued the labor and the worker. I examine the changes to this internal system initiated through the 1974 Consent Decree. The Consent Decree, in the Bethlehem plant, often hurt junior white workers, while helping more senior white workers, even as processes of restructuring in the late 1970s simultaneously began to undermine junior workers' mobility in the internal labor market. I explore strategies used by individual women workers to build ties of solidarity, and to downplay the threats to values of seniority posed by affirmative action-based programs. While some women were able to do this in the 1980s, as downsizing, disinvestment and deindustrialization increasingly threatened workers' jobs in the 1990s, hostility towards women again escalated. Towards the end of the plant, in the 1990s, my research shows that stronger inter-ethnic and inter-racial ties of solidarity were built in the coke works, even as ties of solidarity eroded and fractured for women workers.

In Chapter Five, I examine processes of accumulation by dispossession, the stripping of "legacy" assets from steelworkers. Many workers strategized ways to hold onto steel work benefits, through accepting early retirement options or transfers to other Bethlehem Steel mills. Although workers struggled to control the transfer process through the exercise of rational individual and household "choice," in reality they often had little control over transfer options, making what appeared to them as "luck" a significant variable. While steelworkers do not blame themselves for job loss, workers often do blame themselves for bad decisions around retirement options, internal and external transfers, and alternative job paths. They "second guess" decisions, thinking that "in hindsight," with the more extensive information they now have, they could have made better choices for themselves and their families. While transfer allowed some workers to attain their pensions, the entry of Bethlehem Steel into bankruptcy, and the succeeding takeover of the pension plan by the Pension Benefit and Guaranty Corporation (PBGC), prevented many workers from successfully attaining their pensions. While the bankruptcy process meant the demise of the company, and stripped hard-earned benefits from workers, it resulted in "turnaround" profits for vulture investors like Wilbur Ross, "turnaround"

experts like Steve Miller, and high-priced bankruptcy bankers and lawyers. The bankruptcy court trumped other legal processes – such as those embedded in the collectively bargained contract—facilitating processes of accumulation by dispossession. The loss of health care and the transfer of Bethlehem Steel's pension plan to the PBGC hit workers hard, propelling many into poverty and back into the labor market at much-reduced wages. A small, and very cohesive, financial elite successfully dispossessed steelworkers of pension and health care benefits, decimating the public-private welfare regime of the Fordist period that provided security to many workers and their families, even while excluding sectors of the working class. While workers were very bitter about these processes of dispossession, they did not mobilize collectively to combat them. The uneven distribution of the effects of accumulation by dispossession over the variegated steelworking class undermined the potential for collective response. Instead, workers, for the most part, saw their situation as "luckier" than some, and reacted to insecurity as a private experience. In addition, dominant ideologies about the "new economy" and post industrial society encourage workers to accept this as the new reality, even while they remain highly critical of it. This acceptance of a new status quo, and the lack of organizations by which to combat this, renders workers less powerful.

Chapter Six discusses the movement of steelworkers into a robust post industrial labor market in the Lehigh Valley, and the obstacles workers faced in doing so. By the 1990s, Bethlehem's economy had recovered, and steelworkers looked for jobs in a diversified post industrial economy. The kind of job that workers had in the plant, and the "attitudes" and orientations forged in those jobs, affected workers' success moving into jobs in manufacturing or the service sector of the economy after leaving the steel plant. In addition, workers' understandings of work provided grounding for a critique of post industrial labor relations. Restructuring within the plant, as well as retraining programs with departmental closures, attempted to reorient workers to post industrial work. But workers still used the moral economy of the mill to judge post Fordist jobs, even while accepting a new order of employment. This rupture with the past – with the culture of the workplace--was very difficult for some workers, With pension and health care cuts during bankruptcy, many workers were propelled from retirement

back into the work force, entering jobs in the service sector (either private or public sector jobs), downgraded manufacturing sector, or starting small businesses. Retraining programs, arbitrarily assigned varying benefits to workers and focused on retraining workers in new "skills" and reshaping worker attitudes. Workers found that in a post industrial labor market, seniority was re-defined from a prestigious resource to a deficit. They found respected, assertive masculine attitudes that served well on the shop floor were detrimental in service work. Workers bridled at a service demeanor that seemed inauthentic or insincere. Workers entering the manufacturing sector found a significant difference between "low road" jobs in a downgraded manufacturing sector, and the few skilled "high road" industrial jobs. And workers struggled to work in non-unionized jobs where citizenship rights were undermined. Working side by side with new immigrants was often direct testimony to white workers' loss of prestige and citizenship rights. However, even while many workers struggled with the lower pay, the insecurity, the requisite attitudes at many of these new jobs, many workers experienced new jobs as preferable, in many ways, to the hard, dangerous, and dirty jobs at Bethlehem Steel. Nevertheless, strategies for attaining marketable, new economy skills, might not be economically superior to strategies for holding on to steel wages and benefits. Strategies for individual mobility often contradicted the morality governing social relations in the mill. And, even successful workers still struggle to construct new identities in a post-Fordist city.

This research helps to shed light on processes of fragmentation and dissolution of a specific generation of the U.S. industrial working class. This cohort began their steel careers in a particular moment – one of possibilities, power and potential – in the mid 1960s through 1970s. The institutionalized supports to members of this cohort of the industrial working class that came of age under post war Fordism, were manifested in state policies, union mechanisms, the legal system, and broader societal discourses. This institutional support and cultural legitimation imbued this cohort with an attitude of confidence, an understanding of working class entitlement, and a sense of the possibility of a more egalitarian capitalist order. But, an unrelenting, ongoing, oft-confusing, and uneven attack on the institutions, the expectations, and the vision of the promise of the Fordist compromise had enormous repercussions for these steelworkers. Through

understanding these complex processes we can better understand the potentials, and the limits, of the industrial working class.

CHAPTER 1

DEINDUSTRIALIZATION AND THE BETHLEHEM WORKS: THE FACTORY IN BETHLEHEM

Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, a city of about 72,000 people, was dominated by steel manufacturing from the 1900s through the 1990s. Bethlehem was the headquarters of Bethlehem Steel (or "the Steel" as it was called locally), founded in 1904, and for long the world's second largest steel producer. The city was also the site of Bethlehem Steel's flagship steel plant. The massive Bethlehem plant stretched for almost five miles and covered more than 1,800 acres along the Lehigh River. Bethlehem Steel's South Bethlehem plant was originally an iron manufacturing plant which specialized, at the turn of the century, in manufacturing steel for military armaments. Charles Schwab, then-head of Bethlehem Steel, parlayed that munitions expertise and technology into lucrative contracts with Great Britain during WW I, and into the rapid growth of Bethlehem Steel. By the 1920s steel was a core industry fueling U.S. industrial, economic, and military growth. US Steel and Bethlehem Steel controlled more than half of all steel plants in the U.S., as well as the majority of iron ore, coking coal, and transportation to the mills (Reutter 1988). There was a close relationship between political and economic elites in the steel industry and the construction of large, monopolistic steel corporations. Large government military contracts, government capital for technology, and government tax abatements helped to fuel the growth of the big steel companies during the first half of the 20th century, WW I, and WW II (Hinshaw 2002). From 1929-1958, the steel industry generated the largest percentage of U.S. GDP growth (Prestovitz and Heidinger 2009:84). Monopolistic control through price fixing, vertical integration of the steel making process, exclusionary contracts with suppliers, and, in the post war period, collectively bargained labor agreements eliminating the strike threat and giving workers a bigger piece of the economic pie, led to rapid increases in steel prices, growing wages for labor in the postwar period, and the elimination of competitors.

The Bethlehem plant produced large quantities of varied steel products that fueled the shifting growth of the country's suburban consumerism and expanding infrastructure. During WW II, at the height of Bethlehem Steel's production, 30,000 workers were employed at the Bethlehem steel works. After the war, Bethlehem Steel continued to do well, as productivity in

core US manufacturing industries expanded in the post WWII "affluent society," but the steel work force in Bethlehem was reduced from its WW II high to about 16,000 steelworkers. The Bethlehem plant produced a wide variety of products including steel for the automobile and oil industries, consumer durables and war materiel, and structural steel for skyscrapers and bridges. During this period of what has been described as the "Fordist compromise," the U.S. achieved global political and economic hegemony with a rapidly growing consumer market fueled by suburbanization and a labor-capital accord driving economic growth. In this Fordist regime of accumulation, regulation theorists argue, the contradictions of capitalist accumulation were balanced through a set of social and political policies that ensured a degree of stability. Keynesian economic policy advocated increased consumption and a rising standard of living for the working class as an economic and social good, and rising salaries, supported by low interest mortgages and state-funded infrastructural improvements, fueled the growth of the suburbs and accompanying expansion in demand for consumer durables. These policies combined with social insurance programs to provide a broader political context for the labor-capital accord and for ongoing capital accumulation. In the post war U.S. "affluent society" the Fordist compromise between capital and labor, in which business unionism ensured labor a larger share of the growing profits, was made possible through a robust, expanding economy. Blue collar steelworkers were able to purchase autos and other consumer durables (many of which were made of steel) with their increasingly middle class wages. And Keynesian economics supported this contract, defining a growing middle class as an overall economic and social good.

Bethlehem Steel entered the postwar period with a formally recognized union (after much struggle), and in 1942 a first contract, negotiated under the pressure of the state. Large industries like steel forged agreements with unions to provide higher wages, regular salary increases, and good benefits in return for a stable, hard working, quiescent work force. In steel, for example, by 1973 labor gave up the right to strike--even between contracts--in the Experimental Negotiating Agreement (ENA). The ENA guaranteed steel a reliable labor force, without the threat of strikes and the accompanying cycle of stockpiling of steel prior to contract negotiations, followed by layoffs when the contract was signed. The USW gave up the right to

strike under affluent society assumptions of ongoing expanding reproduction in return for cost of living and wage increases (Moody 2007).

As many recent analyses have pointed out, when the level of profits generated in the postwar "affluent society" were threatened by the crisis of over accumulation of the 1970s, this accord broke down, as "upper classes everywhere felt threatened" by falling profits and declining asset values (Harvey 2007). Contradictions within the domestic and global relations of the Fordist compact generated a crisis in the Fordist regime of accumulation in the 1970s. As David Harvey so clearly shows in his work, the shifting "solutions" to limits to capital accumulation often produce new contradictions, generating crises that must again be "solved." For the steel industry, foreign investment in European and Japanese steel after WW II, the opening of U.S. markets to steel imports, and the support of the minimill industry, all "solutions" for capital, contributed to over production of steel, a "crisis of overaccumulation." On a broad scale, transformation within the U.S. from the Fordist compromise to a post-Fordist regime was not a natural or inevitable economic or societal transformation, nor (contrary to popular representation) has it been a successful strategy for robust economic development. Instead, it has been a "political project to reestablish the conditions for capital accumulation and to restore [and in some cases create] the power of economic elites" (Harvey 2007). The steel elites, struggling to maintain profitability in an industry threatened by increasingly ruthless competition, shook up the industry through practices that included shedding product lines, departments, and entire plants; aggressively pushing labor for wage reductions and speed up; and pursuing mergers, acquisitions, joint ventures, and bankruptcy. These large scale processes of deindustrialization played themselves out in "ongoing waves of dislocation" (Cowie 1999) affecting different industries and regions at different times, with different pacing, through processes that play out unevenly even within specific communities and particular labor forces. These processes are part and parcel of this overall transformation, a restructuring of the social, political, and economic arrangements in the U.S. (and globally) so as to strengthen capitalist classes through processes of expanding reproduction as well as accumulation by dispossession. In restructuring the steel industry, it is important to understand the importance of both expanded reproduction and accumulation by

dispossession, and the relation between these in restoring profitability. In the area of expanded reproduction, steel companies fought to lower wage rates through concessionary contracts and layoffs; restructure the labor process through introducing new, participative management techniques; and redefine skill and job categories through merging classifications. But, for steel companies, the much-discussed conundrum of this strategy to expand reproduction through reconfiguring the steel mills, is that "downsizing" and layoffs (together with the ever-rising costs of "legacy" expenses such as health care) drove up the "legacy" costs of the private welfare system agreed to through collective bargaining. This meant that for many companies like Bethlehem Steel, there was enormous pressure on corporate elites to shed company responsibility for the legacy costs, the assets that working class Americans had gained through the compromises of the Fordist post war period.

Deindustrialization, as a process, was insightfully described and defined in Bluestone and Harrison's seminal 1982 work *The Deindustrialization of America*. In this work, the authors analyzed and documented the ways in which U.S. elites responded to declining profitability through constructing conglomerates that closed or sold productive factories, exporting jobs through direct foreign investment, and waging a war on labor leading to declining wages, shedding of industrial jobs, and decreased union membership. This analysis, defining deindustrialization as a central social dynamic, contributed to anthropological studies in the 1980s that examined the effects of deindustrialization in rustbelt communities. This valuable research documented the effects of these strategies of capital accumulation on workers and communities, showing the displacement, increased economic hardship, decreased state supports, strains on household and family relations, and health issues that resulted from workers' displacement. Anthropologists like June Nash, Gregory Pappas, and Ida Susser documented the effects of deindustrialization on entire communities recording increased crime rates, destruction of housing, closings of small businesses, decline of city services and school systems, expansion of prison systems, the effects of environmental toxins and health issues, and increased levels of alcoholism and drug abuse (1989; 1989; 1982). Anthropological studies examined workers' responses, on an individual, familial, and collective level, to the shock of displacement.

These studies, while enormously valuable, must be updated today with contemporary studies of ongoing processes of deindustrialization and displacement and analyses of the continuing effects of these processes on working class people and their families. Studies of deindustrialization must be complicated today, as it is clear that deindustrialization is not always or only effected through a sudden plant closing and its impact on a local community. Indeed, as Jefferson Cowie finds in his study of RCA, “the plant that abruptly closes down is actually much less typical than the plant that undergoes a more subtle process of cutbacks, attritions, and the gradual relocation or elimination of industrial jobs” (1999:6). The long process, of more than 20 years of fits and starts of “downsizing” in the Bethlehem plant, supports this approach. In addition, as Bluestone recently (2003) points out, our understanding of deindustrialization must be complicated by an analysis of the continuing role of manufacturing in the U.S. economy, and an understanding of the relation between manufacturing overseas and U.S. manufacturing. This is certainly true of an analysis of the steel industry, as, although the Bethlehem plant is closed and Bethlehem Steel defunct, U.S. steel production, including many of Bethlehem’s former mills, enjoyed a “renaissance” in the late 1990s, although often through “foreign” ownership and partnerships.

In addition, all too often economic and sociological use of the concept of deindustrialization represents the process as natural, essentialized, and inevitable (as either evolutionary or developmental). Deindustrialization came to be represented either as a necessary evil accompanying the desirable growth of a robust post industrial or “new economy” in the core countries, or as a positive transformation of American industry from inflexible, gigantic, dinosaur industries to a new, flexible, downsized, lean and mean manufacturing sector. The first explanation is belied by the “strong recovery in productivity growth” in which the “growing efficiency of the manufacturing sector led the way” in the 1990s (Bluestone 2003:xii). Bluestone points out, however, that this dynamism in the manufacturing sector was not accompanied by job creation, as increased efficiency instituted through new management regimes and new technologies has meant lower levels of labor inputs (and we will see this clearly in steel). Close examination of the contemporary auto or steel industries reveals dynamic, restructured industries

producing industrial goods in “post industrial” countries and regions. For a variety of reasons, including investment in fixed capital technologies and infrastructure, fluctuating and sometimes high transport costs, the advantages of locations close to major markets (for steel, a market such as the auto industry), and avoidance of tariff boundaries, there are advantages to maintaining steel production, perhaps as restructured or “re-industrialized” mills, within the U.S. This does not, however, mean that the U.S. continues to be a global center for steel production. Today rapidly increasing demand in China has led to increased capacity there, and China has recently begun to eye export markets in steel. Today (in 2007), China produces 1/3 of the world’s steel (producing more than four times as much as the U.S., China is the leading steel exporter), and nine of the 10 largest steel companies are headquartered in Asia (Madar 2009:88).

The “decline” of steel production in the U.S. is not a unilineal decline, it is better understood as a shifting landscape of changed steel production. Although steel consumption in the U.S. declined in the 1970s and 80s, consumption grew again by the late 1990s, surpassing the prior 1973 peak of 110 million tons with 130 million tons consumed in 1999 (Barnett and Crandall 2002). And, in the late 1990s, U.S. steel production became more efficient and productive, producing more steel with many less man hours. Clearly, this cannot be viewed as “deindustrialization” per se as this restructuring contributes to the health of the U.S. steel manufacturing sector. But this new, efficient steel production nonetheless results in job loss, dislocation, and trauma for many workers and their families. While steel production has grown rapidly in newly industrializing countries, most of this new production has developed to meet the needs of emerging domestic markets (Firoz 2003), and even though 36% of steel produced globally is exported (Madar 2009), steel production in core countries, close to core markets, remains important.

In addition, the “large, industrial firm” does not seem diminished or replaced by small, nimble companies in contemporary steel production. For example, Arcelor Mittal, the current owner of most of Bethlehem Steel’s still-existing mills, is the largest steel company in the world, an enormous transnational corporation with production in 60 countries, a 2009 revenue of $65.1 billion, employing 320,000 workers globally, engaged in greenfield construction projects, and

actively buying up iron ore mines around the globe (Ross 2007). The large, restructured, industrial corporation continues to be vitally important in global and U.S. steel production. The smaller, more flexible minimills have not eradicated large integrated companies, as these integrated companies (albeit many of them restructured to look more like minimills) continue to produce 2/3 of the world's steel (Madar 2009:20).

The second explanation, posited from both right and left analyses, represented the large, rigid, industrial corporation as obsolete due to rapidly changing consumer demands, increased international competition, the need for more 'flexible' labor, more competitive interaction between companies, and more responsive production and distribution systems. In this representation, small-scale, nimble businesses adept at making small batches in a just-in-time distribution and production system, would dominate "post industrial" manufacturing. In steel, the minimills that were lauded as an example of the efficacy of market competition in stimulating entrepreneurial creativity and as "the vanguard of a future regime of flexible, democratic, small-scale manufacturing typical of post-Fordist production" (Stein 1998:294), have not proven to be an unmitigated success. Minimills, it was argued, would take over U.S. steel production, out-competing the rigid, inflexible, vertically integrated mills. Although minimills were competitively advantaged by their new lower cost technology, lack of legacy costs, and "leaner" management and job classifications, as well as through government policies that advantaged "Sunbelt" growth, they did not eradicate the vertically integrated mill. Minimills have encountered obstacles, including fluctuating scrap and electricity prices, lack of access to capital in downturns in the market for steel; and "cutthroat levels" of competition, that can lead to failure (Hall 1997; Stein 1998). During the period of 1982-87 more than 20 minimill plants closed or changed owners (Hall 1997:162). In 2009, minimills accounted for about 59% of steel production in the U.S., with the integrated mills producing 41% (Madar 2009). While this shows the growth of the minimill sector, it also demonstrates that the restructured integrated mill continues to be important in steel production.

To challenge essentialized interpretations of processes of deindustrialization, it is crucial to embed understandings of deindustrialization within broader concepts of capital accumulation.

As Cowie and Heathcott (2003) argue, what we call deindustrialization is a “broader, more fundamental, historical transformation” of U.S. society, a transformation that played itself out unevenly, involving reindustrialization in some regions, even as factories closed in others. Deindustrialization must be understood as a part of a set of processes of uneven geographic development, fundamental to larger processes of capital accumulation. Uneven geographical development demands what Harvey describes as "a process of creative destruction" in which the "created spaces of capitalism" including steel mills, cities, and communities "have to be annihilated" in order to generate new opportunities for the investment of overaccumulated capital and labor (1985:28). These new opportunities include re-industrialization, frequently in different countries and regions, within the context of an uneven and shifting geography of development.

Within the U.S., these processes of uneven geographic development devastate some regions while developing others, generating intense regional competition, reshaping capitalist elites and working classes, and restructuring class struggle. Regional or industrial crises can generate new opportunities for capital as capital picks up still viable assets at “fire sale prices,” oft times finding in devastated landscapes a “new terrain for renewed accumulation” (Harvey 2010:246). Of course, this process involves a struggle between classes, and a reshaping of class relations, as struggle ensues over who bears the brunt of the effects of dislocation and of destruction of assets (accumulation by dispossession). In steel, regional competition opened new, non-union jobs in Southern right-to-work states and overseas, even as jobs were shed in the Northeast and Midwest. Even within large steel companies, like Bethlehem Steel, newer, more productive integrated plants competed with older ones, displacing some workers while retaining others.

Finally, the neoliberal assumption that deindustrialization is a purely economic process, guided by the natural laws of the market has to be questioned. It is crucial to follow the lead of Bluestone and Harrison in refuting this notion by showing how development in one place, and deindustrialization in another is fomented, supported, and encouraged through very specific state policies. In the case of steel, the massive restructuring, closing of plants and facilities, and shedding of jobs of the late 1970s through the mid 1990s was precipitated, in part, through state

policies that supported the growth of foreign steel competitors and of the minimills. These state policies worked to undermine large, vertically integrated steel producers in the urban Northeast and Midwest, while advantaging large European and Japanese steel producers as well as smaller, rural Southern minimills. Under U.S. post-war hegemony, for example, capital was invested in Germany and Japan, supporting the development of their steel industries. New steel mills were located on "greenfield" sites, using the latest technology and design, and situated close to deep water ports. Developmental states in Japan and Germany supported the development of the steel industry through subsidies, tax and tariff policies, extended loans, and minimum price laws. In addition, as these countries looked for markets for excess steel production, under Cold War politics, geopolitical considerations often took precedence over domestic steel support in the U.S. The U.S. opened markets to allies' imported steel, even as Japan and Germany protected their own steel industry from foreign imports (Stein 2010; Hinshaw 2002). In 1977, "the only open market in the world [for steel] was in the U.S." (Stein 2010). Financial elites in the U.S., gaining power, lobbied for free market policies as crucial in ensuring timely debt repayments on the part of overseas producers. Imports claimed a larger and larger share of the U.S. steel market, exerting even greater pressure on domestic steel producers during periods of global recession, when vertically integrated companies sought to export excess production. In addition, the policies in the U.S. favoring new investment favored greenfield minimill investment over the "rounding out" of technological upgrading at the vertically integrated mills.

In the steel industry, contradictions in the Fordist regime of accumulation, leading to a "crisis" in steel production and ensuing processes of deindustrialization in the 1980s, had been emerging in the 1960s. The steel industry was encountering "stagnant American productivity growth" in the 1960s, in which declining profitability in steel was related to less robust economic growth (and much slower growth in demand for steel) as well as heightened competition in the domestic market from imported foreign steel and the expanding minimill sector. While global steel demand was already growing, U.S. steel manufacturers were focused only on supplying domestic demand (in 1950 the U.S. produced 40% of the world's steel, by 1970 it was 20%) (Stein, 2010:155). Declining profitability in the steel industry precipitated layoffs as early as the

1960s, in which some workers "feared they would never work again" (Hinshaw 2002). In Bethlehem, some workers report "old-timers" warning them about these changes when they first started working at the plant, in the 1960s and early 1970s. Peter Clarke, a Bethlehem steelworker who began his career in the beam yard, reported that "when I first came into the department some of the old-timers said 'kid, this is no place for you…this place is going down. Get out now. And that was in 1973. They said, don't hang around here, you don't have a future here" (Behum N.d.). These beam yard workers would have seen a decline in steel shipments out of the Bethlehem plant. While employment in steel in the U.S. remained relatively stable during this period (in 1950 there were 674,000 workers, in 1965 657,000, and in 1970 627,000) (Rogers 2009:125) the beginning of new strategies by steel elites to reduce labor costs –the introduction of new technologies and the practice of contracting out-- were already producing structural unemployment in steel (Hinshaw 2002). The United Steelworkers union even began to negotiate around some issues related to structural job loss in the 1960s, bargaining for benefits that would increase worker security. Although most benefits enhancing security were focused on the cyclical layoffs long endemic to the steel industry (an increase in supplemental pay accompanying unemployment benefits, for example), some focused on structural job loss, such as the bargaining for transfer rights in the 1977 negotiations and negotiating for increased pensions.

Imports were beginning to capture an ever-larger percentage of the U.S. steel market, surpassing U.S. steel exports for the first time in 1959, and attaining 20% of the U.S. market by 1977 (Stein 2010). There was, however, ongoing investment in the Bethlehem plant through the 1960s and 1970s. In 1961, Bethlehem Steel built a costly new research complex, Homer Research Labs, on South Mountain in Bethlehem. And Martin Tower, Bethlehem Steel's new corporate headquarters, was built in 1972, towering over the city skyline. In addition, new investments in technologies were evident within the Bethlehem steel mill. A new structural mill was built in 1968, and a new basic oxygen furnace was constructed, requiring tearing down an entire neighborhood, "the Heights," in 1968 (Young and Benjamin 2010). The early 1970s brought additional investment, bespeaking the economic strength of the Bethlehem Steel corporation (even as imports were eating into Bethlehem Steel's market) and of the historic

Bethlehem mill. In 1975, a new battery of coke ovens was constructed at the plant, and numerous new environmental and pollution control technologies were added in the 1970s. These investments, as well as management representations portraying a robust, healthy steel industry, a thriving Bethlehem steel corporation, and a healthy and productive steel mill in Bethlehem, obfuscated the very real threats to the steel industry.

By the 1970s, however, there were major signs of trouble in the vertically integrated steel industry, at the Bethlehem Steel corporation, and within the Bethlehem plant. By the late 1970s there were clear signs of deindustrialization in the steel industry. The 1977 plant closings in western Pennsylvania's Monongahela Valley brought strong local reaction and national headlines. In addition, at Bethlehem Steel 1977 was the first year of losses in 43 years (Assad et al.2010). The reaction to those financial losses included 1977's Black Friday at Martin Tower in which 800 "shell-shocked" Martin Tower workers, and 2,500 white collar Bethlehem Steel workers were laid off. Seven thousand plant workers were also laid off from Bethlehem mills the same year (Assad et al. 2010). The 1976 closing of the Fabricated Steel Construction division (related to the loss of the World Trade Center contract), and the shrinking of the Johnstown plant in 1979 and the Lackawanna plant in 1977 were clear signs of trouble. Some workers from Johnstown even found themselves transferred into other plants, including a few who ended up at the Bethlehem plant. The closures, bankruptcies, and mergers and acquisitions accompanying this growing crisis in steel were already realigning the landscape of steel production in the U.S. by the late 1970s.

Many workers, asked by Frank Behum in his recent (2010) book of interviews when they first became concerned about the future of the Bethlehem plant, referred to these events of the late 1970s. Dick Adams points to Bethlehem Steel's failure to secure the contract for structural steel for the World Trade Center in 1970.

> The thing that really rattled everybody's cage is when the steel for the World Trade Center was not awarded to the Bethlehem plant. And the corporation bid it effectively, and we did everything we could to get it, but the builders of the World Trade Center chose a Japanese supplier to provide structural beams that we were rolling in the Bethlehem plant….we could see that the demand was being spread out across the entire world now (Behum 2010:139).

Bethlehem Steel underbid U.S. Steel, but the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey opted for multiple contracts with steel companies, many of them using foreign steel to build the skyscrapers (Assad et al 2010:58). This led, six years later in 1976, to the closing of Bethlehem Steel's Fabricated Steel Construction division, employing 7,000 workers at fabricating works at six plants (including the Bethlehem plant) (Young and Bartholomew 2010; Assad et al 2010). This closing of an entire division exemplified Bethlehem Steel's increasingly aggressive stance towards labor, as the company fought to lower labor costs. When Bethlehem Steel demanded a 10% wage concession from Fabricated Steel Construction division workers citing a decline in demand, workers rejected the proposal, offering concessions in health benefits instead. Much to the surprise of workers and the union, Bethlehem Steel shut down the division, throwing 7,000 workers out of a job (Assad et al 2010) and sending a strong message to workers and to the union.

For many workers however, the problem confronting Bethlehem Steel was defined as foreign imports. For carpenter Carl Rieker, events closer to home drove the point home,

> I came to the realization that the plant was in trouble about 1985. When I saw Comfort Inn on the other side of the Hill to Hill bridge, building that Comfort Inn with foreign steel while the Beam Yard was a mile and a half down the road. Now something stinks. Now that wasn't the union's fault. That was the company's fault. That was the people that built the Comfort Inn with foreign steel and foreign labor…I still say if the Bethlehem Steel is right here on the corner, you do not use anybody else's steel but the Bethlehem Steel" (Behum 2010:443).

The company and the union began to define the "problem" as foreign imports, and to combine efforts lobbying the federal government for import restrictions.

As the U.S. steel industry and the Bethlehem Steel corporation began to confront threats to profitability through restructuring, the Bethlehem plant was affected by closure of shops, departments, and even entire divisions. Other workers interviewed by Behum first saw changes within their own plant in Bethlehem. Glen Snyder, a millwright, cited the closing of the Alloy and Tool Steel Division at the Bethlehem plant as first making him anxious about the future of the plant. "They said they went out of the alloy and tool steel business because there was no profit and there was no work…How can you go out of a business when the technology and the demand for higher and better alloy steel is greater all the time?" Snyder attributes the decision to close

the department to disinvestment, “the equipment we were using, was just really that ancient. And alloy and tool steel business, you should jump in with the latest technology you can get” (Behum 2010:370). Workers argued that even though this division continued to be profitable, it was closed anyway in 1981.

With the recession of the early 1980s, the steel industry was hard-hit. Declining rates of profit in steel, linked with the growth of the mini-mills, the increase in foreign imports, and the lack of capital to invest in domestic plants, all contributed to the crisis of the early 1980s. The 1980s, of course, were rife with signs and symptoms of deindustrialization, signs that workers could no longer ignore or interpret as simply recurring cycles in the historically unstable steel market. The recession in 1982 hit steel hard. In the first six months of the year 111,500 steelworkers, or about 25% of the U.S. steel labor force, lost their jobs (Hall 1997; Stein 1998). These job losses were felt at Bethlehem Steel as well. Donald Trautlein, the new, financially-oriented CEO of Bethlehem Steel, hired to rationalize the company, laid off 30,000 Bethlehem workers from 1980-1982, 1/3 of these at the Johnstown and Lackawanna plants (Assad et al 2010:127). 1983 also saw the first concessionary contract in basic steel, after a long period of negotiation during which many steelworkers (including the local union of the United Steelworkers in Bethlehem) fought against granting concessions, interpreting the 1980-82 recession as a temporary cyclical downturn in steel demand rather than a structural transformation (Hoerr 1988). Many of the steelworkers Frank Behum interviewed bitterly remember that concessionary contract, and link initial concerns about the Bethlehem plant to that event, “when they asked us for money, when they asked us for that money back…And I hated to do that. That was my mortgage payment. And what happened with that?...What did I ever get out of that?” (Behum N.d.). These workers link the decline of the plant directly to Bethlehem Steel’s strong offensive against labor in the 1980s. Ray Rosati, a maintenance worker, said he knew the plant was in trouble “when the air traffic controllers were squashed and fired. I knew this country was in trouble, and I knew the Bethlehem Steel was in trouble. They were breaking the union” (Behum 2010:17). Many political and economic factors were mobilized in attaining the 1983 concessionary contract, including the early role of the bankruptcy process in putting pressure on the United Steelworkers, citing concessionary

contracts agreed to “under the stern eye of the bankruptcy judge” at two steel companies—McLouth and Penn-Dixie (Hoerr 1988:65).

Processes of deindustrialization in the U.S. steel industry have been encompassing and dramatic, reshaping the geography and organization of steel production in the U.S. From 1979 to 1994 integrated steelmakers like Bethlehem Steel shed 70% of their capacity, giving up entire product lines; closing shops, divisions, and mills; negotiating new work rules and job classifications; and introducing participative management techniques (Hall 1997). Restructuring has included large scale development of steel industries outside of the U.S., first in Japan and Germany, and now in countries like S. Korea, Taiwan, Brazil and China. The U.S. imports more of its steel today, importing 23% of steel used domestically in 1996, as opposed to 14% in 1970 (Warren 2008:284).

It is the large, integrated, U.S. steel plants located in the urban Northeast and Great Lakes region that have been scrambling to restructure, not U.S. steel production per se. Minimills, in spite of their troubles, have broadly been able to out-compete integrated plants in many product lines in part because of their need for less labor, and their hiring of nonunion labor. Located in rural areas in Southern "right to work" states, the minimills employ non-union workers in fewer job classifications, flexibly taking on varied responsibilities. Union contracts do not control job descriptions at minimills. With less capital-intensive electric furnace technology, more "flexible" labor, and leaner management structures, minimills can reduce labor needs and production costs. Managerial techniques also include job reduction, speed up and job loading, and outsourcing. The smaller-sized, more flexibly managed minimills were able to respond more quickly to local market opportunities (Warren 2008). By 2002, 44 minimills produced 47% of the steel manufactured in the U.S. (ILO 1997). In this restructuring, as Perelman (2002) shows, the decline of unions (and the accompanying reduction in wages, benefits, and control over work and the workplace) is not, then, simply a "natural" side effect of deindustrialization (and the growth of the service economy), it is a deliberate, and state-supported, struggle to reduce wages and benefits and speed up production.

Unions are declining, in manufacturing as well as in the service sector, as part of a deliberate strategy on the part of capitalists to restructure industry. Labor's power has been undermined by strategies including closing plants, negotiating concessionary contracts, introducing new technologies in the workplace, exerting pressures on unions through the bankruptcy courts, expanding the industry in non-union facilities, and letting imports pressure labor to lower wages. State policies support these strategies by providing tax breaks for moving factories (or threatening to move), accelerating depreciation on new equipment, ensuring supplies of immigrant labor, and undermining laws supporting union organization.

Bluestone and Harrison (1982) argue that the U.S. steel industry was not simply out-competed by foreign steel. American corporations and the U.S. state financed and supported foreign steel as capital actively sought external outlets. One solution to the excess capacity produced through monopoly capitalism (exemplified by the large, vertically integrated steel companies of the Fordist era) was provided through the "spatial fix" of overseas investment (Baran and Sweezy 1968; Harvey 2001). This solution, however, eventually produced its own limits -- the very threats to the postwar regime of accumulation -- as foreign competition threatened the domestic steel industry's profits. Banks (Chase Manhattan, Citibank, Chemical Bank) denied capital to U.S. steel corporations for capital improvements in the 1970s, even as they increased their investment in Japanese steel (and, we might argue, in minimill expansion as minimills increasingly were lauded by financial capital). As U.S. Steel and Bethlehem Steel were complaining about Japanese "dumping" of excess steel at cheap prices in the U.S., and as they successfully pressured Jimmy Carter to institute minimum steel prices, these steel companies were investing capital in iron ore mines which produced ore for their foreign competitors. Bethlehem Steel invested in an iron ore mine in Hopei, China in 1978, only to have their own mine selling iron ore to Japanese steel manufacturers (Leary and Shales 1987).

The federal government also needed the cheaper Japanese imports to fuel the expansion of the warfare-welfare state in the 1960s (Arrighi 1994). As welfare increased at home in the 1960s with the war on poverty, and warfare increased abroad with the Vietnam War, simultaneous with a decrease in the rate of expansion of domestic consumption, it became

increasingly expensive to provide the supplies for these increases, and cheap Japanese imports of goods such as steel were desirable. In addition, the increasingly empowered financial elite, those very banks that lent money to Japanese steel companies, lobbied the government to institute free market policies, eliminating steel tariffs, as loan repayments were dependent on these Japanese steel companies accessing U.S. markets to sell their excess steel (often at below cost prices). As capital sought avenues for investment abroad and in the southern U.S., competition from foreign imports and from minimills, political pressure from financial elites for open markets, and the relative power of these financial elites, increased as well.

In addition, large steel corporations did not always reinvest capital from profits in upgrading their plant. Some steel corporations diversified (the landmark example being U.S. Steel's purchase of Marathon Oil for $6.4 billion in 1983). Mike Davis (1986) points out that when the big steel corporations received billions of dollars in wage concessions from labor in the 1980s (as well as receiving government tax subsidies and concessions on environmental regulations) in order to preserve the steel industry, they did not use that capital to invest in the Northeastern and Midwestern steel industry. Instead, capital was loaned to steel companies and was used to diversify, invest overseas, or invest in the Southern U.S. Davis demonstrates that the regional shift in capital investment to the Sunbelt states was actively supported at the federal level, by the Reagan state, through military spending, agricultural credits, accelerated depreciation, and oil depletion rebates. State intervention and policies subsidized this geographical shift in capital investment, creating the very minimill competition that ate into vertically integrated companies' markets and that exerted downward pressure on steelworkers' wages.

Beginning in the 1980s, large U.S. steel producers began restructuring--closing many steel mills, shedding steel capacity, and reorganizing other mills through closure of shops and departments, reorganizing production, and introducing new techniques of management. During the period of 1979-1994, U.S. integrated steelmakers abandoned ½ of their capacity (Hall 1997). There was a disaggregation of steel making in the U.S. as mills were restructured, away from the integrated model, to become more flexible and focus on core product lines. Many mills installed

electric furnaces and/or began importing slab steel from newly industrializing countries, and concentrating on the finishing work (Stein 1998:291). While steel companies used differing strategies--some like U.S. Steel diversifying with its purchase of Marathon Oil, with others, like Bethlehem Steel, concentrating on core products, selling diverse assets, and closing shops, divisions and plants to narrow product lines—all the integrated mills were aggressively restructuring. Steel companies like Bethlehem Steel shed “upstream” and “downstream” divisions and components, selling and closing upstream mines (the large producers sold off more than 70% of their mines) and contributing to the growth of downstream steel service or processing centers that dealt directly with customers (Hall 1997). And steel companies tried to increase productivity through the introduction of new technologies in “core” departments and through new management regimes designed to enhance labor productivity. By 2000 this restructuring had resulted in U.S. steel producers shedding 35% of the industry’s capacity (Madar 2009:55). During the same period, however, employment in basic steel declined by an enormous 75% (Madar 2009:55). Bethlehem Steel went from a total of 130,000 employees in 1970 to less than 25,000 in 1990 (a decline of 81%), while still producing ½ the quantity of steel. (Warren 2008:193). New strategies, including new organizational forms, contracts eliminating job classifications, participative management regimes, and the introduction of new technologies reduced labor needs at a much greater rate than reduction of production capabilities. U.S. Steel’s Gary Works, for example, was producing as much steel as ever by the late 1990s, but with a fraction of the workers (going from over 20,000 workers to 7,500 workers by 1990 (O’Hara 2003). These processes and strategies were implemented at the Bethlehem plant. The only remaining steel industry on the Bethlehem works site currently produces nuclear forgings with slightly over 200 workers (versus 800 when the facility was part of Bethlehem Steel) (Assad et al 2010). The 1990s is often described as the renaissance of steel, as the U.S. steel industry became efficient, productive, and competitive. But, “the beneficiary of this intense focus on cost improvement has been the steel consumer. The loser has been the steelworker” (Hall 1997:304). Steel’s renaissance has been built on the backs of workers’ wages, job security, jobs, and health insurance and pension benefits.

Steel companies, for example, made use of poorly prepared contracts (in the case of Wisconsin Steel) or the bankruptcy court to shed pension and health care obligations. Aggressively reducing labor costs through new technologies was not sufficient for steel elites, as they continued to be "burdened" by the health and pension benefits that companies had agreed to, in lieu of wages, in the "golden age" contracts. "Value" in these steel companies was also created through the process of dispossessing workers of their assets. The integrated steel companies became attractive acquisitions as they weakened unions and slashed legacy costs, as "the devaluation of assets…can…play an important role in establishing a fresh basis of capital accumulation" (Harvey 2003:115). In this process of devaluing assets, however, there is a struggle over who will bear the costs of devaluation. In the case of Bethlehem Steel, it was the workers that bore the costs – losing jobs, losing benefits and pensions, losing health care, and experiencing an entire redefinition of identity, community, and city. Vulture capitalists (like ISG's Wilbur Ross) pick up assets at 'fire sale' prices, then add value through stripping off legacy costs (accumulation by dispossession), as well as through negotiating new, more flexible labor contracts (expanded reproduction) under the ongoing threat of plant closure and bankruptcy. These new "flexible" mills become attractive acquisitions for international steel companies seeking mills near U.S. markets. Mittal bought out ISG for $4.5 billion, and then merged with Arcelor to become the world's largest steel company, running many of Bethlehem's former mills in the U.S.

Today, geographical shifts in steel production continue as a new international division of labor in steel production further develops. Newly industrialized countries like Brazil attracted mobile capital for foreign direct investment in developing steel industries. Steel industries in NICs like Brazil are located near iron ore sources, hire cheap labor, and use new technology in steel production, enabling them to become the "most efficient" producers of slab steel. Importation of raw slabs also avoids many of the trade barriers established to protect domestic industries. Manufacturers of automobiles, heavy consumer items, and construction inputs, however, want sheets, plates, and tubes to be shaped locally, so that specifications can change rapidly and steel shapers can more easily respond to changing demand. As a result, the steel industry,

increasingly, seems to be developing an international division of labor in which slabs are produced in the newly industrialized countries, then imported to the U.S. to be shaped in the large integrated mills (Economist, 2001). This is consistent with the international division of labor in other manufacturing industries in the U.S. While manufacturing has not left the U.S., often the percentage of domestic content used in manufacturing is declining as more components are produced abroad (Perelman 2002:173). Many minimills and restructured integrated steel mills remain in the U.S., close to markets (such as automobile assembly plants) and avoiding tariff restrictions. The last ten years has seen an "internationalization" of the U.S. steel industry, as more foreign producers purchase U.S. steel mills or enter into joint ventures in order to more directly access U.S. markets. Japanese steel companies, for example, entered joint ventures with large Midwestern and Southern U.S. steel mills in the 1990s in order to produce steel for Japanese auto transplants (Florida and Kenney 1992).

In the past decade, there has been a great deal of consolidation and internationalization in the global steel industry. The U.S. steel industry is extremely productive, in 2008 producing steel at the rate of one man hour per ton (as opposed to China's 6 man hours per ton) (Ross 2007), even while China produces many more tons of steel than the U.S. (in 2008 91.5 million tons were produced by the U.S. steel industry, and 500 million tons were produced in China (McCormack, 6). And, the "free market" ideology of unfettered borders and the fluid movement of commodities like steel is only partially true. In reality, at various times tariff boundaries erected against steel imports presented barriers to an export strategy. As with the automobile industry, a strategy which originally focused on export (from Japan to the U.S.) has of late increasingly incorporated foreign direct investment in plants in countries (like the U.S.) with major markets. The Japanese auto transplants, in turn, wanted strong relationships with local steel producers (often met through joint ventures and partnerships in steel mills in the U.S. with Japanese partners). While flexibility is touted as desirable, in fact essential, for workers, the auto industry was looking for much more stable relationships with steel mills. In steel, these joint ventures and partnerships increased dramatically in the 1990s, resulting in an internationalized, globalized, and centralized steel industry today.

Most recently, the global steel industry is again seeing massive restructuring as foreign investors eye emerging markets for foreign direct investment (particularly post 2008 as emerging markets capture an increasing percentage of global steel demand and output), as new multinational corporations are created (with the privatization of European steel companies), and as vertical integration increases once again as large transnational steel companies start purchasing upstream raw material sources and downstream steel processing facilities (Madar 2009). Steel producers use centralization and consolidation to combat cutthroat and unpredictable competition through advocating for government protections, establishing stable relationships with consumer industries, and gaining bargaining power over raw material providers. Challenges, however, include a growing overcapacity in global steel production, the rising price of raw material inputs, and global economic crises that reduce steel demand.

The Bethlehem Steel Corporation, and the south Bethlehem steel mill, did not survive these processes of restructuring, of deindustrialization. At the Bethlehem mill, the hot end closed (in a poignant last cast ceremony) in 1995. And, when the coke works shut down in 1998, the Bethlehem Steel corporation ended its long history of production at the Bethlehem plant. The Bethlehem Steel Corporation filed for bankruptcy in 2001, shedding its pension and health care obligations to workers in the bankruptcy process, and emerging ripe for purchase by vulture investor and New York financier Wilbur Ross. Wilbur Ross was eagerly building a huge steel company from the devalued plants of other companies emerging from bankruptcy, representing himself as the savior of the vertically integrated steel industry. He had purchased LTV a year before, when it emerged from bankruptcy, and in adding the Bethlehem plants, Ross' International Steel Group became the second largest integrated steel producer in North America. The shock of the bankruptcy process enabled Ross to negotiate favorable contracts, laying off workers at the plants, negotiating diminished job classifications, and reducing wages. Without the burdensome "legacy costs" of pension and health care commitments to retirees, the newly formed ISG became a valuable asset for international companies seeking access to U.S. markets. In 2004 Mittal purchased ISG, then merged with Arcelor (in a hostile takeover) in 2006, becoming the world's largest steel company. Arcelor Mittal continues to run many of Bethlehem Steel's

mills profitably today. But, with the exception of the small Lehigh Heavy Forge--a press forge operating with a highly-skilled, predominately white, male work force of about 200 workers--there is nothing left in Bethlehem of the massive steel works that once dominated the city, apart from rusting relics of the giant blast furnaces and an overgrown landscape of increasingly decrepit buildings and sheds.

Restructuring the Bethlehem Plant

Simultaneously, processes of accumulation by dispossession strip members of the former Fordist working class of wealth, as well as power, and prestige. In the steel industry, workers are dispossessed of assets gained in the Fordist period (secure jobs, living wages, health care benefits, and pensions) through processes of deindustrialization including layoffs, job loss, and the bankruptcy court. Although workers often find that there is little they can do to affect the long-term trajectory of the steel industry (or, in this case, the corporation -- Bethlehem Steel), they strategize, as groups (through unions and other forms of collective action), households, and individuals to hold employers and governments to agreements made under Fordist contracts, as well as to keep their home plants open. As Katherine Newman (1988) shows, unlike laid off middle class professionals, blue collar workers such as steelworkers do not blame themselves for their layoffs. Instead, my research shows that workers mobilize values forged in the Fordist era in industries in which frequent layoffs, cushioned by collectively bargained recall rights, gave moral legitimacy to claims for support during layoffs to generate critiques of processes of deindustrialization. Workers do, however, simultaneously hold contradictory ideologies of individual responsibility, individual rational decision making ("free choice"), and the self-actualizing individual which can produce collaboration with management in attempting to make the works profitable, and can result in feelings of individual blame or shame when those efforts fail.

Uchitelle argues that steel companies changed their tactics of deindustrialization after the community-based Youngstown protest of the closing of Youngstown Sheet and Tube's Campbell Works and a number of U.S. Steel works. After this, Uchitelle argues, steel companies "got into the practice of shutting down a plant department by department, eliminating a few hundred

workers in each action, spreading the process over months" (2007:138). In the case of the South Bethlehem plant, through restructuring in the 1980s and 1990s, Bethlehem Steel closed down whole departments and divisions through a process that took not months but almost two decades. John Hinshaw refers to this as a conscious process of "disinvestment and deindustrialization," in which layoffs; closing departments; attempted mergers, partnerships, and sales; introduction of new technologies; and new regimes for managing labor processes served to rationalize and intensify work in the mill. Rationalization and intensification often went hand in hand with disinvestment, as, in the words of one former coke works supervisor, management "bled all the money out of the Bethlehem plant they could." These tactics were also very effective at undermining collaborative opposition, as the effect of downsizing played out unevenly across a variegated landscape of steelworkers. Older workers were able to retire early with benefits, as younger workers, with the help of their unions, focused their energies on cooperative efforts to make the works competitive, and on individual strategies of avoiding layoffs and hanging onto threatened jobs.

Many studies of deindustrialization have examined the decline and despair of entire communities as factories closed, jobs were lost, people moved away, and houses and businesses were boarded up. Within Bethlehem, however, by the final closing of the plant in 1998 workers were spread out geographically, living in single family homes in residential city, suburban or rural communities throughout the Lehigh Valley (or even further north, in the coal region). Most workers were homeowners, with two cars (or a car and a pickup truck) in their garages; maintaining neat, clean houses and lawns; attending local churches; having sent their kids to the local elementary and high school; and living with neighbors who work in a wide range of what are considered "middle-class" jobs (police officers, school teachers, nurses, mailpersons, clerical workers, middle managers). Many steelworkers' wives worked in what were viewed as "middle-class" white collar jobs, and many steelworking families saved money to send their children to college. While the closing of the plant affected the entire city (and Bethlehem's economic political elite had to scramble to plan to replace the city's tax base), it did not decimate Bethlehem's economy and infrastructure. Steelworkers' neighbors continued to work, businesses

thrived, and the city government attempted to position Bethlehem for “development” and “progress.”

But, the closing of the Bethlehem works had an enormous impact on the daily lives of steelworkers. The “city within the city” of the steel works was in ruins, the culture of the workplace ended, and the often multigenerational identity of steelworker was gone. The loss of steelwork in Bethlehem was much more than the loss of jobs, it was the loss of a way of living at work, a cultural system forged on the shop floor, a city within a city with a complex division of labor, and a masculine world of dirt, danger, and hard work making products workers could take pride in.

In addition, this long process of deindustrialization and disinvestment was contested, resisted, bought-into, and finally accepted by steelworkers. Steelworkers and their union officials never saw deindustrialization as natural and inevitable. Instead, they fought long and hard to keep steel jobs and steel making going at the South Bethlehem plant. They defined their struggle around the issue of keeping jobs and production going at their home plant. As Frank Behum explains, the title of his book, *Thirty Years Under the Beam*, reflects the feeling that “we [the workers] carried that plant for the last thirty years, doing everything that was asked of us.” Although in some ways the struggle may have been narrowly defined, it strongly contested company and media representations of deindustrialization as an inevitable result of market forces, or a result of the intransigence of unions and over-the-top costs of workers, and steel production as a matter of high finance, not workers’ skills.

Steel and related industrial workers are also immersed in a dominant U.S. culture which represents deindustrialization as natural and inevitable. Kathyrn Marie Dudley documents some ways that dominant ideologies define deindustrialization as inevitable, and blame blue collar workers for not preparing themselves for this economic transition. Dudley shows that in Kenosha, Wisconsin with the decline of the auto industry, autoworkers were told to simply “get on board” and position themselves, through retraining and education, as flexible workers in the new economy, rather than be stuck in what has come to be defined as an out-dated, industrial past. The professional middle class in towns like Kenosha or Bethlehem frequently blame industrial

workers for their own displacement, citing their disinterest in education, their unions' unwillingness to make concessions, and mobilizing stereotypes of lazy, overpaid, workers with too much vacation time (the "13 weeks vacation" negotiated for senior workers each five years in the 1963 contract is a commonly heard "cause" of plant closure in Bethlehem). In the cultural and economic environment of the 1980s, a professional middle class "culture of the mind," environmental opposition to heavy industry, and media reports fomenting anti-union sentiment all contributed to a dominant discourse that was not supportive of steelworkers, and, indeed, mobilized sharp divisions between class fractions in the Lehigh Valley. Jack Metzgar describes this in western Pennsylvania, "gone was that dense network of sympathies, power relationships and personal bonds with the larger community that had been so important in 1959 [when the community supported the steelworkers in their strike]. It was nearly impossible even to remember it" (2000:183).

Workers, however, often do not entirely accept these dominant explanations for deindustrialization. Instead, my research shows that workers draw on values developed and legitimized in the Fordist era, as well as disillusionments forged in the process of "disinvestment and deindustrialization" of the 1980s and 90s, to articulate critiques of corporate strategies of deindustrialization and of the government's role in such strategies as well as to inform decisions and strategies made in reaction to these processes. Bethlehem Steel workers cite the contract between company and union, negotiated through the collective bargaining process and legitimated by law as justly governing layoffs and promotions, legitimating their rights to wages and benefits, and legislating work rules and processes. Workers also refer to their labor, the work they put in at the steel mill--the danger, the heat, the wear and tear on joints, the exposure to toxins—as moral legitimacy for their rights to wages and pension and health care promises. And workers talk about the sacrifices they had to make individually and in their family life to produce steel—the swing shift, working holidays, commuting long distances, working overtime—as evidence of the hard work they put in to earn wages and benefits. Workers mobilize ideologies of hard, dangerous productive work; citing the importance of industrial work for

American security and economic strength; and posit a value system in which thrift, savings, hard work, and deferred gratification should result in a middle-class standard of living for families.

Workers also point to the very real value of their steel-making skills. Union officials like Tony Valeri saw enormous strengths (along with weaknesses – the age, the layout, the lack of access to water routes) in the Bethlehem plant. The greatest strength articulated by union officials and workers was the workers, their skills and knowledge of steel making. Tony most regrets losing the assets of the Bethlehem workforce, "You've got to understand something, we had probably the best workforce in the steel industry. Because we're all foreign people that came from the other side. When they went to work, they wanted to make money. And that culture stayed with them, as far as I know." David Harvey points out that creative destruction (deindustrialization and disinvestment) is "not only the destruction of capital invested in places but also the elimination of local productive powers and capacities embodied in the skills, qualification levels, and know-how accumulated by generations of workers" (Hayter and Harvey 1993:20). Tony understands these skills as transmitted, intergenerationally, both inside and outside the plant. Inside the plant,

> In the coke works they were all Puerto Ricans. So when a Puerto Rican came in there, he talked the language of that guy, and that guy told him 'you'd better listen to me or you ain't going nowhere, I won't teach you nothing.' That guy came up through the ranks, so the next guy came in, they were all educated the same way. We were educated the same way when I went in there. I educated the other guys coming in too. Of course, it was a little harder with the younger guys. They knew everything until they got in trouble. Even in our plant, most of the guys worked, you always had that five or ten percent, that's anyplace, but most of the guys were good workers. Because that was the culture.

This knowledge, what Jack Metzgar refers to as "metal sense," built up over generations, is devalued and lost.

As Bethlehem Steel downsized the Bethlehem Plant in the 1980s and 1990s, merging departments, closing the "hot end," stopping steel manufacture in 1995, and, finally, closing the coke works in 1998, workers attempted to hold onto their jobs and to continue steel production in Bethlehem. Steelworkers, even those who were happy to leave their jobs, lament the loss of steel production in Bethlehem. They mourn the loss of a place of steel production, a city within a city, a rich workplace culture, and the value of productive work when they reflect on their

experiences in Bethlehem. Workers took pride in the importance of their work at Bethlehem Steel – citing the quality of Bethlehem steel products, and the uses that Bethlehem Steel's products were put to-- building bridges, skyscrapers, and fighting wars—in building the nation-state with steel. And workers entering the plant in the 1960s and 1970s describe the energy of the city within the city. Workers talk about the "constant movement" at the plant, a movement of machinery, of steel, of people, "the sparks flying all over the place, and the whistle blowing, trains are moving, everything was in constant motion here." (Behum N.d.). They describe shift changes that were so crowded that it took an hour to get out of the parking lot, with people and cars flowing out of the gates. They describe departments with cranes, and steel beams, and railroad cars moving every which way, a movement that they imbued with danger, but that also conveyed the vitality of the plant, its importance. Jack Deutsch could hardly believe that this vitality, energy, and crucially important and patriotic work could end, "I never thought Bethlehem Steel would go down. I mean we were needed. They needed us. It just shows how expendable you can be. That's a hell of a feeling. Your whole life there, and just because it wasn't run properly and everybody's greedy, nobody's satisfied" (*Steelworkers' Archives*).

Although the steelworkers in my study started working at the Bethlehem plant in the busy times of the 1964, 1974, or 1978/79 hirings when 16,000 workers worked at the Bethlehem plant, by 1980 declining profits in the steel industry were felt in many departments in the Bethlehem plant. By the 1980s, many of the workers hired in 1978, with least seniority, were facing layoffs, and spent the next 18 years of their work life experiencing the impact of various approaches towards "restructuring" on the part of the Bethlehem Steel corporation (as negotiated, often, with the United Steelworkers union). Restructuring included an uneven process of downsizing through eliminating jobs, layoffs, and early retirements; closing departments; attempted partnerships, mergers and sales; introduction of new technologies; and the introduction of new managerial systems to organize labor processes.

Throughout the 1980s the union struggled against company threats of departmental and divisional closure. In 1986, the company threatened to close the "hot end," shedding 1,300 jobs (of a total of 5,700 plant jobs in 1985), if the union did not agree to a restructuring that would

eliminate 500 jobs (Morning Call 1986). This restructuring occurred in a local and regional climate of corporate plant closings. In the Lehigh Valley Mack Trucks had closed an Allentown plant, building a new plant in South Carolina, and the Northeast was rife with steel mill closures. The union agreed to give up the 500 jobs, "the union never gave up any jobs before," in return for modernization. The company did build a new mill in the Grey mill, but failed to come through with other capital investment, something that union officers are still upset about, "they conned us on the modernization."

Union negotiations ensured that pensions and early retirement benefits were made available to workers whose jobs were eliminated. As the Bethlehem plant was downsized, older workers were offered "sweetened" retirement options, negotiated through the collective bargaining process, to encourage retirement. These pensions included a $400 month supplemental benefit to pad the pension until the worker reached the age to attain social security. This was a significant pension for workers (although it varied relative to their earnings at the Steel). Retired workers also maintained full health care coverage. Workers who retired with these benefits often did not need to find another job.

Pete Bondar, who retired from the beam yard in 1986, took advantage of the early retirement offer that came with downsizing. Pete said

> I figured with the $400 of supplemental, it would carry me over. Later on, I realized that it wasn't that big of a deal because they would take taxes and stuff out of that. So it wasn't $400, it was more like $300 some. And then by retiring, the other guys, there wasn't enough guys to do a job, so these guys are working six, seven days a week, and they were making big bucks. And me, as inflation rose, my pension, which was a little over a thousand dollars, it's still the same. It stayed over 21 years.

Pete sees, in hindsight, that early retirement may not have been the best option. Had he continued working, his pension would have been significantly higher, as the "lean" remaining labor force made higher incentive pay (less men were doing the same work, at sped up rates, making higher incentives) and worked more overtime, thereby adding to their final pensions.

Tony Valeri argues "by giving up those jobs, getting the new mill, we kept the plant running for 16 more years, we got 16 more years of pension." But, he also thinks "management was smart. Their strategy was reduce the work force, and let them work all the overtime they

want. We don't have to pay the pension." This strategy of layoffs and early retirement, combined with increased overtime, leading to retention of a "core of high seniority workers" is documented in the Canadian steel industry as well (Winson and Leach 2002). It is an effective strategy for expanded reproduction, as the increase to pensions resulting from overtime work strongly motivates more senior workers, but the strategy does rely on inflating "legacy" costs of retiree health care and pension in order to cost-cut on current labor costs. This is seemingly a nonsensical strategy, without some expectation of underfunding pensions, or anticipation that something will happen to change legacy costs in the future (as it did, through the bankruptcy court, in Bethlehem's case).

As Bethlehem Steel started closing entire divisions and departments, workers transferred internally to avoid layoff, using seniority to determine access to remaining jobs at the Bethlehem plant. Many workers, from all over the plant ended up in the coke works, the last department to remain functioning at the Bethlehem Plant. The coke works was long considered the least desirable department in the plant – it was hot, dirty and dangerous work and the air was full of noxious gases and by-products of making coke. Puerto Rican, Mexican, and Portuguese workers were over-represented in this division, as many white management and steelworkers were convinced "they could stand the heat." (I frequently heard this sentiment expressed in conversations, although I also frequently heard this criticized as a racist assumption). White workers who had held skilled positions in more prestigious departments and divisions were disconcerted to find themselves, at the end of their careers in the plant, working in the racialized coke works. Barry Gorski, a white A level machinist, said "I never thought I'd end up down there. It was terrible. It stank…But, I did what I had to do." It was "the place no one thought you would end up in."

Decisions regarding internal transfers could also affect pensions, as lowered wages towards the end of one's career might affect pension levels. Barry Gorski describes applying for a new position in the ingot mold department. "I was starting to go after more money, because of my pension…to increase my pension." At the end of his career at the Bethlehem plant, his job in

the coke works had a negative impact on his salary, thus potentially affecting his future pension payments.

Union officers from this period also expressed the importance of getting workers their pensions. Curt Papp, staff representative for the United Steelworkers International union, said "I felt I could see the writing on the wall" in the late 1980s. "That was my theory at the time, keep the place going as long as I could, every year and every month someone became eligible for pension." Papp said the union kept encouraging senior people to take layoff, and keep the young people. "This kept extending the young guys to get more time…Our goal was to keep the youngest people working at all times." Because business unionism had few tools to oppose departmental shutdowns, maintaining jobs in some departments, maintaining some steel production, and helping workers to attain their pensions came to be defined as goals for the union and for workers.

Workers who were not eligible for retirement were laid off. These workers had four options: to attempt to get back into the steel plant, transfer, access the pension through medical disability, or forego the pension and look for other jobs outside of steel. By the 1990s, when entire divisions were closed down, thousands of workers had already been laid off from the Steel, and many never returned to the steel works. Women were disproportionately represented in this group, as they were the "last hired," less likely to have access to insider knowledge or mentoring that would enable them to negotiate internal transfer, and more likely to be alienated from an often hostile masculine workplace. Most of the women hired in 1973/74 and 1978/79 were laid off during the 1980s.

In addition to closing departments and eliminating jobs, restructuring also reorganized labor relations in a system modeled after Japanese steel mills. A joint labor-management team from the Bethlehem plant visited steel mills in Japan (as well as visiting mini-mills) in the early 1980s, looking for techniques to "streamline" production and reduce labor costs. The techniques introduced by Bethlehem Steel, characteristic of flexible labor regimes, involved reshaping labor-management relations using paradigms of participatory programs in which joint labor-management committees underwent training in new techniques (Parker and Slaughter 1994). At

the Bethlehem plant, this program was the Partners for Progress program, adopted by the corporation and instituted in the Bethlehem plant in 1984. These committees went through training in the Juran Institute, a "total quality management," approach which emphasized creating a "management-led culture of continuous quality improvement." (Wall Street Journal 2008). Joseph M. Juran and W. Edward Deming, the two management gurus of the post-Fordist total quality movement, had honed their management approaches in Japan. Union officer Tony Valeri remembers the Juran training sessions in which union and management representatives ostensibly learned to "become the representatives: the company and the union. Everything was supposed to go through us…we were supposed to calm down the negotiating committee, and we were supposed to keep them from fighting." The 40 hour Juran course taught "decision making, interpersonal, and problem solving skills," encouraging workers and managers to work collaboratively on management-worker "teams" (Morning Call 1987).

The Partners for Progress plan, coming out of this training, envisioned, according to Tony Valeri, that "the union and the company will get together and start eliminating waste in the plant, eliminating down time, see what they can do to get the product out faster." Much of this was directed at cutting waste, eliminating defects in product, and increasing productivity. "Bethlehem Steel had an $800 million loss for claims. And when we were losing money, that $800 million would have been a nice profit." Under Partners for Progress "the union and management would sit down once a week and start different projects," cutting costs through "getting workers input, and management's." Both sides were supposed to reveal information that would enable developing new, more cost-effective systems of production, "management would tell costs."

There was a significant amount of support, among many workers, for a program that sought out workers' input. "They, the majority of Bethlehem Steel top management, probably enough of them knew about what Juran was, but none of them – because of the way Bethlehem Steel operated – had the guts to mention this is what we should be doing. That we need these employees." Andy Vanek valued the Partners for Progress approach because he felt it was "the first attempt to actually recognize the net worth of the employees….it was an attempt to mine the minds of the workforce to have a more efficient operation." This corresponds with Ruth Milkman's

findings for GM autoworkers, that workers liked the ideas of greater worker participation in the design and quality of work, and a more humane and collaborative management.

But, just as Milkman found out with GM autoworkers, management at Bethlehem Steel failed to follow through on their commitment to the program. Although union leaders describe this initiative as important to corporate management, local plant managers had little incentive to institute real collaboration in the plant, often fearing that it could lead to the elimination of middle management. This lack of follow through, as well as the practice of coopting worker knowledge to eliminate jobs, led to worker disillusionment with the strategy. Workers complained that management did not reveal true costs, obfuscating management cost savings, thereby putting workers at risk of bearing the brunt of cost savings and of losing their job if they revealed too much about their work load. This ensured that this partnership was not a real "collaboration." Tony Valeri's analysis was that "people at the top said we should create a joint management/union committee. Every plant should have it. So, guess what? Management says we're dictated by the big shots across the river. We have to have a cooperative effort here, we'll do it. But if you don't have your heart in it, forget it!" Plant managers' lack of commitment to the plan, and their desire to have workers bear the brunt of restructuring, ensured that it was not successful.

Workers became disillusioned when job cuts, based on information they revealed in the collaborative process, impacted their jobs and their departments. Some analyses argue that collaborative participatory models were thinly disguised techniques for using workers' knowledge to eliminate jobs (Parker and Slaughter 1994; Moody 2007), and many workers at the Bethlehem plant, some at the time and some in retrospect, agreed with this analysis. Wilbur Redline said that when Partners for Progress began he was willing, and even eager, to contribute to the participatory process in an effort to save the plant. But, ultimately, he was frustrated with the results of the Partners for Progress program.

> we might have had six repairman, we were going to decide how many repairmen we actually really need in the power house to run the power house, because we didn't have everything running at the end. Do we really need a welder? Like they asked me, 'Do you weld 40 hours a week?' Which, to tell you the truth, I was honest through that whole process. In fact, when I came back, my men told me they shouldn't have sent me because I was too honest. And then when I

> really found out, a lot of people lied through that whole process, union people included. All they did was try to save their jobs. I eliminated my own job. I went over to the blast furnace to work after that restructuring. [Behum 2010:128]

Wilbur says "I thought I was there to try to save Bethlehem Steel, and that's what I'm going to do here; I'm not going to sit and lie about nothing," but he ended up disillusioned with the program, as he felt individual interests of both management and workers took precedence over saving the plant. Other workers expressed a more oppositional stance from the get go, and were reluctant to reveal any information to management. Some workers, in the early 1980s, were irate with their union for concessionary contracts, for giving up jobs, and for collaborating with management, and argued for a more adversarial approach.

There were some other changes in the managerial regime that workers were enthusiastic about. Most notably, towards the end of the Bethlehem plant, as more and more foremen were laid off, the union negotiated the position of "working leader" with the corporation. Tony Valeri, a union official, described how this worked:

> they took the best incentive job in the shop and made a working leader off the job, class 28. Up there pretty high. When the foreman left, we replaced him and had that job permanently. It worked as good as anything else. We knew as much as the foreman did. We knew what was going on. Workers had been there for twenty, twenty-five years, knew just what the foreman was doing.

Workers felt that this restructuring finally recognized workers' skills and expertise, and resulted in a better, more effective labor process.

Some restructuring involved combining jobs, as John Pohanty describes with the combining of two machine shops, ending up with "a much smaller shop…so you wound up doing both jobs. They finally decided to save money after it was too late." By combining two jobs, as retirement ensured attrition, the union negotiated increasing workers' job classification (involving a salary increase). These strategies did, however, foment some resentment on the part of departments that did not get job combinations, and some resistance from workers who felt that they should get the pay of two jobs for the merging of responsibilities, creating fractions and divisions within the workforce.

Workers also harbor a great deal of resentment towards Bethlehem Steel's restructuring strategies focusing on negotiating mergers, joint ventures, or sales of pieces of the plant. As

steel making in Bethlehem was increasingly threatened in the 1990s, Bethlehem Steel pursued these options. One much-discussed potential joint venture at the Bethlehem plant was with British Steel in 1991, a deal that fell through after two years of negotiations. The plan proposed closing Bethlehem's basic oxygen furnace and last blast furnace, structural beams would be sent from Steelton to Bethlehem, and 2,000 of the plant's 4,200 jobs would be lost. British Steel blamed a recalcitrant union for dooming the deal. Union negotiations were crucial to the joint venture, as British Steel was seeking "a new standard for labor contracts" modeled after the non-union minimill model of greatly reduced job classifications, more flexible labor, and salaries oriented around profit-sharing, and the company was inflexible in its demands. Union officials were not eager to emulate a minimill model in its entirety, as one union official describes visiting Nucor and Chapparal mills in the early 1980s.

> They were like working in the stone age. The problem is that there are so many other things that the union represented, not just wages. Benefits, work safety, we provided these for our workers. They [the minimills] had one guy, if that, that represented the whole safety program in the plants. They were dark, dingy, they worked 24 hours a day, had shanties that the company built. These guys would eat out on the job. It was a miserable place to work.

Each new proposal for restructuring the plant, whether it was closing departments, making capital investments, or contemplating sales and mergers, was accompanied by new demands for concessions from the union, and another round of blaming the union that generally played itself out in the local press. British Steel spokesmen blamed the union for failing to make sufficient concessions, but union officials represented the lack of pension insurance and interplant transfer to be unacceptable (enormous issues in such an uncertain and insecure context). In addition, union officials and plant supervisors point to other causes for the demise of this deal, speculating that British Steel lacked sufficient capital, that state-support at home for the deal had waned, and that Bethlehem and "the British" could not come to an agreement on how to restructure production functions. But British Steel's blame of the union played out in the local press, contributing to dominant perceptions of steelworkers and their union as inflexible. Fred Needham, a millwright in the beam yard, resents dominant understandings of an inflexible union, as he describes these years, instead, as a string of demands for concessions, in which the union "made concessions all along. Yup, and the judge made concessions for us."

The final attempt to save steel production, after the collapse of the British Steel joint venture, was an agreement between the company and the union to restructure and modernize the plant so that it could compete with the minimills. This entailed cutting 1,500 of the remaining 2,500 jobs, dividing the plant into 3 subsidiaries, and modernizing (an initial investment of $105 million) by replacing ingot mold technology with a continuous caster and future electric furnaces (with a future additional $145 million investment). This agreement was announced--with the support of the city, the state, the union, and the company--with great fanfare in July of 1993. Union officials, in an enormous meeting at Lehigh's Stabler Arena, had convinced union members to give up jobs and to make concessions to keep the plant running. Hank Barnette, Bethlehem Steel CEO at the time, said "we're seeing a new level of cooperation between labor and management." Don Trexler, President of Local 2599, was enthusiastic "getting a new caster was the greatest thing that could have happened. It was a sign they believed in us a little bit" (Assad et al.; 2010).

Six months later, Hank Barnette announced that due to minimill expansion, the company had decided not to invest in modernization at the Bethlehem plant. Pete Brekus, steelworker and editor of Informer, the Local 2599 newsletter, said "the company sold us a bill of goods about modernizing our plant while putting its investment eggs into its more profitable operations" (Morning Call 1995). Resentment over this broken promise, and anger at Bethlehem Steel management, was never overcome. Workers and union officials remember that betrayal with anger today. And workers and union officials continued to fault Bethlehem Steel for failing to consider other viable buyout options from corporations like Noble Ventures and Pacific Gas and Electric for remaining portions of the plant (the combination mills and the coke works). Some buyout options supported by workers were put together by local plant managers with considerable steelmaking experience.

But, with the exception of a march on Martin Tower in response to Bethlehem Steel's rejection of an offer for the beam mill, this anger did not coalesce into a broader collective movement. This could be, in part, that as angry as union officials were (and Hector Nemes describes throwing his chair across the room in this final meeting with management), the only

alternative they saw was to work with the company to continue to save some jobs at the plant, to ensure that transfer rights to other plants were respected, and to attempt to roll as many workers as possible into pensions. In addition, as Metzgar points out in central Pennsylvania, there was not a thick web of public support for steelworkers in the community, with only a small core of workers remaining at the plant, and a new professional middle class planning for alternatives to steel production in Bethlehem.

Dominant discourse faults industrial workers in steel and auto for not anticipating the demise of factories and the decline of the industry and preparing themselves for post industrial work. But, the trajectory of downsizing and restructuring is a long uneven process of concessions, promises, broken promises, and uncertainties. The terrain of disinvestment and deindustrialization, as played out over the long term, is not an easy one for steelworkers to "read" as many of the signals of the health of the plant and of management's commitment to the plant are highly contradictory. For example, even as the plant lost jobs, departments, and divisions in Bethlehem, new technology was being installed in some areas in the plant. The $50 million upgrade of the Grey mill in 1988 and the $60 million upgrading of the coke works for environmental and efficiency improvements are two notable examples. In 1995, Tim Lewis, the Bethlehem plant President, said "we intend to stay in the coke business for the 10-year planning horizon. In other words, in 2005, we'll still be in the coke business." But three years later Bethlehem Steel closed the coke works precipitously. Workers misread the $60 million investment, together with the words of management, as a commitment to production, often transferring into coke works from closed departments in order to get their final years until pension eligibility in at the plant. Dan Oates, a long-time worker in the coke works, was shocked by the timing of the coke works closing. "They told us the week before Christmas, that it would be closing March 28, [1998]. We were supposed to go to 2007, which would've given me plenty of time to get my pension."

The convoluted, uneven process of buyouts, bids, and negotiations meant that even after an area, such as the combination mills, was closed down, negotiations were still in process that might re-start jobs there. Laid off steelworkers hung in a kind of limbo, awaiting the decision of

Bethlehem Steel on a Noble Ventures' buyout of this mill which would have restored 430 of the 600 jobs. When Bethlehem Steel turned down the company, Bethlehem Steel workers accused the corporation of being afraid of being "shown up" through a successful business on the site. Workers felt that the prestige and public relations concerns of Bethlehem Steel outweighed the desire to produce steel in Bethlehem and to support steel jobs.

The structural steel division closed in 1995 and by 1996, Brandenburg Industrial Services, a Chicago-based demolition company, was scrapping the plant, even as 2000 workers continued to work in the coke works, combination mill, and Beth Forge and Centec. These were the only areas still operating, in the now almost-empty 1,800 acre plant, a quieter, ruined industrial landscape, with its small pockets of steel work. These remaining steelworkers went to work making steel, even as Brandenburg went to work tearing down the mill. Workers watched the buildings they had worked in (and sometimes built) and the machinery they had run, being scrapped by an outsourced company. Brandenburg did hire United Steelworker members to decimate their own plant, but workers had a great deal of resentment towards some of the hirees, feeling that they had "sold their soul" to work for Brandenburg, tearing down the Steel. There was an enormous amount of anger directed at Brandenburg. When Bethlehem Steel backed out of a deal with the union to install a continuous caster, Brandenburg was brought in to get rid of some of the buildings, and "recycle the steel." Bethlehem Steel could recycle this steel, devouring itself, until the hot end was shut down. Bethlehem workers, struggling to preserve steel making at their plant, were furious at this cannibalization of the plant, this destruction of the city within a city. The scrapping of the plant, tearing down the buildings, shipping out the machinery, and scrapping the steel that constituted the built environment of the city within a city made deindustrialization final, effectively putting an end to the possibilities of offers to re-start parts of the steelmaking process at the plant. In Ohio, a key mobilizer in the fight in Youngstown was U.S. Steel's plan to tear down the Dorothy blast furnace, a furnace that was not even four years old, even as workers were scrambling to find ways to re-start the plant. While Bethlehem did not have a workers' initiative to take over the plant, at various times former plant managers, many of whom workers respected for their steel knowledge and their commitment to the home plant, bid on pieces of the

plant, only to be turned down by the company. As long as the mills and furnaces were there, standing, these buyouts remained a possibility. The demolition ended this possibility.

In addition, it pained workers to see the city within a city, the environment built, in many cases, with their own sweat or the sweat of their ancestors, torn down, the machinery, of which they had an intimate knowledge, shipped off. The demolition, so antithetical to a producerist ideology that lauded producing goods defined as crucial in building American strength, was condemned. The shipping of machinery to competing Bethlehem plants in Lackawanna, Sparrows Point and Burns Harbor was derided. And the selling of machinery at fire sale prices through brokers to steel mills in emerging countries with booming steel industries was criticized as downright treasonous.

When a number of select, skilled Bethlehem Steel workers took their pensions and went to work for Brandenburg, they encountered the raw anger of their fellow steelworkers. Tim Fuchs describes going to work for Brandenburg at the plant, "they used to scream at us and call us union scabs. They saw Brandenburg as an enemy, coming in to take their piece of life away from them." Tim thinks they were directing their hostility at the wrong entity, "all these decisions were Bethlehem decisions. They used Brandenburg as a scapegoat," but the violent anger and tension were real, "a guy almost attacked me, [yelling] why don't you tear Nucor's mill down, not our mill down." It was only when union officials appealed to steelworkers to respect their co-union members, as the union prioritized the union jobs produced, that tensions died down.

Ultimately Bethlehem Steel workers and union officials were disillusioned with the company's claims that they wanted to preserve steelmaking at the Bethlehem plant. In instance after instance, Bethlehem Steel let the plant close down, eliminating jobs, closing entire divisions, and, finally, selling off the small last functioning piece of the plant. Bethlehem Steel's final sales involved sale of a small remaining functioning part of the plant, what had been Beth Forge and Centec (a Bethlehem-French joint venture), to WHEMCO. Workers argue that WHEMCO purchased this part of a plant in a process described as "asset stripping," as new corporations buy up old plants with the idea of either making them profitable or getting them at such cheap prices that they can make their investment back through the scrap market (Hayter and Harvey

1993). Ultimately, Centec went to the scrap market, while Lehigh Heavy Forge continues to be a successful press forge, employing about 200 steelworkers, today. After all the concessions, negotiations, and shattered deals, steel work had effectively ended in Bethlehem.

CHAPTER 2

THE LABOR PROCESS AT THE WORKS

The south Bethlehem plant was a point of production, an enormous steel plant, with a confusing variety of shops, departments, and divisions during the 1960s and 1970s when workers began work at the mill. The union officially classified 32 different job classifications, spread out across this complex landscape of production, of shops, departments and divisions contributing very different processes to the steel production process. Although jobs were ostensibly divided into maintenance and production worker jobs, there were also "service" jobs (security work, mailman, nurses, delivery drivers) within the plant, as well as a complex hierarchy of management positions. This complex division of labor, the reliance on crew work, and the dramatic differences in production processes between different departments and divisions, make the labor process within the steel mill quite different from the Fordist model taken from automobile factories.

Workers, who initially began as laborers, working at the most grueling jobs in the plant, were awed and overwhelmed by the nature of the work itself. The work was hot, dangerous, dirty, and difficult. Matt Nichols describes his first days at work, "it was pretty shocking to me to see the melt shop for Beth Forge. The size of the ingots we were pouring, and the work was something that was just, to me, phenomenal. I couldn't believe that work could be so hot and so dangerous." Charlie Joyce describes his first days on the labor gang in the blast furnace in the 1960s,

> it was something different, something you never saw before…Probably if I would not have been married with a child, I would have done a lot more wondering [about what I was doing there]. But every time I wondered, I just got to the point where, well you just got to have the job."

Workers portrayed the steel mill as different from mainstream society, but the mill, and the ways that labor processes are constructed within the mill, are thoroughly embedded in wider regional, national, and global processes. The patriarchal structure of the mill; the privileges given to whiteness, masculinity, and native-born status; and the measurement of "skills" through testing and the credentialing of formal education are just a few of the ways that hierarchies of

mainstream society are made use of and reproduced within the mill. Indeed, the mill became more "different" from the "real world" as concessions won through union organization generated a middle-class lifestyle outside the mill, where union workers and middle managers often lived next door to each other in neighborhoods far removed from the sound and sight of the mills, and as steelworkers developed identities as members of the middle class in their households and communities.

The enormous, vertically integrated steel mill was made up of a series of departments and shops, many of which functioned independently of each other (although flows of materials connected many of these departments). Within the Bethlehem plant, Jim Todd, a former foreman, explains that the Bethlehem mill "was a very special example. A specialty manufacturing plant on one end and a tonnage-oriented regular steel plant on the other end [the structural end]. It was really two entities in one." The plant had a reputation for being able to produce all kinds of specialty steel, in addition to structural steel. This meant a great diversity of shops and departments within the plant, three local unions in charge of different areas, and a complex array of jobs involved in producing a wide variety of steel products and maintaining a vast number of both new and antiquated machines. The complexity of machinery and the variety of shops was also related to the age of the Bethlehem plant, the historic flagship plant that had grown along the Lehigh River over a hundred years. When Jim first walked into the plant "I said, by God, this place is an operating museum." With 13,000 workers spread throughout divisions and shops in the bustling mill of the 1960s, very few workers ever saw every shop and department or understood every facet of steel production at the Bethlehem mill.

When the union won representation in America's steel mills at the beginning of WW II, the wide variety of jobs in steel plants across the country were classified into 32 job classes, each of which carried a base rate of pay. This formal codification of earlier job categories was compiled by the United Steelworkers, to be agreed upon with the first USW steel contracts of 1942 (Hoerr 1988; Warren 2001). The classification process was of an enormous scale, as U.S. Steel alone had 25,000 different jobs, each of which had to be categorized into one of the 32

classifications. These were published in a thick job manual to be used by management and the union.

However, in addition to (and even more complex than) formal classifications and accompanying wage base rates, incentive pay rates attached to particular jobs and tasks were developed and expanded in the mill in the 1950s. During this period an “intensive” regime of labor/management control replaced a more extensive one. Steel plants in the U.S. shed many unskilled jobs in this period, and incentive systems were expanded in an effort to increase production with a reduced number of laborers (Hinshaw 2002). In the Bethlehem plant, as in all steel plants, incentive payments supplemented base wages. Incentive payments were classified as either “direct” or “indirect,” with indirect incentives divided into “primary” and “secondary” indirect payments. Although incentives had been used in the plant for decades, they were extended to incorporate an increasing number of jobs in the 1960s and 70s. In 1947, a minority of steel mill jobs received incentive pay, but by 1977 85% of steel mill jobs did (Metzgar 2000). Incentive pay, or piece-rate pay, set for a job by a rate setter (industrial engineer) was determined by either a direct relation to the amount of tonnage produced or an indirect relation to tonnage. This pay could constitute a significant percentage (sometimes more than 50%) of a worker’s salary (Bruno 1999). These pay rates (and the percentage of pay that they composed) varied dramatically depending on the job (production workers usually made more incentive pay than maintenance workers), the specific task being done, and the amount of work or demand within the plant in any given day, week, or year. As a result, incentive pay could be quite variable, both between jobs in the plant and at different points in the fluctuating economic cycle. Although the United Steelworkers union fought to make these rates more explicit so that workers could accurately calculate and check their own incentive pay, the complexity of the system ensured that no one worker within a plant the size of Bethlehem understood the variety of rates attached to different jobs. In fact, direct experience was most often necessary to really understand the kind of pay that could be made in any department and on any specific job, as it was only through experience that workers could assess the particulars of the frequency of various tasks with different rates, the ebb and flow of demand, and the speed at which jobs could be accomplished.

Younger workers relied on information from more senior workers and from friends and relatives in other departments to access this information.

This complicated pay system ensured that the internal labor market (well-described by Burawoy as a means of building worker consent in the production process) was intricate and highly variegated. As a result, worker strategies vis a vis internal mobility were varied and at times convoluted. There were a number of variables to consider in making decisions regarding internal mobility, and these were not always neatly divided between production vs. maintenance jobs. Different shops and departments might also influence incentive rates and schedules. In much of the literature on factory work, production jobs are represented as "unskilled" jobs, and maintenance jobs as "skilled," but in a steel mill this is really a false dichotomy, as the skills necessary for production jobs were many and varied. Production skills, however, were often not as easily transferable to other jobs as some of the maintenance skills (for example electrical, carpentry), nor were production skills as tested, credentialed, and formally recognized within the mill. Maintenance jobs could also offer better opportunities for upward mobility within the plant. Apprenticeship systems in the crafts offered opportunities for upward mobility into the ranks of foremen, although these programs were discontinued well before the closing of the Bethlehem plant. High direct incentive rates in some of the production jobs, however, ensured higher rates of pay than in craft work.

The Bethlehem steelworkers I spoke with were hired in the 1960s and 1970s as workers in the enormous, vertically integrated steel works in which labor processes were structured under what scholars have described as a wider Fordist regime of accumulation. Marxist labor process analyses discuss the shift, within the factory, from an extensive regime of labor discipline, when the working day was coercively extended (lowering hourly wages and generating collective struggle over the length of the working day) to a Fordist intensive regime where the introduction of new technologies and systems of organization of labor results in intensified production (Davis 1986; Burawoy 1979; Braverman 1974). This shift has been characterized as moving from more "despotic" to more "hegemonic" factory regimes (Burawoy 1979; Edwards 1979; Friedman 1977), as management develops new systems of coercing workers, as well as of generating their

consent, to intensify labor. The capitalist must confront the problem, described by Braverman, of the limitation of the infinite "potential" of human labor by the "subjective state of the workers, by their previous history, by the general social conditions under which they work" (Braverman 1974:57). The effective use of labor power in the process of production requires "the mobilization of the person,"(Harvey 1982) the mobilization and motivation of an entire human being, inseparable from his/her labor, the transformation of labor power into labor. Under Fordism, techniques such as speed up, the introduction of new technology, and new management techniques result in new factory regimes that intensify labor, increasing productivity. Regimes that developed out of the interaction of managerial processes of coercion and consent, as well as responding to workers' resistances, shaped the construction of a shop floor culture, labor practices, and worker subjectivities.

In 1974, the publication of Braverman's *Labor and Monopoly Capital* generated a renewed interest in Marxist understandings of the labor process. Braverman described the way the development of the science of management constructed an intensive regime at the point of production. Scientific management, based on the time-motion studies performed by F.W. Taylor and merged with Fordist assembly line practices, created a new factory regime for intensifying labor. Scientific management separated the conception of work from its execution, deskilling work, and producing a detailed division of labor. This system, Braverman argues, intensified labor while simultaneously shifting power in the labor process from the worker to management, reducing worker control over "craft" and the labor process, and contributing to worker monotony and alienation on the job. Braverman's discussion is particularly pertinent to Bethlehem Steel, as F.W. Taylor performed his famous time-motion studies with "Schmidt" (a Bethlehem steelworker) in and around the Bethlehem plant's No. 2 machine shop. Taylor was, however, fired from the Bethlehem plant, and Bethlehem never as fully adopted his technique as did the auto industry. Steelwork, unlike assembly line work, proved more difficult to disaggregate into a detailed division of labor

Braverman's emphasis on the alienation and dehumanization of workers through scientific management, contributed to an understanding of Fordist industrial work as "monotonous

assembly line operations where 'deskilled' drones bide their time until the final whistle blows" (Newman 1988). Researchers interviewing U.S. factory workers documented worker dissatisfaction with factory jobs. Many found, in interviewing workers, that assembly line workers don't like their jobs. Scholars found that factory workers worked to have time off, to support and provide for their families, and to maintain a standard of living that includes home ownership and values high levels of consumption. This research described the compulsion to work as instrumental, driven by the need to maintain a culturally-defined standard of living influenced by new forms of consumption and affluence in the Fordist period. This motivation, combined with values of sacrifice and deferred gratification (Sennett and Cobb 1972), provided a compulsion to work at unfulfilling, alienating, and dehumanizing jobs (Aronowitz 1973). Given the perceived lack of meaning at work, many researchers turned their attention to the family and community to understand how market-structured consumption practices propelled workers into working class jobs. These researchers are interested in what compels workers to work, how workers forge dignity in a Fordist regime that does not provide dignity in the workplace, and why workers don't organize more resistance to such an alienating and exploitative workplace.

Critiques of Braverman's analysis of deskilling through scientific management in the 1970s (Burawoy 1979; Friedman 1977) criticized him for prioritizing exploitation in the labor process while failing to give sufficient attention to the mechanisms through which hegemony is established in the workplace, the "manufacturing of consent" (Burawoy 1979). In hegemonic management regimes of Fordist capitalism, Burawoy finds that workers' labor is intensified not simply through the coercive disciplinary regime of scientific management (which he defines as more of an ideology than a practice), but through the building of worker consent on the shop floor using a variety of managerial practices. Burawoy points to structures at the point of production that generate consent. He points to the importance of an internal labor market (certainly true at Bethlehem Steel where there was a highly variegated work force, including jobs at various different incentive rates, job classifications, skill requirements, etc.) in representing to workers the idea of individual "choice" in jobs. He discusses the role of the union-policed internal state, including the collective bargaining process and the grievance system, in individualizing worker

dissatisfaction and limiting worker demands. According to Burawoy, the legally codified collective bargaining process removes the worker from bargaining and narrowly defines issues available for bargaining such as wages and benefits. The grievance system is a labor union process (supported by the state) that transforms what are collective worker issues into individualized worker complaints. In addition, Burawoy examines the importance of worker agency in constructing perceptions of choice through individualizing shop floor "games" at work. Burawoy argues that these characteristics of Fordist factory regimes function to generate consent to the labor process.

Burawoy's analysis directs us to the importance of analyzing how this consent is generated at the point of production (not simply through the affluent consumption practices of the Fordist worker), as workplaces have been, and continue to be, powerful milieux for class formation and shaping class identities. The Fordist labor process Burawoy analyzes, with an internal labor market, an internal state, and workers' game-playing on the shop floor, did generate a system for mobilizing worker consent at Bethlehem Steel. The internal labor market at Bethlehem Steel functioned as an avenue for individual workers to exercise 'choice' in bidding on jobs, and to generate consent to the labor process, although individual 'choice' was shaped and structured through gendered and ethnicized internal, as well as external, labor markets. On the basis of union-regulated seniority, steelworkers could and did bid for jobs as they became available in the plant. According to Burawoy, this gave workers the perception of individual choice and control over career trajectories, generating what Bourdieu (1984) would characterize as amor fati, an acceptance of the existing system. But the internal labor market did also result in real rewards and real management accommodations to workers. These gains construct dichotomous tendencies – on the one hand improving workers' lives, on the other generating a successful form of capitalist accumulation. Halle (1984), for example, documents how New Jersey chemical workers were able to exercise individual and household strategies in bidding internally for jobs: choosing jobs on the basis of variables such as pay, schedule, how interesting and how grueling the job was, and job security. Like the workers Halle studied, Bethlehem workers also weighed information about job classification; incentive pay; how "dirty," "dangerous,"

and difficult the job was; work schedule; and variety and interest in the job in decisions on bidding. These variables were weighted differently depending on where workers were situated in the family or life cycle, and were influenced by workers' access to information and mentoring (often determined by gender, race/ethnicity). The importance of different variables changed as processes of deindustrialization shrunk the Bethlehem plant and job security, for example, became an increasingly important variable in bidding on jobs. But bidding in a robust labor market did allow workers to exercise some power over the linear narratives of their lives. Variation in pay and individual bidding could also, however, fragment working class solidarity, generating individual competition, with workers keeping their bids secret from other co-workers who were potential competitors for the position, and creating inter-departmental resentments and fragmentation.

The choices made in negotiating the internal labor market are not, however, all produced at the point of production. Instead, the planning of a "linear narrative" for one's life is also shaped by broader residential patterns (such as home ownership), entrepreneurial opportunities and ideologies, and gendered understandings of household relations. My research points to a complex relationship between ethnic and gender identities constructed on the shop floor, and roles and identities shaped outside of work (in household relations, kinship networks, school). Production workers, for example, often bid into or stayed in direct-incentive production jobs because those jobs were some of the highest-paid hourly jobs in the Bethlehem plant. Many production workers making direct incentive pay describe themselves as "hungry," willing to work long overtime and holiday hours. Part of that "hunger" is itself produced through the game of "making out" (Burawoy 1979). Although some production workers, like workers in the shipping yard where steel is loaded onto railroad cars to leave the plant, say "What do we make in the beam yard? We make money," money is not merely pay, it is also a measure of skill, respect, and dignity. "Making money" is a way of demonstrating skill in manipulation of machinery, knowledge of shortcuts, and expertise in outwitting rate setters (Halle 1984; Burawoy 1979), and is respected by coworkers. But the hunger to work at these production jobs is also produced from outside the mill. Fred Bachman, in his role as the primary breadwinner, was a "hungry" worker,

because, as he said, he had to support his stay-at-home wife and five children. Traditional gender roles within the household generated demand for the higher production wage. But choosing these production jobs also shaped gender relations outside of the plant, as swing shift work ensured that many wives of "hungry" production workers could not work full time. The wives of beam yard workers--who volunteered for overtime opportunities in addition to regular swing shifts--had to take on the lion's share of responsibility for childcare, housework, and maintaining kinship relations, since their husbands put in such long hours at the plant. Bill Markus' wife describes running the household, doing housework, preparing meals, packing her husband's meals, and taking care of the children, all while working outside the home. "There's never an equal sharing of work," she reflected, "that's just the way it is." While providing good salaries at the steel, these families were often least well-equipped to find other work after steel, as production skills and attitudes did not transfer to other jobs, and wives lacked marketable skills.

Many workers charted job trajectories at the Bethlehem plant in maintenance work, work they may have found more fulfilling in terms of job variety and the opportunity to learn new skills. These jobs often had schedules that were more amenable to family life, to two parent working families, and that were less susceptible to layoffs. Many of these jobs also provided skills training conducive to getting second jobs during layoffs or after work (carpenters, for example, could work in the construction industry), depending on the type of maintenance job. But, depending on the shop, maintenance jobs also could require shift work and overtime, and some maintenance jobs (pipefitter, for example) did not easily transfer to smaller scale construction work.

Workers often made internal labor market decisions, at different points in the family cycle, to accommodate family needs. Jerry Schneider, who worked as a carpenter for much of his career, describes working swing shift and getting overtime hours. "I provided the best I could. I took as much extra work, even though the wife complained, took the shift work. It paid more." This decision brought more money into the household. But, Jerry's wife, Irene, ended up leaving her job in a garment factory. His wife "tried working for awhile, but couldn't make enough…to pay a babysitter." Wives of workers who worked swing shifts and overtime at all different hours found full time work difficult, as their husbands' erratic schedules meant that they could not be relied on

to assist with childcare (see also Olson 2005). These economic decisions interacted with cultural values about family. Jerry decided to go for the extra work to enable Irene to stay home, "we wanted to raise our own children," rather than relying on daycare. Decisions were also influenced by changes during the family cycle. When Jerry's daughter was a teenager, he moved to steady day shift for awhile.

> She [my daughter] was showing the fatigue of me not being there. The stress. She depended on me a lot. I used to make a thing when I worked on shifts, she'd sleep on the chair and I'd check her homework. So I took steady days for awhile so that I could spend time at home. It helped. When she married and moved out, I went back to swing shift.

Feminist scholars have shown how family responsibilities in the life cycle affect women's decisions about wage work (Lee 1998; Hareven 1982; Freeman 2000). While childcare responsibilities have a much greater impact on women's work, male steelworkers in Bethlehem also negotiated an internal labor market with these needs in mind. Often when kids were in high school, fathers felt the need to spend more time with them, going to their sports events, helping with their homework, or ensuring that parental structure and support were there (often in a gendered parenting context where the father is seen as providing more structure and discipline). Louis Moran says he started taking Saturdays off when his son was playing high school football, and when his supervisor became irritated with this he told him "God and family comes first, everything else is after that. If you think you're above those two, you're wrong." He says his supervisor understood and cooperated with scheduling during those years. His ability to assert his needs for scheduling to meet his family responsibilities stands in sharp contrast, however, to the difficulty that younger, female steelworkers had in negotiating any scheduling flexibility related to their parenting responsibilities.

The internal labor market at the mill was not limited to hourly production or maintenance jobs. Workers also could attempt to move into supervisory positions, or could aim for union officer positions (within the "internal state"). These opportunities were also shaped and limited by a variety of variables (including class, gender, race, locale, and ethnicity) produced both inside and outside the plant. Supervisory or foreman positions were often made available to workers in the apprenticeship programs, generally graduates of vo-tech with some craft training, who were

seen as potential supervisors. The apprenticeship program at the Bethlehem plant included extensive formal training, both in class and on-the-job. Before the apprenticeship programs were discontinued in the 1980s, this was seen as a route for upward mobility into management. Some apprentices saw their trajectory at Bethlehem Steel as involving a decision between active commitment to the union, or moving into management. Charlie Richter, who started at the plant in 1951 as an apprentice, said

> I didn't join the union until I graduated from my apprenticeship…Then I had to make up my mind to join or not. As time went on, in my early years, I got involved with the union and the company didn't like that. They did not like it. They put me on worse jobs.

The "choice" between union activism or management was often quite explicit. Nick Koval, also a craft apprentice, describes working so effectively as shop steward in his department, that he was approached by Bethlehem Steel management and offered a foreman position,

> I was offered a foremanship, but I had to not file a grievance for a year, then they would give me the foremanship. I was a steward. I beat them on a real big grievance. They didn't want to deal with me anymore. They said 'look' he says, 'we'll give you a foreman if you don't file a grievance for one year, we're going to give you a foremanship.' I couldn't do it. I wouldn't do it. So, the foreman was given to a guy with less time than me and without as diverse a training as I had. I know I could have had it. I didn't want it.

Becoming a foreman was not for everyone. Strong union ties and commitments, not wanting to take on additional responsibility (and this could be related to family commitments, a second job, or leisure time activities), or simply not seeing it as advantageous (often "they'd actually be taking a cut in pay with incentives and things like that") prevented many from going this route. Eddie Havela, who worked much of his time at the Bethlehem plant as a temporary foreman, said that he was offered a permanent foreman position, but didn't take it because it did not pay any more. "I was quoted an amount by the general foreman, and they quoted me an amount that was considerably less [than what I was making]. It didn't make sense" to take the job. In addition, the company often hired "college kids" over trained, experienced workers for these supervisory positions, and a worker might put himself in an emotionally vulnerable position by setting his sights on the job. Charlie Richter tells the story of when he and a friend, in 1975, were interviewed for a management job as a cost accountant in the engineering department. Charlie expressed his ambiguity about the position, saying his wife told him "that's not for you…being

dressed up everyday…are you going to like it?" But, three weeks later his coworker and he got a letter "sorry to say, we hired two college kids, but we'll think about you in the future…Did it bother me? Yes. To a certain extent. Did it bother my buddy? Very badly. It did." In addition, not every steelworker would be offered a supervisory job – shared social networks and/or ethnic/religious background were helpful. For example, in many departments of the plant being a member of the masons provided valuable social contacts for promotion. Nick Koval points out "a lot of it had to do too with the masons, that really helped a lot. I saw that happen…it was personality, who you knew, it wasn't one hundred percent your education." Bob Ward says "in some departments, you weren't going nowhere unless you were a mason."

Some workers found fulfillment and expansion of skills and power in their positions within the union, and becoming a union officer was another route for internal mobility within the plant. Work with the union could result in further education through coursework, travel, and the development of "white collar" skills in mediation; the opportunity to exercise power in relations with management and with coworkers; and challenge and fulfillment in helping coworkers. Union positions were not open equally to all workers. Having a job like driving truck that took the worker to a variety of departments could help in running for office. Being respected for formal craft work accomplishments could also be an asset. Rob Greer says an important decision in his career was taking the machinist craft tests, as "that gave me credit as a union rep. This guy is a machinist, he's got the rate, he passed the test." Being in a numerically strong department and having the right connections (ties with union officers that were often constructed along lines of gender, ethnicity, generations in the plant) were also helpful. Mentoring by union leaders was crucial for younger aspirants to union positions as it provided them with education and support. Curt Papp credits a former union President, his mentor, for his success as a union official, making him transfer into different shops to learn how they worked

But work with the union, while possibly generating promotional opportunities, could also lead to obstacles to internal mobility. Carl Weiner describes these obstacles when, as a shop steward in the electrical department, he bid on a maintenance position that required testing:

> because of me being shop steward, when I wanted to get a C rate, they put some roadblocks in front of me….when I took the test, they gave me a test with no relevance to what we were doing. I failed.

Management staged a difficult test, making it impossible for a shop steward they disapproved of to move into a better job. Carl went to an outside attorney, sued, and won his case, winning the job assignment as well as back pay, but the case shows how being an active shop steward could limit one's promotional opportunities. Some workers (particularly those in apprenticeships) felt they had to make a choice in their career – between sticking with the union or attempting to take a route into management.

Scholars critiquing Braverman also attempted to link factory regimes with either an epochal approach to capitalism or a categorization of core vs. peripheral industries (Friedman 1977; Edwards 1979). Much of the focus in labor process studies has been framed within a developmental understanding of factory regimes moving from coercion to consent with advanced capitalism (Braverman 1974; Burawoy 1979; Edwards 1979; Friedman 1977). More consensual regimes are represented as developing with monopoly capitalism and accompanying Fordist systems of labor control with assembly line technologies and managerial regimes relying on scientific management. But Lee critiques this, asking social scientists to further explore "under what conditions is consent or coercion the key problematic for labor process analyses" (1998:19). She argues that in an unevenly developing advanced capitalism, different factory regimes may be related to different labor markets, and labor supply and demand may be shaped by gendered familial relationships as well as managerial ideologies. In addition, different technologies used in differing industries may shape regimes of labor control. Ruth Milkman criticizes Edwards for eliding mass production in monopoly capitalism with the Fordist revolution of the moving assembly line. She points out that in different industries, such as steel, "machinery did not exert sufficient control over labor," necessitating a greater reliance on incentive systems (Milkman 1987). In the contemporary global capitalist economy, researchers have pointed increasingly to the competition and coexistence of various forms of organization of labor control within different kinds of factories in regions and in countries in differing positions in the global economy (Collins 2003; Lee 1998; Sassen 1999). The notion of a progressive development of Fordist monopoly

factory-based capitalism, managed through ever-more refined systems of scientific management, has been contradicted by the uneven geographic development of contemporary globalized capitalism. Harvey points out that today “competition between different labor systems becomes a weapon to be used by capital against labor in the struggle to procure surplus value” (Harvey 2010:226). Neither Braverman nor Burawoy predicted the proliferation of these forms in contemporary capitalism. The “spatial fix” of the closing of factories, and moving production overseas, as well as the proliferation of workplaces using coercive systems of “management by stress” (Moody 1997) simultaneous with the “high road” expansion of consensual, team-oriented workplaces produces a highly competitive terrain that often results in the “devaluing” of industrial labor through a ‘race to the bottom.’ It is also crucial to examine factory regimes, the degree of coercion vs. consent in these forms of workplace organization, in relation to state policies, how “the broader political apparatus intervenes in the regulation and reproduction of labor” (Lee 2007:22). Regimes of labor discipline are not constructed on an isolated shop floor, as the power of both shop floor management and workers is embedded within wider systems of state power, and broader cultural and social processes.

In addition, Burawoy does not sufficiently examine the way that internal labor markets are differentially shaped by a gendered and racialized/ethnicized industry-based division of labor. The explosion of studies on gender and work in the 1990s, including many studies of women factory workers in peripheral countries, explores multiple means of degrading labor. Labor degradation is not limited to strategies of deskilling alone, and skill is often constructed in racialized and gendered ways. Studies explore ways that racial, gender, and ethnic ideologies are used to devalue labor, and how these uses on the shop floor are articulated with uses in the broader society to control labor through regimes that make use of social and cultural constructions of gender and ethnicity, as well as examining how, at the point of production, “that construction is constitutive of and constituted by power relations in the workplace” (Lee 1998:27).

Bethlehem Steel, and the U.S. steel industry, had a long history of organizing entire departments and shops at the large vertically integrated mills along lines of race and ethnicity.

Workers coming into the mill in the 1960s remember encountering the effects of this system. In the northern plants, "blacks and immigrants from Southeastern Europe" were concentrated

> in departments that were dirtier and hotter and required more manual than mental labor, although there were many variations and exceptions to this pattern. Workers often preferred the blast furnaces, even though the wages did not rise as high as those in the finishing end, because the work was steadier and less subject to the instabilities of product markets…The union's wage classification program moderated the economic consequences of such hiring by raising the rates of jobs with unpleasant work environments." [Stein 1998:44]

At Bethlehem Steel from the 1960s through the 1990s, the internal labor market was shaped through initial hiring and recruitment drawing on an external labor market, as well as internal transfers and promotions. Racial and ethnic ideologies informed managers' ideas about characteristics of laborers and suitability of labor pools. In the 1960s Bethlehem Steel used advertisements, recruiters, and kin-based recruitment networks to recruit workers from both Puerto Rico and the Pennsylvania coal country for the least desirable jobs in the plant. Puerto Rican workers were defined as naturally suited for jobs in the coke works, as they could "take the heat," and "up homers" from the coal regions were seen as having a strong "work ethic". When workers came in to the plant, they were either assigned to one department, or were given a choice of departments. Those workers who had family members who worked at the plant (i.e. native-born Lehigh Valley residents), who had some relevant education related to manufacturing (at local Vo Tech or college), or who knew people in management were offered better placements and were more able to evaluate initial placement offerings than Valley "outsiders" (from farming families outside the Valley, or "up-homers" from the coal country). In addition, non-white workers were assigned to the worst departments. Puerto Rican workers were assigned to the coke works--a hot, dangerous, low-paying department--on the basis of race/ethnicity alone. Even when they were Bethlehem-born, second generation steelworkers, Puerto Ricans were generally given the coke works as an initial assignment and usually were not offered choice in assignments. Danny Moreno, a light-skinned, second generation Puerto Rican Pennsylvanian hired in 1973, describes the way that Puerto Ricans were assigned to departments. Danny was initially assigned to the billet yard, although with layoffs he soon transferred to the coke works.

Reflecting back on his experience, Danny expressed surprise at not being assigned to the coke works, like most Puerto Rican workers,

> I was surprised. It must have been because I had an Italian last name, sounds Italian rather than Spanish. There was a couple of white guys worked in coke works for years and years and their last name was Gomez, two brothers, they were white…a lot of people they looked at their last name and that's where you're going—the coke works.

Ed Ramos says "when I went to apply, they read my name and said 'you're the type of person that we need at the coke works.' I didn't realize what they meant by that until I got down there."

White steelworkers who came from outside the Lehigh Valley were also disadvantaged in initial assignments, although, unlike the Puerto Rican applicants, they were generally given choices. Because they lacked knowledge of the mill, they were at a disadvantage in choosing between initial departmental options. Rob Cuny, a white steelworker, came to Bethlehem to find work after being laid off from a silk mill in his farming community west of the Valley. When he went in to Bethlehem Steel,

> they gave me two choices for work. I think it was iron foundry and the coke works…I don't know why I picked the coke works. It was one of them things. You didn't know nothing about it. I didn't know anyone who worked at Bethlehem Steel at the time. Didn't know anything, going in blind, it was a job.

He could have made significantly more money at the iron foundry, but he had no knowledge of the plant on which to base his initial decision.

Once assigned to a department, internal mobility in the plant through transfer and promotion on the basis of seniority was differentially accessible to workers. Workers had varied access to information about various job openings, depending on social networks inside and outside the plant that might connect them to management or to union officers, as well as the degree to which their current positions included exposure to different departments at the plant. These variables were affected by gendered, racial, and ethnic divisions of labor built through complex histories of recruitment and job assignment in the Bethlehem works. Women, Puerto Rican, and African American workers relate very different experiences and understandings of mobility within the plant and the internal labor market than do white workers (see Chapter Four).

Prior to the 1974 Consent Decree mandating plant-wide seniority, internal mobility generally occurred within one's department (restricting Puerto Rican workers, for example, to the

coke works), as seniority was departmental. A number of law suits for discrimination, filed against Bethlehem Steel (and implicating the United Steelworkers union as well) at its Sparrows Point and Lackawanna plants, as well as against U.S. Steel had resulted in court decisions mandating plant-wide seniority. This resulted in a Consent Decree, filed by the EEOC in 1974 with nine steel companies (including Bethlehem Steel). In accepting the Consent Decree, Bethlehem Steel acknowledged its role in racial discrimination. Bethlehem Steel agreed to pay a settlement to aggrieved workers, replaced departmental with plant-wide seniority, and set up goals for hiring minority workers (Dickerson 1986). At the Bethlehem plant, this resulted in the hiring of women workers for the first time since WW II, and in granting plant-wide seniority to all workers at the plant (including Puerto Rican, Portuguese, and Mexican workers at the coke works). This ostensibly provided much better opportunities for minority steelworkers, as more senior coke works workers could now bid on more desirable jobs in other departments.

However, the granting of plant-wide seniority did not eradicate gendered and racialized barriers to internal mobility within the Bethlehem plant. When plant-wide seniority was mandated most Puerto Rican workers did not transfer out of the coke works department, or transferred briefly, only to return. Puerto Rican workers describe encountering hostility in other departments, and experiencing exclusion from the "camaraderie" of the workplace culture and from the mentoring that was crucial in learning new jobs (see Chapter Four).

Even with plant-wide seniority, women hired in the 1970s found obstacles to bidding on jobs in other departments. Women who had worked hard to overcome initial resistance and hostility and develop collaborative and supportive social relations with coworkers found that transferring to a different department was very difficult, as they would have to once again work against sexist ideologies and attitudes to build work ties of respect and collaboration. In addition, women were discouraged from applying for job opportunities by male supervisors who had low expectations for female workers (see Chapter Four). We need to pay attention to the complex ways in which labor is devalued, not just through deskilling, but also through constructing racialized, gendered, and ethnicized labor markets, both external to the plant and internally. The Fordist workplace was shaped by gendered, raced, and ethnicized relationships embedded within

the wider community, influencing the regional labor market, and constructed within the mill to create an internal labor market of segregated departments and differing promotional opportunities.

In addition, it is crucial to examine worker agency in the labor process. Braverman was much criticized for failing to examine the role of worker struggle, resistance, and agency in shaping factory regimes. Friedman emphasized the agency of workers, highlighting the role of worker resistance in generating these accommodations in managerial regimes (Friedman 1977). Burawoy's analysis of consent examines worker subjectivity and agency, but represents workers as too easily consenting to management's rules for interaction. Other social scientists examined ways that workers construct meaning in the labor process, build a work culture on the shop floor, gain knowledge (and thus control over) the work process, and develop collaborative and egalitarian social relations. Newman argues that "the image of the factory as deadening does not capture the complexity of the Singer plant, which retained under one roof a mix of skilled and unskilled workers, of complex and routinized systems of production, of highly particularized work…and routine assembly line work" (1988:185). Some social scientists critique Braverman's dichotomy of "manual and mental" labor, analyzing the "skills and abilities," the kinds of conception that are cultivated in "manual" labor (Rose 2004). Dudley builds on this more complex understanding of shop floor relations and production work to examine the many forms of cultural meaning workers construct through social relations on the shop floor. Dudley documents a rich culture that is constructed on the auto shop floor, but extended into the home and community, a self-worth "bound up with the kind of work we do," embedded in opportunities for workers to demonstrate ability on the shop floor, and forged through collective, collaborative work. This shop floor culture constructs alternative definitions of skill and ability, giving meaning and dignity to manual work and generating a "day-to-day experience of cultural solidarity" on the shop floor around shared goals of product quality and job security (Dudley 1994). In my fieldwork in Bethlehem, workers reflecting on their experiences in the steel mill expressed the complexities of working in a work place in which deskilling, exploitation, and alienation structured many aspects of work even while reskilling characterized others, and in which a rich workplace culture was also

constructed, providing meaning and fulfillment to many workers. To argue that this culture was only a means of generating consent to the exploitation of their own labor ignores the solidarity and fulfillment that workplace culture generated.

In addition, the uneven geography of production at this enormous, vertically integrated steel mill, this “city unto itself,” built on and produced variations in worker identities, identities brought into the plant from outside and built within the plant through social relations. The labor process literature does not sufficiently explore this working class variegation within the factory. How can we make sense of a literature that, on the one hand, describes the monotony, alienation, and entrapment of work on the assembly line (Milkman 1997: Sennett and Cobb 1972; Halle 1984; Burawoy 1979; Aronowitz 1973) and on the other describes the rich meanings, moralities, and identities built in the industrial workplace (Dudley 1994; Metzgar 2000; Mollona 2009)? Is it possible that workplace culture has different meanings for different participants? How do these identities and meanings play themselves out in relation to gender, ethnic, and class positions? How might they be related to the “attitudes” workers bring into the workplace, and how do they shape workers’ experiences of processes of deindustrialization?

There is a literature that struggles to understand differing ideologies, “attitudes,” and identities amongst working-class Americans. These analyses attempt to understand working-class identities that are “oppositional,” as opposed to those that conform more closely to dominant cultural norms and expectations. Scholars of working class identities in Europe and the U.S. point to distinctions of “street” vs. “decent” (Anderson 2000), “ear’oles” vs. “lads” (Willis 1977), “hard living” vs. “settled” (Weis 2004), “respectable” vs. “no good” (Hannerz 1969), and “reputation” vs. “respectability” (Freeman 2000). Some analysts point to this tension in the working class, between a middle-class identity at home on the one hand, and working-class identity and experiences of work, on the other (Ortner 1991; Halle 1984). Even inside the family, wives are often framed as more “middle class” in attitude; often have non-blue collar jobs that contribute to different identities at work; and may develop suburban gendered identities that are middle class. Ortner argues that, within the working class, there is a contradiction between middle-class aspirations and values, and working-class culture, a contradiction that becomes

gendered, in which “gender carries this burden [of contradiction] for the working class”(1991:176). Freeman argues that this polarity of gendered ideals of “respect” and “reputation” implies a “tension within and against which people conceive, define, and enact themselves” (2000:110). This has been much explored in the public school system, but less explored in the workplace. In examining how these categories are constructed and reproduced within the school system, this split often appears as a “set of choices” about lifestyle for individual working-class youths. But Willis points to how shop floor culture and work relations produce a working-class culture and identity which is, to some extent, “oppositional.” Workers do not all share the same attitudes and ideologies about mainstream culture, social mobility, the value of education, masculinity, and work in the steel mill. And those workers that define themselves as more “respectable” are often better positioned--through their career trajectories within the mill, their “attitudes” about political and social interaction, and the structuring of their masculine identities--for life after steelwork.

These differing attitudes are evident in ex-steelworkers, and this research hopes to understand how these different identities were shaped and produced within the same steel mill, as well as the effect of these on workers’ trajectories after steel. While many workers I spoke with were happy to be out of Bethlehem Steel, even while regretting the loss of good salaries, benefits, and job security, there were many other workers who sorely missed their work and the work culture at the steel mill. Workers who were happy to be out of the steel mill often did not find steel jobs to be fulfilling, although they characterized them as good jobs to make money and jobs with security. They found them to also be jobs that were entrapping and stultifying. Workers like Dan Torres do not want to return to the steel mill (although he deeply regrets the loss of salary and job security), and instead are working to forge new identities in a post industrial milieu. Dan described running into an ex-steelworker:

> so I listened to him say to me how much he was so insulted and offended by the fact that the casino is using steel from the same company that put us out of business. I mean he was so upset. And I’m thinking, wow! And so I’m guessing that there’s a lot of people that feel like him. They have not figured out how to let go of that particular piece. That there’s still a lot of harsh feelings around that. And he said something really interesting. And I’d have to agree with him, but he said “if the mill was open we’d still be working there. You know that, right?” And I thought for a second and I said “yeah, you’re probably right. I would still be there.” It was one of those situations where I wanted something better out of life and I was having like this dilemma of how it is that we are not an environmentally

> friendly business, how we…our health is always in jeopardy and all those things, it was, it was starting to be a challenge. So, for me, when it happened it was like somewhat of a relief that I didn't have to make that decision or have that fight within me anymore.

Dan describes himself as staying at Bethlehem Steel because he was "economically handcuffed, oh my goodness, and the security….there is a lot of value in job security." Although Dan went to work for Bethlehem Steel straight out of high school, and his father worked for Bethlehem Steel, he no longer strongly identifies as a steelworker, and would not want to return to the Steel. Many workers, if they were able to access pension and health care benefits as they took early retirement, relished the chance to leave Bethlehem Steel. For Ed Ramos "things went from bad to really good when the steel closed. The closing was good for me."

These workers describe an instrumental motivation to work, sounding similar to workers characterized by many researchers (Sennett 1998; Aronowitz 1973; Halle 1984). For these workers, work was primarily a means to provide a good life for one's family, and attain future benefits. Rob Cuny, a production worker in the coke works for his entire career at Bethlehem Steel, describes working there, "it was hot and dirty, but I figured, well, I'd just keep doing it cause I wanted a good job and benefits and retirement." He says, "we all worked together at the coke works and did our jobs I had no trouble with that. We all wanted to do the same thing—have a good living and get our retirement. We had a set thing to do. We all worked together to do it." Danny Moreno describes the attitude of many of the Puerto Rican workers in the coke works,

> they didn't care [about running for union office]. The only thing that was important to them was that they had a job and brought their paycheck home. The union to them didn't mean nothing. If they had an issue they went to a shop steward, but as far as running the union, they really didn't care…As long as they were working, making a paycheck, and bringing money home to their families, they just did their job…They were mostly home people. Go to work, come home, go to work. Swing shift work, four gangs, nights, middles, days, off, swing over.

Many workers never wanted to work at the Steel, they envisioned themselves in other kinds of jobs, they yearned for a different kind of life, one with a sense of possibility. Luke Bauer "didn't want to work in an industrial place in the first place. When I showed up in the employment office, flowered pants, love beads, long hair, a beard. I was a 'token hippy'. They hired 'tokens' all the time. I thought I wouldn't get a job offer if I showed up that way." Luke wanted to work in graphic arts, but without a college degree it was difficult for him to find jobs in this field. He "didn't like

industrial work" and defined work at the steel as "a deadening routine," but found that "Bethlehem Steel paid so well, I was raising a family, I couldn't afford to leave."

Some workers aspired to a different kind of life than that of their fathers. Will Hornack's father "didn't want me to work there" at the steel, even though his father worked in the mill, his family had a history of 200 years of work in the Bethlehem plant, and his grandfather was killed in the plant. Will's father "told me about the application there, but really didn't want me to work there. I mean he knew it was a dangerous place. It was a dirty place. And, I think he wanted more for me than what he had." Will says, however, that "you kind of get stuck with the pay and the benefits, cause it was a good paying job and the benefits were really good. You kind of get stuck there. I think you get comfortable and you kind of get stuck there. Especially once you have a family."

And Frank Gore, who found himself leaving college and looking for a job when his girlfriend became pregnant, had never wanted to work at the steel, even though he also came from "a long line of steelworkers." Frank says he didn't want to work there because "everybody worked there and I didn't want to be everybody." He found the mill to be a "hostile environment," especially for a young, slight, college-educated worker with long hair, "they took it for granted that I was a protesting hippie-type guy." But, Frank also found that "as time went on and I got more and more time served now, I'm here five years, oh my god, after so many years your pension gets vested, I needed a car, and I needed this and needed that. I lost my courage to move out."

But for many other workers, like the one Dan ran into, instrumental motivations do not define the job for them. Many of the ex-steelworkers I spoke with would have returned to their jobs at Bethlehem Steel tomorrow, not solely because it was a good-paying job, but because they have lost a part of their identity, one they cannot recapture outside of the mill, the feeling of fulfillment that they got through work in the steel mill, through the workplace culture forged on the floor of the steel mill. Jack Deutsch, who worked as a millwright, welder, and rigger at Bethlehem Steel for over thirty years, expressed how meaningful his work was.

> I'll tell you the funny thing about this is I still dream about the Bethlehem Steel. I swear to God, I'm the kind of person, I even ask doctors if some people do that, I have dreams all the time, dream about the Bethlehem Steel. I dream about going down to the screening station. I dream about the guys. I actually wake up

> at night. I'll get up at night, doing something, go to the bathroom. I run back to sleep so I can get back in the same dream. I missed it so much. I'll dream about things we did, at the beam yard, actually like we were there. I dreamed about when we were taking breaks, working down at the hot bed. I dream so vivid, and so clear, that the guys and stuff, it's like I sometimes think I died and that's what it's going to be. [*Steelworkers' Archives*]

For some workers at Bethlehem Steel, the work culture that was constructed on the shop floor created an alternative culture that entailed social relations frequently described as entailing "camaraderie," where coworkers were "like family," forged in a workplace in which workers worked to attain some control over the labor process, and maintain safety in a dangerous environment. Workplace culture was different from mainstream culture, corroborating David Halle's description of workers as working men in the factory, leading middle-class lives in the community. Jack Deutsch describes work at the mill, "It's a whole different life, you can't explain to people, you've got to be there to really see how nice it was, even though you're doing dirty, crummy, dirty jobs, we had jobs so dirty you just couldn't even fathom doing them" (Steelworkers' Archives). Andy Vanek loved his job in the beam yard, "every day was different. You could never get bored working at Bethlehem Steel. Whether you worked for the company or the union [as an officer]. I'd work union [during the week] and weekends at the plant…I'd work night or day shift…I'd tell bosses if this guy wants off, just put me in there."

Carlos Rodriguez, a second generation Puerto Rican steelworker who moved from a unionized mill job in the coke works to the offices at Bethlehem Steel, reflected on the enormous differences in the cultures of the two workplaces,

> I was a union worker for 2 to 3 years myself. Don't get me wrong. It's us vs. them. The floor vs. the office. That's the main thing. But it's a whole different world. There's like a…luckily I grew up where I grew up…whole different attitude in the office. More professional. On the floor, in the mill, there's more crudeness. They play practical jokes on each other, use foul language. The beginning of women coming in, there was disrespect towards women. It was the opposite in the office. It might be sexist, but not right in front of her. It was like two different worlds. The mill was like living a whole, entire life. The office was a different life also, but it is more like the real world than working in the mill was. That was nothing like the real world.

Many workers got their jobs at the Steel because it was something that they and their parents aspired to, it was a family tradition, a trade that fathers had worked in, sometimes grandfathers, and sometimes many extended family members. That kind of intergenerational

commitment to a trade is very different than the voluntary individual choice that workers are expected to make today in pursuing a flexible career, pursuing "lifelong learning" through ongoing higher education and certification, and jockeying for new opportunities and careers as they become available. Frank Havlicek describes this, "our fathers were all steel, you know…It wasn't just a little whim. Oh, I think I'm going to put my application down the steel." A job at the Steel was a solid, secure, reliable job; a job you could keep for a lifetime, advance within the steel mill, learning new skills; a job you could take pride in. John Wister describes the family tradition and pride in steelwork in some Bethlehem families,

> My grandfather worked in alloy. When I got my first check [from the Steel], we lived with my grandparents. He cried. He sat at the table and he cried because it was like, you made it. You've got a good job, good money, your life has just panned out okay. And I think an old saying, steelworkers bitch and moan, but they want their kids to work there…some people go to college and they don't have this. They got a degree and they don't have this. They don't have the salary.

Bill Markus describes his family's thoughts about the steel, "for a lifetime, you made steel. That was a way of life, that's the way you thought. You didn't think about college…All my relatives were steelworkers. It was a family thing, my uncles, two on my mom's side didn't do it, but my father's side, and all the cousins." When Bill got his job at the Bethlehem plant, "my father was elated. He knew that it pays the bills. He didn't have to support me, although we were living on our own and I had a job…that was big money, you knew it was steady, and your benefits were excellent. You built seniority and vacation time." Shirley Macek grew up in a steel town, near the Lukens mill that Bethlehem Steel bought in 1998. She had a fierce desire to work in the steel mill that so many of the men in her family worked in.

> I came from a steel family, I came from a steel town, and I always wanted to be in the steel…I wanted to work in the plant. I wanted in that mill..I just wanted to get in there and see, all this talk…and you would hear you have your life made if you got into the steel because you got paid well, you had the benefits, it was sort of like a respect in a steel town for steel workers.

Shirley ended up getting in, not to the Lukens mill, but to the mill in Bethlehem.

Steelwork provided a common bond, between generations, and between extended family networks. Eddie and Mary Smith grew up in steelmaking families, Mary's father worked in the steel, her first husband worked in the steel, and her second husband, Eddie, worked in the steel,

they lived close to the steel plant, and many of their neighbors worked in the mill. Mary describes how her husband and her father

> would sit there with their beers and they talk, it was always steel. My brother would come, steel, steel. Everywhere you went the guys would sit there with their beers discussing the Steel. They loved the Steel. I mean it, truthfully, it was their second family. I mean, even when my dad retired, he was always at the union hall to see the guys…it was a life that you really got attached to.

In Ruth Milkman's study of New Jersey auto workers who accepted a buyout in 1986 and 1987, she found that a self-selected group of younger, low-seniority workers, took a buyout because of their concerns about future job stability and their dislike for working for General Motors. Milkman documents the complaints that workers had about work in the GM plant, complaints that characterized auto assembly work as monotonous, repetitive, with dictatorial management, and time that was controlled by the whistle. Workers found the work loud, stressful, and complained that when you "find the shortcuts" in your GM job, and can do it well "you get punished with more work" (Milkman 1997:118). Workers complained that the "physical" work "took a toll on my body." In addition, work at GM in the 1980s was insecure, with the constant threat of layoffs. These characterizations of undesirable GM work, coupled with very desirable wages and benefits, coincide with the characterization in the literature of factory work as being unfulfilling, and factory workers as having an "instrumental" approach to work.

Milkman admits, however, that this self-selected group of younger workers is not representative of all GM workers. And Bill Markus, a production worker in the Bethlehem beam yard corroborates this variety within the work force. Bill says when he was laid off, if he didn't take advantage of the early retirement, "I'd lose big money monthly for the rest of my life." In accepting early retirement he retired while his earnings were still high (influencing the size of his pension) and with a $400 supplemental payment until he attained social security. So, he retired. But, he says, many workers stayed.

> These guys stayed, although they got awarded more years of service, they made less money monthly towards their pension. Some guys were just afraid to leave. You worked in a place like that for so many years, it's almost like an institution that protects you. You know, your wages are there, your living is there, everything, your whole life based on that. Some of those guys didn't have a life anymore, they didn't bother with their families, didn't go hunting anymore, they're just, you're into the steel company.

As Bill shows, many workers at the Bethlehem mill defined themselves through their work, they felt fulfilled in their work, and they simply did not want to leave the steel mill. The steel mill was their life, it was their world, and it defined their identity.

In part, this is true of these Bethlehem steelworkers because workers who remained at the Steel in the 1990s had more seniority and had moved into more desirable jobs. But in addition, the work at a steel mill is very different than the work in an auto factory. The variety of shops, departments, and jobs within them; the opportunity to transfer; the option for learning new skills; the gang or crew work that forges strong social relationships; and the exercise of agency in making job choices all construct a different attitude towards steelwork. Although there were workers at the Bethlehem plant who, like Milkman's buyout group, did not enjoy the work, who felt trapped at the steel plant, and who welcomed the opportunity to move into other jobs, there were also many, many workers whose lives and identities were forged in the mill, and who found steel work highly fulfilling.

The culture of the mill, created at the point of production on the shop floor and through the collaboration of workers, contributed to the construction of worker skill and the creation of knowledge, the development of relations of solidarity, and a strong morality of rights and responsibilities at work. Although Fordist labor processes were effective in coordinating and managing many aspects of workers' labor and knowledge, researchers have documented ways that workers struggle to retain knowledge, and thus a degree of control, over the labor process. William Kornblum, in his ethnographic study of South Chicago steelworkers, documented mill hand knowledge, in the steel mill, of the "idiosyncracies of a particular mill" and the specific technologies and machinery used (1974). Experts, who do not work with the machinery everyday, often don't have knowledge of these idiosyncracies, and of the shortcuts and "grey zones" documented by Halle (1984), Dudley (1994), and others. As Harvey points out, "the perpetual problem of habituating the worker to such routinized, deskilled and degraded systems of work, as Braverman forcefully argues, can never be completely overcome"(1990:134). Too much deskilling, Burawoy argues, can generate strong worker resistance and class struggle, as workers become aware of the surplus value extracted, but too little and the capitalist

accumulation of that value is threatened. Therefore, steel mill management recognizes and develops some skills in workers, even as workers struggle to attain their own forms of knowledge, skill, and a degree of control over the labor process. Sometimes, as Burawoy argues, that knowledge is used to consent to shop floor "games" that speed up production, increase productivity, and construct common interests for management and workers. But "games" can also collectively benefit gangs of workers, as when workers in the beam yard create overtime work by slowing down and accumulating steel for the higher-paid work on holidays and weekends (Kornblum 1974:60). This knowledge and skill is also used, as Dudley (1994) argues, to construct solidarity, egalitarian social relations, and a working class culture on the shop floor as well as to free up leisure time to build social relations and inhabit the spaces of the mill.

Finally an approach that emphasizes the hegemony of the workplace fails to pay sufficient attention to struggle. The autonomistas argue that capital has to "struggle mightily" to control labor, as it is labor that has the creative ability to produce, and, always the ability to refuse to work, to block the labor process. Workers are directly aware of this power at the Bethlehem Steel plant, and the power to block production contributed to the "attitude" of macho swagger and aggressive confrontation that production workers were known for. A commonly used metaphor at the plant was comparing the plant to the human body, or specifically the human digestive system – the beam yard (shipping yards) was the "asshole" of the plant, because if it closes its sphincter, everything stops. Steelworkers used this visceral metaphor to explicitly represent what Mario Tronti calls a crucial point of "blockage of the work process" (Tronti 1965:237). This power was used to block the entire production process by workers, and in Bethlehem had been used effectively as recently as 1959 during the 116 day strike. Production workers, like Al Trakas, in ingot mold expressed confidence in that power. Al was fully aware that the importance of the Bethlehem plant's ingot mold department was that it supplied molds to a wide variety of steel producers in the U.S., including Bethlehem's Burns Harbor plant. This may have been an "efficient" means of production, but it meant that production workers in ingot mold had a great deal of power at the point of production. Al lays this out clearly: "we used to just stop working, cut production in half or less. That [ingot mold] was the real nest egg. When you stop there,

everything else stops right down the line. Like dominoes, it would fall down through all the plants including Burns Harbor."

The knowledge of this power to block production was exercised through workers' unions to demand higher incentive rates and is evidenced in the confident and assertive attitudes towards management held by production workers. Management could not manage through coercion alone, but had to grant concessions (through collectively bargained contracts and informal shop floor relations) including the highest rates of incentive pay in the plant to those crucial areas: ingot mold, the blast furnaces, and the beam yards. But, these confident and assertive--often described as confrontational--attitudes often handicapped production workers when they moved to jobs outside the Steel.

In addition, although Burawoy critiques the "internal state" for generating consent through construction of narrow and individualized concerns, collectively bargained and grievable areas did include important concepts that validated worker culture and empowered workers. For example, safety concerns in the collectively bargained contract supported values that workers constructed around craftsmanship. In the Bethlehem plant, individual skill is also measured through the quality of work (craftsmanship) and through safety. The final product must be well-made, safely-made, and of high quality, and workers took pride in the quality of the Bethlehem steel products they made. Richard Sennett argues that "craftsmanship emphasizes objectification," the craftsman invests him/herself in the object made "judging himself by whether or not the thing was made right" (2006:104). Workers had to judge what was necessary regarding safety requirements, they had to use their mind, not just their hands, to do the job effectively. Charlie Richter, who worked for more than 40 years at the plant, describes workers he worked with

> Them men used their heads, their minds, and not because different men were foremen. There were two guys at the Saucon plant, open hearth, my God, like them men I worked with at Lehigh that didn't want to be foremen, these guys, there was nothing equal to them in using their mind and thoughts of a job. They used their ingenuity and their mind. Never did anything in a hurry, took their time. And they tried to explain it to you.

But working safely often contradicts the need for speed (and the use of speed up as a technique of intensifying labor). In production jobs, speed was consented to through the "game" of "making out." The 'shortcuts' that production workers use to display their skill and demonstrate

their expertise at making money and outsmarting management are often in the “grey area” of what is safe. Part of the “machismo” of production work is centered in the willingness to push those safety limits to some extent. Mike Wilson, for example, describes working as a rigger “I had to always show off, try to take shortcuts and stuff.” He describes one such shortcut, “I could have got disciplined, lost my job even, but I did it because I was a rigger, and let’s just say it works. We were on contract at the time. The more you did, the faster you got the job done, the more money you made.” This became an issue for women working in production areas. Women crane operators in production areas describe themselves as very safe, they even pride themselves on their skill in safety. Jim Todd a foreman at the plant, says that many women became crane operators, and “by George, they weren’t reckless cowboys like the guys. Right off the bat they did a better job.” But crane operator safety concerns did generate some resentment from coworkers who perceived the women as slowing them down.

Safety, like quality in craft work, requires methodical care, or what Sennett describes as “obsession” (2008). Workers worry that the introduction of incentive pay to more and more maintenance jobs in the 1980s made work less safe (while also increasing individual competition between workers). Charlie Richter says

> the craft never had incentive. That program didn’t come until the mid 1980s, that they put us on incentive. And that should never have happened. Never should have happened. That’s where men easily could get hurt. See. You’re making the job go faster to beat your time, and you’re not getting 100 percent of work. Before you were getting it every day. This way, you were given the rate. Hurry up, that’s good enough. Don’t worry about that extra piece. You can’t have that, can’t have that.

The craftsperson’s concern for quality also makes a safe, high-quality product used to “build America.” A number of workers with whom I spoke brought up the 9/11 collapse of the World Trade Center towers as representative of the danger to the nation-state of poor quality steel. The construction of the World Trade Center was highly symbolic in the life-narrative of the Bethlehem Steel corporation, as it was the first major construction contract that Bethlehem lost to foreign steel imports symbolizing the beginning of the end for the south Bethlehem plant that produced the Grey beams used to build so many skyscrapers. Bethlehem steelworkers often argue that the World Trade Center towers would not have collapsed if they had been made with Bethlehem

steel, that the poor quality of Japanese imported steel contributed to the collapse of those buildings, killing Americans and undermining U.S. strength and hegemony.

Burawoy represents the internal state as generating consent to an exploitative labor process through a collective bargaining process that defines labor issues narrowly, as pay and benefits. And analyses of the growth of business unionism in the post WW II period argue that unions conceded control of technology to business, limiting the definition of workers' interests to wages and benefits (Moody 1997; Davis 1986). This business unionism constructed an identification of workers with business, articulated through the ideology that workers would do well if business did well. However, these analyses fail to recognize that collective bargaining continued to include many other issues that related to the labor process itself, and these could be mobilized by workers to support worker valuing of quality craftsmanship. The danger of the steel mill was one rationale for steelworkers' high pay relative to other industrial workers, and it was built into the collectively bargained contract as Article 14. Article 14 guaranteed individual workers a right to safety on the job, and the invocation of Article 14 could result in stopping the job, halting that area of production pending further investigation, and, ultimately, in changing the requirements for the job permanently. Although a masculine work culture and shop floor games prevented workers from mobilizing Article 14 as often as they might (see Willis 1977), the contract did empower workers to challenge supervisors, even halting production.

Worker identities, while constructed in large part on the shop floor, are also built, defended, and understood within a wider social milieu. And these representations of steelworkers and of steel work change with the long processes of deindustrialization, the shrinking of the "city" of the Bethlehem Steel works, the declining contribution to the life and economy of the city of Bethlehem Steel, and the changing perceptions of regional politicians and economic elites within the industry in a city increasingly defining its future as "post-industrial." Dudley examines some of these changes in Kenosha, Wisconsin, examining how national rituals of plant closure send messages about the "deviance" of steelworkers as industrial workers appear "less and less modern," and as industry and industrial work is defined as obsolescent in a "post-industrial" city. Steelworkers in the period of the 1960s through 1990s lived in middle class

communities, in neighborhoods with public sector workers, middle managers, school teachers, and clerical workers, and talk about confrontations with neighbors "at the supermarket" who expressed growing resentment of steel and steelwork as processes of deindustrialization shrunk the works. Local media representations of lazy, over-paid steelworkers and belligerent, unyielding unions contributed to the erosion of broader community support. Worker identities are also shaped in relation to dominant culture expectations, representations, and stereotypes of steelwork and steelworkers.

CHAPTER 3

THE MORAL ECONOMY OF THE WORKS

The south Bethlehem plant was a huge vertically integrated steel mill that stretched for more than five miles along the Lehigh River. The scale of vertically integrated steelworks, like the Bethlehem plant, was awe-inspiring. The size of the plant, and the massive size of the machinery, were of an almost unreal scale. The plant had a complex division of labor, with not only management and workers, but a huge variety of divisions and shops spread out over the 1,800 acres. It was often described as a city unto itself, with "more police officers than the city of Bethlehem" (Assad et al. 2010::12). The plant, separated from the other city with fences and guards, was described as a "mythical place, at its peak [during WW II] a virtual city of 31,000 with its own police force and fire department, its own hierarchy and its own societal rules" (Assad et al. 2010:12). A complex division of labor within the plant included production workers manufacturing all the materials for steel making and producing and shipping steel products; maintenance workers involved in building machinery, buildings, and doing repairs throughout the plant; a hierarchy of supervisors; and workers in the ancillary services of running this "city" – working in the powerhouse producing the energy to fuel the plant, policing the "city", working in the fire department, staffing the dispensary that saw to workers' medical needs, and manning the trucks, buses, and railroad cars that moved goods and workers around the plant. This complex division of labor ran a "city," a world, that was closed to the general public, that had its own built environment and "natural" landscape, or "second nature" (Harvey 2010:117) (including "mountains," gardens, and orchards), its own sensations (sounds, sights, and climate); and its own vocabulary of vulgarity, slang, and arcane technical terms that were different from the "outside" world. The steel mill had a scale and intensity that was rarely experienced in the outside world. Connie Godfrey, one of the few women working in the plant in the 1980s, described the intensity, the danger, the scale, as "like a drug trip," that amongst "the flames and the danger, I felt I was on an escapade," it was "like Vietnam," in a "world of men," a world in which everything felt different. This was a masculine world, separated from mainstream society by guards and gates (workers weren't allowed to leave for lunch), a world to which most women

were denied entry. Wives and daughters of steelworkers often never saw the inside of the plant. Mary Smith's father was a steelworker, and her first and second husband worked in the mill, yet she never saw the inside of the mill until one day in the 1990s, shortly before the mill closed, when her husband got permission to bring her in on a Sunday to see, for the first time, where the men in her family had worked for their whole lives. Mike Holmes, who was hired in 1973 to work in the beam yards, said "I always said every woman whose husband works at the Steel, she should come in for one day and watch what he does."

Workers describe the steel plant as a different world, often relating their first experiences in the plant as shocking, disorienting, and frightening. In the plant, everything was different, not just the work itself. The habits of daily living, the showers, the clothing and "change around" (getting dressed), cooking food, and the scheduling of living and sleeping were all distinct from mainstream society. Workers that I spoke with repeatedly said that "you couldn't understand" unless you were there, it was "a different world." Workers described their first days as "I thought I was on another planet," "It's like walking into a different country" and I felt I had "walked into 1930" (Behum 2010). Bob Shoemaker says he would "walk through the gate and go down through the tunnel and walk into what we used to call 'the other world.' Like going down to *The Wizard of Oz* or *Alice in Wonderland* where you walk through the tunnel to another world. Another language down there too! I'd rather not elaborate on it. That was another world" (*Steelworkers' Archives*). They describe the noise, the dirt, the heat, the danger, and the scale of activities in the plant as initially being "overwhelming" and "scary." Workers describe the constant movement – of transportation (cars, buses, trains), of equipment (cranes, conveyor belts, larry cars), of people (flowing in and out of the gates at shift change)—of the bustling works (employing about 16,000 people) of the 1960s and 70s. They describe the terrifying beauty of the steelmaking process, "the dirt, the dust, and the noise to me was like a big band, and poetry, and music, and everything else. I mean, it was just a fascinating place."

The workers that made up the citizenry of the mill themselves constituted a wide variety of (mostly) men. Some, attracted to the plant by the high wages, came to the mill after college, others had not finished high school. Some were recent immigrants to the Valley, some fourth

generation steelworkers, others commuted back and forth daily from the northern coal country. Some came to the mill eager to work at a job they aspired to, others saw their steelwork job as a temporary means of making money. Some were motivated to make money, others wanted to learn craftwork in the mill, and many were motivated to do both.

The male world of the steel mill had its own etiquette of eating, bathing, practical joking, and hygiene, its own understandings of proper social behavior, its own culture of the mill, and its own moral economy. The mill was different than what some workers called the "real world," and for many, the world of the steel mill was more real, a world where masculine working class identity and solidarity was built through work and leisure. This was different than the middle-class lifestyle that many workers lived outside of the mill, where union workers and middle managers often lived next door to each other in suburban neighborhoods far removed from the sights and sounds of the mills, and where workers nurtured identities as homeowners, petty entrepreneurs, husbands, fathers, and volunteers in their communities.

The culture of the mill was informed by and embedded in wider regional and national processes as evidenced in the patriarchal structure of the mill, the privileges given to whiteness, masculinity, and native-born status; and the measurement of skills through testing and the credentialing of formal education. These are just a few of the ways that hierarchies of power in mainstream society were built on and reproduced within the mill. But the world of the mill also shaped and built a male working class culture, and a moral economy, a web of relationships of exchange and redistribution, often unequal, "that are governed primarily by morality…or by ethics governing a particular vision of the good life." (Ong 2006:199) Out of this heterogeneity of workers--through their work in the mill and through inhabiting the spaces of this city within a city--a collective, white working class (that at times incorporated raced and gendered "others") and a citizenry of the steel mill was built.

The moral economy of the steel mill incorporated an understanding of shared norms and responsibilities, of the economic roles of both workers and management, and of proper and ethical behavior in the workplace (see Thompson 1963; Scott 1976). This cultural understanding was forged in shop floor production and in the wider "public' spaces of the mill to frame an

understanding of the rights and responsibilities of the worker, the bosses, the corporation, and the union and union officials. These understandings were compromises, informed by earlier regimes of morality (welfare capitalism, for example), and reached through social struggle, a "moving equilibrium" held together by shared understandings; and built through common institutions, habits, and practices (such as the grievance process, crew work, practices inhabiting space). The political culture of the mill was transformed and formalized through the union (through the mechanisms of collective bargaining and the grievance process); internalized in workers' belief systems and ideologies; enforced through informal practices of reciprocity, obligation and redistribution; and materialized in redistributive practices such as cost-of-living increases and pension benefits. In this chapter I focus on the ways that specific habits, practices, and ideas of solidarity, seniority and citizenship informed the construction of value, and shaped a moral economy of the steel works.

This moral economy shaped a world in which workers could live and work with some dignity and respect, garner self esteem and self confidence, feel that they earned just pay for the work that they did, and live what they defined as a good life. Of course, these understandings also excluded many—African American workers, Latino workers, women workers—relegating many groups to second class citizenship within the mill. The moral economy of the mill was also rooted in broader understandings that shaped a national labor-capital accord, affecting workers' lives and shaping their understandings outside of work. This broader "compact" or hegemonic order in Fordist society generated a set of understandings of what was socially just: that workers' wage increases were good for the whole society. Workers who could purchase homes in the suburbs and buy automobiles, refrigerators, and washing machines fueled American economic growth and the growth of a stable and just society. These understandings, forged out of struggle and compromise, came to be supported by the wider consensus of the community. A moral consensus of the value of a middle class society, in which hard work at a family wage would earn a middle class standard of living and economic citizenship, structured a broader moral economy. Mike Davis (1986) describes this period as an "armed truce" between labor and capital, a period in which an historical bloc constructed consensus based on some major exclusions, but

legitimating the social order. It is crucial to understand the moral economy of the mill, and its relation to the moral consensus in the broader society, to understand the capacity for indignation, betrayal, and affront that accompanied the long term processes of disinvestment, restructuring, downsizing, and eventual closing of the world of the mill.

In this chapter, I will examine how the values, norms and expectations of this moral economy were codified into internal law through the union contract, enforced and shaped through the internal institutions and mechanisms of the union, and built through work crew habits and practices, and leisure time activities. The union codified, built on, and validated some understandings of solidarity, seniority, and citizenship while ignoring others. And these, in turn, shaped worker interpretation of deindustrialization.

Citizenship

Within our legal system, through the mechanisms of private property and the wage contract, the corporation is given privileged "rights" of citizenship, rights that are tempered through the legal apparatus that recognizes the rights of unions as manifested through collective bargaining agreements. However, through the wage contract, workers are seen as having what has been described as "economic citizenship," defined by Alice Kessler-Harris as "an independent and relatively autonomous status that marks self respect and provides access to the full play of power and influence that defines participation in a democratic society" (2001). Steelworkers attained "economic citizenship" through the wage contract (although we will see that many of those rights – pension, health care, access to credit and mortgages, right to work—have been erased by processes of deindustrialization). The "economic citizenship" of the family wage gave steelworking men rights within their communities and families, with many women accessing a secondary "social citizenship" as mothers and housewives (Shklar 1998). But the union, as well as informal ways in which workers laid claim to the spaces of production and control over the labor process, also recognized and supported worker rights within the mill. I will argue that workers felt a certain citizenship "right" to the space of the mill, the space of production, to the "city within a city" that they worked in for much of their lives.

While the steel mill is set up as a distinct entity in which the company, the corporation, "makes most of its own rules and laws," operating as a closed fiefdom within the larger city, steelworkers also made claims on space, time, production, and social reproduction in the mill. Although the corporation did attempt to exercise a tight control over this space--banning entry with gates and guards, barring photography, preventing workers from leaving during their work shifts, and instituting all kinds of rules and regulations for the use of space—workers nonetheless found ways to use this space in a myriad of creative ways. In building spaces of everyday living as well as of production within the mill, workers constructed an ownership of mill spaces, a right to the mill.

Steelworkers were involved in not just producing steel, but in building the plant buildings; repairing, maintaining, and building plant machinery; generating electricity and water for the plant; patrolling the plant; delivering the mail; running the buses; and maintaining the grounds. They kept the city within a city running, and in so doing built a place for themselves. Workers held political rights through the union, economic citizenship as manifested in the family wage, and felt inhabitance rights as dwellers within the mill.

Bethlehem steelworkers themselves built many of the buildings and mills installed at the works. The "capital investment" for building materials was supplemented by the creative labor of steelworkers in producing the spaces of production in the steel works. Workers installed new roofs, maintained buildings and machinery, and built new buildings and mills throughout the plant. Although building work was sometimes contracted out, at other times Bethlehem Steel workers constructed the new mills and buildings such as the new 12 and 14 inch rolling mill built in 1975, or worked with outside contractors to do parts of the work. Charlie Richter describes working on this enormous job as a rigger:

> A job like that is going to be day shift and middle shift. Very little night shift. Day shift was installing, excavating, and pouring concrete. And we would have to as riggers, put the rebars in and carpenters would make the form and that was a length of a football field. It was a very good job.

Charlie took great pride in helping to build this mill, in the new, innovative technology and the complex variety of workers' skills needed in building it. "This was going to be a first: belt driven and high speed. It was going to be spectacular. It was."

In addition, workers worked in those buildings, learning the nuances of the machinery, and repairing and maintaining the gigantic machinery used in making steel. Dennis Mayer agreed that workers felt an ownership of the mill,

> Yeah, even if you didn't build it, if you earned a living on it. And you know there was a effort in the Partners for Progress, where when we didn't have work as riggers, carpenter, and pipe shop, we were going to salvage those buildings. The company never got into that. They wouldn't get us the equipment we needed. Like, they didn't believe.

Knowledge, expertise, and practiced activity with the machinery gave workers a feeling of ownership or claim to buildings and machines. Workers took pride in the massive scale of much of the machinery, and the specialized knowledge required to run it. Workers delight in nuanced measurements (lengths, diameters) and weight capacities of machinery and engineering details of furnaces and mills and they highlight these in their descriptions of work.

Workers also worked in making the wide variety of steel products that the Bethlehem plant was known for. Steelworkers felt competent in production, and took pride in their competence—confident that their skills in producing steel were crucial in the success of the plant. Within the complex division of labor at the mill, certain production jobs (such as the heater at the blast furnace) were widely recognized as highly skilled jobs, essential to producing quality steel, and demanding respect. Workers' productive skill is also recognized and defined in relation to the skill of other workers, as produced through collaborative crew work. Any individual worker is not capable of undertaking major production, construction or repair projects at the mill, but because of the knowledge that all workers had, the complex division of productive labor within the plant, workers had enormous confidence in their ability to successfully produce and build almost anything. Dennis Mayer says

> My brother used to say at the Bethlehem plant we could have made an automobile with everything except the tires. We didn't have the means of producing synthetic rubber. But even the glass, we had sand that could have been manufactured into glass, our carpenters could have fabricated the dashboard, the steering wheels, things like that, the trim, the engine could have been cast in machine. Everything needed to build an automobile was there except the tires.

But this immense power and self sufficiency of the mill, in this example, was built out of the interdependence of workers with different skills working together to produce a final product.

Workers in the crafts took pleasure in "the human delight in making useful things" (Cockburn 1983). Workers had pride in the product that they created. Tom Urban describes the work his father did, both at New Jersey Zinc and doing construction projects around the town that they grew up in

> My dad used to, besides working at the zinc company, he learned how to lay brick, block, and stone so there's lots of places standing that my dad built. And I just have a lot of admiration for that. And I kinda said to myself, jeez, there's nothing standing that I ever built besides my shed. But then again, there's my beads of sweat on some of the I beams in buildings, so that's something to look back on.

Workers mobilize a producerist ideology in which productive manual or mechanical work, making the things that build the country, gives a "moral claim to the dignity of all work and to a decent living for anyone willing to do it" (Doukas 2003:111). At the Bethlehem plant, pride in productive work was linked with nationalism, as Bethlehem steel products went into military production, skyscrapers, and bridges, building the landscape that represented U.S. hegemony. The flagship status of the Bethlehem plant, as the birthplace of the second largest steel company in the U.S. and the producer of America's armaments and infrastructure, was a central component in workers' perspective, and was mobilized by workers to legitimize the importance of their work. Steelworkers expressed this sentiment clearly: "you were part of the history, of the building of a nation, and that was part of your everyday life" (Behum 2010:486). Workers cite the Empire State building, the New York City skyline, the Golden Gate Bridge, and a wide variety of military ships and weapons as evidence of the importance of the plant's production in building America, and they link the decline in America's strength, both at home and overseas, to deindustrialization, citing the 9/11 collapse of the World Trade Centers and the Minneapolis bridge collapse as due to lack of support for the domestic steel industry. But even this claim varied within the plant, as Fred Bachman explained, emphasizing differences between production and maintenance workers, "the guys that melted the steel, forged, rolled the steel, they all take credit for building tanks, guns, ships, skyscrapers, Madison Square Garden. But the craft guys—you have to use your intellect, ingenuity, and experience to make order out of chaos." Many production workers highlighted their central position in the work of producing America's strength.

A workplace culture that produced and prioritized these values of seniority, citizenship, and solidarity meant that many workers did not accept the company's assertions that departments in the mill were not profitable. Over and over again, workers asserted that various departments at the South Bethlehem plant continued to be profitable, even as they were being closed. This was not just true of the Bethlehem plant, but is characteristic of plant closings, that both workers and the union believed that these plants were profitable and productive (Weinbaum 2004; Lynd 1987; Hathaway 1993; Geohegan 1991; Juravich 2009), and that it was worker productivity, worker skills, and worker knowledge that made plants productive. A recent global upsurge in plant occupations and resistances to plant closings highlight this concern. For example, workers who occupied the Republic Window and Door plant in Chicago in 2008 refuted owners' claims that the plant simply was not profitable. Workers stated that they would "make money by keeping us open" (Luo and Cullotta 2008). In Youngstown, steelworkers protesting plant closings in the 1980s argued breach of contract in court: that concessions obtained from managers to restore plant profitability in the promise of keeping the plant open were broken. Profitability was restored through union concessions and worker creative activity, but the plant was closed anyway, resulting, they claimed, in a breach of contract (Lynd 1987). In these forms of resistance, steelworkers accept the capitalist profit motive, that the plant must be profitable. But they argue that their knowledge, skill, and labor are what make the plant profitable, even in highly difficult circumstances (which they define as capitalist disinvestment in the plant). Barry Kirk, a worker at the Bethlehem coke works, is highly critical of the company's claims that they had to close these works due to lack of profitability. Barry argues, "Our coke was the best—in Bethlehem. Other plants were importing Chinese coke. It was cheaper, but not of the same quality. We had a customer base, we were selling to Ford's steel plant for the auto industry. We met the goals, but they still shut us down." Disinvestment is interpreted by these workers as antithetical to the basic premises of capitalism, and workers argue that even in the face of capital disinvestment and corporate managerial incompetence, worker experience, skills, solidarity, and knowledge of the plant ensure productivity.

Although the legal system defines the space of the mill as the private property of the corporation, workers also developed a sense of ownership or rights to the space of the mill itself. The mill was a gigantic space, that including different shops and departments, roads and trails, a built environment as well as a "natural" landscape. Dennis Mayer says he would not have been happy working in a factory:

> If I was a kid, that grew up, I could never work in a factory. I liked the outdoors. That's why I chose forestry when I went to school. I didn't want to be confined. But the steel mill wasn't like working in a factory—where you're making shirts, or making stoves, or making refrigerators. That was a big place. There was a lot of outdoor space and things. Between the buildings and things like that. …we walked to most of our jobs.

This giant expanse, as described earlier, contained spaces for social reproduction (for eating, sleeping, washing up, spending leisure time) as well as spaces of steel production, and workers felt an ownership and right to these spaces. The sprawling outdoor space; the enormous, dangerous machinery; the complex division of labor inside the plant; the struggle for control of time and space (through sleeping, cooking); and the exercise of competency and skills in production generated a feeling of control over the process of steel production and the space of the mill itself.

Workers struggled to control the space of the mill, the jobs they did there, and the time of the working day, although they did so within the terms and conditions of capital. They built into the spaces of production space and time for making and eating meals, taking naps, showering and washing up, in addition to making steel. The structuring of time in steel production – the swing shifts accompanying the continuous production of a steel mill—meant that workers were at the mill at all hours, weekends as well as weekdays, on holidays, and during blizzards. When demand increased, with no new workers hired, the mill demanded more overtime, and workers doing double shifts needed to catch sleep on the job, eat most of their meals at the mill, and reproduce their own labor internally to the plant. To this end, workers creatively used and constructed time and space at the mill.

The outdoor space of the steel mill, because it sprawled across so much land, embraced a variety of landscapes, including agricultural landscapes. Workers walked the land, they explored the geography (and they love to talk about the geography of the plant with co-workers,

just as long-time residents of a city do), they took disallowed photos, and they kept material keepsakes from the plant. Charlie Richter describes the landscape of the plant:

> But them buildings out there at East Lehigh, when we were going out there in my time there was a lot of peaches, pears and apples. Trees that were out there. Oh my God, lots of trees. It was all farmers fields before. They never tore them down. No, they let them grow, and they were good peaches. On middle shift we used to go out with our truck and pick peaches. There was another place up at Blue Mountain, where number two press forge was. There were two pear trees in the back. I used to fill a shopping bag half up with pears. I'd go past the cop at the gate. He'd ask, what do I have in the bag? He'd look inside, stick his hand in and get two, three pears. Out the gate I went. He didn't say nothing.

The East Lehigh section of the plant was an open, natural area with deer and other wildlife. Workers called this area "the cabbage patch" after the gardens that steelworkers cultivated on the hillsides in the summer time. Workers would fend off the deer, and harvest and cook the vegetables that they grew there, especially on weekend shifts when there were fewer supervisors present.

In addition, workers literally constructed their own personal spaces within the mill, using the variety of steelwork skills. They built heaters to warm themselves in the winter, cookstoves to make elaborate meals, coffee machines to brew their morning coffee, and "beds" on which they could lie down to nap. In the "primitive," dirty, and unrefined spaces of the steel mill, workers literally built the technology to support their leisure activities and social reproduction within the mill. And, using that technology, they often took on roles that, at home, were assigned to wives, such as cooking. Because middle shift was worked during the dinner hour, workers came up with creative ways to prepare elaborate meals at the mill. Although "the company" did not want you to have "no refrigerator, no stoves, nothing," men found ways to cook. "I saw guys bring bacon in to eat…raw bacon I saw men bring in. They put it on the radiator, steam heat, and they cooked the bacon, sliced bacon and it worked." The electricians would make elements for workers, "you had to know somebody. We had one made, 5 or 6 of them slots, steel plate, and then put a cover on like a grill, and on each end were the wires you plugged in." Coffee was made, out in the field, using these constructed hot plates. Maintenance workers on middle shift designed their own division of labor, in which some members of the gang went off to do repair jobs, leaving one back to finish preparing their evening meal. Workers describe "one pot" stews, which workers would

contribute ingredients or money for, as well as more elaborate meals, “we even did a little bit of baking.” Workers often used leisure activities outside of work – hunting and fishing--to bring in ingredients for steel mill dinners.

When workers came in on holidays, meals might be more elaborate. Dennis Mayer describes Thanksgiving at the steel mill:

> somewhere in the welding rod oven or somewhere, there’s a turkey cooking. And you sit down with your other family, namely the guys you work with, from 12 until quarter to one or one o’clock, you’re eating a turkey dinner with all the trimmings, because some guy was a good cook. A lot of times that fell on me, because from the Boy Scouts and stuff, I could cook on open fires. It wasn’t hard in the steel mill to find a hot place that you could roast a turkey or a ham or something like that.

Cooking became a masculine activity, as it entailed building the cook stoves, and cooking over open fires. The cuisine and style of cooking was masculine, with an emphasis on meat, potatoes and wild game, and associated with the “grilling” that husbands did for family picnics at home, and were socialized into, learning from their fathers or boys’ organizations like the Boy Scouts.

Bruno documents similar leisure time activities in his study of Youngstown steelworkers, finding that “time to eat, cook or throw ringers had to be stolen from productive space” (Bruno 1999:67). Social activities like gambling (cards, numbers games, and sports pools); opportunities for conversation, practical jokes and horseplay; time and space for napping and cooking; and time to pursue hobbies (one Bethlehem worker designed and made special accoutrements for his Harley Davidson motorcycle in the machine shop) were created. “Workers had ample opportunities to turn parts of the plant into places where they could satisfy their social needs” (Bruno 1999) and these social, leisure activities further built solidarity. The more workers could exercise control over timing of work – by avoiding “make work,” dividing tasks among crew members, and completing jobs quickly to produce leisure time--the more free time and public space they created at the mill. Informal economic activities such as sports pools and petty entrepreneurship also took place in the mill. Workers lived everyday lives within the space of the mill.

Workers who worked a great deal of overtime, or worked under extremely hot conditions, had to find ways to recharge and keep going. On many jobs, there were breaks in the work pace

during the middle or night shift, where workers grabbed catnaps. Workers would use "planks and boards all over the place…as beds" and grab a nap after an extremely hot job, or on a long night shift. Workers used analogies to explain this to outsiders or bosses, comparing the pacing of and control over their work time and space to working as firefighters or to managing a sports team – that it was important that workers be prepared to work when work was needed; that they control the pace of their own work, and not be given "make work" to fill down time. Workers argue that in conditions of highly strenuous labor, and during slow periods of work or long overtime shifts, catnaps were necessary to recharge the worker. But workers' use of mill space for what society defines as leisure activities was not supported by the union, not written into the contract. As a result, workers had to negotiate their right to space and time with foremen, using strategies such as slow down to educate problematic foremen.

But the use of mill space for these activities of everyday living is turned against steelworkers by the wider community. Workers' cooking on the job and taking catnaps is cited as evidence for their laziness and lack of motivation, as exemplifying an "attitude" of unionized workers, that, in the most extreme manifestation of this argument, resulted in the demise of Bethlehem Steel and the closing of the plant. Lieber, in his book on National Steel's Weirton steel plant, quotes CEO Jack Redline as complaining that the Weirton plant was out of control, "was being run by the union" with poor safety, paraphrasing Redline citing as evidence "that men were sleeping, drinking and holding 'steak-fries,' hot-plate barbeques in the mill during work" (1995:45). This use of company space (private property) and company time (the wage contract) was cited as evidence for an undisciplined, unproductive work force. The very activities that Dudley describes as manifesting skill on the shop floor, and workers describe as reenergizing the worker – for example wresting leisure time from management through finding shortcuts--are represented and perceived as laziness and a lack of attention to quality by the wider culture. However, this seizing of leisure time also does build citizenship rights to the space of the mill, to the inhabitance of the city within a city, which, while often not recognized by mainstream society, is a powerful font of workers' feelings of citizenship rights. This mainstream antimony makes it very difficult, however, for steelworkers to translate their feelings of a "right" to the mill as

manifested through the appropriation of space for everyday living into a political stance in concert with wider community-based organizations or institutions, and, instead, was used to undermine community support for steelworkers in the Lehigh Valley.

This participation in the plant, the building of the plant, doing the work of producing steel, the creation of a space for activities of social reproduction and leisure time all contributed to the strong sense of ownership, of a right to the plant, on the part of workers. When the plant was abandoned, being scrapped, and a casino being built at one end of it, Will Hornack said he felt devastated when he drove by. Who had asked him for his permission to transform this space? "When I drove by" the mill "it was kind of like, I can really compare it to, to the Indians when they were here. We took their land and did stuff, but driving by like that, you get the feeling, cause I was there for 30 years, you kinda feel like, hey, that's my land! Look what they're doing with it." These feelings of ownership did mobilize political opposition to bringing Brandenburg Industrial Services in to demolish the plant and fueled opposition to some re-development efforts on the site of the works in post industrial Bethlehem.

In addition, workers at the steel mill attained formal citizenship rights in the steelworks through the capital-labor accord, regulated and managed by the union. This citizenship was formally recognized and legislated through the institutions and mechanisms of the "internal state," the collectively-bargained and union-administered rights of the worker. Understanding the role of the union to recognize citizenship rights is complicated, as the business unionism of the 1960s and 70s recognized some workers' rights as citizenship rights, while simultaneously undermining other sources of worker power, creativity, and solidarity. The wider legislative structure of the "external" state, as well as the internally defined laws and institutions of the union, delineated a system of governance, including defining which aspects of labor-management relations could be collectively bargained and formally adjudicated or grieved. The "right to work," the work contract, earned the worker certain rights of citizenship inside of work (the right to a degree of health and safety, the right to a degree of control over work conditions, the right to a fair wage) as well as outside of work (health care, pension, unemployment benefits). For workers, the union defined an internal citizenship, within the plant, that produced real power and benefits for Fordist workers,

and that defined a moral economy of expectations, rights and obligations in the relationship of employer to workers.

There is a significant literature that is critical of the role of unions in the Keynesian-Fordist post WW II order. Antonio Gramsci has a cogent critique of the role of unions in working-class movements (in his examination of the Italian case), analyzing both unions and political parties as inextricably tied to the broader logic of the capitalist system, and therefore unlikely to function as a milieu for building counter-hegemonic good sense (1971). For Gramsci, the Italian unions failed to be sufficiently progressive, defining workers' interests narrowly as strictly economic. Therefore, although the trade unions began as more radical organizations, they ended up functioning to mediate relations between workers and capitalists within an accepted capitalist system, thereby aiding capitalist accumulation. For Gramsci, the trade unions accepted the logic of the capitalist order, "trade unionism stands revealed as nothing other than a form of capitalist society, not a potential successor to that society. It organizes workers not as producers, but as wage-earners, i.e. as creatures of the capitalist, private property regime, selling the commodity labor" (Boggs 1984:79). Trade unions, through acceptance of the collectively bargained contract, take as natural a legal system that recognizes a contractual relationship between workers and capitalists around wage-earning, fetishizing, rather than questioning, that relationship. Gramsci was also critical of unions for dividing workers into crafts (or into unionized vs. non-unionized sectors) rather than uniting workers into a broad working class, and for developing a bureaucratic structure that distances union leaders from the rank-and-file. Gramsci devoted much of his writing to questions exploring how to support, produce, and foster democratic, progressive forms of worker organization, organizations that could build on and develop a collective good sense within the factories. Gramsci was interested in factory councils, forms of organization that would be less bureaucratic, more democratic, and that "embraces the whole working class" (Adamson 1980:75) as potential locuses for worker political education, organization, and the construction of an alternative culture.

Contemporary critics of the role of labor unions in what the autonomista school defines as the "Keynesian productivity deal" agree with Gramsci's critiques (Cleaver 1979; Tronti 1966).

Autonomistas criticize unions in the post WW II period as participating in a productivity deal between government, business, and unions in which wage increases for workers (again accepting the premise of labor as a commodity) became tied to increases in productivity, and unions directed working-class struggles towards collaboration with increases in capitalist productivity. The union collaborates with capital through defining their constituency narrowly (rather than using a broad-based concept of the working class), and through the acceptance, in the collective bargaining system, of the wage system, the limiting of what can be bargained for, and the rejecting of direct action (strikes, demonstrations, sit ins, and sabotage) (Yates 2009). For the autonomistas this squelching of direct action is particularly problematic, as it is the refusal to work (to provide the creative labor that fuels all capitalist growth) that is the real power of the working class. This "deal" is shored up with government legislation like the Taft Hartley bill, banning many forms of direct action and narrowly defining and circumscribing union powers.

Social scientists have built on this critique of business unionism. We have seen that Michael Burawoy (1979) shows how worker consent is produced under the Fordist, union-regulated order of this period, how workers are motivated to increase capitalist productivity through competitive "shop floor games" speeding up production that union-approved piece work and incentive pay systems encourage. Burawoy argues that worker solidarity is undermined through a grievance system that individualizes worker's issues (rather than treating them as collective issues). Scholars argue that the bureaucratic structure of unions divided them from the rank-and-file, and union leaders become coopted through social mobility and shared interests with the professional middle classes (Davis 1986; Moody 2007; Lichtenstein 2003). In this bureaucratic system, leadership becomes more interested in serving only the interests of the constituents that elect them, not of a broader working class, and since the contract limits issues that can be bargained or grieved, broader-based solidarities and alliances extending outside the plant are discouraged (Lichtenstein 2003; Moody 2007). In addition, the union acceptance of the dominant definition of waged work divides the working class—splitting the waged from the non-waged, and obfuscating the exploitation inherent in unwaged work within the factory (in the form of surplus labor value) (Cleaver 1979) as well as of non-waged workers (housewives, informal

economy workers) (Kessler-Harris 2001). In addition, a "servicing" model for unions leads to longer term contracts, negotiated by union officials and experts with little rank-and-file participation (United Steelworker members do not ratify contracts), and further distances union officials from the rank-and-file (Durrenberger 2007).

Inside the plant, the union often legitimized fractures and divisions within the working class (even while simultaneously building, at times, broader solidarities). At the Bethlehem plant, three different locals represented workers in different divisions, ensuring different elections and different representation for most maintenance vs. production workers (widening the division between workers). Departmental (as opposed to plant-wide) seniority legitimized pay and promotional differences along racial and ethnic lines (until the 1974 Consent Decree). And defining wage bargaining in terms of percentage increases actually contributed to wage differences between higher-paid and lower-paid jobs (again often linked to racial and ethnic divisions in the plant) (Aronowitz 2003).

While these analyses point to serious issues with business unionism, and are extremely relevant to our understanding of the failure of unions to effectively stop processes of deindustrialization, they fail to recognize some of the real benefits that workers realized in the Keynesian productivity deal, as well as some of the real struggles and resistances that continued within the plant. Worker gains from business unionism continued throughout the 1970s at the Bethlehem plant, including increases in wages and benefits; union-backed legislation that resulted in Medicare, Medicaid, OSHA, and ERISA; and improved working conditions. But these gains were often predicated upon rapid growth, an economy in which "there seemed to be no conflict between consumption and accumulation, labor and capital, equity and growth—the essential harmonies of affluence" (Stein, 2010, 25). The hegemony of the labor-capital accord within (and outside of) the plant should not be reified. We need to understand this as a "moving equilibrium" in which worker struggle is responded to by capital strategies. For example, management speedup strategies in the 1970s were responded to by labor militancy, leading to new management tactics that resulted in the concessions and restructurings of the 1980s (Moody 2007; Lichtenstein 2003). This perspective recognizes the ongoing struggle, on a shop floor often

not completely controlled by union bureaucrats, which defines or shapes labor-management relations. In addition, even while power and benefits wrested by workers from capitalists in this process changed workers' lives outside the mill, contributing to suburbanization, home-ownership, college education for children, and health and pension benefits, they also contributed to greater control over the labor process inside the mill (see Chapter One). These real benefits to workers formed the basis for legitimacy of the union, for a union-regulated moral economy through which workers understood fair and just relations.

The union-defined mechanisms of the internal state did give workers very real power within the mill, giving them control over not only wage and benefits, but over many of the conditions of work. Workers knew that they could use the grievance process to protest unsafe working conditions, changes in their working conditions or the expectations of their job, and changes in their incentive pay, all important aspects of control over their own labor. Although some analyses of business unionism have represented the grievance process as "individualizing shop floor issues" (Burawoy 1979) (and they often did do this), these grievances *could* be used to transform work conditions, not just for the individual grievant, but for all workers doing the job. Work terms and conditions were delineated in the collective bargained contract, and workers felt empowered to control many of the terms and conditions of their jobs. Jack Metzgar describes how this worked for his steelworking father. "Specific work rules and working conditions were crucial to him, and he had a way of dividing them from wages and benefits, a way that coincided with the split between work and family that was so much a part of 1950s culture. The wages and benefits were for the family; the working conditions, for him alone" (Metzgar 2000:37).

In protecting workers' rights to not only bargain for wages and benefits, but to control many of the aspects of their own jobs inside the plant, the union ensured worker citizenship within the plant, shoring up worker self respect and giving opportunity for voice in the workplace. The granting of "economic citizenship" to skilled, white workers such as steelworkers, ties many social benefits (health care, unemployment insurance, pensions) to jobs, and defines these workers as independent, autonomous citizens (Kessler-Harris 2001) outside the plant, supporting families through the family wage. While many of these rights gave male workers citizenship outside the

mill, inside the steel mill, the protection of workers' jobs and the conditions of their work through the contract (seniority, Article 2B (past practices), Article 14 (safety)) and the grievance process gave workers a "freedom" at work, a sense of citizenship rights within the mill and of control over the conditions of their work that they lacked pre-union. John Wister describes this feeling at the Bethlehem plant:

> I'm sure maybe it's because it's human nature, you remember pleasant things and forget unpleasant. But I always say, I never, it wasn't hard for me to go to work. We had fun. We were just—it was like a happy group. Part of that, I'm sure, was because of the union atmosphere. I used to work for a personal friend of my father's. He yelled at me in a day more than I ever got yelled at in 33 years at Bethlehem Steel. There was a certain freedom about the work: freedom of speech, freedom to express yourself.

John felt confident that he could grieve an infringement on his working conditions, and in doing that, using the grievance process, "the worst thing that can happen is everything stays the same. If you don't resolve it, you vent some of your frustrations."

And workers themselves contrast this freedom with the period before the union gained strength, when "employment at will," the power of the bosses to schedule, promote, and fire at will squelched worker voice, freedom, and self respect. The workers I spoke with had all worked with older workers, or lived with older steelworking family members, who educated younger workers through stories about work at the mill before the union. These morality tales emphasized the favoritism exercised before the seniority system. Workers talked about, in the pre-union days, the need to hold one's tongue "I would have been fired everyday," with my "attitude" and "big mouth," "you couldn't say nothing or you're going on night shift, you're going to work every weekend. They had ways to control you." Workers cite the pre-union lack of safety, "before the union there was very little safety precaution. Very little concern for the men, I think. You were more like a, it was like having a mule in a mine, if you dropped they just got another one." Workers refer to the pre-union autocratic management style that undermined worker dignity and respect, "there were some people that looked down on people because of their position in the labor force, and knowing if you didn't have regulations guiding them or telling them what to do, they would have been a lot worse than they were." There were many "general foremen that were not exactly what I would say polite when they talked to you, they would talk down to you. They wouldn't talk *to*

you, they would talk *down* to you." And the pre-union lack of rights and lack of legal recourse or backing to enforce rights, "the union backed me up…if I needed something or had problems, I went to the union." "The union were our lawyers, they were our defenders." While workers greatly appreciated the increased wages and benefits that came with union contracts, they also cited these changes in worker power, dignity, and voice in the workplace.

The union recognized citizenship rights, on the basis of work and union membership, within the mill. Union membership was a badge of citizenship related not just to voting. It codified skill and experience through seniority; it built plant-wide solidarity (post 1974) around common wages, benefits, and working conditions; and it generated a union identity in contradistinction to management. Belonging to the union gave one rights and responsibilities within the mill, a feeling of empowerment and voice, dignity and self respect. Al Trakas, who worked in the beam yard, said "the union gave you a self confidence that you had. You weren't just another number. You had rights and that type of thing." These rights empowered workers not only to use the formal mechanisms of the internal state, but to assert power informally as well, "when [the foreman] barked at me, I barked at him." Workers didn't hesitate to slow down work if unhappy, to "teach" autocratic foremen lessons, and even to directly confront foremen with their physical and collective strength. Andy Vanek, an ex-beam yard maintenance worker, tells a story that illustrates workers' assertive confidence. There was a worker in the beam yards, Andy says, who was notorious for never taking guff from anyone. A problematic foreman ordered him and his crew to go down into an especially hot and greasy pit to work on an unnecessary job. The worker, a big, tough guy, grabbed an enormous chain, held it aggressively up towards the foreman, and said "if we're going down there, you're coming with us." The foreman backed off, and the crew moved on to another job. Andy tells this story to illustrate the real power that some workers had, the power to directly confront management (in this case outside of the union process) using physical strength, assertive confidence, collective solidarity, and the threat of violence. Although this incident took place outside of a union-mediated process (i.e. it was "unlawful" and the worker didn't grieve the foreman's actions) worker confidence in his own power was forged in a work environment where workers had recognized citizenship rights. Union-

recognized citizenship gives workers the right to respect from others in the workplace, and if a foreman is seen as being disrespectful (in this case making an unreasonable and unjust demand), workers take action. Andy, who has worked at other jobs after the Steel, understands that this is a rare thing in neoliberal workplaces, and that it is hard for outsiders to understand the moral economy of the mill, "You wouldn't believe this happened, but these things did happen at the Steel."

In addition, although the larger, bureaucratic structure of the union might distance rank-and-file workers from union officials, some union officers (like shop stewards) had more direct contact with workers, and the grievance system was often used creatively to change working conditions for the collective. Jack Metzgar argues that shop stewards were very important in working directly with the rank-and-file, "when it works well a union steward system is a wonder of workplace democracy that blends thousands of face-to-face, grassroots encounters into a powerful national institution for collective action" (2000:49). Mike Davis (1986) agrees with Metzgar, arguing that management, increasingly, attempted to neutralize shop stewards (beginning in the 1970s) as stewards were using the grievance procedure to actually transform jobs and working conditions (i.e. not making those transformations through the collective bargaining process, but through the grievance process). Shop stewards at the Bethlehem plant give examples of strategies like flooding the system with grievances to change practices used by unjust foremen and citing Article 14 (safety) to bring production to a halt and cause re-evaluation of a job.

Charlie Richter relates using the grievance system to express a critique of the very underpinnings of the labor-capital accord: the acceptance of the wage agreement, of the commodification of labor. Charlie describes an incident in the 1990s, when Bethlehem Steel decided to incentivize a big gas job at the coke works. The incentive system had been expanded to include maintenance jobs in the 1970s, but doing the rate setting for this wide array of jobs was a long, slow process and, in Charlie's experience, this was the first time a gas job had been rated. The job, a multiple craft (pipefitters, riggers) job, entailed working on a gas pipeline, doing welding and repair work on lines carrying highly volatile and poisonous gases. Workers doing gas work

were required to have special training, special equipment (masks with piped-in oxygen), and special time constraints (frequent spelling on jobs). Charlie's first objection, shared with many workers, (although this was not grieved) related to the authority of rate setters' "expertise," "How do you rate something you never did? Where does he get that knowledge? What the hell does he know about rigger work?" Although management reserved the right to rate jobs, and the union granted them that right, battling between management and workers over rate setting is well-documented in steel mills as workers (who have the knowledge of how to do the job) try to confuse or deceive the rate setter, resulting in a favorable job rate. In addition to this issue, however, Charlie was morally outraged that a gas job was rated. He found this morally repugnant, to put a rate on such a difficult and dangerous job, "Nobody in the world is going to rate my life!" He did the job with his crew, slowly and carefully, but grieved it. The grievance must have baffled the union and the company, as it wasn't a safety grievance nor was it a dispute over the amount of the rate set. For Charlie, a gas job simply should not be rated. Workers on the crew need to work together, take their time, and ensure that the work is done well and done safely, that it is quality craft work. Rushing the job, or attempting to reduce crew size, common strategies used to increase pay on an incentive job, were antithetical to quality craft work and highly dangerous. Charlie's moral indignation at rating this job momentarily deobfuscated the assumptions of the entire wage contract, of the laborer as a wage earner, "Nobody's going to put value on my life with gas. That's my assignment, and nobody's going to value it….No. Nobody's going to do that to me or to the men that I work with." Charlie did not define this as a safety issue (Article 14), under which grounds he could have refused to do the job, since he felt he and his crew could do the job safely, if they did it at their own pace. In winning the grievance, however, both the union and the company must have been baffled by Charlie's response. When company representatives asked Charlie how he proposed the men be compensated, Charlie refused to answer that question, pay was not his purview, "it's at the company's discretion." But the men had to be paid for their work, how do you pay incentive pay for a job that cannot be incentivized? Charlie proposed that the company slip the pay into the men's paychecks, perhaps attached to another job, "the men will know where it came from." Charlie had no solution for the pay, because

although in most work he accepted the wage contract, this argument questioned the entire premise of wages for labor. Charlie's grievance may not have changed working conditions, since he says there were no other big gas jobs before the closing of the Bethlehem works, but it made a powerful moral statement, that workers' labor is more than a commodity, that craftspeople have the right to exercise their judgment and expertise in controlling the timing of this job, that there is no fair "wage" for a job like this.

Seniority

The principle of seniority was central to the organization of work at the Bethlehem plant, as the basis for promotion and layoff. The institutionalized concept of seniority defined skill quite differently than the concept of ability that management preferred to use in structuring an internal labor market of promotions and layoffs at the plant. With the first union contract at the Bethlehem plant in 1942, along with developing a codification of job classifications, the union institutionalized a seniority system in which workers' access to promotions and protection from layoffs would be determined by length of time on the job. This principle became a crucial organizing concept for steelworkers, not simply because it structured access to jobs, but also in the ways it invoked values about work and skill, and organized social relations within the plant.

Prior to unionization, steelworkers had long endured paternalistic systems of hiring and promotion that relied on favoritism to ensure exemption from layoff and access to promotion. Steelworkers were highly critical of these personalized systems, describing them as disempowering workers and undermining the respect and dignity that working men should have on the job. John Strohmeyer, editor at the *Bethlehem Globe Times* for 28 years, says that before the union "Seniority had no standing as company policy. In fact, favoritism on job assignments at Bethlehem Steel was an open scandal tolerated by the company" (1986:23). Nick Giacinto, a 92 year old steelworker who started at the plant in 1936, describes relations with foremen before the plant was unionized. He says he would be afraid to be called before his supervisor, because "they could swear at you, spit in your face, you had to take it."

John Wadolny, interviewed by John Strohmeyer in *Crisis in Bethlehem*, worked for 46 years in steel,

> At the Bethlehem Steel entrance off Emery Street, there were about twenty small wooden lockers reserved for foremen. The men who worked under them would come to work with eggs, chickens, half a hog, and so on and place them in their boss's [lockers]. It was expected at the time. If a guy wanted a better job, he was told to take care of his boss. And he did. [1986:24]

Nick agrees "there were a lot of farmers coming in in the 1930s. They could make more money at the Steel than they could on the farm. They'd bring stuff into the supervisors, they got the good jobs."

During times of scarce work, getting a job at the steel plant, and holding onto that job, was crucial, and systems of favors, payoffs, and patronage ensured jobs. Of course, this kind of access to jobs and promotions through favoritism was also shaped by discrimination. Bruce Nelson quotes from a 1950 report by Joseph Badzar, a local union official at Bethlehem Steel's Steelton plant, who related job access to racial/ethnic status. Those workers who were "recent immigrants or sons of immigrants, workers of the wrong religious denomination, workers who did not belong to certain fraternal lodges, and even workers who did not live in the same neighborhood as their foremen" simply did not get jobs (2001:209). Ethnic, religious, and community-based ties (distributed along racial and ethnic lines) constituted social capital to be mobilized in attaining a job and in job mobility.

The ways that this system of favoritism undermined worker dignity was symbolized through extreme, and perhaps apocryphal, stories illustrating foremen's power that are told and retold in the community. Strohmeyer relates one of these stories, as told, again, by John Wadolny.

> But the one thing that turned me strongly toward the union didn't happen at the plant, it happened outside. Now, remember, I'm eighteen. I come from a good Catholic family. I'm working in a section with a bunch of guys mostly in their thirties. I was invited to a party at the Holy Ghost Club where they had bowling. What I saw turned my stomach. Two or three of the foremen were there. They were getting all their drinks free. The steelworkers' wives were there too, several of them really beautiful girls. The foremen would feel them up, right in front of their husbands. You know, fondle their breasts and everything. No one would say a thing. I thought to myself: "Is this the goddamn way you have to get ahead in the steel company?"[1986:24]

Jack Metzgar (2000) the son of a western Pennsylvanian steelworker, relates a similar story, oft-told by his father to demonstrate the importance of the union:

> When work was slack during the Depression, before the union, foremen were in control of who worked and who didn't on any given day…To get work, workers would vie with each other to curry favor with foremen and superintendents. One fellow who had a reputation as a particularly good worker had been employed steadily during one period; to ensure his employment, he cut his foreman's grass in the summer and shoveled snow for him in the winter without pay; he also brought homemade kielbasa and other goodies to the foreman on a regular basis. One day the foreman ran into this worker while the worker was with his sixteen-year-old daughter, a particularly beautiful young woman, as the story goes. The next day at work the foreman, a married man with a family and himself only slightly younger than his employee, asked the worker if he could arrange a "date" with his daughter. The worker said he'd see and would let the foreman know the next day. The next day the worker arrived with a particularly large supply of freshly made kielbasa, but told the foreman he would be unable to arrange the date. At this point he was summarily fired and was subsequently without work for the better part of a year. [2000:33-34]

Both of these stories, extreme in the degree of humiliation communicated, were told and retold within their respective communities. The story in Strohmeyer's book came up a number of times in my conversations with people. The story was incorporated into Jay O'Callahan's one-man play, *Pouring the Sun,* depicting steelworking life in Bethlehem in the first half of the 20th century. This play has had a number of much-publicized showings in Bethlehem. These stories use graphic imagery to spell out a moral message. Metzgar describes his father as telling this story to illustrate the point, that before the union the worker "couldn't just say no," that "even in refusing the foreman's request, he couldn't 'stand up to him,' couldn't maintain his dignity" (2000:34). In these stories, a system based on favoritism, in which the worker had to ingratiate himself to his boss through gifts and subservient demeanor, undermined a worker's masculinity, his independence, and his role in the family as a protector of women's dignity, respectability, and sexuality. The steelworker's job was constructed as a masculine job, requiring strength, toughness, and the ability to tolerate hard, dangerous, dirty, work. But in the stories, the worker is emasculated by the foreman, highlighting the conflict in these pre-union times between the worker's responsibility as primary breadwinner (having to get a job to support his family during the depression) and his role as protector of feminine sexuality within the family, showing the worker caught in a double bind. They simultaneously expose the company's argument of "merit" or "ability" as grounds for promotion, and undermine the company's demand for "moral" workers.

Workers also describe the pre-union era as an era in which solidarity was undermined by the lack of seniority. Before the union institutionalized seniority, many jobs in the mill were

learned through informal apprenticeships. But, often the more senior, experienced workers were reluctant to share their skills, to teach the younger workers. They were aware that their only guarantee of job security--of continuing in the more desirable, more skilled positions; of avoiding layoff--was monopolization of steel-making knowledge (Cockburn (1983) also documents this for printers). Bethlehem workers who started at the works in the mid-1960s describe older workers who still worked that way – sending the younger workers out of the room when they performed the tricky and skilled components of the job, continuing to work as if seniority did not protect their jobs. John Wister describes

> the holder repairmen there pre-union, my department one time was predominantly Pennsylvania Dutch, shipping maintenance, they'd talk Pennsylvania Dutch and if they were discussing how to do a certain thing with a part, they'd go to Dutch or they'd send the helper, the young guy, "We need four bolts, go get them at the department." And you'd come back and the job would be done. "Oh, we got it, sorry." Pre-union your job depended on your being able to do more than the next guy…there wasn't the sharing of vital information.

John contrasted that to the mentoring and solidarity built into senior/junior relationships in the plant in the 1970s and 80s, "Now I walk in, an 18 year old, first day, 'come here kid, take this cap off, do this,' he's happy he can direct me. If there's a layoff, I'm going to be the first to go."

The union, the moral is, through struggles that many steelworkers and their families remember, through introducing and policing seniority, allowed the worker to maintain his dignity on the job, to be a breadwinner, to fill the role of patriarchal protector, and to be further empowered in that role as the family ideal of the stay-at-home housewife and mother came to be realized by many steel working families. The union replaced "ability" and favoritism with seniority as the dominant principle structuring the internal labor market.

Seniority institutionalized the principle of experience – as measured by time spent on the job, working the job in the plant, as paramount. Seniority became more important than the ability or potential ability measured by standardized testing or formal schooling, and given value or cultural capital in mainstream, professional middle class society. Experiential learning, in which workers were schooled by more senior, experienced workers either formally through apprenticeships or informally in everyday working relations, develops skill in workers. Richard Sennett (2006), in his analysis of working class culture, points out that although time and motion

studies as applied to the industrial labor process fragmented time into smaller units, long-term time was built into the institution of the factory through the valuing of these experiential skills as institutionalized in the principle of seniority. And skill, encoded as seniority, was respected. Andy Vanek, a beam yard worker at the Bethlehem plant, describes his first day on the job, as an 18 year old in 1964, walking by mills rolling file steel. The worker taking him around said "kid, you won't be working there. The only guys that work there are sacred cows. 'sacred what?' 'That's a guy with so much seniority that before the superintendent does anything, he talks to the guy to get expertise. Them guys really got whiskers.' 'They got what?' 'Whiskers. Seniority. Everything works by seniority." Danny Moreno says "in the Steel, seniority was number one. You respected everyone's seniority. You have more time, you're entitled to the job." And Ron Keschl says "when you picked up a job down there…it took you years to learn that job…it was not just like an ordinary off-the-wall job outside some place" (Behum 2010:305).

Respect for years of experience transcended the formalized union recognition of seniority as well. Workers had respect for the years that families had spent working at the Bethlehem plant. The "metal sense" or knowledge that is built up outside the plant, through working with grandfathers and fathers in their leisure time, is recognized inside the plant as family's "years of service." Nick Romero told me that many of his family members worked at the Steel "Oh my God, cousins, uncle, my God. Oh my God, we probably got over 500 years all combined." Charlie Richter's family is legendary in the community for having "441 years" of work (of father, brothers, sister) in the Bethlehem plant, and Charlie and his co-workers frequently cite that statistic as a way of validating Charlie's knowledge of the Steel and his expertise in steelmaking, as well as the moral weight of his commentary.

This is not to suggest that seniority is the only principle guiding the internal labor market. We have seen that initial job and departmental assignments, and even promotions, were influenced by the cultural capital of formal schooling and performance on standardized tests used in hiring and during the promotional process. Management represented "ability" as crucial in promotion. And long after the union introduced seniority as a central principle for hourly workers, supervisors continued to use nepotism in promoting hourly workers to supervisory positions (see

prior discussion of the internal labor market). Andy Vanek criticizes management's notion of "ability," arguing that favoritism and nepotism was rampant in the plant culture, "their idea of 'relative ability' was if you're my relative, you're hired." And, even with hourly workers, in the unionized workplace, standardized tests were vulnerable to manipulation in ways that seniority was not. Women and minority workers relate ways that tests were rigged to make it more difficult for them to move into certain jobs. Eddie Perez, a second generation Puerto Rican worker, described going for his welder's test. At that time, he said, "there were all Hungarians in that area. A Polish guy saw what was going on with the test, and took me aside. 'Try your hardest on that test. These guys don't want you to pass.' Well, I did and I tested higher than them. I had to prove myself and then they never bothered me—we were like a close-knit family."

Although seniority, for the most part, institutionalized a valuing of skills based in experience and learned through practice over time, the system was not perfect. As discussed earlier, departmental seniority as initially designed by the union, worked to keep racial and ethnic minority groups in less lucrative departments, it "institutionalized discrimination" against black and Latino steelworkers (Hinshaw 2002). Workers were trapped in more dangerous shops and departments with shorter promotional tracks and fewer highly skilled positions. The mentoring necessary in learning skills through experiential learning also could exclude minority groups (such as women) who found it difficult to get men to teach them necessary skills. In addition, random luck might determine one's relative seniority within an "age grade" of peers (if workers were hired on the same day, their birthday would determine seniority; workers relate stories of making a "lucky" decision to start work a day early, thereby gaining seniority on a number of their peers). This was not so important when steel production was robust, but with restructuring, downsizing, and internal and external transfers at the end of the plant's life, these small and arbitrary differences in seniority, that were not related at all to experience or skill, could have significant consequences for workers.

Transmission of skills from more experienced, more skilled steelworkers to younger workers occurred through explicit instruction, as well as through observation, imitation and practice. Sometimes men told younger men explicitly how to do things, sometimes neophytes

watched skilled workers. Charlie Richter says when he started at the steel mill right out of high school, a "big German guy" "he said to me, he called me schoolboy, and while he's talking he raised his hand with his finger, "schoolboy, you keep your eyes and your ears open and your mouth" [he zipped his lips] "you keep your mouth shut." I did that for the next thirty years." Charlie also describes learning different jobs at the press forge through observation,

> I used to watch the forger and all he did was, with three other men in a pulpit about 20' away from him, and all they did was give him hand signals, how to make the press come down. The traveling table would take the ingot in and out so much of a distance. It was amazing to watch. I asked the forger if I could watch him and he motioned to me, ok, but don't be in his way. I wasn't never in his way. It was amazing.

Charlie describes working as a younger worker, putting a crane up in the open hearth. The beams had to be put in up high, a dangerous job. So the foreman asked Charlie to stay on the ground the first day, and go up the second (about 150' up). The A leader took him up and said "'I'm going to put you right here and sit in this spot and do nothing but watch us work.'…I watched them…I seen what was going on."

Young workers, or "young pups" as they were often called, were taught work skills and moral lessons through participation and explicit instruction that included lessons on safety and attentiveness. Charlie describes a rigger teaching him how to work at heights, climbing up with him, showing him how to climb and how to work up high, "he was right there the first time I went up, he taught me a lot," but also teaching him how to think about dangerous work, "Your mind has to be there where you are. No other place. Not with your girlfriend, not going on the weekend. When you're walking in the open, you have to be there." In addition to skills and attitudes, workers learned workplace morality through formal and informal interactions with more senior workers. They heard morality tales about pre-union work at the plant, received lessons in how to work with co-workers, and learned techniques for putting foremen in their place. In short, through senior workers, they learned the moral economy of the mill.

Seniority also shaped social relations in the plant. Hirings in the plant occurred in large waves, when there were booms of demand in the steel market. At those times – in 1964, 1974/75, and 1978/79--large numbers of steelworkers were hired and started at the mill. These "age grades" of workers had similar levels of seniority, developed strong bonds as peers, and

moved into the lower laboring jobs within the plant, allowing the last “age grade” to move up into more senior positions. Respect for an older worker’s seniority was part and parcel of the culture, and “booms” in hiring were welcomed by senior workers, as it allowed them to move into less physically strenuous positions. As the Bethlehem plant moved into the 1980s, workers grew older. Bill Markus says that in 1979, when a lot of young guys came in, “it was like the bloom of spring. We loved it, you know, because we were moving up as these young guys were coming in and taking our place. It was short-lived” (Behum 2010:69).

For the younger workers, however, the hierarchy of the seniority system was difficult. After that hiring, there were no younger workers coming into the plant to relieve the more senior workers. John Wister said “It put a big physical demand on the employees that were there not having younger people. When I was younger, I would look at 50, 60 and think wow look how old these guys are. They would say [to the younger worker] can you swing the sledge hammer? We didn’t have the younger guys. Physically, it put a strain on us.” For the “class of ’79,” the last large hiring of the plant, these workers were always the junior workers, “The youngest got stuck in a position where I have twenty some years, but I’m still the youngest guy.” The centrality of the seniority principle meant it shaped skill hierarchies within work crews, “Every team, every group that you worked with, the older guys were the brains of the outfit, more or less directed the job; the middle guys did the work; and the younger guys were the gophers, they did the hard climbing and the heavy lifting and pulling and pushing and stuff.” (Behum 2010:474-475). In addition, the middle age cohort played important roles in mediating conflicting seniority-based interests (between old and young workers). In his book, *Striking Steel,* Jack Metzgar describes the role of these middle workers in enforcing practices and inculcating a morality of solidarity,

> The ability to stick together was something that had to be cultivated and enforced over time. If a younger worker was working too hard or too fast, my father would explain to him that he was working himself out of a job: ‘If you’re going to bust the rate, we’re going to have to bust it too, and guess who’s going to end up on the street.’ Or, if you were an older workers with solid seniority protection, you were ‘working some younger fella out of a job. [2000:114]

Younger workers had last pick on selection of vacation time, were junior in bidding on jobs, got last choice to be on crews for high incentive jobs, and in the Bethlehem plant, as no new workers were hired, were not able to mentor younger workers in a masculine workplace in which learning

was also a rite of passage into manhood. Although these conflicts related to seniority resolved themselves, over time, in the expanding manufacturing sector of the post WWII period, younger workers chafed at the deference expected towards more senior, more experienced workers in a workplace with no new workers (beginning in the 1980s). And as the middle age grade workers became senior (with retirements), there were less mediators to ensure that seniority interests did not trump solidarity. This, as well as the extreme pressure that younger workers who were ineligible for early retirement experienced, contributed to schisms in the Bethlehem plant, with deindustrialization and restructuring that coalesced along age grade lines.

Solidarity

Work in the steel mill is very different than work on the assembly line, as much of the work in the mill is done in work groups (called gangs or crews). Although, as we have seen, the steel mill has a complex division of labor. Work is performed differently depending on whether one works on production or in maintenance as well as the department or shop in which one works (in what part of the steel making process), and much steel mill work is performed by small groups of people. In work on some of these crews or gangs, workers can spend many, many years working with the same group of people. For many workers, who work on swing shift, "a work group…may remain on the same turn for years, always working through the temporal sequence with the same co-workers and foremen" (Kornblum 1974:45). Relationships with co-workers develop, through collaborative work, over long periods of time.

Ties of solidarity differ among groups of workers, depending on the age of workers, the amount of time the group has been together, the danger of the work, and the relation of work to steel production (Kornblum 1974). But feelings of "camaraderie" or solidarity are built into the social relationships of the work crew – the dependency on members of the crew through a skill hierarchy and division of labor to get the job done effectively, efficiently (and this might have a direct influence on pay rates), and to ensure safety in so doing. In working groups or crews collaborative work is necessary to get the job done safely, efficiently, and well. Crews entail a division of labor, as workers are not substitutable. But each has a different job that may require different skills, crew members are somewhat equal, they all contribute to getting the job done. In

dangerous work situations, safety depends not only on individual skill and awareness, but also on the skill and awareness of one's co-workers. Dave Campbell, who worked the same "turn" with his crew, was "with the guys 40 hours a week. You'd see them more than your family – days, middles, nights. I'd come home from work night shift, go to bed, wake up for supper, go back to work. When I worked double shifts, I'd get home, eat, at 3, I'd go right to bed and wake up at 9 in time to go to work, with my lunch packed." Working with the same crew, for so many hours, and so many years, produced an intimacy that facilitated collaboration. Howard Kovarik, a beam yard craneman, describes the intimate communication that develops among crew members, saying he didn't have to wait for signals from workers that steel was chained up, since "I worked so long, you work so long, with a certain group of men, and you seem to know each other's moves and everything."

In production jobs, skill could be measured, and collaboration built, through safety and speed of work. Bill Markus, a maintenance worker in the beam yard, says "camaraderie is pride that we had…proud of our safety that the guy we worked with didn't get hurt." But he also talked about the shop floor games that workers used to measure skill,

> we were on incentive, but our pride was to beat the other crew. There's always that one-upsmanship, and we used to, like the crew over there at 16 saw, that was Paradise. And then someone would holler 'trouble in Paradise.' There'd be an argument, whatever, someone don't agree, it wasn't going as smoothly as normally. They weren't all smiling. And then the other crew would pick up on that, and it would make them gear up a little more.

Bill's crew picked up on the break down in solidarity, in collaboration, in the neighboring work crew, and worked together to out-compete them, making a "game" out of shop floor production. But, in the steel mill, the competition of the games, while producing corporate interests in speeding-up production, simultaneously and contradictorily built gang solidarity (unlike the individualized assembly line games described by Burawoy), working-class strength that could be used to resist, subvert, and oppose management demands.

Maintenance workers took pride in working together to produce a quality result, to use skills of craftsmanship to produce a quality product, Bill, again, defines "camaraderie" as

> those guys were proud of fixing something, improving it, over say the product was Birdsboro, a big industrial company. I used to improve that. I improved on their patent by adding a little piece, okay, something we worked without for years

> and all of a sudden some millwright he welded up and said I can make this better, that's the kind of thing.

Maintenance workers could get machines up and running so production workers could get back to work; they could also innovate to make production workers' jobs easier. Maintenance workers worked collaboratively with production workers to get production going. Fred Bachman, a rigger, explains that "I could *not* fix the crane, and shut the operation down. But most skilled craftspeople just don't think that way. They know we're going to fix it, and not hurt production, because we'd be hurting our brother that was loading the steel too." Plant-wide solidarity, and solidarity uniting production and maintenance workers, is harnessed, in this case, to ensure productivity (i.e. used in the interests of the company), but it also builds strong working-class ties.

Principles of seniority (learning through mentoring and apprenticeship on the crew) and solidarity were reinforced through work on the crew. Charlie Richter, who worked more than forty years as a rigger, describes being a young apprentice rigger:

> When I was in the gang, I did whatever I was asked to do. If I didn't know how someone showed me the right way and the proper way so I wouldn't get hurt…After working awhile I started to climb around, hang some rigging. You never went alone. Always someone with you.

Charlie describes more senior gang members teaching him how to do the job.

> I learned so much, especially [working] on the furnaces, the camaraderie with the men, talking with each other, listening to each other, and helping each other. And who makes decisions on jobs…They were always looking for the other person; that they didn't get hurt.

On dangerous jobs, safety was a paramount concern, and included an awareness and responsibility for co-workers:

> We took our time, You have to. The other four men that were there with me, they were the best of buddies. You got to know each other. The camaraderie it was there. That played a big factor in the riggers. The camaraderie that you had with the man."

The camaraderie of co-workers ensured the job went smoothly and safely, even as the principle of seniority structured the division of labor within a gang. Young workers, "pups," were also hazed by more senior workers in coming-of-age rituals that initiated them into the crew and to manhood. Young "pups" were sent off by senior workers to "get a bucket of steam," a "left-handed wrench," or directed on long circuitous wild goose chases through the plant. But, if they

were able to make it through that hazing (and many new workers to Bethlehem Steel left after a few weeks, unable to tolerate the difficult schedules, the hard labor, or the hazing accompanying their junior status), they became a member of the group, and "once they accepted you, and you shown that you could cut the mustard…you became part of the family…both at work and over at the union hall…You became a family. You became a close-knit family" (Behum 2010:270). Workers look back on this process as a process of maturing into a man, "at the Steel, you had to man up," (Szarko, *Steelworkers' Archives*) pull your weight in the group, and watch out for the safety of yourself and others.

Jack Metzgar, a social scientist and the son of a steelworker, describes mechanisms for socializing workers into a culture of solidarity on work crews in his book *Striking Steel.* Metzgar argues that in the steel mill, although the conditions of working on a crew were conducive to developing strong social relationships, "the ability to stick together was [also] something that had to be cultivated and enforced over time" (Metzgar 2000:114). Work groups used various leveling mechanisms and informal sanctions to ensure that younger workers learn the moral economy of the work crew. Metzgar gives an example of how workers might have to discipline a co-worker who is behaving selfishly, not acting in the best interests of the group. On production crews an "incentive hog" is someone who is behaving selfishly by working too fast, thereby potentially causing a rate change that could affect everyone's pay or contribute to losing of jobs. This kind of worker is problematic. This worker's "selfish" behavior needed to be pointed out, usually first through explicit comments or teasing. If this did not work, the crew could mobilize "fellow workers to isolate, intimidate, and just generally harass the hog" (Metzgar 2000:114). These informal sanctions were mobilized to enforce egalitarian standards for moral behavior on the work crew.

Rewards were also built into collaborative work. Working on a crew meant working together in a way that ensured the crew earned good money, worked safely, and did a good job (could take pride in production). Cathy Kovarik, a woman crane operator in the beam yard, describes the things she would do to make a crew member's job easier. She learned to break the chain herself so that her chainman didn't have to walk long lengths of the beam yard. In return, the chainman would ensure that she didn't have to climb down from the crane unnecessarily,

saving her time and effort. These, along with other continual instances of reciprocity, of helping each other out, were an everyday part of crew work, and were returned by co-workers, building strong egalitarian social relationships. Working on a crew was not based on individual skills alone, instead it was a constant experience of dependence by workers.

Even though these mostly male, unionized workers took pride and gained prestige in the wider society as "citizen" wage earners who defined themselves as self reliant and autonomous at home in social statuses of independent homeowners and family wage earners (see Kessler-Harris 2001; Collins 2010), they recognized their dependence on others in their wage work. And this dependence on others at work was not experienced or defined as a weakness (in contradistinction to the dependence of women on the male breadwinner). In reality, of course, this male "self reliance" at home was predicated upon the work of wives in childcare, meal preparation, housework, maintaining kin relations, and, in most instances, wage work at various points in the life cycle. Dependence at work was defined as masculine and as a strength. An emphasis on danger, and the necessity of depending on one's co-workers for safety was often stressed using military metaphors like "being in the foxhole together" or "watching my back." Military metaphors for solidarity expressed the dependencies of solidarity within a masculine discourse of honor.

The moral compulsion to "look after the other person" and "help each other out" carried over into the more "private" living spaces of the workplace. Charlie Richter describes the ways that workers looked after each other in the welfare room, in the showers.

> Anyplace you took a shower and somebody saw something on you, you were told about it. You had anything on your feet, arms, back, private parts, you were told – honest. And you'd better do something about it. You'd better. Otherwise, you're not taking a shower.

Workers looked for any signs of infection or fungus that could spread in the shower, looking out for their own interests, but also for that of their co-workers. And workers helped each other out in the shower, helping clean hard to reach spots: "When you're taking a shower the dirt got behind your neck, down your back. Lots of times I was washing someone else's back with their washcloth, someone was washing mine. That was nothing new." Workers were especially solicitous of injured colleagues, "If guys would get hurt, and they'd need help in the shower, guys

would help them. They would. If you got burnt or something." The most intimate spaces of everyday living, care that might normally be gendered as female and reserved for wives or girlfriends, were spaces of masculine reciprocity, where strong, egalitarian social relationships were built.

These relationships within the crew were also built outside of work, whether it was at the bar after work, or going to family picnics and weddings. Louis Moran, a worker in the beam yard, said:

> I was just talking to a bunch of my friends about the Steel. It was a family. When you're associated with guys for so long, that was the hardest part, losing your, you know, you got away from your family. Because these guys, you grew up with them, you saw them get married, you went to their weddings, you saw their children grow up. You'd come into work, they'd say boy your kid did real good in football yesterday. Or your daughter, hey your daughter was in the paper for this. Whatever, you know. It was always a family thing.

Workers of the same seniority, from the same age grade, went through life cycle rituals together, establishing reciprocal relationships such as godfathering and being the best man in weddings. John Wister said, "I'm a godfather for several guys, we've gone to each other's weddings. I started there when I was 18."

Egalitarian systems of reciprocity often extended outside of the plant, as Louis Moran describes:

> I can remember one fellow getting hurt. And he actually got hurt and he had to put a new roof on his house. After work, we went over to his house, tore the roof off, put a new roof on. And we did this for a couple of days in a row, and got his roof done for him. He was hurt and couldn't do it, but he had to have it done. Because he was gonna do it himself. He had the material there, so we went over, and we did it. Which I think everybody should do…This is things people should do for each other.

Scott Crewe continued this relationship with co-workers on his gang after work at the Steel had ended. One of the jobs he worked on, as an electrician, was a restaurant/nightclub near his house. He describes:

> I used to work there for tickets, I'd get so many tickets, they'd have a dinner show, like Jerry Reed and I got us all tickets and we had dinner, and it was all on me…I used to take all my pay in tickets, the best in the house, too. I made sure of that.

Workers valued, and were taught to value, relationships of reciprocity, helping each other out both inside and outside the mill.

Workers that did not participate in this kind of reciprocity – whether it was helping each other on the work gang, buying fundraising tickets from co-workers when they were selling them, or sharing information and knowledge – would be sanctioned by the group through gossip, teasing, or withdrawal of friendship and solidarity. Charlie Richter tells about a co-worker who had special knowledge about shoeing horses. When a member of his crew asked him for advice, he responded "I'm not going to tell you anything about horseshoeing," implying that this was his individual knowledge, attained through schooling that he had paid for and wouldn't give out gratis. Charlie asked "Was that proper or right of him? To talk like that to his fellow workers that he's going to be with them for however long he's going to be there? Did it matter to him? He didn't care. But he did lose a lot of friends." Those "selfish" workers developed a reputation that might hurt them in work where they had to rely on others.

Kathyrn Marie Dudley, in her ethnography of autoworkers in Kenosha, Wisconsin, found that solidarity was not limited to production workers, nor to one shop or department, but was built throughout the plant. In addition to the social ties of the work crew, workers also develop "plant wide social ties characterized by this sort of generalized reciprocity" that is used to create an egalitarian workplace culture (Dudley 1994:115). Generalized reciprocity ensures that workers cover for each other on "bad days" on the job (Dudley 1994). The union is crucial in supporting a broad, plant-wide working-class identity. The unionized workplace supported a work culture in which workers cultivated a strong identity in contradistinction to management, a pride in the product; and a culture in which workers (maintenance and production workers) helped each other to ensure that everyone could make a good living. Winnie Edwards, a woman who worked over twenty years as a machinist, credits the union with constructing this kind of a culture. With a union, she says, you "watch each other's backs," "the union created the culture that you look out for each other."

Both Dudley and Metzgar point out that on the shop floor, workers are allowed to be individuals, but also members of an egalitarian working-class culture. Dudley argues that "the kinds of work that working-class people do and the contexts in which they do them do not lend themselves to the listing of discrete, individual accomplishments." In fact, amongst Bethlehem

workers an emphasis on individual accomplishments is considered to be "blowing one's own horn" and is looked down upon as a lack of recognition that one's accomplishments are dependent on working with others. For steelworkers, "what counts is the kind of person you are, day in and day out. They look to their personal qualities on the job and off, not to specific things they have done, to define themselves. And these qualities always come in human packages that include unchangeable deficiencies, immutable weaknesses" (Metzgar 2000:204). The formal credentials and "achievements" of professional middle-class culture are not recognized (and may even be denigrated) by steelworkers, but individual workers prove themselves on the shop floor through, as William Kornblum found in his ethnographic study of steelworkers on the south side of Chicago, "the skill and finesse through which he carries out his routine work" in a "complex team effort in which they [workers] perform as total personalities before a large audience of peers" (Kornblum 1974:53). This skill and finesse, individual performance, is not done solely as an individual, it is done in collaborative work with others. On the work crew "your weaknesses were simply accepted because they could be offset by others' strengths, just as your strengths helped offset others' weaknesses…Even if you could eliminate your deficiencies, you would have to define yourself as self-sufficient, a fundamental error that inevitably leads to both loneliness and an inability to be honest with yourself" (Metzgar 2000:204). An individual's strengths would be an asset to the entire crew – "standing out as a particularly clever and skillful worker strengthens the solidarity of the group" (Dudley 1994:122), and workers pitched in to cover for individual weaknesses and shortcomings, not expecting that any one worker will be perfect. A hard worker without the same level of technical skills could also contribute to the crew. As Dennis Mayer, a pipefitter at the Bethlehem plant, says "There was room for everybody in there…kids that quit school…could come in and get a forklift operator's job, make a decent living, and eventually retire and die with dignity. What does a guy like that do today?"

This understanding of a dependency of collaboration transcended the work place, it was brought out into relations in the community. Cathy and Howard Kovarik, two married beam yard workers, discuss social mobility, and wonder if their own son, the next generation, fails to recognize this interdependency. His mother reflects, "to me he's very arrogant. I love him dearly,

but he can be very arrogant." Arrogance, self aggrandizement, or "blowing one's own horn," are criticized since, even as individualism, self-reliance, and an entrepreneurial spirit are values that are touted, there is also a recognition and valuing of the dependence on others. The dominant culture emphasis on individual talent and merit as the grounds for social mobility is criticized by a culture that values egalitarian solidarity. As Cathy says, success is valued, "you're climbing that ladder to succeed, which is a good thing to do that," but it is never assured, and any one person might find him or herself in a situation where they need those egalitarian and reciprocal ties. "Don't ever forget that small person down here, because that small person, if you fall down that ladder, you're going to need that small person to get back up and to succeed more." Cathy feels that her own son "forgets the little person down there. Don't ever forget that little person. You some day might need that little person again."

William Kornblum, in his study of South Chicago steelworkers, argues that the solidarities constructed through crew work and an ethos of collaboration in the mill could transcend racial and ethnic boundaries on the shop floor (1974). This might be difficult, as inter-ethnic/inter-racial crews were not common in many shops in the Bethlehem plant, due to the segregation of workers in shops by race/ethnicity. But, when black and latino workers were able to successfully move out of segregated shops (and we have seen that it was very difficult for workers to do this) and to overcome more senior workers' initial resistance to these junior workers, ties of solidarity were created on the shop floor. Kornblum found that these ties were often still not built on outside of work, and this was very true for women workers at the Bethlehem plant. But my research shows that, at the Bethlehem plant, as white workers transferred into the heavily-Latino coke works towards the end of the plant's life, enabled to do so by union rules of plant-wide solidarity, inter-ethnic ties of solidarity were built through working together. And, after initial periods of very strong hostility, ties of solidarity were also constructed in the context of gang work in stable shops for many women workers.

Building plant-wide solidarity was, however, more challenging than work gang or crew solidarity. As we have seen, there were all kinds of divisions within the variegated work force of the gigantic steel mill: divisions between production workers and maintenance workers; between

different shops; and between different, often ethnicized/racialized, departments. These divisions were often formally incorporated into the internal state and regulated through the union contract. For example, the enormously complex system of incentive rates, with various job classifications, and even particular jobs within classifications, receiving different "incentive" pay (direct, indirect, or secondary indirect), resulting in very different levels of pay between jobs and shops at the mill. Sometimes single work gangs or crews at the Steel would have to overcome divisions within the workforce that were formalized through these systems. The distinction between production and maintenance workers, for example, could lead to tensions on the job. Ann Kovar relates working as a welder (a maintenance job on indirect incentive) in the iron foundry with a chipper (a production worker on direct incentive).

> A chipper who would be working side by side on the same job, and the chipper's getting good incentive, and I'm still getting my $40. And I used to tell him all the time 'this is so unfair.'…I used to work side by side with the chippers, the guys that used to clean off the iron castings, and a lot of time they couldn't chip the stuff off. I had to blast it an oxygen torch, and after I get done, he'd come in, chip a little, or chip outside or whatever, but a lot of times, him and I, used to work side by side and he used to tell me that 'what they're doing to you ain't, ain't right.

Although these two workers worked in unison, in their different job classifications (as a maintenance worker and a production worker), incentive rate differences could breed dissension. Other workers give examples of dissension being created within maintenance gangs when incentive rates were introduced for specific jobs, as workers would lobby for the gang to have less workers for the job (the less workers on the gang, the higher the incentive rates for each worker). This undermined the "camaraderie" the solidarity of looking out for everyone, and encouraged workers to pursue their individual interests (which coincided neatly with the production interests of the company).

Masculinity and Physical Work

Steelwork was also described as masculine work, and the steel mill was defined as a masculine world. The dirt, danger, large scale machinery, extreme heat, outdoor work, and heavy physical labor were defined as masculine, as was the culture of the workplace—the vulgar language, practical joking, sexual banter, and valuing of physical prowess. Masculine work and a masculine culture of solidarity was constructed that included a valuing of physical effort, physical

strength, and the ability to take physical punishment. Masculinity was not simply imported from the wider society (although masculinities constructed at home, in the school, and in the community were brought into the works), it was also actively constructed and produced in the mill. Pierre Bourdieu discusses the importance of a "valorization of physical strength as a fundamental aspect of virility" in male working class culture and manual, industrial labor. Bourdieu argues that resistance or opposition to dominant classes can only occur, for the working class, through the withdrawal of labor, through the fighting strength of the working class "which depends on the physical strength and courage of its members," and through sheer numbers "through consciousness and solidarity" (1984:384). Working-class strength, for steelworkers, was, thus, manifested directly in physical strength, as well as in solidarity.

Much steelwork involves difficult, physical labor and steelworkers cite this as a defining aspect of the masculinity of steelwork (and as grounds for excluding women, who are essentialized as physically weaker, from steelwork). Many steelworkers take pride in their physical virility, as evidence of masculinity. Particularly for younger workers, physical strength and toughness are respected within the mill. Dennis Mayer relates an incident in which physical strength generated respect from peers when he was working on a job with a heavy, 650 pound, valve.

> Becker and I picked that valve up off the floor and lifted it into place. That was normally a job where someone climbed up with a chain block and lifted it into place. Well Becker and I didn't say anything, but there were people there who saw it, and by the time we got to the washroom, 'Hey, I heard you and Becker put the equalizer valve up without a chain block?' Well, you were kinda proud of it. I was stupid. Maybe some of the problems I'm having now are a result of that. But when you're young, and full of pep like that, you do stuff.

Jack Deutsch, a professional boxer, who was much respected as a young rigger for his physical strength and his toughness, says: "I always had to show off, try to take shortcuts and stuff. We'd do a job at the Beam Yards and working on the crane, and wait for the crane to come. I'd pick up a [extremely heavy] tank of acetylene and carry it up to the top of the steps" (*Steelworkers' Archives*).

Physical strength was valuable on the job, and demonstrated one's toughness, one's virility, and one's masculinity. And physical strength was recognized, on the job, in people's

nicknames – nicknames like “Tree” for a giant, strong steelworker or “Tiny” for a large man. But toughness was not related to strength alone, but also to the ability to stoically take physical punishment. Workers who work in extremely hot environments in the plant, for example, were respected for their toughness. Dennis Mayer tells of walking by the soaking pits at the open hearth:

> as I come down, this guy jumps out from behind a column and with a very heavy Dutch accent he says ‘Hey buddy, you see them numbers on the columns?’ I said “Yeah, what about them?’ ‘Them’s the ones that stayed in the flues the longest.’…Well, down underneath that access floor…someone had to go down in those flues and clean the soot...I went in there when the lights would go out, I was in there already when the walls were still a dull red. Those laborers would be in there maybe 24 hours after the furnaces had been shut down. They had to wear inch thick wooden shoes so their feet wouldn’t burn up. And they were only allowed to work for twenty minutes, in what they call a twenty minute spell…This guy boasted about these guys whose numbers are on the walls. They stayed in the flues longer than the prescribed twenty minutes. They thought they were doing something great. But they were killing themselves. I don’t know if there’s an explanation for that. On the battlefield, that type of carrying on would be considered heroic. In the industry situation with the company knows it’s dangerous, certainly you should know that it’s not good for you, why would anyone be trying to look more manly by trying to abuse themselves more than they had to? I don’t understand that behavior but it was there. I might even have participated in some of that stuff, being one of the bigger guys in the department, you know, lifting things that other guys can’t lift. You know, there’s some kind of incentive to act that way, even if I can’t explain it.

Success at tough, physical, masculine activities outside the plant (boxing, excelling in other sports, heroic physical military performance, or honorable toughness in fights) generated reputation and respect within the plant. Jack Deutsch, the professional boxer, says:

> they all liked me. I was running, I was working out all the time. They all liked me. I never tried to push my way around like I was a tough guy, even though I was boxing all the time and all this tough stuff I was doing. I never, ever talked like I was tougher than they were. I just got along….They were always nice to me because I always acted like I was the toughest guy around, the strongest. And at the riggers, I probably was at the time [*Steelworkers’ Archives*]

Of course, toughness and physical virility could also be measured through sexual conquests, and some men did have a reputation and gained prestige for sexual conquests at the plant. As Andy Vanek says, “steelworkers don’t kiss and tell” unless, he adds a caveat “you’re around a whole group of men.” This acclaiming of sexual “conquests” of women, while still joked about today, was a much more active component of social life and masculine conversation at the mill when workers were younger.

Toughness and virility was also related to risk, to taking risks, and pushing oneself, even when afraid. Although this toughness and masculinity could run contrary to considerations of safety, it was valued in the culture of the mill. John Baxter describes learning as a novice carpenter:

> First day on the job I had to climb up a tower, 150' in the air. They wanted guys that could climb. It caused quite a disagreement. The seasoned vets didn't want a punk kid on his first day off the ground. They were worried about safety. The supervisors wanted to see if he could do it. They were arguing about it. There was a [senior] guy, I remember, he was complaining up a storm. At the end of the day he said 'I'll work with that guy anytime.' I was young and inexperienced, but that showed them. He was thinking they should work us in slow.

Although senior workers argued for safety, and for the training and experience in climbing that comes with on-the-job learning, they were, nonetheless, impressed with John's daring.

The aging steelworkers that I spoke with did have to deal with the loss of physical toughness and virility. Jack Deutsch says "you think you're never going to get old, you're never going to fall apart, because you never drank, you never smoked, because you're the toughest guy around." And Dennis Mayer's quote (see above) demonstrates his reflections on the toll that heavy, physical work and toughness took on the body. As steelworkers age, and the physical toll of hard manual labor and "toughness" manifest themselves in steelworkers' bodies, seniority privileges allow workers to transfer into less physically demanding jobs. Processes of deindustrialization--the long downsizing of the plant, the lack of hiring of new younger workers, the movement of women into some of these less demanding jobs, and the transfer to hard manual jobs in other plants—eliminated many of these steel jobs generating resentment and anger on the part of older workers who found themselves still working in physically demanding jobs.

Although women often didn't have the upper body strength for some of the jobs in the mill, women could work to condition their bodies to be more prepared for physical lifting. Although the women steelworkers I spoke with did not discuss learning to lift weights, "hard-hatted" women interviewed by Molly Martin did talk about training with weights and having to "teach myself the proper way to lift heavy objects." (1988:145) At the Bethlehem mill, women that stayed either transferred to other shops, or were moved to jobs that did not entail quite as heavy

lifting. Christie Radics relates being hired to work in the 48" mill, and working on roll changes, "things were just heavy. So actually the girls that, a couple of us that were there, couldn't do the heavy part of it, so then we got moved to Steam, Air and Water, which I stayed for the rest of my time there."

Women were also tested around heights, and around the "toughness" required to work on heights. Although this was seen and defined as an innate difference between women and men, successfully negotiating heights is a learned skill, and women were often not given the training to learn to do this. Shirley Macek, for example, describes her early experience working at heights in the boiler house. Shirley says that she was deathly afraid of heights initially, but made herself do it. "I did know one thing, if you were afraid of heights you had no job. If you weren't willing to climb, you had no job." But how you learned to experience and negotiate heights could be crucial in your success.

Charlie Richter, on the other hand, got careful training on "climbing" and heights as a young rigger. Charlie describes a senior man teaching him how to climb:

> After working awhile I started to climb around, hang some rigging. You never went alone, always someone with you. The first time when I went, I'm following this guy, up off the ground 20 feet, have to go another 20 feet, climbing and he stopped. I stopped behind him. He said to me "Charlie, you have to stop following me." I says "how am I going to learn?" He says "you'll learn, but how tall am I?" he says. I says "oh Jesus, over six foot, six foot two." He says "yeah, how tall are you?" "5 foot 8" He says "you think. You and me, I'm climbing, and you're right behind me. When I grab ahold of something and you grab a hold, you better know it's there. When I grab it and you reach your arm out, you better know what you're grabbing. Otherwise, you know where you'll be? Laying on the ground. Don't follow me. Go behind me, but you're going to learn."

Charlie goes on with the description, but he is describing very specific, detailed, and embodied instruction from an older worker, on how to climb at high heights. He describes a process where his body is learning how to climb safely and correctly, with the support and advice of the senior co-worker. An experience that is frightening becomes knowable, manageable, and embodied through this supportive instruction. This opportunity was not given to women like Cathy Kovarik, when she bid on a job in the carpenter gang. Instead, the belief in women's innate fear of heights and avoidance of risk was used to haze and terrify Cathy and prevent her from taking the job.

The masculinity produced in the steel mill also inhabited a contradictory space in the relationship to class struggle over production and wages. Although working-class masculine identity has often been represented as "oppositional" to mainstream culture and gender identities (Ogbu 2008), in the steel mill, a working class masculine ethos was mobilized, contradictorily, both in service of and in resistance to capitalist accumulation. Macho workers would take risks, work in the grey area of safety, work under incredibly hot and difficult conditions, and not shirk from heavy loads to enact their masculinity in the mill. Paul Willis represents this as the "will to finish a job, the will to really work," which is represented, by workers, as masculine, and which produces masculine power, "masculinity is a power in its own right" (Willis 2004:188). All of these demonstrations or practices of masculinity in the steel mill resulted in speed-up and increased productivity. But, these assertive macho attitudes could also be mobilized to confront managers and corporate policy, both outside of the union-regulated internal state (as in the worker who threatened his foreman with physical violence) and inside the union-regulated system (in the macho assertiveness that fueled grievances, and, in the past, strikes). In addition, these masculine characteristics – toughness, risk taking, and strength—that were needed in a dangerous job, were used to define steel work as a male job and to legitimize a right to higher masculine wages. But, the union- and shop floor-defined expectation of a higher wage also contributes to an acceptance of the legitimacy of the wage contract – a fetishization of labor as a commodity – that accepts increased wages as the proper resolution for conflict over the labor process (see Willis 2004). Also, these characteristics, defined as masculine, excluded women from steel work for years, and generated enormous hostilities towards women when they started work in the mill. Male workers worried that if steel work became feminized, it could undermine the claim on the family breadwinner wage, they created solidarities forged in social interactions defined as masculine (for example built in part on sexist talk that denigrated and objectified women), and they developed self esteem rooted in a masculine definition of steel work. In the Bethlehem mill, this conflict over gender exacerbated fragmentations and tensions within the working class.

CHAPTER 4

CONSTRUCTING THE WHITE WORKING CLASS: EXCLUSIONS IN THE WORKS

While the Bethlehem Steel mill, and the internal union-governed state, supported seniority systems, defined citizenship, and built solidarities for white, male steelworkers, these rights and relationships excluded African American, Latino, and women workers from equal participation. The rules of the internal state, the recognition of experience-based skills and the seniority that legitimated these, and the citizenship benefits of the worker citizen and the inhabitant of the mill were forged through relationships that excluded racial, ethnic, and gender groups. These relationships were constructed historically within a specific political economic context that produced a white male working class constructed and defined, in part, through these very exclusions. As June Nash observed in her ethnography of General Electric workers, “the precarious security workers struggle to achieve” in the Fordist period “is based on exclusions” of race, gender, and ethnicity (1989:19). While these exclusions were often encouraged, supported and exacerbated by management in an effort to divide the work force and to cheapen labor, they were also produced by workers who sought to control access to jobs and to skills inside the steel mill. It is important to pay attention to these processes in the formation of white, working class solidarity within the mill, to the internal divisions and fractures within the working class through which, in a seemingly contradictory way, solidarities are built and divisions and hierarchies produced. It is through these processes, as they change and shift in historical and economic contexts, that we can understand working class formation and re-shaping, and pay attention to the “outer limits of the working class” (Katznelson 1986:24).

Nonetheless, it is important to remember that unionized industry did provide significantly more opportunities to black and Latino workers (in terms of income and benefits) than non-unionized industry. In the construction industry in the late 1970s, for example, “unionized contractors had better racial records than non union ones” (Stein 1998:151). Even as black steelworkers confronted “exclusion, discrimination, and even segregation within organized labor,” nonetheless, “no organization in this country…has done more to raise the living standards of black workers than unions” (Needleman 2003:8). And the unionized jobs that Puerto Rican

workers were able to get at steel mills were far superior to other available jobs in non-union industrial or agricultural work (Rivera 2005).

In addition, we will see that plant-wide seniority, imposed on the union and the company by an EEOC-negotiated Consent Decree, while changing seniority rules so as to offer more job and promotional opportunities to black, Latino, and women workers, also generated strong divisions and conflicts within the plant's working class, especially between junior and more senior white workers and between male and female steelworkers.

The exclusions that were institutionalized within steel mills in the post WW II period were initially related to hiring minority workers in the very worst shops and departments, and limiting seniority to departmental promotional lines. While expanded transfer rights introduced through the collective bargaining process in the 1960s made plant-wide transfers easier, department-based seniority meant that workers could not use their seniority in bidding on jobs in other shops. Therefore, movement into other shops and divisions continued to be difficult, as workers were required to transfer in at the bottom of the job hierarchy. Because of this, workers' initial assignments to shops and departments upon hiring were enormously important in their life-long career in steel work, determining salaries, susceptibility to layoffs, scheduling, promotional opportunities, and skill acquisition. Racialized understandings of the skills and abilities of minority workers, and essentializing stereotypes like they "could withstand the heat," ensured that these workers were disproportionately assigned to the hotter, harder, more dangerous departments. These racialized and ethnicized jobs and shops, in turn, "devalued the worker and degraded the work" in these departments (Roediger 2005:213). Heavily minority departments like the coke works had less powerful local union representation, greater health and safety risks, lower incentive rates, and a shorter promotional track (meaning workers could never attain the same level of "skill" and experience as in other departments) leading to a racialized definition of skill within the mill.

Essentialized assumptions about race and ethnicity influenced initial job assignment, and these assumptions were then reproduced within the internal labor market. Internally to specific shops and departments, even with shop seniority, the more highly skilled jobs were reserved for

white workers. In the coke works at the Bethlehem plant, for example, Marc Ortiz, a coke works worker and foreman, reports that in the 1960s the unskilled laborers were all Portuguese, Mexican and Puerto Rican. In the more skilled jobs, there were only a very few Latino workers, that “if they did speak English, they didn’t have the laborer’s jobs, they had the more skilled jobs.” Foremen, supervisors, and union officials were, for the most part, white and were exclusively male. And these wages of whiteness were defended by the newly whitened children and grandchildren of Eastern and Southern European workers, who had gained access to these more skilled jobs in the steel mill in the postwar period (Roediger 2005).

Work solidarity and citizenship at the plant was also built through simply excluding many workers from the unionized jobs in the mill. For most of the 1960s and 1970s, women were excluded entirely from union jobs at the steel. Many women in the Lehigh Valley, worked, instead, in the lower-paying garment factory jobs in the area. In addition, there were very, very few African American workers in the Bethlehem plant. Women and African Americans were simply excluded from steel jobs at the South Bethlehem plant, and from the union membership, higher pay, better benefits, and economic citizenship that accompanied these core industrial jobs. Since by the 1970s steel jobs were some of the most highly paid industrial jobs, these exclusions had social and economic consequences for women and African Americans in the Lehigh Valley, and contributed to the shaping of contemporary class, race, and ethnic relationships in Bethlehem.

It is clear that Bethlehem Steel management never actively recruited African American workers to jobs at the Bethlehem plant, although the reasons for this policy are less clear. Recruitment of African American workers to steel mills in the North has a long history, and an uneven geographical distribution. Many mills recruited African American workers during WW I and during and after WW II, contributing to the “Great Migration” of African American families from the South to the North, from agricultural to industrial jobs. At many plants, by the post WW II period, African American workers were 25% or more of the work force (Dickerson 1986:153). In some steel mills, however, even in more urban settings (like Bethlehem), there were few to no African American workers. Historian Bruce Nelson cites data from a 1950 USWA civil rights

survey of steel mills to show that many mills in Memphis, Indianapolis, Youngstown, and several Pennsylvania steel towns reported never having blacks employed there (2001). One local union official from Elwood, Indiana reported no African American workers at the plant, saying "there has been a tradition that Negroes were not wanted here" (Nelson 2001:210). Even as Bethlehem Steel did not recruit African American workers to the Bethlehem plant, the company actively recruited African American workers at other Bethlehem steel mills. In the 1960s, Bethlehem's Sparrows Point, MD plant and its Lackawanna, NY plant had significant minorities of African American workers (about 1/3 the work force at Sparrows Point and 1/6 the work force at Lackawanna) (Reutter 1988), and in the 1970s Bethlehem Steel claimed that 12.5% of their total workforce at all their plants was black (Assad et al. 2010). This is a sharp contrast to the very few black workers at the Bethlehem works.

The most likely explanation for the paucity of African American workers in the Bethlehem plant was the lack of a significant African American population in Bethlehem. In 1960, only 1.3% of Bethlehem's population was African American (U.S. Census 1960). Bethlehem management would have to adapt labor recruitment to local labor markets. In addition, however, Bethlehem Steel's corporate elite, headquartered in the city of Bethlehem, may have been reluctant to exacerbate racial tensions in the city through recruiting black steelworkers. Certainly, Bethlehem elite would have been familiar with a serious racial incident at Johnstown, Pennsylvania, a city somewhat similar to Bethlehem with a large Bethlehem Steel mill. In Johnstown, where blacks made up only 2.5% of the population, black workers did not join white workers in a 1937 strike and mill-wide walk out (Nelson 2001:196). Nelson explains that black workers prioritized support for the Bethlehem Steel company over solidarity with their co-workers because of an earlier, 1923 racial incident, when Johnstown's mayor responded to the crime of a black migrant killing two policemen by ordering every "Negro" new to the community to "pack up his belongings and get out." In this tense confrontation, Ku Klux Klan members burned crosses on the hills around the city. But Bethlehem Steel refused to follow the mayor's order, standing behind African Americans in the Johnstown community (Nelson 2001:196). The Bethlehem corporate elite, looking at Johnstown, may have wanted to avoid these kinds of racial confrontations in Bethlehem. They

might have read local cultural attitudes as resistant to recruiting African American workers, and have decided to avoid racial tensions in the city in which they lived, had friends and neighbors, and were active in political and community affairs. John Strohmeyer, *Bethlehem Globe* editor, speculates as well about the role of "racial prejudice at the upper levels of Bethlehem Steel" as a possible variable in labor recruitment (1986:92).

Without African American labor for some of the hottest, hardest, and most dangerous jobs in the plant, management at the Bethlehem plant sought labor elsewhere, perhaps as "preferred" to recruiting African Americans. During the booming 1920s, in a tight labor market, Bethlehem Steel looked to Mexico and Mexican labor. One Bethlehem Steel executive told sociologist Paul Taylor in 1929 that "The Mexicans are better, more dependable workers than the Negroes. The Negroes aren't there when you want them; they go south with the cold weather" (1932:13). Bethlehem Steel recruited unskilled Mexican laborers in San Antonio, Texas and transported them by train to Bethlehem, without their families. Almost 1,000 mostly single male Mexicans arrived by train in Bethlehem between April and May of 1923 (Assad et al. 2010; West 1976:98). They were housed in a labor camp located next to the coke works, as well as a barracks in Shimersville (West 1976; Assad et al. 2010). Mexican men were assigned to the coke ovens, as it was thought they could "take the heat," even though, as West points out, many of these Mexican immigrants came from temperate areas in Mexico. Maria, an 86 year old Bethlehem-born Mexican American whose father came to Bethlehem to work at the Steel, says that Bethlehem recruiters "didn't want anyone that was educated. They wanted uneducated people, no schooling, no nothing. So they can use and abuse them. They couldn't speak the language. They stuck together. They worked together. They made their money, they saved it." This echoes African American experience in Bethlehem Steel's hiring at their Sparrows Point mill in the 1950s. Deborah Rudacille quotes an African American steelworker saying in 1955 "they wouldn't hire anyone from Baltimore City, that they only wanted you if you were from the Deep South and wanted to get away from that rule" (2010:115). Rural, uneducated, unorganized immigrants were seen as desirable, unskilled laborers.

During the 1920s and the 1930s, especially with the slow-down brought about by the Depression, many of the Mexican workers left Bethlehem, leaving a core of "about 50 families," many of whom continued to work at the Bethlehem coke works. Paul Taylor, in his 1929 book on Mexican workers, quotes a Chicago-area steel mill manager as saying "When I hire Mexicans at the gate, I pick out the lightest among them. It isn't that the lighter colored ones are any better workers, but the darker ones [look] like niggers"(1932:210). Mexican workers were defined as not black (although not really white) and, therefore, preferable to African American workers, as well as constituting more "flexible" labor (and many Mexicans were forcibly deported during the Depression when their labor was no longer needed) (Takaki 2008).

Later, in the post WW II labor shortages, when Bethlehem Steel once again looked for laborers for the hardest, dirtiest, lowest paying jobs, the company turned to Puerto Ricans. The steel industry in much of Pennsylvania heavily recruited African American workers during WW II, almost doubling the percentage of African American steelworkers in all of Pennsylvania (from 3.5% to almost 7%) (Dickerson 1986). In Bethlehem, however, without networks of African American workers to mobilize for labor recruitment, and without the desire to recruit African American workers, Bethlehem Steel looked for labor elsewhere, recruiting women and older men during WW II and turning to Puerto Ricans after the war. Dr. Sanchez (a local professor whose parents emigrated from Spain to work at Bethlehem Steel in 1950) said "they weren't allowed to hire blacks at the [south Bethlehem] mill, so they hired Hispanics" (Diaz-Soto 1997:20). Puerto Ricans, like Mexicans, were hired as workers that were *not* black. A Puerto Rican agricultural worker who interviewed at a U.S. Steel mill in Lorain, Ohio in 1947 said managers had a clear profile for Puerto Rican steelworkers, "At the time in Lorain they would only accept tall people with white skin at the mill" (Rivera 2005). After the war, the Bethlehem steel mill recruited Puerto Rican farm workers who had come as agricultural contract workers to work in eastern Pennsylvanian and western New Jersey farms in the late 1940s and 1950s under Operation Bootstrap programs. Rural male migrants from the tobacco and sugar regions in Puerto Rico worked for commercial chicken farmers, orchards, potato growers, and tomato producers near Bethlehem as seasonal laborers (Antonsen 1997:32). In 1951, for example, 325 Puerto Rican

men came to the area to harvest potatoes, tomatoes, and fruit (Adams 2000:12). Puerto Rican workers quickly found that permanent, industrial jobs at Bethlehem Steel were preferable to the less desirable, seasonal, low-paid agricultural contract work. Rather than returning to Puerto Rico at the end of their farm labor contracts, Puerto Rican farm workers stayed during the winters to work in the local factories and at the steel works. A study in 1950 showed that 89% of Puerto Ricans interviewed in Pennsylvania preferred industrial to agricultural work, citing higher wages and steadier employment (Maldonado 1979). Puerto Rican workers, unlike the Mexican workers that had preceded them, moved into unionized jobs at the Bethlehem mill (although the union was still relatively weak). Although the steel jobs at Bethlehem Steel were on the lowest rung in the hierarchy of steel work, they nonetheless were unionized and offered better wages and opportunities than contract farm labor. Bethlehem Steel management then built on kinship, ethnic, and village networks to actively expand recruitment of Puerto Rican workers. Bethlehem Steel advertised in Spanish language newspapers in New York City for workers, they asked workers to write to relatives at home, and they sent a Puerto Rican "recruiter" to two towns in Puerto Rico--Corozal and Patillas--to recruit laborers. Within the Bethlehem mill, a white male working class, that excluded black workers and distinguished itself from the Latino coke works workers, was constructed through these hiring, promotional, and seniority practices.

Consent Decree and Seniority

The union-managed internal state of the mill formalized seniority as a means of eliminating favoritism and recrimination in layoffs and promotions. Although seniority systems recognized experiential skills, the departmental seniority of the 1950s and 60s ensured that workers assigned to less desirable shops had far inferior promotional lines and opportunities within the steel company (often looking at a lifetime of work at hotter, harder, lower paying jobs). Departmental seniority excluded minority workers from the more coveted promotional tracks in the steel mill, tracks that led to higher-paid, more skilled, more varied, and possibly less dangerous jobs. The greatest challenge or change to the formalized, union-legislated and regulated system of seniority was the 1974 Consent Decree, the attempt to address racial, ethnic, and gendered inequities within the plant.

The 1974 Consent Decree mandated plant-wide seniority in an attempt to eliminate exclusionary and racialized shop promotional lines, thus offering opportunities to transfer, with rate retention, to minority workers who had been segregated in less desirable departments and occupational lines. This Consent Decree, signed on to by Bethlehem Steel and eight other steel companies and by the United Steelworkers union, was an agreement with the federal government resolving the many discrimination cases that had been filed with the EEOC. Suits filed by the government on behalf of African American workers at Bethlehem Steel's Lackawanna plant in the late 1960s, and at the Sparrows Point plant in the early 1970s brought court or government-ordered solutions. As an agreement to resolve these suits, the Consent Decree "put into place one of the most extensive affirmative-action plans in basic industry" (Fonow 2003:57). The decree mandated hiring goals for women and minority men, put in place measures to increase representation of women and minority men in crafts positions, and restructured the seniority system to change from departmental to plant-wide seniority. Although the Bethlehem plant did not have a separate discrimination suit, and had a very small number of African American workers in the 1960s, it was included in the broader industry-wide Consent Decree.

This decree had an impact on many workers in the plant, as it instituted major changes to the departmental seniority on which workers had been planning their careers. For some younger workers, this was beneficial, as they were able to transfer into more desirable departments. For others, however, in more desirable shops, plant-wide seniority hit them hard, as they could be "bumped" out of jobs by workers with higher seniority from other departments, or fall down in seniority in relation to layoffs and recalls. Changing the seniority system had major repercussions, and workers felt very strongly about it, as "with the exception of the home, seniority represented an individual worker's largest investment" (Durr 2003:184). Seniority was not only a financial investment determining one's status in the internal labor market, but, as has been shown in Chapter Three, a codified system of values for recognizing skill, experience, and social status.

In addition, the Consent Decree exacerbated tensions between some workers. The way the Consent Decree came to be implemented in the Bethlehem plant, many more senior white

workers moved from less desirable into more desirable departments, knocking back younger white workers with less seniority. For the younger hires, hired in 1973, this had a major impact on their jobs. Jeff Scholl describes this in the electric furnace melt shop:

> In 1976, plant seniority came into effect…with the Consent Decree, and that just hurt me very badly. Because electric furnace melting was one of the highest paying shops in all the steel mill. And all of a sudden, in 1976, at the time I was running a stock yard crane…I had three years seniority. People, you had to have twenty years seniority to get into the shop, and everybody with twenty years seniority from the blast furnace and from all different shops bid in, and I was finding myself being laid off very often…the second there was any slow down, we would be bumped down and out, and these men would just transfer in and take our spots.

In Jeff's department, none of these in-transfers were African American or Latino, they were all more senior white workers from other departments. While this hurt junior workers, it benefited more senior white workers, like Dennis Mayer, who had transferred into the pipefitters from another department, and was now able to "jump" ahead of other pipefitters because of his seniority in the plant. While the new rules of the Consent Decree were accepted in the plant, this was a big over-turning of the pre-existing order through which workers had made decisions about internal mobility, and in some departments this exacerbated tensions between junior and senior workers.

Although most workers at the Bethlehem plant were affected by more senior white workers transferring in, workers were also affected by minority transfers and quotas for minority hires in apprenticeship programs. Greg Becker who was hired in 1973, describes the negative effect of the Consent Decree on his career. Greg applied for an apprenticeship, but was unable to get it because of Consent Decree policies on apprenticeships, "that knocked me right, knocked me out." He says that minority workers were accepted into the apprenticeship program, even though "they had less time" and "I had the scores to get it, but I couldn't get it." Greg perceives this as unfair, as he had both qualified for the apprenticeship through testing and had accumulated the seniority for eligibility.

Many white workers had no memory of racial/ethnic minority in-transfers related to the Consent Decree at the Bethlehem plant, perhaps because many black and Latino workers, like Dan Oates, an African American worker hired in 1972, never took advantage of the Consent

Decree's plant-wide seniority. Dan's initial plan had been to work in the coke works for 10 years and bid out.

> But in ten years I was one of the youngest people working. You know, everybody with my seniority getting laid off in all the other departments. So I decided, I'm going to stay in the coke works, and that's what I did. I never got laid off in the 25 years I was there. But people who started with me, and months before me, they were laid off at some time.

For Dan, as for many workers, the effects of the Consent Decree coincided with the escalating processes of deindustrialization in the 1980s, and job security became a more important consideration in bidding on jobs than pay, variety of work, or the opportunity to learn new skills. Dan describes some workers transferring out of the coke works into more lucrative shops, but as shops were downsized, they were then laid off. This was risky as "if they were laid off for more than two years, they would lose their seniority." So, when these workers came back, "once they got in the coke works they stayed there till the closing." As a result, job security became a more important variable in considering where to bid on jobs. Danny Moreno, a Puerto Rican worker, started off in tool steel, a department that closed down in the early 1970s. As a result, he transferred into the coke works, "that was steady work. There were not layoffs…at that time it was the only department that was hiring…it was steady work, I didn't want to be laid off."
This was true for many of the Puerto Rican workers in the coke works, even though they had attained plant-wide seniority, by the time this policy was implemented, workers saw the benefit of staying in their shop in a more secure and reliable job with less layoffs.

Racist and sexist assumptions also affected workers' reactions to minority workers moving into the higher-paying shops. Before the Consent Decree, it was difficult for Puerto Rican workers to bid on jobs in other shops (even when they were willing to give up their departmental seniority to make the transfer and had the union-recognized right to transfer). Marc Ortiz says when he first started in the 1960s, "at that time you couldn't get out of the coke works. I saw it with my own eyes, [the application for transfer] into the garbage." The Consent Decree had a major effect on this, "after the Consent Decree, and the union got stronger, it was easier to transfer with plant-wide seniority." Marc says that, nonetheless, many Puerto Rican workers did not transfer out of the coke works (and researchers such as Judith Stein find this in other mills).

"It felt uncomfortable being in those other places, felt out of place. They felt that you were taking their job away. I never felt discrimination, but I felt that you were my friend as long as I wasn't making more money than you." Thus, even after the Consent Decree formally established plant-wide seniority, everyday practices of solidarity and mentoring that excluded racial/ethnic minorities and women prevented many minority workers from taking advantage of this plant-wide seniority. And white worker resentment towards minority transfers, or what was perceived by some as special treatment for minority workers, exacerbated this, making it difficult to build relations of solidarity and learn new skills through mentoring. Carlos Rodriguez says that there was a "feeling of community at the coke works, the food at lunch time, a feeling of community. To leave there was not comfortable for some people. Leaving would be difficult." Not only would this make for uncomfortable and perhaps even dangerous work, but it could hold workers back from further mobility in the new shop. Instead, at the Bethlehem plant, it seems that the major effect of the Consent Decree was that younger workers were bumped from desirable jobs by more senior white, male workers, and that women were brought into the plant.

However, even as the exercise of the Consent Decree exacerbated tensions between junior and senior white workers and between white and minority workers in the short term, at the Bethlehem plant, it may have resulted in broader solidarities in the long-term, building a union-recognized, plant-wide seniority system that included all workers at the plant (and even had ramifications, which we will discuss later, for workers between plants in transfer rights).

White workers were especially resentful of the back pay received by some minority workers as a result of the Consent Decree. This resentment may have been fostered, in part, by the anger of the union over the back pay issue. Back pay was demanded by the EEOC at the last minute in Consent Decree negotiations and was much resented by both the company and the union, leading to the withdrawal of Inland Steel from the Consent Agreement, and nearly undermining the entire agreement (Stein, 1998). Judith Stein reports that IW Abel, USW president, was furious about the USW's $3 million obligation to back pay and argued vociferously that the "demand for back pay undercut systemic change" (Stein 1998:174). White workers from the Bethlehem plant highlight back pay as particularly egregious, expressing resentment that

"minority" workers (and this would have been only racial and ethnic minorities, as there were no eligible women workers) received back pay regardless of whether that individual worker had experienced discrimination. White workers tell stories designed to re-build solidarity under the perceived threat of unjust pay, stories that highlight class solidarity across ethnic and racial lines. One such narrative is of a Mexican worker who received his back pay check, told his co-workers that he couldn't keep the check, he didn't deserve it, and donated his check to a local charity. Another story is of a black worker who said he didn't deserve the check, that he should give it back, and was told by white co-workers to keep it and put it aside for his children's education. The theme of the stories is that individual minority workers should explicitly recognize that this was not pay that was rightfully earned, even if they ended up keeping the money. And, of course, individual minority workers (especially those working in shops and departments that were predominantly white) would have had strong motivation to deprecate these payments to their white coworkers.

Minority workers also reported confusion around the back pay awards, as, at the Bethlehem plant, management was unclear on who qualified for back pay and for "minority" status. Gus Guerrera describes this process:

> I remember, one time they were giving money for minorities [as a result of the Consent Decree back pay awards]. A guy said to me, "How much did you get?" "What do you mean?" "For minorities." They were always joking. "No, over to the union hall, go over there to get money for minorities." "Oh, get out." This one guy I know, he's real white, looks like a little Dutch man, Gonzalez, he got money. I went over there, I ran into a lot of guys, I see this one guy, he's Portuguese. He would always say he's white. I say "what the hell are you doing here?" He says "I'm Portuguese, I'm a minority." I see this other guy, his name is George Albert, "What are you? What kind of minority is that?" He says "My name is Alberto, I'm Portuguese, I always was. My dad took the O off of it." George and Jerry Albert. But when it came to money I saw people I never knew that were minorities.

Women, African Americans, and Spanish-Americans were considered minorities, but what about the Portuguese workers at the Bethlehem plant? John Strohmeyer quotes George Moore, the attorney for Bethlehem Steel's industrial relations department, "We couldn't get a definition out of the Justice Department or EEOC on what the hell is a Spanish-American. We were ready to pay the Puerto Ricans, but we also had a lot of Portuguese. Nothing was in the settlement about them, but we reached in our pockets and paid them too" (Strohmeyer 1986:97). These stories

reflect white worker beliefs that individual minority workers at the Bethlehem plant did not experience discrimination (even though race and ethnic based initial job assignments affecting promotional trajectories were quite evident at the Bethlehem plant). One older, retired worker told me that he was a member of an ethnic minority, he was Ukranian, but he never received any back pay. This was a common sentiment, that white ethnic workers also experienced considerable discrimination at the Bethlehem plant, but never received special treatment. In the Bethlehem plant, where there were very few African American workers, awarding pay to ethnic minorities was quite contentious.

Minority workers also did express some discomfort around receiving the back pay, Gus Guerrera, a second generation Mexican steelworker, responded to my question about white workers' resentment of back pay by saying,

> If they're giving money away, and I don't get the money, why doesn't this guy get the money? Why doesn't this guy, just because he's white, why don't he get it? It's not fair. It's very hard. That's an argument we could go on about. I never asked for favors because I was Spanish. But when I did, I did figure, I'm going to get it. The heck with it.

In some steel mills activist minority steel workers refused to cash their back pay checks (which averaged only $300) as by cashing the check workers gave up their right to sue for past discrimination (Needleman 2003), but this did not appear to happen in the Bethlehem plant.

The Consent Decree also opened up promotional opportunities to minority workers and women, including options for apprenticeships and for promotions to foremen. Desirable apprenticeships that had formerly in practice been closed to minority workers, contributed to the construction of skilled work in the mill as white and masculine. But, minority workers found they experienced heightened resentment and hostility from coworkers in apprenticeship programs, perhaps in part because entry to apprenticeship programs was much more heavily constructed around formal "credentials" (vo-tech degrees and formal testing). And, even as apprenticeships were opened up to minority candidates, the apprenticeship program itself was being dissolved, and this avenue for becoming a skilled worker was shortly no longer available. By the mid-1980s there were no more apprenticeships at the Bethlehem plant.

Dan Torres, a second-generation Puerto Rican steelworker, was asked to consider an apprenticeship as a part of the Consent Decree's expectation that fifty percent of apprenticeship openings go to minorities.

> Fifty percent of the jobs were going to minorities, fifty percent were going by seniority. I'll have to say that the company and the union in their wisdom were trying to do an honorable thing. But they didn't think it all the way through. Because no one checked with the workers to see if they would find this acceptable. So…it didn't work out well. Even though I took the test for the apprenticeship, and I maxed out on it…when you're an apprentice someone's mentoring you. So the person who's scheduled to mentor me the first 18 weeks was the brother of someone who didn't get the job because of me. And in his most polite Pennsylvania Dutch format said to me in no uncertain terms I'm not happy that you're here.

Dan was so miserable that his father said "son come down to the coke works. If it's that bad everywhere else, come down where at least you're with family." He did, and he stayed there for almost 20 years.

Marc Ortiz, a Puerto Rican worker, was offered a promotion to a subforeman position, as a result of the Consent Decree. Ortiz says, "They only did it because they had to, not because they wanted you." Then, when restructuring led to layoffs, "When things started turning around, getting rid of people was unfair." Marc felt that "you got kicked back down" on the basis of race/ethnicity. He felt that "this was happening with management. The union, you couldn't do that. But management you could." Union seniority protections didn't allow for that kind of subjective and discriminatory decision making around layoffs, but management positions weren't protected by those guidelines. Affirmative action programs designed to be effective in opening up new promotional opportunities in a booming steel industry were less effective, or even irrelevant, at a shrinking plant. Marc brought a lawsuit against Bethlehem Steel, charging discrimination in his demotion, but lost his lawsuit.

It is ironic that at the end of the plant's life, the coke works became the more desirable department that many workers transferred into, as it was the last major shop up and running. The work at the coke works also became safer, cleaner, and easier, thanks to activism on the part of workers, the union, and OSHA Efrain Sanchez, a first generation Puerto Rican steelworker who started working at the Bethlehem coke works in 1953, testified in Washington about the dangers of asbestosis and was quite clear that the union and Puerto Rican workers who testified played a

great role in improving those conditions. Efrain describes conditions when he started at the coke works as hot, dirty, dangerous and difficult. He started at Bethlehem Steel with 11 other Puerto Rican workers, but by the end of the month "there were only three left. People quit. It was too hot, and they didn't like working on Sunday (the holy day)." Efrain said by the time he left the plant, with environmental and safety upgrades, "they put in air conditioning, everything was done by machine, like remote control. It was easy. It was a good job when I left." Minority workers who found it hard to transfer out to other shops and departments were motivated to work collectively to change working conditions in the department in which they were stuck, to use "voice" rather than "exit" strategies. By the time white workers transferred into the coke works, as the steel mill closed other departments, the job had become a better job, a safer job, and a healthier job, although white workers still saw it as a lower-status job.

The plant-wide seniority introduced by the Consent Decree ensured that senior white workers could transfer into less desirable departments at the end of their careers in steel. In transferring in, however, white workers worked side-by-side, often for the first time in the Bethlehem plant, with Latino workers. Mitch Roberts, a crane man who had worked in electric furnace melt, transferred into the coke works in the 1990s. He said his job as a working lidman,

> was the toughest job I ever did…That was a different kind of heat. I've stripped ingots at the electric furnace melt with a red hot ingot. But, the coke works, the heat came up through our feet. It knocked you out. It was amazing what heat through your feet, that you don't realize it, how quick it takes you down, how quick it warms your blood. The Hispanic population working down there were some of the best workers I worked with in my entire history in Bethlehem Steel. They were tremendous. I was pretty good at it, I could take the heat better than most. But these guys were animals, just downright tough.

In a masculine work culture that valued toughness, Mitch gained great respect for these tough, male workers. White workers who worked in the coke works recognized the skills that experienced coke works workers had, Jack Deutsch who worked briefly at the coke works said "we became like a team to work together…they all liked me…all those guys know everything. They've worked every machine there, and you're just a new guy coming there. You try to be on the qt and just listen." As the jobs at the coke works improved (through union activity) and the stability of jobs in the coke works became more appealing, and as white workers transferred into

the coke works with restructuring, the coke works became a much more integrated department in the late 1980s and the 1990s.

Many of the Puerto Rican workers I spoke with were second generation steelworkers at the Bethlehem plant. As second generation workers, they were hired at the plant in 1964/65 and 1974/75. This meant that they had long-term family connections with steel and at the plant, and that most of them had seniority over the new women hires. Mexican workers working in the 1970s and 80s were often third generation steelworkers, able to boast of lineages at the steel as long as many of the white ethnic workers. Nick Romero, a third generation Mexican American steelworker boasts a lineage of "over 500 years all combined" of family steel work at the Bethlehem mill, although he claims that his family's years of service do not get the same recognition as those of white workers. Although these family lineages, and the seniority related to their year of hire, gave these workers status over junior workers, their minority ethnic status lowered them in the "skill" hierarchy within the plant, and they continued to be recognized as "Spanish" or "Mexican" workers. Women, however, experienced the multiple marginality of being (for the most part) the most junior workers (hired in 1978/79) and being women in the male world of the steel plant. Male Mexican and Puerto Rican workers were able to build solidarity with white coworkers through a masculine solidarity that women were unable to access. This was crucially important as the hyper-masculine culture of steel work shaped almost every interaction on the shop floor. Mexican and Puerto Rican workers were, however, often unable to access a white working class identity, and the wages of whiteness that accompanied that (see Roediger 2005; Nelson 2001).

Although numerous accounts have pointed to the irony of affirmative action measures opening more desirable jobs and promotional tracks to minority workers, even as layoffs, restructuring, and downsizing in the steel industry eliminated opportunities, less noted is that these same opportunities were simultaneously being eliminated for the younger white workers (in the Bethlehem plant, those hired in 1973 and 1979). Even as affirmative action mandates limited opportunities for younger white workers, they were also affected by steel restructuring generating layoffs, increasing job insecurity, and shrinking internal labor markets. This contributed to a

backlash mentality among some white working class men (Durr 2005). Affirmative action openings, combined with processes of deindustrialization eliminating jobs, exacerbated many white workers' hostility towards minority workers. At the Bethlehem mill, while less noticeable towards ethnic/racial minorities, where internal transfers at the end of the plant actually increased inter-ethnic solidarities, it was dramatically evident towards women workers who bore the additional stigma of being marked (by gender) as the most junior "class of '79" age grade.

Even with the plant-wide seniority of the Consent Decree, discrimination continued to be practiced, in less explicit ways, in the plant. Minority and women workers might find it more difficult, for example, for managers to accommodate special scheduling requests (allowing them to meet family obligations, maintain second jobs, or pursue schooling). When Fred Needham, a white worker, requested a special schedule so that he could attend his sons' high school football games, his foreman acquiesced. When Marc Ortiz, a Puerto Rican worker, asked for scheduling changes so that he could take his children to college visits, he resented management's reactions. "When my sons were going to college, and I wanted to visit the colleges, Bethlehem Steel, they treated you like little kids. You need an excuse, you need this. I'm going to Penn State or Temple University. They said, you can't do that. They deprived me of so many things." Ed Nobel, an African American shop steward, describes a grievance he brought – that he was denied access to a training program necessary to move into a higher job because he had to miss two weeks of the training for his softball schedule. He later found out that white workers were admitted to that same training, and allowed to take two weeks vacation in the midst of the training, and he filed a grievance citing racial discrimination. And women found both foremen and union representatives to be completely unsympathetic to scheduling needs related to childcare – such as a child's illness or babysitting issues. Of course, women with young children were more likely to also have very low seniority, but women report that foreman responded "we hired you, not your child."

In addition, even after the Consent Decree, skilled jobs still were not as available to minority workers. Ed Nobel, an African American worker, described the difficulty he had moving into a first heater position on the coke works heating gang. In order to attain this position, the

candidate had to have appropriate seniority, take an eight week training program, and pass a written test. Ed suspected, however, that white workers had greater access to the knowledge needed for the test, "there was preferential treatment going on, how the hell did they get all this knowledge?" Years ago, this was a position that was reserved for white workers (only one other black worker had ever attained this position). In describing the fight that he had to go through to get this job, Ed says he "had to work harder than the next guy." Bobby Robinson also describes racial discrimination, "sometimes, even with seniority, it didn't help you. You still got the dirtiest jobs" (Behum 2010:195).

Union office and representation was also not equally available to black and Latino workers, although eventually these groups put representatives into some union offices. Ed Nobel says when he filed his two week off grievance, even the union tried to get him to drop it, and they followed up by attempting to kick him out of his shop steward position. He prevailed, involving the international office of the union. "I'm a die hard union man" Nobel says, "but it was the leadership within the union. They think they can do whatever." Local unions with predominantly white, male union officials were not always supportive of claims of discrimination. But, even without equal representation, broader working-class gains won through the union did improve work for Latino and African American workers. Efrain Sanchez, a first generation Puerto Rican coke worker, said "if it wasn't for the union, we would never have got all the benefit we got. Not only we but all the steelworkers of all nationalities." But workers of all colors did express frustration that "the people at the top of the union didn't listen to you," "some of the union guys were worse than our own bosses, and they still are." Gus Guerrera described in detail how that could feel, and how that could silence the voice and citizenship of minority workers.

> I'll tell you what happened to me there. When I first started, I don't know what happened, I wanted to complain about something. I didn't know at the time what to do, all I know is I wanted to go to the union hall. I didn't even know how to file a grievance. I went in there, there's a bunch of guys talking, and I sat there for 10 to 15 minutes. Finally, the guy looks at me, he says do you want something? I says "I got a complaint, who do I talk to about it?" I told him what the complaint was. Another guy says "you ought to be glad you have a job. Get the hell out of here." I didn't say nothing. I turned around and walked out. What the hell, I think, I goofed up. I told the guys, I'll never go back there again. I'll keep my mouth shut and pay my union dues and that's it. Couple years later something happened. I said, "I ain't going back, the last time they made a fool out of me." But then I say, "you know what, I'll go back." I went back in there, I don't know if

> it was the same guys or not, talking and talking again. It's like a clique. One guy says "do you want something?" "I've got a complaint. Who do I talk to about it?" The guy asked what my complaint was, and the guy jumps up and says "You ought to be glad you got a job." The President came out of his office, "what do you want." I said "I've got a complaint." He says "you, that guy has a complaint, get the hell out, you're not going to be a shop steward anymore. That guy comes, you're working for him." That guy got up, and he took care of me. I felt important.

Full citizenship in the plant, as expressed through voice and political leadership in the union, status and prestige within the mill, and use rights of the entire space of the mill, was difficult for black and Latino workers. Danny Moreno says "Latinos mostly didn't even run for [union offices], didn't even go for it. We had a couple of black guys that ran for shop stewards and stuff like that. The union presidents were all white." It was difficult for Latinos to get elected to union offices in shops that were predominantly white. Gus Guerrera said he was working on the crane once, unbeknownst to white workers in the shanty below, when a well-liked Puerto Rican worker came into the shanty "he came in and said, 'I'm running for shop steward. What do you think?' They said 'sure, we'll vote for you. We've known you for a long time. Sure we'll vote for you.' He walked out, and they said 'I won't vote for that goddamn pork chop," exposing the limits of solidarity. Some Hispanic steelworkers did become union officers, most notably a Spaniard and a Puerto Rican who became Vice Presidents, and are lauded for doing a great deal for Latino workers. Manny Vega, an ex-union official, says he got involved because "some bosses would start belittling some of the employees, especially the Hispanics. And that ticked me off…the union needed more Hispanic representation."

Nonetheless, it is important to reiterate that the union, through mechanisms of the internal state that enforced plant-wide seniority and its importance in the internal labor market, was crucial in building broader solidarities, across racial and ethnic lines, throughout the plant. Many union leaders of color express the sentiment "I knew the union wasn't perfect, but I had to be part of this process to make things right…we the people need to make the organization better." This solidarity was crucial at the end of the plant's life when many white, senior workers found themselves working side by side with workers of color in the coke works, and union supports helped build plant-wide solidarity. Solidarity was crucial as workers worked together to try to keep the coke works open. Bill Markus described the feeling of camaraderie at the coke

works, the last shop open, in the 1990s. “The camaraderie, you make it work. If you can’t make it work, not only could you get hurt, you hurt others. And you lose your jobs. Because you won’t have a place. This place will be gone.”

Regional Exclusions

Although many exclusions were constructed along racial, ethnic, and gendered lines, a “homogeneous” white working class is not a given, but, rather, had to be constructed through processes that whitened ethnically-defined immigrant workers. When the workers I interviewed started at the Bethlehem mill, many of the Lehigh Valley-born third generation ethnic immigrants had become “whiter,” moving into jobs in more desirable departments in both skilled and less skilled positions. But workers from up north continued to be defined differently. The “rural” northern workers from the coal regions were defined as a less educated, less cosmopolitan, inferior group to white workers from the Lehigh Valley.

During the 1950s and 1960s, Bethlehem Steel actively targeted the coal region for recruitment, as growing labor needs put pressure on the company to find workers. As mentioned earlier, recruiters looked to Puerto Rican workers. But Bethlehem Steel also recruited aggressively in the anthracite coal region, to the northwest of the Lehigh Valley, a region that had gone through its own “decline,” escalating in the 1950s, as demand declined for anthracite coal and the mines closed. Ed O’Brien, a former President of the local union, says “they did a lot an awful lot of advertising, in the end [1964/65] when they had a tough time getting people. The ads in the paper would say do you have any relatives, friends, neighbors? Bethlehem Steel was looking for people” (*Steelworkers’ Archives).* Sons of coal miners, in the late 1950s and 60s, were counseled by their fathers to “get the hell out” and look for jobs elsewhere. They did, even though, for many, mining was “in my blood.” The coal jobs were drying up, and young men saw the effect of regional deindustrialization on families and communities. Many young men looked to other unionized, blue collar, industrial jobs such as those at Bethlehem Steel, although these jobs required commuting or out migration. Ed O’Brien describes relatives migrating out of the coal region to New Jersey and to Pennsylvania’s Levittown (where many moved to work in U.S. Steel’s new Fairless mill), as well as commuting to industries in the Lehigh Valley for stable, union

jobs (see also Dublin and Licht 2005). During the 1950s and 60s, as Bethlehem Steel was aggressively seeking workers for some of the less desirable departments, Joe Privsek argues, "you couldn't get the white guys to do some of this work. That's why Bethlehem Steel advertised in the coal region. They couldn't get local people to work in the ingot mold or the coke works." In this statement, Joe racializes the "up homers" like himself (as non-white), alluding to the privileged position of native Lehigh Valley white workers. As workers who were eager for work (lacking opportunities in their region), up homers were willing to work hard at these less desirable jobs. Seeing local jobs dry up, parents losing work, and neighbors commuting far for jobs produced an "appreciation for having a steady job." In addition, work in the steel mills was seen as preferable to the dangerous and unhealthy work in the coal mines. "I guess danger, I don't think I minded it. Coming from that area up there, and just knowing what my ancestors went through, this had to be a picnic compared with going down into a coal mine. That's the way I look at it." (O'Brien, *Steelworkers' Archives*).

Bethlehem Steel saw this group of workers, lacking the vo-tech education of some of the Lehigh Valley workers, as an unskilled pool of labor, highly motivated to work. As with Puerto Rican workers, work characteristics of "up homers" were naturalized and essentialized, they were characterized as hard workers, willing to do back-breaking manual labor but also as rural hicks, not as intelligent, educated, or as likely to be candidates for the apprenticeships and skilled jobs in the plant. In his book on working at the Bethlehem plant, Dave Kuchta (an up homer) writes about coming to a job interview at Bethlehem Steel in 1952. He describes the interviewer asking "to look at my hands. Yes, he was disappointed. They weren't calloused and beat up from picking coal" (Kuchta 1995:11). Disappointed by the lack of evidence of hard work, instead of sending Dave to the hardest jobs--the CSL, coke works, or ingot mold--he gave him a job in weldment. These workers were not, however, typical "rural" immigrant workers, as they had long family histories with industrial work (many were third generation coal miners), and long and often radical union experience. Ed O'Brien attributes his strong union commitment to his "bloodline," as he had many relatives who were active in the United Mineworkers, and a great grandfather who

went on the run for his activities as a Molly Maguire. Workers often came from generations of union workers, with strong commitments to the union.

Some of these workers moved down to the Lehigh Valley, meeting their wives there or marrying up home and making a family decision to migrate. Pete Bondar, for example, started working at Bethlehem Steel in the 1950s, and commuted on weekends for the first six years of work. But after getting married, his wife moved to Bethlehem, they raised their children in Bethlehem, and they assimilated to urban life.   Pete continued to maintain a strong coal country identity though, working with the union to ensure that he could help his co-ethnics, as those who were commuting "didn't have time to come to the union hall."

Others commuted from the coal country for their entire careers at Bethlehem Steel, developing reputations of driving through any kind of weather to make it to work. Like many men in the coal country, they opted to commute daily (or in some of their neighbors' cases even weekly) to maintain homes in the coal country (Dublin and Licht 2005). For commuting workers, their identity as coal country "up homers" continued throughout their careers at the Steel and shared car pooling amongst groups of workers generated strong bonds of solidarity for coal country workers, "the trip took about an hour each way…we would talk about everything under the sun" (Kutcha 1995:35). Workers stayed in the region for a variety of reasons: because of wide social and extended family networks, inherited houses, cheaper housing and cost of living, "it was less hectic, less crime," and they loved the more rural towns and rolling country they had grown up in, it is "God's country". Scott Crewe, who lived in New York City for awhile, returned to his coal country hometown, got a job at the Steel, and commuted for his entire career, "this is where I was born and raised, in this village. I never wanted to move."

While co-workers harbored personal prejudices and stereotypes towards groups of coworkers, management also attempted to exacerbate these divisions within the workforce by pitting groups against each other. Co-workers initially categorized the "up homers" as hicks, "coal crackers," and "coal miners," usually using those terms in relation to some "dumb" move at work. Ethnic stereotyping was common in the mill, and was often used in joking relationships to build strong ties between groups, even while denigrating groups. Workers often claimed ownership of

these terms and stereotypes. Dennis Mayer says "The guys from down there [from the Lehigh Valley] they called us coal crackers in a demeaning way. But we took that as a compliment." However, these resentments could grow when work became scarce. In the early 1980s, when labor markets were tighter in the Lehigh Valley, Pete Bondar describes resentment directed at up homers, saying Valley "natives" started saying the up homers "took their jobs…because of you up homers we can't get a job." The very identities through which citizenship rights to the mill were mobilized (the inter-generational work of entire families of workers within the plant) could be used to legitimize exclusions of newcomers – whether they were from the coal region, Puerto Rican workers, or women.

And management mobilized stereotypes and differences in an attempt to pit workers' groups against each other. Charlie Joyce says the company "would use up homers coming in to work [in bad weather] as leverage about the people from the city who didn't come in during bad weather." The naturalized regional characteristic of "hard work" was used to pit workers against each other, and led to demands, at times, on the part of the Lehigh Valley natives to young coal region workers to slow down.

However, many up homers were able to move into skilled jobs at the steel mill, often using craft training from the military to access craft jobs. Through building on shared, white, ethnic, masculine solidarities with native Lehigh Valley workers, up homers were able to assimilate into a broader steel working class. This gave them access to the internal horizontal labor market, to mentoring in the plant, and to building strong solidarities with other white steelworkers. Workers' strong commitment to unions contributed, for many, to participation as shop stewards and union officials, offering additional avenues for internal mobility within the plant.

Women in the Steel Mill

Women experienced very difficult exclusions at the steel mill – initially exclusions that simply prevented the hiring of women (with the exception of women hired during WWII). The hyper-masculine culture of the mill, through which male working class solidarity was constructed, excluded women. And the double marginality of women hired in 1978/79, as both women and as

the most junior hires, contributed to the harassment, discrimination, and difficulty accessing promotions that women encountered at the Bethlehem steel works.

Women were hired at the Bethlehem plant as a result of the 1974 Consent Decree. Although the Consent Decree was primarily directed at racial minorities in steel plants, women were added to the decree at the last minute (Fonow 2003). The Consent Decree set hiring goals for women, mandating that 20% of all new hires in production and maintenance nationally be women, as well as laying out the goal of getting more women into the crafts and skilled trades (Fonow 2003:57). At the Bethlehem plant, this meant that the next major hiring, that of 1978/79, was the largest hiring of women at the Bethlehem plant post WW II. At the height of their employment in basic steel (about 1980) in the U.S., women represented 14,500 of maintenance and production workers, increasing from 1.8% to 5.8% of basic steelworkers from 1974 to 1979. By 1984, after massive layoffs in basic steel, these numbers were sharply reduced, with only 3,000 women working in maintenance and production jobs (Fonow 2003:7). This constituted a higher percentage of women steelworkers, but much lower overall numbers as layoffs displaced thousands of workers in steel (Stein 1998).

Women entered the steel mill (as did all workers) with low seniority, as the junior workers. A few women were hired at the Bethlehem plant in 1974/75, but the bulk of women hired for shop floor jobs were hired in a wave of hiring in 1978/79. Like their male counterparts in that "age grade," women never experienced the opportunity to mentor younger workers, and as workers of the lowest seniority they found opportunities for moving into better jobs limited with the contraction in the industry in the early 1980s. In fact, many of the women hired at the end of the 1970s lost their job in the 1980s, and never returned to work in steel. Women shared a white, Lehigh Valley identity with most of their male age-grade peers. I heard of only one Latina or African American woman worker in the Bethlehem plant, in all the stories I heard of women. Fonow points out that with the decline in jobs in the early 1980s, "equity became a zero-sum game," increasing hostility of junior workers towards senior workers, and, she believes, increasing competition between junior workers (and between men and women) for the remaining openings.

Most men were initially very hostile to the idea of women working in the steel mill. Men defined steel work as masculine work and the steel mill as a man's world. Men argued that women did not have the physical strength to do the hard, manual labor in the mill; that steel work was too dangerous for women; that women were not tough enough to deal with the risk, dirt, and heat of steelwork; and that women were technically incompetent and incapable of working with heavy equipment. Although women had worked in the mills (including the Bethlehem mill) in WW II, the total numbers of women in basic steel were never high, and women workers were quickly displaced from the shop floor through layoff or ending what had been defined as "temporary work" at the war's end (Fonow 1993: Milkman 1987). After the war the steel industry, and the South Bethlehem plant, excluded women from what was defined as male work (Fonow 1993: Stein 1998). As in the auto industry (see Milkman 1987), this exclusion helped legitimize and maintain the "family wage" that steelworkers fought for. Unions contributed to these ideologies, pushing corporations to pay a "family wage" that they legitimized as necessary for maintaining the ideal nuclear family form of the male breadwinner family. Women's paid work was defined as supplemental, and women's work as housewives and mothers was defined as primary (even though most steelworkers' wives held waged jobs at various times in the life cycle). This family wage, of course, served to reproduce gender inequalities at home as women were denied entry into jobs defined as male and denied access to male wages, but it also ensured the security of a family wage and benefits for women married to steelworkers.

Women workers starting at the Bethlehem plant in the 1970s confronted resentment that women were taking "family wage" jobs. Shirley Macek, who started at the Bethlehem plant in 1979, had a boss whose son didn't get into the plant, "and he resented that. He said that the jobs were for them [the men]." Cathy Kovarik says "we would hear comments like: 'you oughta stay home, you oughta take care of your kids.' You know. 'You should be home making babies. You should be taking care of us, making dinner.' Women may not have taken explicitly "feminist" perspectives in applying for steel jobs, but they very quickly had to develop and refine counter-arguments legitimizing their work, as they confronted sexist stereotypes (see Fonow 2003). Shirley responded to her boss: "I didn't take this job from anybody. This job was my job. You

know, that would be my retort back is I didn't take his job. This is my job." Understandings of citizenship rooted in the right to work were not extended directly to women in the mill. Instead, women were seen as behaving immorally, as "taking" or stealing a male job. Ideologies that defined waged women's work as generating income to supplement a male breadwinner wage legitimized this interpretation of women steelworkers as "selfishly" taking male jobs. Later on, as some women married steelworkers, they also confronted resentment that one family would monopolize two "family wages." A moral economy that emphasized solidarity structured around preserving jobs for as many workers as possible, interpreted this as "selfish," immoral behavior. Of course, this did not recognize that many of the women working on the shop floor of the mill had their own families to support, as many were single mothers seeking the better pay and benefits of steel jobs, or working to supplement husband's less lucrative wages.

Many men in the Bethlehem plant also resented a civil rights' emphasis on gender, race, and ethnicity in the Consent Decree as taking precedence over what they defined as a central moral principle--seniority. Fonow argues that this contributed to the hostility that women experienced on entering steel mills as "women entered the industry under an unpopular court order at a time when court orders regarding affirmative action and desegregation were generating considerable hostility and backlash in white, working-class communities across the United States"(1993:62). At the Bethlehem plant, Ben Weyer resented his electrical apprenticeship being "taken away from him" as women were given priority access to these apprenticeships, arguing that affirmative action should not trump seniority. Workers also resented the loss of "preferred labor jobs," physically easier jobs that had traditionally been reserved for older, weaker senior workers. Howard Kovarik describes such a job:

> when trucks came in to get loaded, they used to back in to wherever they were going, so we had a person called a truck walker that would precede the truck and kept it aligned. They started giving this preferred job to women only. Well that got my dander up, because that's not seniority. Assign this job to the senior person that wanted the job.

While men interpreted the assigning of this job to more junior women as contradicting the central principle of seniority, Howard's wife, a crane operator, interpreted this problem as being more complex, relocating it within gender-based discrimination. She responded, "but it wasn't the

women that necessarily wanted the job, it was the men that insisted this is what they wanted them to do. Because the men didn't want the women to be the crane operator, the chain person, the loader." In Cathy's interpretation, these less physically demanding jobs are lower prestige, lower pay, and less skilled jobs, and preserve more skilled jobs as "male."

Since seniority was the central principle formalizing and structuring an understanding of skills and experience, as well as organizing hierarchical social relations in the plant, a threat to seniority (in this case through a rights-based discourse and civil rights legal structure) was seen as immoral. This blue collar critique of affirmative action is very different than a dominant professional middle class critique centered in the idea of innate talent and merit (as measured by standardized testing and educational credentialing). Professional middle class opposition to affirmative action is based in the argument that these programs lead to the promotion of less talented, intelligent, and qualified people since "quotas" do not respect the "normal" criteria for measuring innate merit (i.e. standardized tests and educational credentials). The shop floor culture does not give the same credence (in fact shows a considerable amount of skepticism) to formal credentialed merit, but values experience as encoded in seniority, and is critical of affirmative action programs that do not sufficiently recognize seniority, or that override preexisting seniority systems.

While the Consent Decree gave women jobs in the steel mill, there was little in the decree that enabled them to "challenge sexist practices on the shop floor" and to protect women from harassment and discrimination in everyday work (Fonow 1993). In addition, Bethlehem Steel had done little to prepare for women's entry into the workforce. There was no training around sexual harassment or discrimination, there was no education of workers or foremen around new hires, and, at the Bethlehem plant, there were not even suitable washroom facilities for women coming into the plant. In fact, washrooms became a symbol of the exclusion of women from the mill, and a locus for battles around the issues of women workers. Building solidarity amongst women workers to confront these issues was difficult, as women were located in disparate departments and shops spread across the mill, and women had difficulty mobilizing union support for women's specific issues (such as childcare, pregnancy, sexual harassment,

sex-based discrimination) in the workplace. One of the few women who held a union position, Cathy Kovarik, is critical of local union officials' lack of attention to women's issues and their resistance to including women in union positions. Cathy says "the union definitely did not know how to handle the women. They did not know how to fight for the women…they had no clue how to deal with the women." She tells a story of a new washroom built for women to illustrate these issues. Cathy, as shop steward, went to inspect it and found that, although the company was insisting the women move to the washroom that very day, there were no walls on the toilet stalls. Cathy went to her union representatives and "invoked an article 14…I thought it was unsafe." She stated her complaint as a gender issue, that women (unlike men) needed toilet stalls for privacy. Local union officials, while not sympathetic, filed the grievance, and set up a meeting with company officials that evening, at the washroom, only to find that the stalls had been completed. This made Cathy look foolish, Cathy's husband says "they set her up. The company and the union set her up." The male union officials had to file a grievance that she had grounds for, but the union and company collaborated to ensure that the bathroom was completed before the evening meeting, thereby undermining Cathy's power, authority and standing as a shop steward and denigrating the validity of women's issues in the plant.

As a result of this lack of solidarity amongst women and the lack of union support for women's issues, women often had to resort to individual strategies to deal with sexist discrimination at work. Women attempted to overcome discrimination and harassment by countering male stereotypes about women workers, by constructing solidarity with sympathetic male coworkers, and by mobilizing gender-neutral moralities of respect for seniority and skills and a valuing of collaborative work. As women could not effectively mobilize arguments for the social value of their work, for their "right" to citizenship through the family wage, they instead had to prove their value as productive laborers and valued contributors to the gang or crew.

Women disproved male assumptions by "proving" themselves at work, demonstrating how hard working, physically adept, and tough they were. Many women relate stories of proving themselves, telling these narratives to illustrate points at which relations improved with foremen and coworkers. Ann Kovar described herself and a woman coworker working with a foreman who

was initially very hostile to women. He assigned them to the very hardest, manual job of anyone on the labor gang, digging under a railroad track for days on end. Ann and her coworker did it, working hard, proving that they could do the work. Ann says at the end of this job, the boss

> actually took us aside and he told us that, he actually apologized to us…he said "you girls out performed some of these guys by a hundred to one" and he thanked us. He apologized to us for the way he was treating us up to that point, and pretty much after that we didn't have any problems.

Shirley Macek, who worked in the Boiler House, says "many of us, I think, tried to prove ourselves. The ones that didn't left." Shirley worked to prove herself,

> basically every job that they gave you, you know, you learned it as well as you could. You made sure that you did everything you were supposed to do. And I always tried to do one thing extra, just one little thing. I'd get a can of paint out and paint something. Or just do one little thing extra, fix something that, you know, nobody else would do. Or I would clean something that nobody else wanted to touch. So I always tried to do one little extra thing.

Some women felt very strongly that they were setting a precedent for women in steel work, and that it was their moral obligation to prove that women could do the work. Karol Keglovitz's father laid out her responsibilities as a pioneer and precedent setter for other women very clearly to her before she started work in the plant, "my dad said to me, just remember something Karol, you're one of the first women working in that place and you're going to set a precedent for Bethlehem Steel whether or not they're going to hire anyone" (Behum 2010:210).

Women also used other strategies – using masculine strategies of toughness and vulgar language; demonstrating solidarity with co-workers, even in trying circumstances; and refusing to adhere to male stereotypes of feminine workers – to build solidarity with male coworkers. Cathy Kovariks tells the story of working on a crane in the beam yard, with a beam yard crew, a "hungry" crew on direct incentive, who were giving her, a woman, grief. They didn't give her a break all day long, keeping the work pace relentless and fast. Cathy says

> normally when there was breaks, maybe the one guy down here would go up in the crane and give this guy a break and so forth and so on. I didn't get no breaks that first day. That first day they just kept pushing and pushing….There was no let up. And I kept up with them. I was not going to let them discourage me.

Cathy says she did the work, and she did it well. But at the end of the day, as she left the crane and walked into the shanty, she looked at the five guys in the crew and said

> "I hope to God when you go home tonight you can't get a hard on, because you'se fucked me all day." Now that broke the ice I think. That broke the ice with these guys, because I let them know what they did to me. But yet, on the other hand, I wasn't angry at them and I wasn't really cursing…believe me, I didn't curse at work, I really didn't.

Cathy felt that by standing up for herself, by not "taking crap," she showed these men, using their own language, that she was willing to work hard, but expected to be treated respectfully, as they treated each other. She showed that, although she was not masculine, she was also tough and would not take their harassment. After that incident, according to Cathy, things went much better with the crew.

The ethos of solidarity in co-worker relationships dictates that problems between coworkers be dealt with between workers, not taken to management. Jeanne Brugger, one of the very first women in the plant post WW II, who started in 1973 as an industrial engineer (a rate setter for incentive jobs), describes her very first night. "They put me right on night shift then too, I guess to discourage me from staying." Jeanne relates a frightening incident when a worker came in to her office that first night and said

> This is the rate I am getting or else you will be tied down and whatever. So I, he went out of the booth, I locked the door, I picked up the intercom and said 'Mr. Stocker who works on XYZ machine, you will not be getting that rate, and you will not be tying me down and f'ing me, and you will be reported in the morning for attempting to do so. [Behum 2010:156]

She says that, immediately, all the guys were knocking on the window, screaming, saying she can't do that.

> So then the next day I come in and everybody's all worried. Oh my God, Stocker didn't even come to work today, he's so upset, he's gonna end up going to jail over you and lose his job. How can you do this? I was like "what are you guys talking about?" So the foremen look at me and they go "what happened last night?" I go "what happened?" [Behum 2010:157]

Jeanne made her point clearly – she would do her job fairly, and she would not tolerate threats, harassment, and abuse. Her response would be directed at the workers, she would not involve management. Jeanne describes winning the respect of her coworkers through that incident, demonstrating to them that her loyalties were with the workers.

Women also might be able to build solidarity through relationships on the job with age-grade peers, forming bonds of solidarity as junior workers experiencing hazing together. Cathy

Kovariks relates that with the large hiring of women and men in 1979, many junior workers started together in the beam yard, doing "muley" jobs that required working together, "we'd have to synchronize pulling it together and dropping it" to make the job move more easily. New workers, men and women, were sent together to this crew work. Their age, seniority, and place in the life cycle, "became a bond. These guys took, helped take care of the women. The women took care of the guys…they enjoyed the company, a lot of them, they became friends. Not just in the plant, but outside the plant. You would hear them talk about parties at so and so's house."

Women also struggled with how to define respectable femininity in a masculine work culture that required "tough" behavior from them. Ideas about women's roles at home generated stereotypes about women working in non-traditional jobs—that either they were willing to participate in a masculine environment because they were not respectable (of loose morals), or that they were not sufficiently feminine (i.e. too masculine), and women worked to counter these. To be characterized as "loose" would be highly problematic for a woman, leaving her open to overt sexual harassment. But in an environment in which discussions of sexual conquests, ribald commentary, and vulgar representations of women were a part of the everyday discourse from which masculine solidarity was built, women were denigrated and excluded (Olson 2005; Rudacille 2010). Men in the mill build masculine solidarity through this talk about women, and through the exclusion and denigration of women (or of non-respectable women). Cockburn found that amongst unionized printers, "women are the subject of a traffic among men that serves the purpose of forging solidarity within the workshop and giving meaning and strength" to the union (135). Women workers, therefore, were excluded from these processes and had to focus on building solidarity with male coworkers in other ways.

Women who were able to make it through the initial period of resentment, hostility, and harassment often were able to establish strong ties of solidarity with coworkers, although frequently at the expense of transfer to better-paying jobs. Many women, however, never made it through this initial period. Many women left these jobs because the harassment they experienced was too great, the schedule was too difficult (for mothers the swing shift, posted anew each turn, made scheduling babysitting close to impossible), or the physical labor was too grueling. Of

course, most men who started work at the Steel in the 1970s also left the job. And, as women were just beginning to gain some seniority and the opportunity to bid on better jobs, the recession of the early 1980s produced large layoffs of junior workers, and many women were laid off, never to return to steel work.

Women often stayed in shops in which they had proven themselves and had built strong social bonds, rather than transferring to higher-paying jobs. Women who had worked hard to establish respect, ties and bonds with co-workers were reluctant to transfer into other shops or departments where they would have to "prove" themselves once again. New co-workers resisted having women working with them, isolating them on the crew, refusing to train them, and subjecting women to degrees of hazing far beyond what junior men experienced. Cathy Kovariks, who bid into a coke works job as a carpenter, describes the hazing that she went through in her first day on the job in this new department. Cathy readily admits that she is afraid of heights and says, "If they don't want you, this is what they do to you…" She describes working, her first day, on a swing scaffold far above the ground.

> It was hanging on the outside. One man on this side, and me on this side, and then on each side, there's a crank. Like a jack so to speak. And the guy on this side, he would say, 'okay, go down one notch, go down two notches. And he would say, go down two, I'd go down two, and he'd go down four, so. So one of these, you'd get one of these [Cathy holds up her hands to show the extreme tilt of the swing scaffold which she would have had to hang on to to stop herself from falling]. Um, I didn't stay there.

Cathy's coworkers did not mentor her or acclimate her to climbing, unlike John Baxter's, for example, who tried to protect him from climbing his first day on the job. Instead they made the heights seem as frightening as possible, causing her to transfer out of the department. This resulted in a certain amount of occupational segregation within the plant, as women preferred to remain in lower-paying jobs, rather than transferring to new shops where they were dependent on learning skills from more senior workers.

Women also sought out jobs they could excel in. Women avoided jobs that required extremely heavy lifting (women gained a reputation, for example, of being good crane operators) as well as direct-incentive production jobs with a more "macho," fast-paced, and risk-taking culture. Cathy describes preferring crane work on a maintenance crew in the beam yard, rather

than on the same production crew day in and day out, even though it was less money. She felt excluded, as a woman, from the masculine solidarity of the production crew, where the emphasis on making money, working very rapidly, and using shortcuts to speed up the work defined skill. Cathy prided herself on safety as a crane operator, but this value conflicted with the "shortcuts" taken by the macho work crew. Cathy describes receiving a "discipline" while working as craneman in a beam yard production crew. She said she carefully followed safety guidelines, waiting for the signal from the chainman before lifting steel beams. But her superintendent "said he thought that I was slowing production down because I wasn't moving fast enough." The "discipline" she received was working with maintenance crews, a work that was less pay but which she enjoyed more as she felt she could work more carefully and safely, "I did not move unless I had a signal from them." She equated this work style with feminine gender roles, "I think being a mom too, you always, being a mom you know you're a little more, you don't want your boys to get hurt. And I think I was always that mom. I don't want my boys to get hurt so I'll, I'll do things." Cathy felt her skills, which she defined as carefulness, quality work, and safety, were underappreciated in the masculine production crew, and she was excluded from the solidarity of the gang. She took a maintenance crane job, where she felt included, appreciated, and could build relationships of solidarity, but she sacrificed pay in so doing.

Those women who managed to transfer into receptive departments (sometimes at lower pay rates) or to move beyond the long initial period of hazing and harassment, developed strong relationships of solidarity with co-workers, although many did not and left. Shirley Macek, who worked in Steam, Water and Air, described a rich camaraderie at the plant, "we lived our lives there. You know, we knew each other. We knew the families. We knew the ones that died, the ones that lost their jobs, the ones that lost family members. You know, our lives were intertwined." For Shirley, at the steel mill "Everybody looks out for everybody else. It's one thing I seemed to notice. We did try to take care of each other." Christie Radics describes the strong relationships she developed with the male crew members she worked with on the same "turn" at the boiler house. "The people on your shift, you got to know so well. I mean we talked about

everything and anything. They were just like having a girlfriend because that's you know, I was the only girl on my shift…and we just got along so well."

Anthropologists have shown how women factory workers have built solidarities with other women workers, making use of feminine values and practices of kin work, social networking, and family-oriented rituals to build relationships of solidarity that transcended racial and ethnic differences (Lamphere et al. 1994). But, in the steel mill it was difficult for women to build everyday ties with other women, as in such a large plant, with so few women on the shop floor, women were often physically isolated in the mill (Fonow 2003). Cathy says she tried to get the union to better represent women.

> When I became a shop steward for 2599, I tried to call and get a hold of the women. I went to the corporate company and I says "Well, give me a list of all the names of the women" so that we could get a meeting just for the women, to let them know that there was somebody there, and union representation for them. Let me tell you, it didn't work…I can remember calling and riding out, and I think there was about 32 or 35 women that I got a hold of to come to the union hall. You would not believe what went on. It was more like "Why are you trying to start a problem? Why are you, you know, we don't need this here…Already we're having a hard time, we don't' need somebody to come to stir up a problem."

Cathy found this frustrating, "So that was shot down. It was everybody for yourselves I guess after that." But, the women Cathy spoke with may have realized that the tension between individual rights (in this case based on gender) and union-supported values of seniority and masculine solidarity would render their attempts to organize around gender counter-productive. Organization could generate even greater resentment on the part of male co-workers, fueling a backlash of sexist stereotyping of women as needing special, protective treatment. The physical isolation of women within the plant meant that women had to rely on ties of solidarity with male co-workers, and gender-based forms of organization that threatened those ties would be injurious to their work lives.

Women workers especially resented other women who did not work hard to prove themselves in the mill. Shirley talks about a woman co-worker who "didn't really want to learn, didn't want to do the jobs, and caused a lot of problems…We resented those women, because it made it bad for you. All the hard work that you do and all the stuff that you do. They just undermine everything you've done." Some men assumed chivalrous and protective attitudes

towards women who came to work in their departments, and some women encouraged this, mobilizing feminine imagery to solicit assistance and special treatment. Bill Markus gives an example of his objections to this, describing when women came into the beam yard.

> I didn't have much contact with women in the beam yard. But some guys ran over and did their work. It was impossible. You can't serve two masters. They'd pull the hook out for the women. How many times are you going to do that? Our incentive's going down the toilet.

Such chivalrous behavior undermined group solidarity, as it slowed the entire work crew down (and, therefore, everyone was making less money), and co-workers' responsibilities towards other men on the gang took second-place to their paternalistic impulses towards women workers. Those women who struggled to "prove themselves" realized that chivalry would only contribute to protectionist ideologies that continued to define women as not capable of doing steel work, and women were angry at those women co-workers who exploited men's chivalry. Cathy gives an example of a woman who came down to the beam yard, "she got those real long, red fingernails, this make up and stuff like that. There's no way that this woman, no way that she would have fit in doing chaining." Cathy resented her

> because there we are trying to make a way, and now you come in and you want to, I mean, you come in with your hair all fixed up, and makeup on, and long, red fingernails and red lipstick, and you want to walk around like you don't want to get dirty. Where there're some of us, are in the ditches, and we're getting dirty. So it made it even more difficult for some of us women.

This worker did not succeed in the beam yard, but Cathy says "I think she came in and they wound up putting her in the office to carry mail, and yet a lot of the guys didn't fight her." She was moved into a "cushy" job, the kind of job that had traditionally been reserved for old or injured senior men, thereby generating even more resentment of women workers, but a job viewed as more "gender appropriate."

Many women attempted to downplay their femininity in order to avoid these kinds of responses from men (the come-ons, the chivalry), striving, instead, to be viewed as co-workers (and to participate in the solidarity of co-workers). Women tried to define themselves at work as neither masculine nor feminine but as good workers. Karol Keglovitz told Frank Behum that

> I always put a bandanna on my head…I wore that bandanna for two reasons. The dirt really damages hair, and I used to put, and plus it would get in my way, if I had a hard hat on, cause my hair was halfway down, well almost halfway down

> my back. So I didn't want to have to deal with my hair getting caught in machinery. Plus I liked the idea of the bandanna because I didn't look real feminine and I didn't look masculine. So I didn't want the focus of me being a girl. I wanted to be a co-worker." [Behum 2010: 217]

When Frank asked her if she "wanted to look like one of the guys?" she responded, "Yeah, but I didn't want to be one of the guys either, you know. I just wanted to go in and do my job." Karol wanted to be feminine (and many of the women continued to have long hair while working at the plant – see Martin 1997; Fonow 2003; Olson 2005), but she didn't want to emphasize or use feminine sexuality at work.

Some male steelworkers downplay the role of gender-based discrimination, and attribute these difficulties to seniority not gender, interpreting them as the normal hazing that junior steelworkers experienced in their interactions with senior men. This view fails to recognize the articulation of gender and age/seniority in power relations within the plant, and renders invisible the initial and ongoing discrimination women steelworkers faced within the internal labor market in the plant. The moral economy of the plant, as codified into internal law by the union, valued seniority and prioritized seniority in determining access to internal promotions. But, as we have seen, in reality race/ethnicity and gender affected workers' access to internal job openings. Other accounts of women in steel mills (Olson 2005; Rudacille 2010; Fonow 2003; Martin 1997) document a pattern of foremen discouraging women from bidding on jobs, and assigning women to hard jobs (resulting in lower pay and harder work). This was true at the Bethlehem plant as well. Ann Kovar relates how her bosses discouraged her from bidding on jobs, but she went ahead and bid eventually, citing her union-backed seniority. She also describes a boss "he was another one that was down on women, very down on women." She says "I used to set up on my job [as welder], then he'd bring one of the other guys over and tell them "you're taking that job.' This was insulting to Ann, as she would be moved to a lower paying job after having done all the work setting up her job. In this case, Ann went to her union shop steward and he gave her advice "One time when you're with your boss alone, read him the riot act. Tell him anything you want to tell him." He advised her to not "take crap" from her boss, to use masculine language and an aggressive, masculine attitude to put him in his place. Ann did that,

> I made it known point blank that he is not going to say one more thing to me. He is not going to do one more thing to me, after that. I told him I'd put up with this long enough. And pretty much I would say, after that he leveled off. I think it just took me to stand up to him and tell him what I really thought. And normally, I'm not like that. I more or less just go in, do what I'm supposed to do, and go home at the end of the day. I don't want any problems or stuff like that.

In this case, Ann was given the confidence to deal aggressively with management, as she knew that the union supported her, even though she resolved her problem outside of the formal grievance system

Many women workers, even after successfully building solid working relationships with male co-workers, found that they could not build on this solidarity outside of the plant. Masculine solidarity was built outside the plant as well as inside, through family activities such as picnics and weddings, but also through male activities—hanging out in bars, going on hunting trips, and playing sports. Most women I spoke with at the Bethlehem plant did not socialize with co-workers outside of the plant, and this is the case with women steelworkers in other mills as well (Fonow 2003; Olson 2005). When I asked about these activities, Christie Radics said "It just didn't interest me to do it. And I don't really know of anybody that did do it. The girls that I worked with never did. And there's a lot that the guys' wives weren't thrilled about us being there." Women workers encountered resentment from steelworker wives, and were, therefore, careful about socializing outside of work. Mary Fonow (2003) documents, at the Wheeling-Pittsburgh steel mill in Steubenville, Ohio, a near-picketing by wives when women were first hired in the mill. Bethlehem women workers corroborated the dissatisfaction of wives. Shirley Macek said

> their wives would never stand that you're friends. You're not looking to steal their husband. Like, my god, you crawled around in piping with these guys. You put your life on the line everyday with these guys. But you're not out to steal them. But you have so much more in common with them than I think anybody else could ever know. But you can't maintain this relationship without there being a problem [after the works closed]. So we got more cut off.

The tensions that women experience with the wives of steelworkers may be more than simply sexual jealousy (although clearly the stereotype of female steelworkers as "loose" plays into wives' jealousies). Ellen Israel Rosen, for example, in her 1980s study of working class women, documents resentment on the part of working class women towards women moving into male "family wage" jobs. Women who move into these higher-paying blue collar jobs are seen as

> depriving another wife of her rightful due. Working-class women therefore hurt themselves as women by claiming equality with men. Terry Sullivan, a garment worker, expressed this dilemma quite forcefully when she said, “When I see the women go and drive the bus or deliver the mail, when there are so many young men who need jobs, I think men should have these jobs, not women. I think women hurt themselves by being equal to men.” [1987:171]

This could be true in the Lehigh Valley, as the high-paying Bethlehem Steel jobs only open up occasionally for hiring, but this resentment is exacerbated by sexual jealousies and tensions rooted in stereotypes about the “loose” non-traditional blue collar woman, wives’ understanding of the masculine (sexualized) culture of the steel works, and the mill as a separate city (with shift work, including eating and sleeping at the mill) off-limit to wives. Male steelworkers used various strategies to assuage wives’ fears. Karol Keglovitz says that she was never invited to co-workers weddings,

> because some of the guys they told me that they told their wives I was fat and ugly and if they ever see me at the store I should keep moving…I’m serious. He says, don’t say hello to me cause I told my wife, she knows there’s women down here, and I told her you were big, fat and very ugly. And if she sees you walking over and says hi, I’m dead. [Behum 2010:221]

Women also framed their femininity carefully in an effort to avoid sexual harassment. The masculine shop floor culture was built, in part, through a portrayal of women as sexual objects, discussions of sexual conquests, and a tacit understanding that “running around” was acceptable, perhaps even desirable, and would never be mentioned to wives. The representation of women as disreputable, as that being the only role for women in the man’s world of the mill, put women at risk of harassment. Jeanne Brugger tells a story of when she started at the mill, as one of the very first women on the shop floor in 1973. Jeanne says her very first day on the plant, “some guy came up and told me the only reason I must be there is I must be a two dollar hooker looking for some extra money.” For Jeanne, this comment seemed to come out of nowhere, and she reacted strongly, “I was so shocked, I really was shocked…I still lived at home.” This kind of role assignment legitimized, for men, their sexual harassment of women workers, including making up stories that portrayed women as irreputable, rather than “respectable.” Christie Radics, for example, says

> they make up stories about you. I just remember one time, the only thing I can think of, somebody must have saw me and my niece, and this one guy says ‘Oh, so how’s your daughter.’ I’m like ‘what are you talking about?’ and he went

> through the whole story…all the girls there, there was always some goofy story somebody's making up about you.

Christie insinuated that defining her as a single, unmarried mother cast her as not respectable, undermining her reputation on the shop floor. Women combated this through highlighting kin connections as daughters, girlfriends, and wives (and some women did get protection within the mill through these familial connections, although often assignments to very different shops meant that protection was not great). Women also went to great effort not to be interpreted as "loose" – not socializing with co-workers outside of work, not going to steelworker bars, and not accentuating their feminine sexuality in the mill.

Although upward mobility into supervisory jobs was problematic for all workers, as values of solidarity with co-workers in contradistinction to management discouraged individual mobility, it was especially problematic for women. The Consent Decree laid out expectations for increased supervisory opportunities for women and minority workers, citing goals of 25% of promotions being women or minority workers. This became an issue for women workers that had worked hard to prove themselves to male co-workers, and to build relationships of solidarity. Ann Kovar describes working at the coke works when one of the women workers, Donna, became a labor leader. "Many of the guys resented that big time." So, she says when the general foreman came to her

> he came out to me and he says "Ann, I want to make you a foreman." And I said to him, they needed more minorities into management positions. I don't know if that was NOW mandated or that was just steel company mandated, but they wanted to do this. And, I remember all the stuff Donna went through, and I said to him, I says, "Well, if I work up to the job, I'd take it." But, I said "I don't want it because you need a woman in a supervisory position.." and he says "Are you sure?" I says "That's exactly how I feel."

Ann would have liked the supervisory position, but she didn't want to be given preference as a woman, "I said, 'I'm sticking true to me.' So I never, I never took a foreman's job. I just felt that I needed to work my way up there." Ann probably also realized that without the support of male co-workers, the foreman's job would be untenable as senior, experienced workers had multiple strategies to undermine the efficacy of problematic foremen. In addition, within a moral economy that valued seniority, and denigrated affirmative action, Ann interpreted the offer as unethical, and realized her coworkers would as well.

Women in the mill also claimed a citizenship, a right to the city of the mill, but they did so in ways that were different from men. I never once, for example, heard women talk about cooking in the mill. Cooking appeared to be a man's job, although women could bring food in to the mill, wives packed lunches, and women workers baked cakes at times. In fact, Mary talked about the men feeding her as she walked around the plant

> middle shift, night shift, I could go the whole plant and get coffee, donuts, sandwiches, anything. They'd be cooking. They always had hot coffee, donuts, baked potatoes, steak. That was how they cooked. The one place they used to make steaks. They had heaters and they would make steak on top. You could smell it throughout the area.

Women also viewed the large, open spaces of the works differently than men. Where men found autonomy and leisure time in hidden, unsupervised spaces, women frequently described these spaces as a bit frightening, especially at night. Mary Keenan tells about being scared at night in No. 2 machine shop, a large empty building with strange sounds. Jeanne Brugger, who walked around to many different shops, describes seeing a man and a woman worker having sex once in the mill. Her reaction was, "anybody could do anything down there. After I saw this, I just thought, anything could happen. I better really start watching my back. Cause before, I always thought things were jokes that they did to me." Rather than representing, for her, an autonomous life space within the mill, this made the mill more frightening to her, raising the issue of sexual violence in the masculine space of the mill. Women don't describe sleeping or taking catnaps (although one woman did describe a "private space" she used to take a break from her crane work), as, again, this might be more difficult for women on the job – they may feel they want a private space for this.

The washroom, a place for building masculine camaraderie, was a physical space of exclusion for women workers. Shirley describes learning the ropes on her jobs, as a new worker, with the men,

> they would take us to different parts of the plant. You'd never be able to find your way back out, because they'd bring you to this building, that building, and that building, and you had no idea where you were at. And you had to come back. Okay, where were we? I would follow behind these guys, and I was going to go into this one room, and they were like "you can't come in here." Like, why are you going in there? Well it was called the welfare room. And it was the men's welfare room. And I was like, now where do I go? Because I had no place to go. I'm by myself totally again.

Women had to use their own washrooms, which often meant spending more time commuting at the end of the day to get to distant washrooms. Ann Kovar describes a new washroom where she had to change when she worked at the iron foundry, "cause they never had washrooms for the women, you had to go a long way to take a shower." Women did see each other in the washrooms, so some solidarity could be built there, but the segregation of the women's washroom also made them a site of harassment. There are a number of reports of men creating peep holes to spy on women taking showers, and then using the private information they gleaned to denigrate women in the public spaces of the mill.

Women took ownership of mill spaces in different ways than men. Like men, they came to have an understanding of the geography of the mill, and some enjoyed the "natural spaces" within the mill, talking eloquently, for example, about releasing a snapping turtle to the river. The beauty of natural spaces was appreciated, but the danger of gendered violence in empty spaces was omnipresent. Women also did "kin work" within the mill. Shirley describes creating an elaborate lineage diagram of steelworkers in her department, Steam, Air and Water. During the 1990s Shirley created a wall, "we called it *the Wall*" in the power house, with light shining on it, on which "all these names were put in one, a block, that was painted in gold, and then preserved and stuff. Of everybody that was in our department from the beginning." Shirley said that this project resonated with workers:

> You would have people that would come from all parts of the plant just to look at the wall and maybe find their name, make sure their name was there. And I did it from the foremen on down, you know, everybody. And I had people that were older, and they would come and they would give me names…as far back as it went, everyone they could think of, you know, for our department.

Shirley put over 300 names on the wall, and the piece attracted workers from all over the plant. She felt badly about excluding workers, "We had a lot of what you would consider brother, sister departments that we worked so closely with. The pipe shop, the riggers, um, the meter men, they were constantly in our department. There were so many of them. You know, it was a very close working relationship, you now, but there was only so much room." Shirley translated her gendered skills in celebrating "family" connections and doing "kin work" to building this lineage of

the department, an artistic representation of the meaningful social relationships built in the steel mill.

Many women successfully found individual strategies to build solidarity with male co-workers—moving out of the more masculine direct incentive production jobs, staying in departments where they had gained acceptance, avoiding activities outside of work—and were able to develop good working relationships, gain skills, build seniority, and overcome the hostility and harassment of their long initial period as junior workers. Women workers benefited from the early retirement incentives, like the Rule of 80, that were offered in the 1980s, as they freed up permanent jobs in departments, getting workers out of what for women was an especially difficult labor pool, because it involved working for short periods in different departments. Those women that stayed at the mill tried to get permanent jobs that allowed them to build relationships of solidarity with their male co-workers, something they could not do when they kept moving from department to department. Julia Mueller, an ex-steelworker, says:

> the company started offering the rule of 80. That freed up permanent jobs in departments that were staying open. They [women workers] could move off the labor gang and quit bouncing around so much. It might have been just fill in when they came back, one month, two months, then they had to find another job. A lot of guys went through that too but it seemed as though guys could find under-the-table jobs to get by and lay off and do enough on the side. Mow lawns, shovel snow, odd jobs, things they did so they wouldn't have to take a permanent outside job that they had to quit. It was harder for women to find those. And if you said, what was your last job? Bethlehem Steel. It didn't even matter when you left, it was like, you're from the Steel if they call you they're going right back. It did not matter what you said.

However, as deindustrialization and downsizing in the 1990s shrunk opportunities in the mill and heightened competition, those women once again encountered increased levels of hostility and harassment at the end of their careers in steel. Some of this hostility coalesced around the perception that women were receiving favored treatment around medical disabilities and external transfers to other plant (see Chapter Five). And some of it centered on the obvious and explicit junior status of women, for the most part hired in 1979, as junior workers. For example, Julia explains that in some departments, if a male worker was laid off from another department, he couldn't "bump" a junior worker above a certain job classification. This protected junior workers,

and women were “marked” as junior, in those departments, in a way that men weren’t. For example,

> in the power house, if she was still there, someone laid off from the machine shop, they can’t bump her off in the power house because that job rises above the bumpable level. That already started hostility. Men thought, these girls barely got here and they’re still working and I’m out of a job? That began in 1988 or 1987 already. Guys were getting bumped out.

These resentments, generated by the stress of seniority-mediated layoffs, once again exacerbated hostility towards women.

CHAPTER 5

DEINDUSTRIALIZATION, BANKRUPTCY AND DISPOSSESSION: THE LOSS OF LEGACY BENEFITS

In this chapter, I examine the effects of the closing of the Bethlehem plant, and the subsequent bankruptcy of the Bethlehem Steel corporation, on steelworkers and their families. The drawn-out process of closing of the Bethlehem plant generated layoffs, early retirements, and transfers as workers at the South Bethlehem plant responded to and were affected by large-scale plant restructuring. As shops, departments, divisions, and, eventually, the entire Bethlehem works closed down, workers and their families responded to these processes. Bethlehem steelworkers took early retirements to access their pensions. Or, if ineligible for retirement, they transferred internally to hold onto jobs, and they accepted transfers to other Bethlehem plants, all to continue working at Bethlehem Steel long enough to retire – to access their collectively-bargained pension and health care benefits. However, after making difficult household decisions about transfer to other plants and enduring long commutes, difficult working conditions, and the expense of maintaining two households, Bethlehem Steel's entry into the bankruptcy courts and the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation's (PBGC) takeover of the pension plan in 2001 effectively ended the time line towards accessing a pension. When the bankruptcy court then allowed Bethlehem Steel to dump its health care responsibilities, in 2003, workers and their families were hard-hit. This chapter discusses these processes of accumulation by dispossession, examining how these processes are supported by broader state policies, how they play themselves out unevenly across steelworkers and their families, and the enormous effects they have on steelworkers' lives.

A key issue expressed by ex-steelworkers and their families at Bethlehem Steel's South Bethlehem plant was the attaining of Bethlehem Steel pensions that can support or help to support families after workers are laid off due to plant downsizing or shutdown. Household decisions were made, family strategies constructed, and collective action taken around attaining the steelworker's pension. Because no steelworkers had been hired since 1979, the cohort of 1973 and 1979 hires were most in danger of losing pension benefits as they were not yet eligible

for retirement when their shops closed. Ex-steelworkers are not the only Americans who are currently reassessing their retirement options, and steelworkers are very aware of the value of a defined benefit pension, and the lack of defined benefit pensions in many contemporary, post industrial jobs. Bethlehem Steel, as in other areas, was a historical forerunner in both the development of worker pensions (through a process of struggle headed by the United Steelworkers union), and in using the strategy of Chapter 11 bankruptcy to eliminate those pension and healthcare obligations.

Workers defined their right to the pension as centrally important in individual, household, and collective strategies for responding to processes of deindustrialization. Workers were keenly aware of the importance and value of their defined benefit pension. Although the exact value of the pension was often difficult to calculate as pension payments are calculated on either the "best five" of the last ten years of employment or a percentage of the salary, the value of monthly pension payments for the remainder of workers' lives was clearly recognized. Workers openly prioritized receiving the pension (and their union was clear that this was a priority in structuring layoffs and downsizing). They fiercely felt that the pension was not a "legacy cost" or an individual "entitlement" that they expected, it was their due, earned through years of hard, dangerous, and dirty work. Jose Rodriguez pointed out that "We gave up our safety [health, environmental, danger of the job] for security…we expected security" in return. Pensions were seen as earned through years of hard work; promised by the company; and negotiated in the legally-recognized collective bargaining process, often in lieu of wage increases. Workers emphasized their citizenship rights to their defined benefit pension – both in terms of what Ghilarducci defines as "deferred wages" (collectively bargained in lieu of wage increases) and as "payments for depreciation" (not substitutes for pay, but payments earned through the hard, hot, dangerous work that takes a lifelong toll on the worker's body), not as "legacy costs" but as "legacy benefits" (2008).

As the Bethlehem plant was downsized, older workers were offered "sweetened" retirement options, negotiated through USW and Bethlehem Steel collective bargaining, to encourage retirement. These pensions included a $400 monthly supplemental benefit to pad the

pension until the worker reached the age to attain social security. This was a significant pension for workers (although it varied relative to their earnings at the Steel) and retired workers also maintained full health care coverage. Workers who retired with these benefits did not need to find another job. Union officers from this period also expressed the importance of getting workers their pensions. Curt Papp, a staff representative for the United Steelworkers International union, said "I felt I could see the writing on the wall" in the late 1980s. "That was my theory at the time, keep the place going as long as I could, every year and every month someone became eligible for pension." Papp said the union kept encouraging senior people to take layoff, and keep the young people. "This kept extending the young guys to get more time…Our goal was to keep the youngest people working at all times." Because business unionism had few tools to oppose plant shutdowns, attaining retirement and the accompanying pension and health care benefits, came to be defined as the goal for the union and for workers.

The value of these defined benefit pensions was evident to steelworkers. These workers are highly critical of the defined contribution benefits, like 401ks, increasingly associated with contemporary post industrial jobs. Although the contemporary insecurity of retirement is often represented by the media as the result of natural and regular cyclical fluctuations in the stock market, or the fault of "uninformed" or "ignorant" consumers and individual investors, these analyses ignore the state-supported changes in private sector pension programs that have produced a radically restructured retirement landscape over the past twenty years. This transformation is part and parcel of a wider neoliberal project to restore capitalist class power through a wide variety of social processes and practices. In the pension system, the capitalist classes have implemented legislation, used institutions such as the courts, and developed discourses which work to shift risks from large corporations to employees and from government and business to families while simultaneously shifting rewards of power, profits, and prestige from working and middle class Americans to the corporate classes (Harvey 2005; Hacker 2006; Gosselin 2008). The current economic crisis has generated a flurry of media coverage about heightened inequality in the U.S. but, as some have pointed out, this focus on stratification, as measured through wealth or income inequality, does not pay sufficient attention to the social and

cultural processes through which the contemporary project of neoliberalism restores capitalist class power (Harvey 2005; Piven 2006). The effect of the current economic crisis on Americans' pension plans and retirement possibilities is directly related to this wider project as it relates to retirement in the U.S.: the shift from "defined benefit pension plans," such as those negotiated by the United Steelworkers union for Bethlehem Steel workers, to "defined contribution" plans such as individual retirement accounts and 401(k)s. These changes in pensions result in savings to the companies, and reduced contributions to workers. In a traditional defined benefit plan, for example, companies invest 7 to 8% of workers' wages annually, while in a defined contribution plan that contribution averages 3% (Greenhouse 2008:278).

There are enormous problems for workers and their families with the shift to defined contribution benefit plans. Some of these problems have been delineated in recent research on pensions (Hawthorne 2008; Hacker 2002; Gosselin 2008; Greenhouse 2008). Defined contribution plans result in lower savings for workers, riskier retirement, and more inequality in retirement benefits to high-salaried and lower-paid workers. At the same time, these changes provide benefits to the companies (as delineated above) and to the financial industry, with millions of dollars in fees and payments for the administration of these new 401k accounts. One issue with the defined contribution plans is that workers do not voluntarily set aside sufficient amounts for retirement. The median amount in a 401k in 2004 was $28,000 for all workers, and for older workers (55-64) it was $61,000 (Greenhouse 2008:279). Clearly, this is not going to provide sufficient retirement support. And lower income employees are much less likely to contribute fully or at all to 401ks, often needing every dollar in their paycheck for ongoing daily expenses. In addition, 401ks may lead to risky, non-diversified investments. Employees may, for example, purchase stock (and may be encouraged or even required to do so) in the company they work for (this was the issue in the Enron disaster). In addition, employees may "cash out" their 401ks before retirement. Although 401ks are more "flexible" than traditional defined benefit plans when employees move from company to company, employees who take "lump sum" payments when they leave a company often do not roll pensions into new 401ks, instead "cashing out." In fact, studies show that employees are much less likely to roll monies over into

new 401ks if they have been laid off, relocate, or need to care for a family member (Hacker 2006). In the insecure post-Fordist order, families are pressured to raid their retirement accounts (even though they lose a great deal of retirement money in penalties and taxes) because of unforeseen but not uncommon difficulties such as job layoffs, care for children or elderly, illness, or moving to follow jobs and work. Finally, unlike defined benefit plans, defined contribution plans have no government guarantee or insurance (like the PBGC) to cover risks, as we saw in the 2008/09 stock market crash.

The "cashing out" problem was clear in my research with steelworkers and their families. In the 1980s Bethlehem Steel, like many large U.S. corporations, began offering 401ks to workers. In Bethlehem Steel's case, these were available as a supplement to the defined benefit plan prescribed and negotiated through the collective bargaining process. Workers could make voluntary contributions into these 401ks, but these were not matched by the employer, as the company was already contributing to the defined benefit plan. Many workers used these additional plans to voluntarily put aside money from their paycheck to supplement their retirement savings. For some, those 401k savings later became an essential part of retirement. Joe Putnam, a retired steelworker, set aside money in his plan, and sold at the right time (before the post-9/11 stock market crash), generating ongoing income which supplements his pension and savings (to the tune of about $8,000 a year) and "is the difference between a job and retirement." His experience, however, was the exception for ex-steelworkers. And, as he represented it, although his savings in the 401k were related to his strong values of thrift and saving, selling at the right time was purely "luck". He did not see himself as an adept financier, savvily playing the market, although he did define himself as a good saver.

Unfortunately, saving alone is not necessarily rewarded in the defined contribution system. More often, ex-steelworkers either sold out of their 401ks too late (after dramatic stock market losses), or cashed out of 401k plans in times of economic stress. Norman Brist and his wife Ellen, for example, decided to cash in their 401k after Norm was laid off from his job at Bethlehem Steel's Lackawanna Plant when they closed the coke works. When he returned home to Bethlehem, unemployed and without a pension, they cashed in his 401k to make the mortgage

payments on their house, "I wasn't going to lose my house." Fred Needham cashed in his 401k to help with health insurance payments after Bethlehem Steel declared bankruptcy, ending all healthcare coverage. Needham's 401k is now "all gone…there is no savings." Finding health insurance that would cover his wife's bad back and his bladder cancer wiped him out financially. These workers did not benefit from the tax advantages applied to 401k accounts. Tony Russo says that he "invested wrongly" in risky investments with his 401k, and with 9/11 "I lost my shirt." This experience has left him and other ex-steelworkers concerned about the next generation; anxious about the 401ks that children in their thirties all have as their retirement accounts, aware that the temptation to cash these out is great (one worker described his daughter's using her 401k for a down payment on a house in New Jersey) and the impetus to saving small.

While steelworkers feel strongly about the benefit of defined benefit pension plans, the shift to defined contribution plans also works to undermine working class solidarity and exacerbate tensions between fractions of the U.S. working class. As a smaller and smaller percentage of workers (generally unionized, and often in the public sector) continue to have defined benefit pension plans, "there's a lot of jealousy but not a lot of sympathy" towards those workers (Orenstein 2009). George W. Bush attempted to mobilize these resentments in his 2007 State of the Union address (and radio talk before the address) in which he stated that "the tax code unfairly penalizes people who do not get health insurance through their job. It unwisely encourages workers to choose overly expensive, gold-plated plans. The result is that the insurance premiums rise, and many Americans cannot afford the coverage they need." (*Whitehouse Archives* 2007). Bush's argument blames those workers who do have health care, and more recent arguments blame public workers with defined benefit pensions for the high costs of health care for other workers and high taxes for homeowners. His solution? To tax those "gold-plated" health care plans. Workers who are paying substantial monthly fees and co-pays for their health care plans and who have 401ks are encouraged to resent teachers, transit workers, and autoworkers with better health and pension plans. Certainly, there was a great deal of resentment in Bethlehem towards Bethlehem steelworkers who were perceived as being well-paid, having great benefits, and having a secure and stable job. One result of this

privatized/public retirement system is that it does construct different "fractions" of the working class, and resentments around "entitlements" can be mobilized towards what are perceived as more privileged workers. Recent politics that shift the focus of accumulation by dispossession onto public sector worker pensions and health benefits play on this fragmentation to mobilize popular working class sentiment against public sector workers such as teachers, mobilizing their interests as tax payers against workers and mobilizing resentments towards unionized higher-paid workers as not reflecting the "market-determined reality" of low wage post-Fordist work.

Bethlehem Steel workers who were not eligible for retirement were laid off. These workers had four options: to attempt to get back into the steel plant, transfer, access the pension through medical disability, or forego the pension and look for other jobs outside of steel. By the 1990s, when entire divisions were closed down, thousands of workers had already been laid off from the steel mill, and many never returned to the works. Women were disproportionately represented in this group, as they were the "last hired," less likely to have access to insider knowledge or mentoring that would enable them to negotiate internal transfer, and more likely to be alienated from an often hostile masculine workplace. Most women at the plant were hired in 1978/79, and were laid off during the 1980s.

External Transfers

According to the contract, when employees with more than 20 years employment were laid off for more than two years or due to plant shutdown, Bethlehem Steel was required to offer them "suitable long term employment" at another plant in the same region within two years. If not offered, they would roll into their pension. Corporate management preferred that workers not access their pensions, so they tried to find transfer options for as many laid off workers as they could. To this end, much to the disgust of many workers, Bethlehem Steel and the USW renegotiated (in arbitration) criteria for plants falling within transfer range, adding the Sparrows Point, Maryland works (a three hour drive) and the Lackawanna, New York steel works (a five hour drive from the Lehigh Valley). In addition, in 1998 Bethlehem Steel purchased the Lukens Steel Company, adding mills at Conshohocken and Coatesville, near Philadelphia, as potential transfer sites.

Workers had to decide whether to accept a forced transfer or, instead, to volunteer for transfer to a specific works, although often times the date of layoff would limit transfer options. Shops, departments, and divisions in the mill closed at different times, and steelworkers might not have had a full array of plant transfer options at their time of layoff. Some steelworkers volunteered for transfer, requesting transfer to the Burns Harbor, IN (a plant so far away that they could not be forced to transfer there), Steelton, or Sparrows Point steel works. In making these decisions, workers attempted to formulate best-option strategies for themselves and their families. In negotiating this complex, variegated, and shifting terrain of deindustrialization, workers made decisions without access to the same formal knowledge as Bethlehem Steel executives. Workers relied on networks of steelworkers, union contacts, and, for some, information from extended family members or friends who were managers at Bethlehem Steel. Different workers (depending on one's job in the plant, union position, and race, gender, ethnicity) had access to varying information. Workers who either traveled throughout the plant in their jobs or who held union offices (and these workers were disproportionately white men) were more likely to have access to information.

Workers might elect to voluntarily transfer in order to ensure transfer to a plant closer to home, as Dave Baker did when he volunteered for the Steelton plant. This allowed workers to commute daily from their home in the Lehigh Valley. Or, some workers chose to transfer long distances--to Burns Harbor—on the basis of information about high income and steady work at the plant. Barry Gorski described his decision to go to Burns Harbor:

> It's the furthest plant of all, that they had. But I figured I'd put in my sacrifice, five years, and work as much as I can as far as overtime. I heard from other people that transferred out there that they were making very, very good money. Our pension here was very low, this plant didn't have a great pension because of the difference in money. Your best five out of your last ten is your pension. So coke ovens [his internal transfer] was one of your lowest paid of all. This place down here [in Bethlehem] especially. So I talked it over with my wife, and she said whatever you want to do. And I went out for a visit. I liked it but my plan was not so much if I liked it, put in those lousy five more years that I needed for my thirty, get a decent pension, come back [to Bethlehem], and find something small and part-time or whatever. It didn't work out that way.

Barry weighed his options, given the information that he had.

> Should I go to Sparrows Point and make less money, or to Steelton and make even less money? I was hearing that one of them was going to close down too.

> A lot of rumors were going around. I decided I should go to the best plant, and make good money. They were going 100% at that plant, it was always going 100%.

Workers who were on layoff waited for official letters to arrive informing them of the suitable long term employment Bethlehem offered. Although rules of seniority were supposed to dictate forced transfer letters, there was a certain amount of uncertainty and arbitrariness to the process, and, therefore, a visceral reality to the physical arrival of the letter. John Moore describes receiving the letter, which arrived by certified mail at the worker's home, "it was like getting a draft notice. My heart sunk when I got it." Although workers would call the union hall to find out where they were on the "list," one man, Paul Davis, described waiting and waiting for a letter that never arrived. He said that workers with more seniority than he received letters, and he never got one. Each day went by, with Paul hoping that he wasn't called to another plant. He made it through the two year period without receiving his letter, and signed up for his pension. He attributes this to luck, "They somehow missed me…All my life the guy next to you got the carrot…Well, I finally got to the point that I got the carrot."

Once the letter arrived, discussions occurred within families to decide whether or not they would accept the transfer. Workers and families visited the new site, had a physical exam, and engaged in a great deal of discussion among family members. Information was collected from coworkers who had visited or transferred to these plants, from the union (as this was a gathering site and informational network for workers), and on these initial site visits. Some workers (those with wider steelworker networks, stronger union ties, and/or extended family or friends in corporate management) had access to more information than others (and this information was unevenly accessible along lines of race, gender, and ethnicity). Workers weighed information such as abundance of work, pay, and overtime hours; the condition of the plant; and commuting distance in constructing strategies.

In considering the transfer, workers' understandings of place clashed with neoliberal assumptions of a mobile, flexible workforce. Workers' emphasis on place, in which working class families "inhabit a fixed territory of local culture and community," as opposed to capital's "more fluid command of space" was evident in these decisions (Cowie and Heathcott 2003). First, most

workers did not move with their families to the city of the new steel works. Instead they came up with alternatives which would enable them to maintain their homes in the Lehigh Valley while completing the necessary time to gain their pension. This meant that commuting distance was a key consideration. Steelton, and later Coatesville and Conshohocken, were plants that could be reached in a daily commute. Sparrows Point and Lackawanna were too far, by car, for that. Many workers with sufficient seniority, such as Dave Baker, volunteered to go to the Steelton plant in Harrisburg. Dave talked to his wife about moving to Harrisburg to avoid the two and half hour daily commute, but "she said absolutely no." As for setting up a household and commuting home on weekends, Dave said "my wife would have divorced me." Ellen Bream said she "cried and cried" when she heard her husband, Rich's, transfer options of Burns Harbor, Indiana or Sparrows Point, Maryland. She told him "I've never flown, and I'm not going to start now."

Connections to place (to the Lehigh Valley) produced social capital which could not be reproduced in the new cities of Lackawanna, Baltimore, or Harrisburg. This included kin and friendship networks through which collaborative labor could be mobilized (for babysitting, household improvements), home ownership facilitated, and job opportunities supported. Kinship ties operate through extended kin networks, including blended families, maintained through women's "kin work." This "nontransferable capital in homes and land, kin and friendship" provides important supports for working class families (Doukas 2003:24). Steelworker families also valued their role in providing this support to their children and grandchildren, through providing housing when necessary (and this happened in many cases as adult children and grandchildren moved back in with their parents), childcare, and financial and emotional support, and many families chose not to move so they could continue to be near children and grandchildren. In addition, wives held a variety of jobs, which many were reluctant to give up for what was defined as a short-term move (and many jobs could not be easily replicated in new cities). There was no guarantee of secure jobs with health care, pension, and vacation benefits in new locations, and wives were extremely reluctant to give up these jobs. One wife did take a six month leave of absence from her job as a health care professional to join her husband in

Lackawanna, but she returned to work in the Lehigh Valley at the end of that time, unwilling to give up her secure, well-paid job and her seniority at work.

Although Steelton was commutable, there were other considerations in determining whether to volunteer for transfer or await a mandated transfer to Lackawanna or Sparrows Point. Workers attempted to assess the likelihood of the job continuing at the plant to which they were transferred. Mark Nowak decided not to volunteer for transfer to Steelton, but instead to wait for a letter forcing his transfer to Lackawanna, on the basis of his assessment of the poor condition of the plant. The Lackawanna plant had been through an extended downsizing, and, in his judgment, the plant would soon close down. "I wanted to go to Lackawanna, since it was down to the coke facility. It was in bad shape, the facilities were falling apart. I thought that the rules would say that after the second shutdown I would be eligible for my pension." Tom Urban waited for the Lackawanna letter, saying "I played the odds. I had a feeling that the place in Buffalo wasn't going to last much longer, especially after I got there and saw the condition of the place. I knew that was the next place to close. Sooner or later." John Moore said "I saw the facility was in a deplorable condition. I thought there was no way I could be there for more than a year." Workers used the information they were able to acquire through an educated eye for capital investment in machinery to attempt to predict the uneven process of deindustrialization within the corporation: which works would the corporation close next, was closure inevitable, and in what time frame would this occur? Since the contract mandated that after a second shutdown, workers would roll into their pensions, this was an important consideration.

Layoffs, however, were not the same as shutdowns, so workers had to also calculate the possibility of long layoffs as they moved to unstable workplaces in which they had lost seniority. Dave Baker said "In transfer, there was no guarantee that you were going to stay there. It was just to get you off the pension list. That's what it was all about." and his wife was reluctant to move because of this insecurity "Brenda said who's to say they don't do to you out there what they did to you here." The potential insecurity of jobs at transfer plants, within a corporation and a steel industry undergoing massive restructuring, was also an important factor in the decision to commute rather than move.

But, in this uneven terrain, workers, in hindsight, questioned the decisions they had made. Workers tried to make rational decisions with the data they had, but they did not have access to the same information as Bethlehem Steel's management did about Bethlehem Steel's viability, the time frame for shut down of the Lackawanna plant, the likelihood of entering bankruptcy court, and the 2001 takeover of their pension benefits by the Pension Benefit and Guaranty Corporation. George Dent, for example, describes arguing for a transfer to Steelton on the basis of seniority, but later regretting it. "Little did I know if I kept my mouth shut, I would never have went anywhere." He couldn't predict that the closing of the Bethlehem plant's coke works would throw a number of lower-seniority workers with first transfer requirements into the transfer pool, making it more likely that he could have avoided transfer entirely (spending two years on layoff and then rolling into his pension). Transfer was also unpredictable because the internal rule of law governing seniority could become confused and confusing in the transfer process. As departments and divisions shut down, workers were laid off, thus becoming eligible for transfer. But the arbitrary nature of department shutdown, coinciding with the uneven availability of job openings at various plants, meant that junior workers might get more desirable transfer options than more senior workers. This irked Jim Wojcik who argued to the union "wait a minute," why should a Bethlehem plant employee junior to him get a more desirable transfer (like the commutable Steelton plant) simply because his department closed earlier? This contradicted the principle of seniority, although not the union-negotiated law governing the transfer process, rendering company transfer decisions arbitrary and unjust.

For most workers, the decision to transfer was defined very clearly as a decision to put in those years necessary to attain their pensions. Since all of the workers at Bethlehem's plant were relatively senior, for these workers this was not an extended period of time. Over and over again I heard "I went up to do my time for pension eligibility." "I had 26 years at that time, I needed four years." "My goal was three years and out," and "I was not going to turn it [the transfer] down. I would've went, no matter where, I would've went. I wanted to get my thirty years. I wanted to take care of my family. The whole nine yards. It's my responsibility." Most workers did not want to move feeling, as craneman Frank Havlicek did,

> I'm a Bethlehem steelworker. Bethlehem's my plant. It's always going to be my plant, and I live in Bethlehem…this is our home. That's not our home up there. We're only going up there cause we have to, we have no choice. We're doing time there. We're coming home here though.

Workers' strategies shifted from the goal of keeping their home plant alive to that of "doing time" until they were eligible for pensions. The "carrot" of the pension benefit did, however, motivate workers to put in long hours at their new plant, increasing plant productivity, as higher salaries would contribute to larger pensions.

Once workers got to the new plant, they confronted the loss of many aspects of their seniority, a loss which had psychic as well as material consequences. Because local unions had differing agreements on transfer workers from other Bethlehem Steel plants, the plants the Bethlehem workers transferred into did not recognize their Bethlehem seniority. U.S. labor unions had frequently negotiated collective agreements that "distinguished between home plant workers and trans-plants" as a part of the price of company-wide recall rights (High 2003:73). In material terms, loss of seniority meant that workers had to take whatever job they were assigned, often moving from prestigious positions within the works to jobs as common laborers, work they had not done since they were young men. Tom Urban describes his new job at the Lackawanna Coke Works.

> Well, we had to start at the bottom. And when you were not the bottom, that's where you went. Things moved pretty fast…I had 26 years when I went up there and it was 26 years this guy (the boss) threw out the window. He gave us 2 months seniority. Which means I had to go to the top of the coke ovens. And I was 45 years old. Young kids were doing the fish dance up there, and I was 45. It was so hot I thought my brain was on fire. I kept feeling my forehead. My forehead wasn't hot, but it felt like my brain was burning. I got big blisters on the bottom of my feet, even though the soles of our boots were that thick [holds up his hands several inches apart], from the heat.

Bethlehem workers had to work at laborer jobs, even as younger workers moved into more skilled positions. Although experiences varied, depending on the skills of the worker, and the works they went to (whether there was a demand for workers being sent there, or if it was over-staffed), many workers were initially passed over for promotions, even when they were the most skilled workers available for the position. USW contracts laid out conditions for compensation for lower pay rates, or time limits for promotion into more skilled jobs, but many transferred workers felt hostile bosses denied them opportunities as long as they could.

Workers also lost seniority when it came to bidding on days off, vacation times, and schedules. These scheduling issues also had an impact on commuting and family relationships. Barry Kirk describes being unable to commute with fellow Bethlehem workers, as Steelton bosses deliberately put Bethlehem workers on different schedules. This meant greater expense, less collegiality, more difficult commutes, and less time spent with other workers.

This "demotion" at the new plant violated principles of seniority as a measure of skill, status, and experience, and resulted in the company failing to best use skilled workers. Fred Schneck, a foreman at the Bethlehem plant's blast furnace, describes working at Sparrows Point:

> I'm going to tell you something. Edison Morales was one of the best welders that I ever worked with in my life. That man could be blindfolded, one arm tied behind his back and hang him upside down, and still put a perfect V underneath the bell cylinder on the blast furnace. I mean it, you couldn't get a better guy. I come down there [to Sparrows Point] and he's in the washroom as a janitor. I go over to the blast furnace that day, because they were down, and I'm up on top of the blast furnace and we're waiting because they had a contract out. Because they need a 6G welder to fix the job that they had on top of the furnace. I went down to the manager on maintenance and I said "you have a 6G welder down in the washroom right now." I said "he could get you going in an hour." They didn't put him up there. This is where it was so unfair to our guys. (*Steelworkers' Archives*)

Fred describes the devaluing of workers in host plants, the failure to recognize these highly valuable skills, honed and developed through years of experience, and the lack of recognition of the social status and standing accompanying seniority. In the case he discusses, company management outsourced work, costing the plant money, because of its failure to properly value transferred workers' status. This demotion contributed to tension and hostility between the home plant workers and the transferees, fragmenting the labor force (one that would be hard-put to collectively fight plant closing in the new plant).

Loss of seniority also devalued Bethlehem workers. As we have seen, seniority was a crucial organizing concept for Bethlehem Steel workers, providing what Richard Sennett calls grounding for a linear "life narrative" of "how things should happen…the idea of being able to plan" (Sennett 2006:25). Workers' date of hire at Bethlehem Steel determined many aspects of the trajectory of their career: what positions within the plant they were eligible to apply for, when they were eligible for pensions and retirement, and which "age grade" of peers at the Bethlehem works they belonged to. Seniority also incorporated values embedded in understandings of craft

work, and codified social status within the plant. As Sennett points out, craft knowledge is based on embodied practice and experience over time, and is enacted in the context of social relations such as apprenticeships and mentoring relationships. To lose seniority meant losing the valuing of experience, of craft skill, as well as the recognition of that experience in relationships with other workers. Men with more age and experience worked under much younger men in these new plants. Jerry Blazek says "when I went to Baltimore I started out as if I just came off the street. There were kids 18 or 19 years old that had higher paying jobs than me." This upsetting of the accepted moral economy of the mill was highly alienating to workers.

In addition, in some of the receiving plants, workers had to confront the resentment of local "natives" towards the Bethlehem "newcomers," reversing a central Bethlehem worker identity as experienced and senior natives in the Lehigh Valley. Workers lost their "seniority" as valued and experienced community members as they moved to new cities, as short-term, transient residents. And they lost the value of their "lineages" of intergenerational experience at the Bethlehem plant, and the claim that gave them to the space of the mill and intimate knowledge of the machinery and technology of the Bethlehem mill. The uneven geographic unfolding of deindustrialization generates conflicts and divisions within the industrial work force as workers struggle to hang onto jobs. Workers are cognizant of this geography of deindustrialization, tracking Bethlehem Steel's decisions regarding capital investments in various plants, and correlating that with long-term plans for these plants. This bred competition between works and between locals of the United Steelworkers union for corporate capital investment indicating long-term commitment, as workers struggled for the survival of their home plants. Partially as a result of this competition, officers of union locals often favored their constituents, the "native" workers at the home plant, over the new transfers from Bethlehem. Although some Bethlehem workers were satisfied with union representation at the new plants, most expressed dissatisfaction with their new union locals.

While Steven High (2003) describes the tension between "home planters" and the "shut-down veterans" who are transferred into plants from previous shutdowns, he does not sufficiently emphasize some of the very real material causes for these tensions. Bethlehem steelworkers

report that workers in Lackawanna and Sparrows Point resented the new Bethlehem workers, believing that they were taking jobs from their relatives, and that they had come to shut down the plant. Now, it was Bethlehem trans-plants who were white, male workers who were viewed as not rightfully holding these jobs, not having full citizenship rights in "host" plants, and lacking the valued seniority that shaped work and social relations inside the plant. This undermined solidarity in the new plant. Solidarities, identities, and forms of political organization within the plant are localized, preventing the development of a broader working class identity and solidarity. But host workers' fears were accurate, as jobs were opened for transferees, leading to decreased overtime opportunities for native workers, decreased probability of junior workers being called back from layoff, and a reduction in demand for new hires. In a shrinking steel labor market, native steelworkers resented prioritizing transferees over more junior natives. At Lackawanna, for example, steelworkers had been directly experiencing the insecurity of deindustrialization since 1970. The 1968 opening of the greenfield Burns Harbor plant already threatened Lackawanna's production (Warren 2010; Bartholomew and Young 2010). As early as 1970 steel production at Lackawanna was cut in half, and the workforce was reduced from 18,000 to about 9,000 workers (Warren 2010:230). The long, drawn-out process of deindustrialization, at the Lackawanna plant, similar in many ways to what happened at the Bethlehem works, although beginning earlier, meant that Lackawanna native workers had been struggling for decades to keep their jobs and keep their plant alive. Like the Bethlehem plant, steelworkers had heard about proposed expansions and seen investment at the Lackawanna plant (a 1973 expansion plan, a 1976-1978 $200 million investment in the rolling mills, a 1981 galvanizing line expansion, and a 1980s improved coke works heating system) even as shops were closed and workers were laid off. Large numbers of steelworkers had been laid off from Lackawanna, and Bethlehem transferees were seen as taking jobs that should have been theirs, as "stealing jobs." Workers do not accept neoliberal concepts of mobile, flexible labor. Instead, they claim industries and industrial jobs as being located within the community. And Lackawanna "native" workers realized that as Bethlehem Steel looked for suitable employment for workers, in order to keep them off the pension rolls, they over-staffed Lackawanna, cutting into available overtime hours for "native"

workers, and eliminating new job openings. Long-time competition of one plant against another in the attempt to "stay alive" also led to hostilities between plants.

In addition, natives often correctly read a lack of commitment to the productivity of the host plant on the part of transferees. In truth, transferees often hoped that their host plant would shut down, giving them access to their pension through the second shutdown clause in the contract. While home plant workers worked hard to ensure their plant stayed open (and we have seen that many Bethlehem workers prided themselves on this in their own plant), transferees were not so motivated, and may even have engaged in sabotage. I heard one story (although I don't know if it is true) of an attempted sabotage at the Lackwanna coke works, in which a Bethlehem worker almost precipitated an oven-closing accident. Bethlehem transferees moving into other plants were initially regarded with suspicion, undermining solidarity, pitting workers against each other, and weakening workers in their ongoing opposition to restructuring, downsizing, and concessions.

These external transfers, part of the broader processes of restructuring and deindustrialization in the steel industry, alienated workers from their own work, producing an instrumental approach to work. For most transferees, steelwork that had once been fulfilling became a means to an end—the pension. The moral economy of the home plant, the values of seniority, citizenship, and solidarity that guided relationships and practices, made work meaningful and gave work dignity. These were displaced and over-turned in a host plant that did not recognize worker's seniority and citizenship rights, and that undermined solidarity. This made work, for many workers, alienating and unfulfilling. For the most part (there was a small minority of exceptions—workers that stayed working for ISG) workers worked to earn their pension, to "do their time," and when their time was up, at the host plants, they returned home to Bethlehem.

Transferred workers also had to deal with the economic strain of maintaining two households, and the emotional strain of maintaining marriages and other long-term relationships while commuting. Family and friendship ties and habits of everyday life in Bethlehem also shored up a moral terrain in which gendered family roles were maintained. Once unmoored from the family ties and kinship networks of the Lehigh Valley, many workers' second homes in Sparrows

Point or Lackawanna became male-focused. Workers would “room” with other Bethlehem steel workers, sharing apartments and townhouses, cooking and (when possible) commuting. Many workers dealt with what they defined as this unsatisfactory home life by working as many overtime hours as were available. But, in periods of limited overtime, some workers started carousing. The masculine culture of the steel mill, brought home at night to their home life, could threaten once-stable family relationships. Co-workers were not condemnatory of peers who ran into marital trouble. Instead, they seemed to recognize the enormous difficulty of maintaining marriages under these circumstances. Nor did workers accept the neoliberal ideal of “flexible” work and a “flexible” family, in which long distance commuting, geographic mobility, and more flexible gender roles are accepted as normal. Without the constraints and supports of household gender relations and family structure, marriages suffered. Norman Brist feels that

> The guys who did the best are those who stuck together and did things together. Guys that lived by themselves didn’t fare well at all. They went out on the town, picked up girlfriends, had a hard time dealing with everything. It was an emotional issue. Having a wife at home, a girl there. One guy committed suicide because of that.

Workers also describe some wives at home who started “running around” when their husbands were absent. Many marriages ended in divorce as the habits and routines of everyday family life, and the deep social networks and connections of the Valley, were disrupted. The demands for a flexible, mobile workforce tore apart many families, contributing to divorces. Workers felt the strain of absence on other familial relationships as well. Norman Brist describes the damage he thinks that his absence in Buffalo did to his relationship with his teenage daughter. He feels his daughter didn’t finish college, because “I wasn’t there for my daughter…the father support wasn’t there…I would be the strict one. Donna would have it easy on them. Fathers are more strict than mothers.” Male workers transferred to fulfill gendered wage-earning responsibilities within the family, but in pursuing the masculine role of primary breadwinner, workers experienced damage to familial relationships and a diminution of their defined roles as father and husband. The gender based division of labor within the household, for example, changed as wives did more yard work, snow-shoveling, and home repair, and more discipline of children--roles that had been defined as masculine.

Although workers used available resources to plan the best strategy for attaining their clearly articulated goal, the defined-benefit pension, most of these transferred workers did not reach this goal. Instead, the closing of the Lackawanna coke works in July, 2001 threw Lackawanna workers out of work. And Bethlehem Steel's entry into Chapter 11 bankruptcy in 2001, followed by the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation takeover of the pension on December 18, 2002, resulted in the failure of many workers to attain their pensions. Workers tell of being six months, three months, and even a few weeks away of rolling into their pensions at the time of the PBGC takeover. But carefully calculated time frames for attaining pensions were cut off at the moment of PBGC takeover. Most Bethlehem workers at Sparrows Point missed their pension, became ISG employees, and had to decide to accept an ISG buyout, giving up rights to employment. The seemingly arbitrary date of the PBGC takeover, an event that was completely outside of the control of individual steelworkers, determined whether individual strategies for pensions were effective or not. These workers, after putting in years of what they described as sacrifice at far away plants, still failed to achieve their pensions. In reality though, without the power to make decisions as to plant closings and downsizings, and without access to that information, strategies based on rational decision making are difficult. When John Caputo went to the Sparrows Point union, angered and upset that he did not get his pension, "the big union guys there" were not sympathetic, saying there was nothing they could do, it was "the luck of the draw." This left John angry at the union, "I think they could have done something for us fellows."

While workers not eligible for retirement had to either forego their pensions or accept transfers to other plants, there were workers that developed individual strategies to access pensions without transfer. The sole purpose of the transfer, for most workers, was to put in the time to access one's pension, as most workers did not want to move from the Lehigh Valley nor work at a different plant. Therefore, if saavy workers could find ways to avoid transfer (while still realizing their pension) this was preferable. A neoliberal morality that emphasizes short-term gain, and lauds risk-taking and the ability to manipulate the system, is mobilized by some workers to get out of these transfers. However, this neoliberal morality runs counter to the moral economy

of the mill, and to a working and middle class morality that recognizes medical or unemployment benefits as earned through work, but as not to be misused or abused by the "undeserving" to take advantage of government largesse.

Some workers did use the strategy of magnifying a medical disability to roll into their pension monies, and avoid a mandatory transfer. Workers with strong contractual knowledge (often acquired through serving in union positions) and/or social networks linking workers to expert knowledge are better-positioned to pursue these strategies. However, workers must also, in some cases, overcome working class moral opprobrium of such strategies. When a worker was laid off from the steel mill, the plant could make a transfer offer within two years of layoff. At that point the worker either had to accept the offer or relinquish current claims to pension and health benefits. The only way to avoid this decision was through determination of a medical disability that would preclude the worker from working at the new plant. When Bob Hale was finally laid off from the steel mill, with departmental shutdown, he knew that as someone without the seniority for his pension, he would be transferred to another plant. When he received a letter for transfer to Lackawanna he was working in a good job in health care and had no desire to move. But, he went up to visit the Lackawanna plant for a tour and a physical. He was irritated by the attitude of the nurse and the doctor in the Lackawanna dispensary, as they rudely deposited forms in his lap with an abrupt order to "fill these out," and the doctor was "rude and cold." Out of irritation, Bob filled the forms out in great detail, writing down every ailment he had ever been diagnosed with, and deciding "we're going to jerk him around more….the faster he talked the slower I'm going to talk." In Bob's story the decision to attempt to get a medical deferment was rooted in the rudeness and insensitivity of the medical staff, but clearly it was also a decision which could benefit him tremendously.

Because of Bob's work in the medical field, he had connections to expert knowledge in the Lehigh Valley. First, he went to his family doctor for restrictions; this was rejected by Bethlehem Steel. He then went to specialists to get more detailed work restrictions written. Bethlehem Steel then asked him to come up to New York for another physical. Bob countered their proposal with a union rule stating he could have his physical locally. Bethlehem Steel

approved that, and granted him a three week hiatus while their doctor was on vacation. Each of these moves squeezed time out of the plant, so, even if not ultimately successful in attaining a deferment, Bob's time stretching tactic could be useful. This time that he was able to gain through delaying tactics translated into less time needed to work at the Lackawanna plant, as this was all time towards his pension eligibility, this "squeezed another week out of them." And Bob resisted his local union's advice to go to Lackawanna, "no, you're never getting out. It's like going to hell, you'll never get out." Finally Bob received a phone call that he describes viscerally, the anticipation and anxiety when he saw the "red light on the answering machine," and the overwhelming relief (of not having to quit his job, leave his family, commute on weekends to New York) saying 'you are unfit to work." He avoided the transfer and rolled into his pension.

Many workers were critical of this kind of manipulation of the system, as they felt that the rules of the collectively bargained contract should be followed, the contract was "the bible", it was the "rule of law", and it spelled out benefits earned by workers through the hard and dangerous work that they did at the steel company. Workers accepted and respected the rules, defined and codified into law by the union. The benefits acquired through the contract were deserved benefits, earned through a lifetime of hard work and through hard-fought negotiations with the company. Many workers felt that manipulating the system for individual gain was immoral. This kind of "gaming" the state system for what workers defined as unearned, undeserved benefits was a characteristic attributed to the "undeserving poor" who collected welfare benefits, not the respectable worker whose benefits were earned through work.

John Moore and his wife, while talking about the hardship of transferring to Lackawanna – the emotional hardship on the family, the difficulty of the new workplace, the loss of seniority – reflect back on the medical disability strategy that some workers used. John said "seeing a doctor, that worked for them. There was a lot of people said they were unable to pass the physical. They're all working today. That got under your craw." Looking back on being displaced from the Lackawanna plant before receiving his pension, he clearly feels conflicted about following the moral system, the "rule of law" of the union contract. He sees that the company, the state, and even the union tried to cheat him out of his rightfully earned pension, ignoring the rule

of law. This betrayal causes him to almost reevaluate his tactics, to reconsider the morality of manipulating the system. His wife, however, reassures him, “you did it the right way.”

There was a great deal of resentment directed at women workers, in the 1990s during the final closing of the Bethlehem plant, as women workers were perceived by many as receiving special consideration regarding transfers, and as more likely to qualify for medical deferments. Although some women were hired in 1974/75, and were eligible for pensions when laid off in the 1990s, most women workers had low seniority (the majority having been hired in 1978/79) and therefore were not pension-eligible. However, most women avoided transfer to another plant (I only heard of two women who transferred). Perhaps the plants to which transfers were available did not relish the notion of integrating women into these plants, and some of them may not have had proper facilities for women, but male workers perceived this as unjust treatment, and hostility towards women escalated in the last few years at the Bethlehem plant.

While some women simply turned down transfers, opting instead for retraining and pursuing new jobs, often outside of steel, others pursued their transfer options. Ann Kovar went to visit the Lackawanna plant, although she had already decided not to transfer there. She describes her feelings at the time, “I like my little town of Bethlehem…if they take me, I’m probably going to say pass.” She brought with her MRIs and doctors’ reports detailing the injuries she had acquired through years of welding – carpal tunnel syndrome, an injured right knee, and a lower back injury. The Bethlehem Steel doctor in Lackawanna determined that her work restrictions would be too great, and granted her a medical deferment, allowing her to roll into her pension. Ann remains a bit uncomfortable with this today, “I don’t like to tell anybody. I felt bad about it, but yet it’s due to me…I did my dues there.” But injuries like Ann’s are part and parcel of steel work, especially for older workers, and many male steelworkers felt plant doctors were less likely to recognize men’s injuries as problematic. Many men describe injuries and doctor’s recommendations being ignored by Bethlehem Steel doctors at Lackawanna and Sparrows Point.

Cathy Kovarik, a crane operator, injured herself in the early 1990s during downsizing, but while still working at the Bethlehem plant. She encountered enormous hostility from coworkers who may have interpreted her injury as an attempt to game the system. Many women reported

that as the plant shrunk in the 1990s, male worker hostility increased. Cathy is still extremely upset today, as she talks about hostile reactions of male coworkers with whom she had built strong relationships of solidarity. Cathy describes her injury as related to a job assignment, a "tight end job," involving upper body strength, putting her, a woman, at greater risk of injury. She badly pulled something in her arm and shoulder, damaging her nerves in her arm, and leading, she believes, to fibromylagia, a debilitating condition that has often been thought of as a "psychological woman's" disease. When Cathy was placed on an office desk job, her male coworkers reacted angrily, threatening to damage her car, and placing a noose on her desk. Cathy was devastated by their reaction,

> many of these guys that had given me grief at the end, I shoveled next to them. I shoveled with Tom, I shoveled more than Tom shoveled just so that the guy can rest, and yet the guy had seniority. Yet the guy gave me grief. I asked him, why did you do this to me? I took care of you many times. You didn't have to bust your hump shoveling, I did the shoveling…These were the men I worked with for years. They were angry because the place was closing.

Cathy felt crushed that these men, with whom she had built solidarity over her years of work, turned hostilely against her at the end of the plant, perceiving her disability as both indicative of special treatment to a woman (thereby undermining the rules of seniority) and as an unethical manipulation of the rule of law (eligibility for medical disability).

As steelworkers reflect on their "choices" and strategies in responding to industrial restructuring, these workers (unlike the professional middle class workers described by Katherine Newman (1988) and Barbara Ehrenreich (2005) do not blame themselves for their layoffs. They do, however, "second guess" the decisions that they made along the way. In hindsight they are able to map out better scenarios, they reflect on alternative individual choices, that could or should have been made. Should they have kept the job that they attained during a layoff and not returned to Bethlehem Steel? Should they have stayed in the Lehigh Valley, and not transferred? Should they have volunteered to transfer to Burns Harbor or to a different plant? Workers are left with anger towards the company, the bankruptcy courts, and the government--understanding the role of these institutions in their loss of pension and health benefits. But many also internalize some aspects of dominant cultural ideologies which blame blue-collar workers for the "bad choices" of "failing to get a college degree," retraining, or otherwise positioning themselves within

the new “postindustrial” economy (Ehrenreich 2005). This discourse of individual choice and personal responsibility shifts blame from societal institutions to the individual and family. Many workers wonder if they somehow made “bad choices” amongst the options out of which they built their pension strategies. In hindsight, they wonder, if only they had made different decisions, could they have attained the desired result--their earned pension and the stability of a secure retirement. Given the uneven, rapidly shifting, and enormously contradictory processes of deindustrialization in Bethlehem it is highly unlikely that workers could have made “better” decisions, but the doubt embedded in hindsight erodes workers’ anger, turning some of it inwards in self-blame and bitterness.

It was, rather than through individual agency, through collective action that some of these workers were able to attain pensions. When Bethlehem workers were laid off from the coke works in Lackwanna, when it was shut down in the fall of 2001, they claimed that they should receive their pension under the second shutdown criteria. Workers expected to get their pension with this “second shutdown,” and unlike the native New York workers, they were thrilled to see the coke works shut. Tom Urban, a Bethlehem millwright at Lackawanna, describes an executive from Bethlehem’s corporate headquarters coming to Lackwanna to reassure the workers, paraphrasing him as saying “you’ll be fine, you’ll get your pensions. This is the second shutdown.” However, this turned out to not be the case. When the PBGC took over the Bethlehem Steel pensions on December 18, 2001 in the bankruptcy process, they recognized the Bethlehem Lackawanna transferees as “laid off” workers, and therefore not eligible for their pensions. The Lackawanna workers were furious at this decision, as they claimed that the only option available to them, the still-open, small galvanized mill across the street, did not actually have jobs for transfers and was not the same facility, “we could never bid on a job over in that area, in that mill, because they said it wasn’t part of them.” When workers protested this decision, they got no support from their local (NY) union, the Bethlehem local union, or the international union, the PBGC, or Bethlehem Steel. Lackawanna transfers viewed this denial of their pensions as highly immoral and unjust, especially as they started comparing their case with that of other Bethlehem workers, “the office workers at Martin Tower, they got their pensions. Management was allowed

to give the pensions the next day when they were going bankrupt. They came back to work as consultants." Even transferees to Sparrows Point and Burns Harbor got buyout monies from Bethlehem Steel designed to downsize the work force making for a more attractive purchase by the International Steel Group. But the Lackawanna transferees got nothing. So, they began a collective letter writing campaign, they "wrote letters to the editor, to the PBGC, to politicians. We submitted them to the Lackawanna newspapers, to *the Morning Call*. We talked to people in Martin Tower and tried to get them to say something off the record." For these workers, collective action was important, "it helped keep our sanity" in a struggle in which "you're up against Bethlehem Steel, and PBGC, and all their lawyers." Workers remain angry with the union, "the union itself, after being so strong and saying they're for the working person, for them to drop us the way they did, it was totally unfair." The local union in New York felt little commitment to the Bethlehem transferees, the Bethlehem local claimed this issue was not their jurisdiction, and the International said the collective bargaining agreement did not cover these pensions (*Morning Call*, 2003). The decentralization of unions often left transferees, who no longer had a home plant (as theirs had closed), without strong union protection. Finally, it was through pressure on their state Senator, Arlen Specter, that they received an appeal hearing, and in 2005, the PBGC ruled in favor of second shutdown pensions for the Lackawanna transfers. For these workers, receiving their pension was a tremendous financial relief, although ultimately it was a much-reduced pension (reduced by PBGC restrictions). As Tom Urban describes it, "in spite of my low-paying job with the state, and the pittance that I get from my pension, I'll be at a livable level. [Although] I'll never be able to retire, I'll have to work for the rest of my life." It was also a moral victory, a vindication, a recognition of the sacrifice they put in at the Lackawanna plant. John Moore's wife described the letter that arrived from the PBGC, stating that the appeal was in their favor, "I opened the letter from the PBGC. I handed it to him. He turned white….He was jumping up and down."

At the Steelton plant, a proactive local union called steelworkers into a marathon session on December 17 (one day before the PBGC takeover), giving workers the options to take a layoff, which would let them claim "early out" pensions, before the PBGC takeover. This

strategy, based on a restructuring plan designed to produce a downsized labor force for an International Steel Group purchase, enabled the USW to get out workers who didn't have thirty years service and weren't sixty years old – which included many of the 1973/74 hired Bethlehem transfers. Sam Chase, a union official, describes meeting with steelworkers and their families (including the Bethlehem transferees) on December 17 in a marathon session, "we sat at a table for 14 straight hours. People brought their wives, daughters, sons to talk about this. What are my options? What's the impact of my decision today?" Sam said it was difficult to lay out the future, "there was so much uncertainty with our plant at the time…Will ISG buy Bethlehem Steel? What will happen to the pensions?...We didn't know." But, Bethlehem workers were encouraged to take layoffs on December 17, resulting in most of the Bethlehem transfers to Steelton attaining their pensions.

Of course, the trajectories of workers and their families do not end with the PBGC takeover. For those workers who did manage to roll into pensions, Bethlehem Steel used the bankruptcy court to jettison health care obligations and turn pension benefits over to the PBGC. This accumulation by dispossession lowered workers' pensions and stripped workers of healthcare benefits, enabling the new "lean and mean" company, without costly legacy costs, to be purchased by the International Steel Group. ISG negotiated new contracts (eliminating "past practices" rules and multiskilling jobs) with the USW, enabling the ISG sale of these new restructured assets to Mittal for a neat profit. These actions are ideologically justified by neoliberal representations of welfare nets as entitlements that need to be removed, thereby "freeing the political economy to behave more flexibly" (Sennett 1998:139). Workers are aware that in this process, there are winners and losers, and that even with the most careful plans many workers were stripped of assets, rights, and benefits that were due them. Workers used the parameters and rules forged in union contracts through the collective bargaining process and backed by strong valuing of experience, hard work, and seniority to attempt to plot rational strategies to build on their years of experience to attain the pension. They found, however, that through arbitration, counter-strategies of the company, the use of the bankruptcy court, and the

sale of the company, the best-planned, rational, individual and familial strategies were, all too frequently, ineffective.

Bankruptcy

Bethlehem Steel workers who made decisions to transfer to other plants or who retired with "sweetened" pension packages were shocked when they discovered that Bethlehem Steel filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in October of 2001. Workers expressed their disgust with Robert "Steve" Miller, the executive who Bethlehem Steel's board brought in a week after 9/11 as a "fix it" expert. Miller had helped Chrysler attain a large federal bailout, had experience with bankruptcies, and was selected, ostensibly, to "turn around" Bethlehem Steel. Instead of turning Bethlehem Steel around, Steve Miller took advantage of the "shock" generated by the terrorist attacks of 9/11 to bring the steel company into the bankruptcy court, filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy within a few weeks. Many steelworkers today are highly critical of Miller's role, refusing to accept the assessment of Steve Miller as an adept and powerful "fix it" expert. Some ex-steelworkers denigrate the contemporary accolades for executives who generate quick profits through restructuring, layoffs, and corporate dismantlings oriented towards a quick profit. Most steelworkers today are extremely cynical about Steve Miller, "Steve Miller? All he wanted to do was sell it [the company], that's all he was here for the way I seen it," and "He did nothing. He sold the place. Anybody could have done that."

The steel industry in the U.S. was a trendsetter in both establishing the benefits (later defined as "legacy costs") of pensions and health care (in the National Labor Relations Board Inland Steel decision and the 1949 Steel Industry Board report). It subsequently became a trendsetter in the use of bankruptcy to jettison these health and pension obligations to workers, as the steel industry was also the first big industry to use the bankruptcy courts strategically to eliminate these pension obligations. In the 1980s, LTV Steel's bankruptcy became the first large pension claim (of $2.2 billion) faced by the Pension Benefit and Guaranty Corporation, and the negotiations around it led to changes in bankruptcy and pension laws and set important legal bankruptcy precedents (Hoerr 1988). Then, in 2001, Bethlehem Steel's pension was the largest pension fund (at $4.3 billion) to have its pension obligations picked up by the PBGC. Bethlehem

had been a center for the U.S. industrial revolution and for the development of the parameters of the "Fordist" social contract in the post war United States, including collectively-bargained benefits. In the 1990s, it became a forerunner in applying neoliberal strategies of using the bankruptcy court to eliminate workers' benefits to restructure a 'leaner and meaner" steel company, ripe for reorganization under "vulture capitalists" like Wilbur Ross, the CEO of International Steel Group who bought the bankrupt Bethlehem Steel.

By the time Bethlehem Steel entered the bankruptcy court, "turnaround" had changed in meaning in the U.S. as corporations began, increasingly, to use Chapter 11 bankruptcy as a strategy to jettison legacy costs and reorganize corporations, thereby generating profits for financiers, managers, and corporate buyers. In 1989 books like *Turnaround: Avoid Bankruptcy and Revitalize Your Company*, gave corporate executives advice on steering clear of stigmatized bankruptcy (Delaney 1999). But by the time Steve Miller wrote his autobiography in 2008 entitled *The Turnaround Kid: What I Learned Rescuing America's Most Troubled Companies,* he touted his own role in bringing Bethlehem Steel and Delphi into bankruptcy, defining this as a creative "turnaround" strategy. Today, "turnaround" no longer refers to keeping the corporation out of bankruptcy court, but of intentionally going into bankruptcy court as a way to strategically restructure the corporation through gutting union contracts, dumping "legacy" commitments, and protecting the corporation from civil claims and lawsuits. Miller himself described bankruptcy as "a growth industry" (Reutter 2006), and represents his role overseeing Bethlehem Steel's bankruptcy and sale as successfully turning around the American steel industry, saying "I had also contributed, along with Wilbur Ross and Leo Gerard and many others, to the transformation and preservation of the American steel industry" (Miller 2008:199). Miller represented the steel industry as ailing due to "health care…pensions, high-cost labor contracts, and intense competition" (Miller 2008:148). In Miller's formula, getting rid of the health care, pensions, workers, and the work rules written into contracts results in a lean and mean steel industry that can successfully compete internationally. For Miller the use of the bankruptcy courts to restructure the industry was "a success story" in which "we may even have set an example" for other businesses (Miller 2008:199).

Contemporary use of the bankruptcy court to restructure corporations has been informed by broadened corporate bankruptcy laws of 1978 and by the legal precedents of these early strategic bankruptcies in the 1980s. In 2009, this restructuring through bankruptcy is referred to as a "quick rinse," and is juxtaposed to the more dramatic "cleanse" of restructuring through corporate takeover. In her ethnography of Wall Street, Karen Ho quotes a British corporate raider describing the "cleanse" as a strategy to "let the market free, and…cleanse through market action a structure which was wrong"(2009:147). For corporate powers, these "legacy costs" are defined as unnatural, rigid restraints on corporate profitability, constraints that can be cleaned by the natural processes of "the market." The cleanse of a corporate takeover is a more radical upheaval--resulting in a competitive, lean, contemporary corporation--than the "quick rinse" of a bankruptcy. In this language, the bankruptcy can "rinse" down the drain the legacy costs of the "old-line" industries (such as steel, airlines, and auto) allowing the emergence of the corporation as a "new" entity, no longer responsible for previous contracts or commitments to workers. These "quick rinses" or "pre-packaged bankruptcies" cancel "debt obligations" and exert pressure on unions to agree to concessionary contracts with the "restructured" corporation. In the Bethlehem Steel case, International Steel Group (Bethlehem Steel's buyer) was able to negotiate a contract with the United Steelworkers union with a reduced number of jobs, fewer job classifications, new work rules, and without previous health and pension benefits as a result of the threat of liquidation (as opposed to sale). International Steel Group became an attractive and profitable steel company, which Ross was able to "turnaround" and sell for $4.5 billion to Mittal Steel in 2004. The sale resulted in a $267 million windfall for Wilbur Ross, earned just one and half years after buying Bethlehem Steel. Clearly, there were profits to be made in steel. But this contemporary speculative, financial economy, created through deregulation, laws favoring speculation, and a culture lauding "shareholder value" (Ho 2009; Martin 2002) continues to rely on dispossessing workers of their assets, as well as driving down wages, to generate the profits that can be made through bankruptcies, takeovers, and mergers and acquisitions.

Workers struggled to understand the purpose and process of corporate bankruptcy. Workers report on a meeting Steve Miller had with workers at Bethlehem Steel's Sparrows Point

plant to assure them that he was there to save the company and restore profitability. Days later, the company filed Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Metaphors of both illness and death are used to represent corporate bankruptcy. Management used the medical metaphor with workers, rather than the metaphor of a death of a corporation, in describing Bethlehem Steel's use of Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Manny Vega was still working at Bethlehem, Steel's Sparrows Point plant when Bethlehem Steel filed Chapter 11 bankruptcy. "We thought it was like [the company] going in the hospital. Go in, get fixed up, and come out. But they didn't tell us you come out on the other side of the door, where they put you in a box [coffin]."

The bankruptcy courts, particularly in specific states like New York and Delaware under corporation-friendly judges (many appointed by the Bush administration), favor the interests of corporate financiers and managers over those of workers. Bankruptcies, under Chapter 11, posit a "reorganization plan" that allows companies to reorganize and restructure the company, emerging from the other side as a "new" entity. In order to go through bankruptcy, a company first needs to get capital through financiers who are awarded the status of "debtors-in-possession." These secured creditors, who stand to earn a great deal of money through high interest rate loans and exorbitant fees, are guaranteed their monies back, and are given a great deal of decision-making power in the bankruptcy process (i.e. in constructing the plan for reorganization for the company). In addition, managers petition the court for special "incentive" pay, required, so they argue, to maintain key managerial staff during this difficult process. Bankruptcy lawyers, that guide corporations through this process, also stand to make significant amounts of money. These payments for legal fees, financial fees, and executive bonuses are generally approved by the bankruptcy court. Steelworkers like Tom Jensen question the bankruptcy court's approval of large salaries for upper managers who oversaw the bankruptcy process, "the bankruptcy judge says they need these qualified people to have an 'orderly shut down.' Give me a break!" Workers, on the other hand, are not defined as important "stakeholders" in the bankruptcy proceedings, but, instead are viewed as unsecured creditors. In addition, labor contracts forged through collective bargaining can be changed or eliminated in the bankruptcy court. After a short period of good faith bargaining, "management can petition the

bankruptcy court to implement a labor agreement unilaterally" (Reutter 2006:2). Many ex-steelworkers are highly critical of the legal system institutionalized in the bankruptcy court, in which the laws of the court trump labor laws protecting the collectively-bargained contract. Louis Moran, a worker who lost about 40% of his pension and all of his healthcare coverage as a result of Bethlehem Steel's bankruptcy, says

> people would say "you have a contract and you're in good shape." But when a judge says "this is what you're going to do" you can tear up that contract right there…once it goes to bankruptcy court the judge controls it. It doesn't matter if the employee has been working there for forty years. They pay the creditor of six months first. It is supposed to be guaranteed. This is a contract. But this contract is not the same thing. People are treated differently.

The agreement of the "debtor in possession" loan is a different contract than the contract with the union. It is a contract that is prioritized and honored by the bankruptcy court.

During the bankruptcy process, the corporation petitioned the court to get rid of its pension liabilities by having the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (an insurer agency created during the 1974 ERISA legislation) agree to take over Bethlehem Steel's under-funded pension obligations. The PBGC intervened suddenly (on December 18) to take the fund over, much to the surprise of Bethlehem Steel, the International Steel Group, and the United Steelworkers union. This early takeover was motivated by the PBGC becoming aware of the degree of under-funding of Bethlehem Steel's pension plan, and moving quickly to prevent additional under-funding since ISG, Bethlehem Steel and the USW had plans to allocate early retirement incentives through shutdown payments to thousands of steelworkers prior to the PBGC takeover, thereby trimming the most expensive component of the workforce, passing those early retirement costs directly to the PBGC, and reducing labor costs, making an ISG purchase more palatable. This would have created an additional $500 million to $1 billion in claims on the PBGC (Matthews 2002).

Bethlehem Steel also rid itself of its $3 billion of health care obligations through the bankruptcy process in Spring, 2002. This transformed the corporation, rid of these "legacy" costs, into an attractive purchase for Wilbur Ross, whose International Steel Group had already purchased a number of bankrupt steel companies, including buying LTV in 2002. Wilbur Ross bought the company, negotiated new contracts with the United Steelworkers, and promptly resold the company to Mittal for a tidy profit. Although Bethlehem Steel did not survive as an entity,

there were a small, close-knit group of financiers, CEO's, and investors who profited greatly from Bethlehem Steel's bankruptcy. Mark Reutter, on his web site makingsteel.com, has devoted years to documenting the connections between this small group of capitalists in industries ranging from steel to the airlines to automobiles. Relationships include important connections to the financial industry. Vulture capitalists like Wilbur Ross (currently described as "hovering" over the auto parts industry) have long-standing relationships with "turnaround" CEO's like Steve Miller, and work financing through bankers like Lew Kaden (the head of the Bethlehem Steel auditing committee during bankruptcy, who became a director for Mittal, and Vice Chairman for Citigroup). The same small cadre of "specialists" in management and financing has been involved in the strategic use of the bankruptcy court to wipe out worker gains in these key industries.

While the PBGC takeover of steelworker pension plans benefited Steve Miller, the financiers, the lawyers, and Wilbur Ross and the International Steel Group (resulting in large profits for these players), it had a negative impact on many workers' pensions as well as eradicating health care coverage. The PBGC has "caps" for total annual pension payouts, as well as rules banning covering monthly supplemental pension payments for shutdown and early retirement. The PBGC was mandated to insure "core" benefits, not early retirement benefits, but many steelworkers had accepted early retirement packages designed to downsize the labor force in the 1990s. These workers now lost these additional benefits. In addition, PBGC caps are significantly lower for younger workers. Finally, Bethlehem Steel had agreed to increase pension benefits annually from 2000-2004, an amount that the PBGC did not fully recognize (*Morning Call*, 2003). Therefore, most retired steelworkers experienced cuts in their pensions with the PBGC takeover. These reductions affected many of the steelworkers I interviewed, and could amount to a monetary loss of as much as 40 to 50% in monthly pension payments. Workers that were most at risk of losing significant pension monies were workers who were younger when they retired, workers who received the $400 early retirement supplemental pension benefit (until Social Security kicked in), and higher paid workers whose pensions exceeded the PBGC cap (this would have included some highly paid production workers, and Bethlehem Steel salaried workers). In addition, because the PBGC did not recalculate rates until about 11 months after takeover, some

workers received a letter a year and half after the PBGC takeover telling them of mandatory give-backs of pension monies (which would be deducted from future checks). Matt Nichols, for example, worked as a millwright in the Bethlehem plant from 1965 until 1997, when he was laid off. When he was initially laid off, with his pension, $400/month supplemental pension, and full health care coverage, his family was fine, although he did continue working. But when Bethlehem Steel claimed bankruptcy, he lost his healthcare (having to pay for healthcare at over $1,200/month), he lost his life insurance policy, and when the PBGC took over the pension plan, Matt lost his $400 supplemental pension. Overnight, the bankruptcy "cost me about $1800 a month." To add insult to injury, Matt received a letter from the PBGC stating that they had recalculated his pension payments, and he would have to pay back extra monies. Thus far "they haven't changed" his monthly pension payments, and he says if they do "the house, furniture, everything will go on the market. We're making it now, that's all we're doing." The arbitrary nature of this bureaucratic recalculation, coming months and sometimes years after receiving PBGC pension payments, reminds steelworkers of the insecurity of their pensions, undermining their "right" to the retirement monies they receive. Al Trakas left Bethlehem Steel in 1995 and started getting his pension, but when the PBGC took over the pension he calculates "I lost $2,000 a month." He lost health care coverage, his $400 supplemental pension, and lost pension payments of about $1,000 a month as the PBGC assessed pension caps. Steelworkers who had been looking at a secure retirement based on a just agreement between employer and employee that recognized the grueling nature of steel work, and the need for early retirement, found that agreement decimated in the bankruptcy court. Jose Rodriguez found that "Bethlehem Steel didn't keep their end of the bargain." Dave Baker expressed his sentiments about the end of retirement:

> My friends, people that I knew, my neighbors, they're retired, enjoying the good life. This guy was a teacher. I remember laughing at him one time, him telling me what he earned and I was earning better than twice that. And I said 'why would you do that, why would you earn that kind of money and put up with the kids and all the grief, why would you do that?' Well, he's laughing all the way to the bank now. So, those guys are retired, and guys like me are all starting over somehow.

Many workers were propelled back into the labor market to look for work to supplement reduced or eliminated pension and health care benefits.

In addition, the date of the PBGC takeover determined the end of the pension clock. Many workers who had transferred to other plants specifically to earn their pensions failed to do so. Some workers were days away from receiving their pensions, but if they had not reached their pension date by December 18, 2001 (the date of the PBGC takeover) they were not eligible for pensions. Dave Campbell compares his experience at Sparrows Point, commuting and working for three and a half years, only to be denied his pension, as similar to contemporary U.S. soldiers "going to Afghanistan and Iraq. They feel like they're torn away, that they have no options. I could have said no. [The soldiers] didn't have any options. They're getting shot at, those poor sons of bitches. But, in my case, you're not allowed to shoot back. Who do you shoot?"

Many workers are cynical about the role of the bankruptcy court, and bitter about the effect of the PBGC takeover. Workers question the inequality of pension remuneration, wondering about the pensions that salaried workers and managers walked away with prior to and during the Bethlehem bankruptcy, and highly critical of the losses they experienced with the PBGC takeover. Bill Civick says:

> I lost my pension. I lost my healthcare…With my pension before the PBGC I would have been happy with that. I lost $900 cash money [a month]. It was hard to swallow. Losing my healthcare, that hurt. That hurt. That made me bitter. You had the golden parachutes for the executives. Golden parachutes. They grabbed their money and ran, and we kept working. They said we're going to modernize. We gave up money. Now, they said, we're not going to do it [modernize]. That's not the way to treat a workforce that was good to you people.

Suspicions of golden parachutes are well-founded, as reports increasingly document the hidden pension and retirement packages of top executives at firms. Firms going through bankruptcy attempt to protect corporate compensation, and corporations increasingly attempt to now "hide" excessive executive compensation in enormous executive pensions as popular outrage at executive compensation has grown (Tasini 2009; Schultz 2006; 2008; 2009). One way to increase corporate pensions is to add "phantom years" onto pension plans. With Delta Airlines, who filed for bankruptcy in 2002, the Board of Directors tacked 16 "phantom years" onto CEO Leo

Mullin's service, resulting in a greatly inflated retirement package. "Phantom years" are added to executive pensions, even as "real years" are wiped out from worker pension plans. The "phantom time" idea is predicated upon the rules of seniority – that years of work experience translates into pension monies – built into the pension system but turns it on its head. Executives simply invent these fictional years. In a corporate culture which rewards speculation, "creativity," and the ability to manipulate the rules, these fictional years are more real (they certainly earn many more benefits) than the "real" years of the workers, years which are taken away from the workers, "erased" through strategies such as freezing pension plans, switching to cash balance plans, and jettisoning pension obligations through the bankruptcy courts. Workers strategies to "stretch time" to realize their pensions pale next to executives' ability to create time.

Corporations are increasingly offering deferred compensation plans to executives. These plans are "like 401(k) plans on steroids" (Schultz 2008), creating accounts into which executives can defer bonuses, salaries, and stock awards. Employers give matching contributions to these accounts as well as giving them very favorable interest rates. At Freddie Mac, for example, executives earned 9.25% on these accounts in 2007 (Schultz 2008), a much higher rate than regular investors could earn. Yet, workers are told that interest rates and investments are "rational decision making" in which every American can participate to ensure a secure future. Even as corporate contributions to workers' accounts are being cut. These deferred compensation plans, however, are not funded, and therefore can affect companies' earnings. So, of late, corporations have been moving some of their obligations for executive benefits into their worker pension plans, letting them access the tax breaks that are meant for workers' pensions. This is a tricky process, as there are IRS rules governing moving monies into these accounts, but corporations use strategies such as "comparing" benefit ratio rates of pre-selected groups and giving small increases to lower paid workers to do this. The problem with this strategy is that as huge amounts of executive compensation are moved into these pension plans, it makes these plans more likely to fail, negatively affecting workers' pensions.

In addition to "phantom years," corporations are innovating with new strategies to increase executive deferred compensation and pensions. One gruesome strategy which has

received some media coverage of late is the purchasing of life insurance policies, payable to the corporation, on workers and ex-workers. This is an appealing strategy for corporations as tax-free life insurance benefits on workers go directly into “informal pension funds for executives” that function like “big, nondeductible IRAs.” These benefits grow tax-free, creating large tax breaks for the funding of these enormous executive pensions. In addition, gains on investment of this money are reported as income, thus “reducing the drag that executives have on earnings” each quarter (Schultz 2009). This much-used system (called “COLI”) essentially pits corporations against the very lives of employees, as corporations are “betting” on the deaths of their employees and former employees. Just as executives like Steve Miller bemoan the longer lives of employees as they assess “legacy costs,” (and Miller is quite explicit about this saying that when workers retired “at age 65 and then died at age 70…the social contract inherent in these programs seemed affordable”), so life insurance policies bet on early worker deaths to fund the lengthened pensioned retirement lifetimes of executives (Shotwell 2006). And these supplemental executive retirement plans are often preserved during the bankruptcy process, even as workers’ pensions are being reduced and turned over to the PBGC (Tasini 2009).

Corporations are finding many new ways to turn over assets to executives, while simultaneously slashing pensions for workers. An excellent series by Ellen Schultz documents these changes in executive pensions in the *Wall Street Journal*. Today’s executives are being paid enormous amount of monies in their supplemental executive retirement plans (SERPS) and deferred compensation programs. These sums are huge, and are becoming a considerable percentage of corporate profits. These executive payments point to the hypocrisy of claims that it is workers’ “legacy” costs that are killing corporations, as well as to the hypocrisy of the overriding moral importance of creating “shareholder value.” Large percentages of corporate profits are going directly to CEOs, often through these less-directly tracked means of payment. Executive pensions rose an average of 19% in 2008, even as company share prices declined an average of 37% (Schultz and McGinty 2009). At General Motors, executive pension obligations exceeded $1 billion in 2006, even as GM was blaming workers’ “legacy” costs for killing the company (Schultz 2009).

Bankruptcy and Health Care Benefits

As a part of the Fordist contract between labor, business, and government, Bethlehem Steel workers, through the United Steelworkers union, had negotiated employer-provided, private health benefits that ensured access to health care. Bethlehem Steel workers had health benefits that covered their families' medical care, including eye and dental and prescription medication. Retirees had health care coverage for themselves and their families. But in March, 2003 during the Bethlehem Steel bankruptcy process the corporation's "legacy" health care costs were terminated by the state.

While the 1974 ERISA legislation shored up private (employer-provided) pensions by establishing a public pension insuring agency, no such entity exists for health care. As a result, when Bethlehem Steel used the bankruptcy courts to jettison their "legacy costs," workers who had qualified for retirement found at least part of their pensions covered by PBGC. But, in March 2003 when the bankruptcy court approved elimination of health benefits, retired and displaced workers suddenly found themselves without any health care coverage. Ironically ERISA, the very same legislation that insured private pensions through the PBGC, also contained wording that contributed to the vulnerability of large corporate health care plans in bankruptcy court. Language in ERISA was interpreted as supporting tax benefits for self-insured corporate health care policies, thereby encouraging large corporations to set up their own employee health care coverage. Doing so saved large companies as much as 50 percent in benefits (Quadagno 2005), thereby providing substantial public support for health care benefits provided through what is thought of as the private sector, and tilting support towards large corporations, not smaller businesses. These changes in health care provision in the 1980s contributed to employers, not insurance companies, becoming the major health risk bearers (Quadagno 2005:142). But this also meant that as employers looked for ways to increase profits in the 1980s and 90s, they looked to savings in health care coverage. Corporate strategies for health care cost savings were increasingly directed towards raising employee costs for health benefits. This was done through raising employee and retiree premiums, copay amounts, and deductibles; instituting caps for

coverage; restricting coverage; creating high-risk retiree groups (which drove up the cost of retiree health care); and eliminating health care coverage all together.

Bethlehem Steel used the bankruptcy process as a means of eliminating health care benefits entirely. Bethlehem Steel was able to use this strategy because by 2003 "business friendly" bankruptcy courts in New York and Delaware were assisting corporations in shedding "legacy costs," and because Bethlehem Steel had a self-insured health care plan. Employers also banked on public health coverage supplementing inadequate employee benefits (as in the well-documented case of Wal-Mart's reliance on state health benefits to supplement employee coverage or the use of Medicare to provide retiree health care). Unionized retirees, in particular, were hard hit by health care cuts. In the period from 1988 to 2004, the percent of large companies (with more than 200 employees) providing retiree health care benefits declined from 66 to 36 percent (Smith 2006:306).

As with pensions, the historical development of health coverage in the U.S. as a "private" employer-provided benefit meant that the public costs and subsidies for privately provided health care become invisible. Private health care, like private pensions, is actually embedded within a much larger "public-private welfare regime" (Hacker 2002). Public health benefits, such as Medicare and Medicaid, developed to fill gaps in private employer-provided and private insurer-purchased benefits. And "private" benefits relied on public state legislation, court systems, non-profit insurers, and tax subsidies. However, this is not to say that the private/public dichotomy is irrelevant. Hacker points out that the heavy U.S. reliance on employee-generated "private" healthcare and benefits has resulted in lower public accountability, scrutiny, and discussion around these benefits. Employer-provided benefits are represented and understood as "private," i.e. under the purview of the private corporation, and as such, not constructed through public or democratic processes. The lack of public discourse around private erosion of benefits ensured that the current cuts and reductions in health care are "played out family by family, workplace by workplace, debate by debate" (Hacker 2002). This privatized production of benefits means that rather than pulling Americans together in a response to health care displacement and insecurity, "for most, insecurity is a private experience" (Hacker 2002) and strategies for piecing together

health care coverage become individual and household (not collective) strategies. In addition, the patchwork quality of publicly provided benefits, a result of this public-private regime in which public programs are added on to cover gaps in employer-provided coverage, and the growth of a "medical-industrial complex" in private coverage, makes the health care system very difficult for Americans to understand (as we are seeing in the current health care policy debate), invites cost inflation, and excludes many Americans (Katz 2001).

Bethlehem Steel entered the bankruptcy court in 2001, with $3 billion dollars in health care obligations. The new CEO, Steve Miller, hoped to shed pension and health care obligations in the bankruptcy court, thereby making Bethlehem Steel an attractive purchase for Wilbur Ross' International Steel Group. A purchase deal was worked out with Bethlehem Steel, the International Steel Group, and the United Steelworkers in January, 2003, pending the loss of retiree health care, as ISG was unwilling to purchase the company unless it successfully sloughed off its large "legacy costs." The bankruptcy court approved the ending of Bethlehem Steel's healthcare obligations in March, 2003, thereby clinching the sale. The loss of health care, while an anticipated boost to the Bethlehem Steel corporation and the International Steel Group, came as a shock to workers. Steve Miller remains an enthusiastic supporter of the bankruptcy process, saying in 2009 "it's a great time to be finishing up bankruptcy…you're able to make hard choices on restructuring…you emerge…with much leaner operating costs." The Bethlehem Steel of March, 2003 was much leaner, rid of what were described as onerous legacy costs. "Freed from these burdens" (Miller 2008) of pension and health care obligations, the corporation was an attractive candidate for purchase by Wilbur Ross' International Steel Group. This shedding of benefits is an egregious example of accumulation by dispossession, a massive transfer of wealth from working people to CEO's. Geoghegan argues that this slashing of pension and health care benefits "did more than any wage cut to increase income inequality in the U.S." resulting in an enormous transfer of wealth, an increasing impoverishment of working Americans, and an increasing reliance on debt for those working and middle class Americans who lost their job, their pension, and their health coverage (2007:129).

What was a boon to Steve Miller and Wilbur Ross was a great shock to many steelworkers. Although steelworkers had foreseen the eventual closing of the south Bethlehem plant (if not the timing nor abruptness of the final closing), steelworkers did not predict bankruptcy. And even when Bethlehem Steel filed Chapter 11, many steelworkers saw the bankruptcy process as a corporate restructuring, not as the end of the corporation. Even union officials, like Ed O'Brien, former President of the United Steelworkers local, did not predict the bankruptcy.

> That is one thing that I could never foresee. I certainly, with many, saw the Bethlehem plant shutting down. As far as the company going in complete bankruptcy, even as it was headed that way and people were coming to me with concern about their pension and benefits--and of course the pension is partially covered by the PBGC, the benefits are gone—I never, never, in my wildest thoughts did I ever think you would see that happen. Never, never. Things could have been handled different if you knew you were on the edge of a bankruptcy. I don't know who saw that coming. You've interviewed a lot of people. If I were to sit here and tell you well someday I knew they'd go bankrupt I'd be a liar. I never ever thought they'd go bankrupt. (O'Brien, *Steelworkers Archives*)

The filing for bankruptcy, and the bankruptcy process, including the court's approval of the termination of promised health care coverage, came as a shock to steelworkers. Don Booth had just transferred to Bethlehem Steel's Coatesville plant. He had been there just two weeks, and went to the office to fill out his paperwork for the new job.

> I'm talking to this lady, and she says 'hurry up. I got to get you out of here. Bethlehem Steel just filed for bankruptcy and we have a meeting in an hour.' My second week there! The first week, I could have gone back to Lehigh Heavy Forge. I'm thinking, I'm screwed. I'll just go with the flow….Oh man, I didn't see that coming at all…I just thought Bethlehem Steel would be there forever…I thought Bethlehem Steel was too big to fail.

As a result of the bankruptcy, Don wasn't eligible for his pension, "I didn't hit the rule of nothing," and spent a couple of years trying to regain a steelwork job at Lehigh Heavy Forge.

Because, unlike the pension, there was no national insurance program for health care, the loss of health care hit steelworkers hard. Steelworkers said "the most heartfelt thing of losing was the medical benefits," losing the health insurance "that was hard." "I lost my pension. I lost my healthcare. I would have given up one or the other but not both….losing my health care. That hurt. That made me bitter." The "big loss for the spouses and employees was their medical benefits." Replacing health care was enormously expensive for steelworking families. These

were “big time costs”, and this loss affected steelworkers, spouses, children, and widows. Ann Kovar says the loss of health care affected widows a great deal, “that was a sin.”

However, the effects of losing health coverage played themselves out unevenly across the group of steelworkers, ex-steelworkers, and steelworking families in the Lehigh Valley. Variables affecting access to health care in both the private and public sphere affected steelworkers and their families unevenly. Some ex-steelworkers could access employer-provided health insurance if a working spouse had coverage through his/her employer, or if the steelworker him or herself had moved on to a job with health insurance. For some, the loss of health benefits propelled workers back into the workforce, generally at lower wages than at Bethlehem Steel. Access to public health care supports varied depending on the age of the retiree, whether the retiree was covered by the Trade Adjustment Act, and if the retiree had access to veterans' benefits or disability coverage. These variables significantly affected the severity of the blow of health care loss. This meant that for some families the loss of health care coverage was not as devastating. Families in which spouses (generally wives) had good health coverage through their jobs added husbands and children onto their insurance policies, although generally at additional expense. Others (depending on age, history, or disability) could find alternative sources of public coverage (Medicare, Medicaid, veterans benefits), although they often had to find a supplemental policy and prescription coverage to complement these, and ended up with much-reduced quality of coverage. Some could pay for health care and receive a 65 percent tax credit or subsidy through the Trade Adjustment Assistance program. For others, however, public benefits were not an option. These workers and their families had to use other strategies like finding a job with coverage. And some were forced to deplete savings, sell houses, and/or go without health care coverage, putting themselves at risk of financial ruin and of serious health crises.

Even within these “public” health care alternatives, the uncoordinated and uneven patchwork of public programs available often made accessing these benefits quite difficult. In March, 2003, just two weeks before the elimination of benefits, the *Morning Call* published a guide to health care for the 20,000 Bethlehem Steel retirees and dependents in the Lehigh Valley. But, even in this complex guide, there were many uncertainties. For how long would COBRA

coverage extend? Would the state of Pennsylvania have a Blue Cross plan available? Would that plan be available if the worker allowed coverage to lapse? Will the International Steel Group set up a trust fund to help with health care? What would this trust fund cover? Even as steelworker coverage was being dropped, the confusing panoply of health care options (all of them expensive), and the arbitrary and unpredictable trajectory of this loss meant that steelworkers couldn't calculate the full implications of this for themselves and their families, and had difficulty generating effective strategies to ensure health coverage.

Retirees (i.e. those who were pension eligible) were eligible for one set of benefits. They could continue their health care coverage, as provided by Bethlehem Steel, under COBRA coverage. As a part of the bankruptcy settlement, Bethlehem Steel workers and retirees had access to COBRA benefits (initially for six months, and then, when the International Steel Group sale was finalized, for their lifetime). In addition, these pensioned workers between ages 55 and 65 were eligible for the TAA tax rebate. But, as health care price increases continue to outpace inflation, monthly prices for insurance through COBRA went up, and these expensive policies were simply too much money for most steelworkers. Younger workers, those who did not get pensions through the process, were left with no public health care supports.

The Trade Adjustment Assistance program had a health benefits subsidy written into the act as a part of the 2002 revised act passed by the Bush administration. This subsidy was a compromise that "says much about the politics of selling free trade to a skeptical public" (Chen 2002). Bush added this program to assure Democratic congress people that they could vote for free trade without abandoning organized labor. Many claim that the resulting program is unnecessarily complex. For example, in 2007 only 11 percent (or 28,000 of 250,000) of those displaced workers eligible for a federal "tax rebate" or subsidy for health insurance took advantage of this program, even though the subsidy is quite large (for many workers, more than $900 per month) (Solomon 2007). When the *Wall Street Journal* asked why that was, they concluded that the rules were too complex (eliminating many spouse's insurance programs), 35 percent of the premium bill was still too expensive for many families, and the insurance coverage did not start until after a 60 day period (and sometimes longer simply because of bureaucratic

snafus) making this option too costly. And, the Trade Adjustment Assistance program itself did not cover all displaced steelworkers at the Bethlehem plant.

The loss of health benefits propelled many Bethlehem workers back into the workforce. One strategy that workers used was to find a job with coverage. For workers, this often meant rejecting service sector jobs, with inadequate health benefits, and pursuing public sector jobs. Ron Kosek said that after the bankruptcy "it started to cost me my pension to pay for my medical benefits for my wife and I (the kids were out). The $400 supplemental was taken away…so I went back to work." For Steve Jaros when Bethlehem Steel dumped "legacy" obligations "I lost everything. I had a part time job, and that's what forced me to go full time for benefits. I just had a part time job while they were still throwing out money at the end. Then I had to do something." For Barry Kirk, who managed to qualify for his pension just 14 days before the PBGC takeover, "health care became most important in looking for jobs."

Finding a public sector job, or another full time job with good health benefits, became a strategy for many ex-steelworkers. Many steelworkers found jobs driving or monitoring school buses for local school districts. This part time, public sector job strategy could work if the retiree had sufficient pension payments to supplement wages. The Bethlehem School District ensured that these ex-steelworkers could be covered by the school district insurance policy, even as part time workers. Some workers would have preferred to work part time, but found themselves working full time to attain health coverage. Dan Oates, for example, was offered a part time bus monitor job, but he would have had to wait out a three month probationary period before being insured. With a sick wife at home, Dan couldn't do that, and instead got a full time job.

Some workers found private sector jobs with health coverage. However, spiraling health prices, particularly for small businesses that are unable to take advantage of the tax advantages for self-insured corporate policies, resulted in employer cuts to health benefits. These cost-cutting strategies are well-documented and result in shifting more of the costs for health care to the employee (Hacker 2006). Barry Kirk, a coke works carpenter who had transferred to Bethlehem Steel's Coatesville plant, found himself moving from job to job because of health care insurance issues. Barry's wife, Lynn, has health coverage through her job, but she describes her

plan as very bad, with high deductibles and a high premium for adding Barry. And she was not at all certain that she could add her husband to the plan. Since Barry had experienced arterial blockage, and had recently had a stint put in, Lynn was afraid her insurance plan would refuse to cover him due to a preexisting condition. Barry, therefore, needed his own employer-provided plan. He found a job he loved at a hobby store, but when this small business cut back on its health care policy after four years, significantly increasing his premium, Barry had to resign, and reenter the labor market. Barry's next job, at a company that did hydraulic assembling, ended when they changed their health care to a plan with a $5,000 deductible. Barry's wife was upset that this low-paying job had such poor health coverage, at "$12 an hour plus paying for health care with a $5,000 deductible, all you're working for is health care." Lynn said "they said to [the workers], we're doing this and saving money to save your jobs. So, he looked again." Eddie Smith, a former Bethlehem Steel crane man, found his job driving truck no longer tenable when his employer announced to the workforce that he would be dropping health care coverage, instead giving workers cash towards health care. "I worked for them for a few years and then they came up one day and says 'We're not going to have no more insurance for you. We're going to give you $250 a month, do what you want with it.' The $250 didn't come close to covering the $1,200 monthly payment that Joe was paying for insurance for himself and his wife. His wife, Nancy, was angry about the abruptness of this elimination of health care. The sudden change made planning, finding the best alternative, impossible. "When his company dropped the insurance, if they would have told us…we would have saved money already with his Highmark Blue Cross. We didn't know that." The insecurity of employer-based health care makes planning (and access to some of the programs, such as the TAA, that were available to ex-steelworkers relied on this planning) very difficult.

Employer-provided health care, today, is covering less and costing employees more. Pat Daly describes his health policy at the large food manufacturer he now works for "you get health coverage, but it's not as good. It's like that everywhere. They keep making it worse and worse. You pay more and get less." Even as workers real wages remain stagnant, their costs in employer-provided health care go up, lowering workers' standard of living and driving many

workers into debt. None of the workers I spoke with described their current health coverage as equivalent to the coverage offered through Bethlehem Steel.

Others, like Jerry Schneider, retired from the steel with their pension and healthcare benefits. Jerry, who worked as a carpenter at Bethlehem Steel, took an early retirement package in 1995, deciding that the pension and health care would be sufficient, and believing it was better that he retire than that younger workers were laid off. Union officials said "If you don't go we'll have to lay the younger guys off and they ain't going to get nothing. I said ok. My house is paid for. Hey, some young guy with a family, let him keep working. So I left." But the pension and health care he planned on supporting his wife and him in retirement were gutted by the bankruptcy court's decisions. Losing health care was devastating for Jerry, as his wife is chronically sick with diabetes and doesn't work. They decided to continue their health care coverage through COBRA, but were paying $1,200 per month. Jerry says it cost them his "PBGC pension plus $100 to pay for health insurance. We were living on social security. I couldn't afford taxes and maintenance for the house…I couldn't afford it…So I lost my home." For Jerry, "health care darn near wiped out my savings. Until my wife turned 65 and could go on Medicare…I have a sickly wife…I couldn't drop it." Jerry and his wife sold their house, moving into a house owned by their daughter. Jerry was hard hit as his wife did not work, had no employer-based health care, had a chronic illness, and was too young to qualify for Medicare.

Younger workers, like John Caputo, were at high risk of losing health care. These younger workers had pensions cut significantly by the PBGC, and were not covered by the 65 percent TAA health subsidy (those workers under 55). Therefore, if they could not find a job with health benefits, and/or were not married to someone who could access benefits, health insurance was simply too expensive. John continues to go without any health insurance, ever since leaving his steel job at Sparrows Point.

Older workers (over 65) could access Medicare, although they did have to worry about Medigap insurance and Medicare B premiums. In addition, workers became eligible for United Steelworkers' negotiated VEBA prescription plan benefits in 2005, a program that helps considerably with the ever-growing expense of pharmaceuticals. And some workers were able to

access veterans' benefits, although these benefits did not provide coverage for spouses. Workers did, however, often have difficulty accessing veterans' benefits.

The insult of losing health care is exacerbated by the health issues related to careers working at Bethlehem Steel of many workers. Bethlehem Steel was a loud, dirty, and dangerous work environment. Many jobs involved heavy manual labor that stressed backs and joints, accidents resulted in injuries, and environmental issues such as exposure to asbestos created long-term health problems for workers. Many workers I spoke with had back and joint injuries related to their work at Bethlehem Steel, some had hearing loss, and one welder had problems with his eyesight from "being flashed." Many workers had been diagnosed with asbestosis, and were members of an asbestosis law suit. Some of these workers were able to receive medical disability, but the majority was simply faced with more expensive health care needs.

In addition, workers may suffer severe health consequences from the stress of displacement – the stresses associated with transfer, loss of seniority, losing one's job. Although it is difficult to document the impact of displacement on health, a recent *New York Times* article cites studies indicating that heart attacks, stroke, diabetes, arthritis, and psychiatric issues are exacerbated by the trauma of layoff (Luo 2010). Studies have shown correlations between unemployment and overall mortality, deaths from cardiovascular disease, liver cirrhosis, arrests, suicides, and imprisonments (Yates 2003). Studies cited by Russo and Linkon find higher levels of depression, increases in family violence, declines in physical health, and increases in mortality rates associated with job loss (2009:195-197). Lack of access to health care, or insecurity of access, may prevent workers from getting the health care that they need during unemployment, displacement, and devaluing.

As workers and their families struggle with the consequences of the decisions of the bankruptcy court and deal with health care issues often related to their work at Bethlehem Steel and to the stress of displacement, most do not describe themselves as angry. Instead, they describe themselves as bitter. Jerry Schneider is highly critical of the bankruptcy process:

> The Executive Board went to the bankruptcy judge, said we have to pay all these board executives their bonuses or they'll walk away. The bankruptcy judge approved their bonuses. Millions of dollars. That was money that would have been our health care and pension. Bethlehem Steel could borrow from our

> pension at 2%. They took our money. As soon as they got their checks, they bailed. The place went down the tubes. I'm bitter. Do I hate the guys? No.

Jerry says that he is doing other things now, "I'm doing community work, I'm relaxed, I feel good, I'm earning honor." Through an enormous amount of volunteer and political work in the community and through helping to raise his grandson, he feels fulfilled. But, does he have "big bucks? No. Social security and pension? No. My daughter gives us a rent free house. I have a good life. All of that bitterness, yeah. Am I mad? No. They did me a favor. They got me out of that dirty hell hole." George Dent says "losing my healthcare, that hurt. That made me bitter." Norman Brist describes his feelings, "In 1999 and 2000 I was very bitter. In 2001 I had enough. I gave up fighting. It took a lot out of me, and I got very depressed." Norm says he was helped to recover through counseling, scouting with his son, and the satisfaction he gets out of his current job overseeing maintenance at a community college. "It could have turned out a lot worse, had my wife not been supportive. Many wives were bitter and fought often. My wife was my rock."

This feeling of bitterness comes up over and over in interviews and conversations with steelworkers and their families. Bitterness is not anger. To be bitter is to be cynical, disillusioned, and hurt by the perceived unjust nature of the plant's closing and the bankruptcy. Steelworkers are bitter that corporations can fire them at will, after a long trail of broken promises and commitments to workers. Steelworkers are bitter that the bankruptcy court can wipe out contracts that were forged in legally-recognized union negotiations. Steelworkers are bitter that the government did not intervene to help the U.S. steel industry to survive, even as other industries (auto) and sectors of the economy (financial) are currently being assessed as "too big to fail."

But this emotion, unlike anger, does not fuel empowered action. Bitterness is turned inwards to feelings of depression, rancor, and disempowerment. Bitterness is not shame, as blue collar workers (unlike many displaced white collar workers) do not hold themselves directly responsible for their displacement (Newman 1988). But in discussion of their bitterness, workers convey a deep disillusionment and disempowerment, a criticism of corporations, the courts, the government, and even the union that has no formal forum, no community-based organization or clearly articulated ideology, through which to express itself or to mobilize collective action. The

bitterness, turned inwards, can fester as stress emerging in health issues (like high blood pressure, digestive problems, and cardiovascular issues) or in psychiatric issues (like depression and suicide), it can eat at families (leading to domestic violence and divorce) and it can fuel substance abuse (Russo and Linkon 2009). It can be expressed in withdrawal of commitment to wider institutions – the union, political parties, corporations – a kind of privatization of pain (although the church can provide some solace). Or, it can generate individual strategies focused on getting what one can in an unjust system (through tort law, medical disabilities, or lying for Veterans' benefits). But bitterness rarely fuels collective action.

And, because the loss and dispossession plays itself out in real terms unevenly across steelworking families, there is a general feeling amongst most steelworkers of still being better off than someone else. Over and over again I heard steelworkers describe themselves as "lucky" or "fortunate." There is a general knowledge that there are others that are worse off than they are. Robert Kaufmann says "I was one of the fortunate ones, I was always able to find a job," even though his jobs entailed an enormous reduction in pay and a loss of many health benefits. "Health care destroyed my pension. I was lucky enough to get social security to make ends meet." It seems ironic that Robert describes himself as "lucky" by virtue of accessing an earned benefit on the basis of his age alone. Mary Keenan and her husband lost pension payments, and had to struggle to put together much more expensive health care coverage, "I have no complaints. I think we were lucky…It's really hard to survive, but we did. We're still here, and I'm still alive." Jerry Schneider lost his house and his savings paying for health care, but he says "I was lucky." Why? Because he received a pension through the PBGC and sold Bethlehem Steel preferred stock before it lost all of its value (he was able to sell when he turned 62, before the bankruptcy was finalized).

These uneven processes of dislocation and dispossession (affecting pension, healthcare, stocks, housing, and savings) mean that the effects of dispossession hit unequally across steelworkers and their families. Steelworking families spoke with each other, and generally found that there was at least one area where they, unlike someone they knew, had been spared from total dispossession. Even Fred Needham who lost all his savings paying for health benefits,

describes himself as “lucky enough to get social security to make ends meet.” He knows that there are younger workers who have not yet accessed social security payments.

Will Wagner was one of the rare workers I spoke with who described himself as unlucky (having lost his house, gone through personal bankruptcy, and been laid off from manufacturing job after manufacturing job after Bethlehem Steel). He worries “am I going to have a job tomorrow” and says you wonder “do you have a monkey on your shoulder with this bad luck.” But, still, he says when he runs into guys who are “devastated” by a layoff (and he encounters many who are laid off in his work trajectory) he and his wife “say it’ll be okay. We’ve been through this.” Rather than anger, they’ve developed a kind of pride in their ability to make it through.

And whether one accesses a public program, whether one’s wife happens to have health coverage, or whether one finds a job with coverage, this access to health care is not represented as embedded in a moral economy. Steelworkers do not discuss this in terms of “deserving” or “undeserving” ex-steelworkers. Instead, they talk about luck. The access to coverage appears to be arbitrary, unpredictable, and insecure. Although there is a strong emphasis on thrift and savings, and a bit of blame for those who continued to squander earnings as the Bethlehem plant downsized, for the most part, workers refuse to generate explanations for steelworkers’ trajectories post-layoff into categories of deserving and undeserving workers. In a system in which one’s promised access to health care is simply eliminated by the rule of law, and in which each family struggles to find a solution to health care coverage, an understanding of dispossession as arbitrary and unpredictable, as determined by factors outside a person’s control, and as supported through broad societal institutions generates both bitterness and a feeling of being better off than someone else.

It is not just health care, wages, and pensions that have been taken away by the bankruptcy court. Instead “the whole message of unions—save, put it away for your retirement—had been discredited” (Geoghegan 2007:122). Even workers that did not love working for Bethlehem Steel had clear goals for the future, “I had the goal of retiring at 65”, I had “a goal of 35 years, then retire…that goal was not realized.” Workers can no longer articulate those kinds of

goals. Instead, they see themselves as continuing to work forever. The future seems uncertain, insecure, and arduous. Even the benefits that ex-steelworkers and their families managed to secure seem tenuous, as unpredictable and arbitrary future processes might eliminate those. Workers are concerned about the potential for financial insolvency of the PBGC as ever larger pension plans are dumped on it. Workers worry about the insecurity of public and private sector jobs. Workers are anxious about the health insurance benefits they have managed to attain, and the rising cost and insecurity of these benefits. "It makes me bitter, but…you put all them years in and you….but then, who knows? With the social security too? Is it going to be there? It's scary." And those steelworkers who went into public sector jobs are becoming increasingly concerned about their defined benefit pension plans and health care benefits as conservative politicians in states with budget crises take aim at these plans.

Workers do feel strongly, however, about health care as a political issue and they vote, in part, on the basis of this issue. Workers' identity as United Steelworker members, and their participation in union forums, also continues to shape their participation in formal politics. Almost all the workers I spoke to put health care as a high priority for political action and reform, and supported both Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama in the 2008 election in part because of their health care proposals. Most workers support a public option in health care, and many workers support a national health care system. Dan Oates, an African American steelworker, says that health care is a crucial political issue for him, since "I know how good health care can be" from working at Bethlehem Steel. Fred Needham compares health care in the U.S. to that in Canada, where he has a trailer home he summers in, "they have a very good health care system in Canada." Fred says Europeans he met "could not believe what we do here. European countries are way ahead of us in that." For Barry Kirk health care is the most important political issue:

> The government has to have something available like Medicare to someone who makes $12 an hour but can't afford $890 a month [for COBRA]. You can't afford to pay $11,000 for health care. You cannot afford it.

John Caputo, who goes without health coverage himself, says his major political issue is health care. It "needs to be fixed. There needs to be a program that covers people who cannot afford high monthly payments." Frank Havlicek is "for the [Obama 2009] health care plan, I'm totally for

it. What does public option mean? Compete for the best rate. Bring prices down. Congress, nobody, picked up on this. Every one of you have a public option. Why isn't it good for the American people?"

CHAPTER 6

STEELWORKERS IN A POST-FORDIST, POST-INDUSTRIAL LABOR MARKET

Even while processes of deindustrialization led to shedding of thousands of jobs at the enormous Bethlehem Steel plant in Bethlehem, Bethlehem did not become the economically depressed, rustbelt community often portrayed in studies of deindustrialization. Although Bethlehem appeared to be heading towards economic decline in the 1980s as the giant steel mill downsized, by the 1990s the regional economy had rebounded, generating new jobs and attracting new businesses. Recent studies of deindustrialization point to the varied and uneven economic and social trajectories of deindustrializing communities—contrasting the disinvestment and decline of cities such as Youngstown to the economic renaissance of Bethlehems or Pittsburghs. Bethlehem, and the surrounding Lehigh Valley, developed a diverse, post-industrial economy in the 1990s.

During the 1980s, as Bethlehem Steel downsized dramatically, the city and the surrounding area was dramatically affected. With the decline of Bethlehem Steel, and the loss of thousands of steel jobs, unemployment reached an official high of 12% in Bethlehem in the 1980s, shops and businesses closed on the city's South Side, parking lots stood empty, and the steel plant grew quieter each year. In the region, manufacturing jobs declined dramatically, going from 58% of employment in 1975, to 20% in 2000, to only 16% in 2006 (*Morning Call* 2006). Manufacturing losses began in the garment industry in the 1970s, followed by losses in steel, auto, and other manufacturing in the 1980s and 1990s. Job losses at Bethlehem Steel were accompanied by losses at other large industries such as Western Electric, Mack Truck, and numerous other industries.

In the 1990s, however, the economy in the Lehigh Valley grew again, with a diversified base of high-technology companies; warehouse-distribution centers (based on the Lehigh Valley's proximity to eastern seaboard cities); back-office and call center functions; a growing service sector with a large healthcare component, a tourism and entertainment industry, and an expanding retail sector; and a large construction industry related to housing and population growth. By 1999, the *New York Times* described Bethlehem as experiencing a "renaissance,"

citing its economic rebirth as a “high-technology phoenix…rising on the steel shards,” and describing Bethlehem’s success in attracting businesses and its declining unemployment rates (Deutsch, 1999). In 2008, Bethlehem was described as “back from the dead” and selected as one of the “best places to live and launch,” a city that “will feed your soul and nurture your business,” by Fortune Small Business magazine (Fortune 2008), and was voted one of the hundred “best places to live” in a 2006 ranking (Money 2006).

The Lehigh Valley experienced a shift from an economy that relied heavily on manufacturing to a more service-based economy. As jobs continued to decline in manufacturing, jobs were added in the service sector in health care, education, government, and tourism/hospitality. In 2007, the Lehigh Valley was declared “the hottest job market in Pennsylvania”, adding 27,000 jobs from 2002 to 2007, a rate far exceeding job growth rates in Pennsylvania. By 2007, five of every six jobs in the Lehigh Valley were in the service sector of the economy (Karp 2008). In a recent book, Sean Safford, a Harvard business professor, compares Youngstown to the Lehigh Valley, arguing that while in 1975, both were middle-sized industrial cities dominated by manufacturing, by the 1990s Youngstown was a depressed, rustbelt city, while Bethlehem had transitioned successfully to a postindustrial city with a robust economy and charming urban aesthetic (2009). He attributes this successful transition to the dense social networks facilitated by a strong regional class alliance. This alliance, he argues, was able to mobilize local capital, generate strong political supports, and develop public-private partnerships to jump-start robust economic diversification.

But, social science claims that the ”new economy” has brought new, skilled, knowledge-information jobs to middle class workers in cities like Bethlehem (Florida 2003; Levy and Murname 2004; Castells 1995) must be examined in relation to the family trajectories of displaced steelworkers. Although my research shows that there were some displaced workers able to access middle class jobs in the expanding health care sector, in growing housing markets, and in high tech sectors of the Lehigh Valley economy, the majority of ex-steelworkers turned to lower-paid jobs in warehousing, manufacturing, or in the service sector; sought out public sector jobs; or turned to small business ownership. Most workers experienced a loss of salary and benefits in

this transition, as well as increased insecurity in their employment. The robust post industrial economy of the Lehigh Valley is constructed through displacing and devaluing the working class, and transforming regional class relations.

A powerful regional inter-class alliance in the Lehigh Valley has actively recruited smaller corporations through the construction of 42 industrial and corporate parks employing some 22,000 workers and involving $436 million in private investment (*Morning Call* 2009). A regional class alliance, which included strong representation from Bethlehem Steel upper management, was responsible for developing the area's industrial parks under a philosophy of economic diversification, beginning in 1959. There are now seven industrial parks in and around Bethlehem, the most recent opening on a part of the former Bethlehem steel works site, a piece of the overall plan for brownfield site development. The industrial parks have successfully attracted light manufacturing and financial back-office operations to the Lehigh Valley (Safford 2009).

In 2000 the *New York Times* ran an article documenting the movement of New Jersey corporations into Pennsylvania seeking lower taxes and cheaper labor and real estate costs (Bagle 2000). Pennsylvania projects such as "toolboxes" of tax rebates, low interest building loans, enterprise zone incentives, technical assistance, and the development of infrastructure (funds were put into improving the Lehigh Valley's super highways and expanding the airport) have attracted businesses. The Lehigh Valley has aggressively marketed its accessibility to Philadelphia and New York City, calling itself a "corridor city…exporting services to the region." These aggressive efforts have successfully produced jobs (the official unemployment rate declined to 3.7% by 1999 (Deutsch 1999), but the kinds of jobs that were available to steelworkers were limited in pay, benefits, and promotional opportunities. Although new jobs are more available in the service sector (with health care the most rapidly growing area in this sector), manufacturing, warehousing, high-tech industry, and construction also afforded job opportunities.

One major growth industry in the Lehigh Valley has been warehousing and distribution. The construction of transportation infrastructure, combined with marketing of location and the above-cited tax rebates, attracted warehousing and distribution centers. Access to a number of

major markets on the East Coast, highlighted in Lehigh Valley marketing as “within a one day truck drive of one-third of the U.S. market” (LVIP), has led to the opening of many large logistics facilities in the area. Infrastructural improvements, including the completion of I-78 in 1989, as well as the Route 33 spur in 2003, have contributed to this growth. Gigantic food warehouses, using refrigerated warehouses and trucks to distribute food throughout the northeast, have moved into the area. Although these warehouses and distribution facilities are enormous and have substantial land and infrastructure needs, they do not generate a large number of jobs. Most warehousing jobs are not unionized, pay averages about $13 an hour, and there are limited opportunities for advancement. Some warehouses hire only temporary labor through organizations like Manpower, while others do provide more secure jobs. In addition, the warehouse industry was hard-hit by the recession, as decreased demand for products led to decreased deliveries, and is only now (2011) beginning to recover in this region.

Bethlehem’s industrial parks also do attract smaller manufacturing operations, although manufacturing continues to decline as a percentage of the Lehigh Valley labor market. While manufacturing still accounted for $7 billion of annual output in the Lehigh Valley in 2003, and produced 86,000 jobs (*Morning Call* 2004), this is many less jobs than previously. Manufacturing continues to be an important sector of the employment base, but this "small manufacturing" may not hire union workers, offer stable employment and benefits, or pay higher salaries, and benefits. Unionized manufacturing jobs in the Lehigh Valley, and the higher salaries accompanying those jobs have declined significantly.

A regional class alliance which initially included Bethlehem Steel was invested in reinvigorating the urban economy in an inter-urban environment which has become increasingly competitive as capital becomes more mobile (Harvey 1985). In order to attract capital, regional class alliances must out-compete other urban regions through offering an attractive environment for both production and consumption. Pennsylvanian tax breaks, Keystone Innovation zones, public private partnerships, and infrastructural improvements were directed at attracting companies, many from New Jersey and New York, to the Lehigh Valley. In addition, the development of a tourism and entertainment economy in Bethlehem, described as the city’s

“emerging identity as an entertainment destination,” is predicated upon competition with entertainment venues and gambling milieux (such as Atlantic City) in New Jersey (LVEDC 2009). Bethlehem’s new casino, the Sands, aggressively advertises its location as closer to both New York and Philadelphia than Atlantic City.

Bethlehem’s regional elite, through organizations like the Lehigh Valley Partnership, also worked to construct an economic environment that emphasized “new economy” high tech industries, service industries including health care and education, and a tourism and entertainment industry. Regional elites lobbied hard for the Ben Franklin Technology Center, a public-private partnership located at Lehigh University and funded with state monies, set up to support high tech and biotech start up businesses. This incubator site, located at Bethlehem Steel’s former Research and Development Center, provided a home for successful local electronics and biomedicine start up companies like IQE and Orasure. Start ups were effectively linked to a private venture capital company that tapped into regional capital (Safford 2009) and to local banks. Private capital came from local investors as well as from the large, locally headquartered corporations (Bethlehem Steel, PP&L, Air Products). While these start ups fuel economic growth, many of the jobs produced are professional middle class jobs demanding a college education.

In addition, between 2000 and 2006, 60,000 new residents moved into the Lehigh Valley fueling a construction and housing boom, and a growth in the higher-end retail sector. Rising real estate prices in New Jersey made the Lehigh Valley, particularly Northampton County, a preferred location. Many newcomers were willing to commute longer distances to work in New Jersey and New York in order to access more affordable housing. This influx of professional middle class immigrants fueled a housing construction boom, and also drove up the “market basket of goods and services” in the Lehigh Valley 24% over four years (*Morning Call* 4/8/2007). While this growth was desirable for some, such as those working in the housing construction industry, real estate developers, and the large home builders (like Toll Brothers), it was less desirable for many steelworkers and their families. The growing cost of goods, the increased

traffic congestion, and the urban sprawl, changing the feel of the area, are often cited by steelworking families as problems in the Valley.

Another growth area, aggressively marketed in Bethlehem, is the tourism and entertainment industry. A regional "growth coalition" elite builds on existing festivals, Bethlehem's Christmas City reputation, and historic preservation and tourism efforts in North Bethlehem to expand the city's tourism and entertainment industries. While the wealthier, "Moravian," North side of Bethlehem had been regarded as the "historic," tourist-draw for some time, the re-development of the site of the Bethlehem steel works has recently been an important part of economic development efforts. The 1,800 acre site constitutes about 20 percent of the city's taxable land, and the deserted, rusting site represented a depressed, deindustrialized landscape. Redevelopment of what was declared the largest brownfield site in the U.S. has been a long term project, entailing the efforts of the regional elite. Bethlehem Steel continued to be an active force in the redesign of Bethlehem in the late 1990s. The corporation worked with the state of Pennsylvania, the Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation (a not for profit group controlled by Lehigh Valley elite), city government, federal government, and private developers to develop a plan for the site of the deserted steelworks. Bethlehem Works, an organization initially established in 1997 through Bethlehem Steel, was devoted to redeveloping the site of the steelworks. When Bethlehem Steel declared bankruptcy and sold the land to the International Steel Group (ISG) in 2003, this project seemed in jeopardy. However, in 2004 ISG sold a core 124 acres to Bethlehem Works Now, a group formed predominantly of Newmark Knight Frank, major New York City developers. Shortly after this purchase, it was found that Las Vegas Sands was a majority shareholder in the development group, and that the State of Pennsylvania would, for the first time, be issuing a limited number of gambling licenses within the state. Although there was strong opposition to building a casino on the site, mobilized through local community-based organizations and religious groups, BethWorks Now and Sands were able to overcome this through fostering key local allies. These developers wooed local non-profits, donating land to Arts Quest and to Channel 39 and office space to the Steelworkers' Archives. They promised the Lehigh Valley Building and Construction Trades union jobs for casino construction, and they

assured the community that historic adaptive re-use of buildings and preservation of the blast furnaces was a crucial component of their plan. The Bethlehem City Council voted to allow gambling on the site, the Sands won the casino license, and work began on the promised casino, hotel, retail and convention center.

In the midst of this construction, the Great Recession unfolded, hitting the highly leveraged Las Vegas Sands Corporation hard. The Sands had to halt billions of dollars of construction in Macao, as well as stopping construction on the hotel and retail component of the Bethlehem project, even while working all the faster to complete the Bethlehem casino for a Spring, 2009 opening designed to start revenue flowing in. Pennsylvanian approval of table gaming in 2010 has contributed to increased current revenues at the casino. Recently, Sands reinitiated construction on the hotel, which opened in May, 2011, and announced plans to resume mall and events center construction.

Other components of a tourist/entertainment economy on the steel works site include the expansion of Arts Quest's offerings, a new home for PBS' channel 39, and a National Museum of Industrial History (affiliated with the Smithsonian) all currently being constructed. These venues build on the "heritage" of the site and incorporate adaptive reuse of Bethlehem Steel buildings into design plans. Arts Quest is currently completing a $36 million SteelStacks "cultural and recreation center" offering a variety of venues for concerts and entertainment, PBS is building a $17 million broadcast center, and NMIH is completing the re-development of Bethlehem Steel's electrical repair building. These various venues, "anchored" by Sands Bethlehem, are represented as a dynamic tourism/entertainment center for Bethlehem's economy, designed as a "destination" for New Jerseyans and New Yorkers.

Of course, "entertainment" growth in Bethlehem is predicated, again, on competition with surrounding states, and the revenue flowing into the Sands Bethlehem casino is certainly related to the decline in revenues in Atlantic City. While jobs are being generated in this service sector, many of the jobs are at much lower pay, with worse benefits, and without union protection—quite different than the steel jobs they replace. In addition, there is some resentment on the part of steelworking families that this new development will result in expensive entertainment venues that

they cannot afford. Some steelworkers are critical of the growing expenses attached to Arts Quest's Musikfest, an event that relies heavily on the strong spirit and tradition of volunteerism in the community. They argue that even as it generates higher profits each year, participation becomes prohibitively expensive. There is a concern that the new "campus" being built on the steel works, and projected to be used as a new site for Musikfest events, will exclude the less affluent, catering to outsiders and to the regional professional middle class.

Recently, the Great Recession has hit the Lehigh Valley economy hard, slowing down housing development and in-migration to the area, producing an unemployment rate of 9.5% in 2010, higher than the state average of 8.8%, and eliminating job growth in all sectors except education and health care. The Valley regional elite's emphasis on regional competition – attracting New Jersey professional middle class homeowners and commuters, as well as businesses--ground to a halt with the Great Recession. The housing market went into a tail spin, new construction stopped, and many sectors of the economy experienced layoffs, shedding jobs and closing businesses. This economic crisis has contributed to broader structural effects on a displaced and devalued working class, has contributed to job loss and job insecurity for ex-steelworkers, and has provided an opportunity for regional elites to cite economic deficits in broadening attacks on labor, attempting to widen the wedge between working and middle class property owners and public sector unions.

Steelworkers in a Post-Fordist Labor Market

As Bethlehem Steel continued to close down shops and departments, finally closing the last of the shops in the South Bethlehem plant in 1998, the last workers at the plant were laid off with early retirement or transfer rights. Some workers took retirement, and looked for other jobs, some workers transferred to other plants, and some workers turned down transfer, and found themselves on the job market. After Bethlehem Steel's bankruptcy in 2001-03, many retirees and transferees found themselves back in Bethlehem and back on the job market, as transfer jobs ended and retirees needed to find work after losing health care benefits and pension monies. Workers moving into other jobs often found the experience of obtaining and negotiating new jobs in the "flexible" post-Fordist labor market bewildering and demoralizing. Chroniclers of

deindustrialization have examined the devastating blow to steelworkers, many of whom had generations of steelwork in their families, of the loss of steelwork and steelworking identity. They have documented the loss of not only jobs, but of an entire other culture, other city, and other world, where these workers had spent much of their waking hours. Steelworkers lost a wider societal recognition of the value of manufacturing and manufacturing work. They lost a work culture, a moral economy of the workplace, that shaped and gave meaning to productive work and to their relations with others. And they lost access to a space and a city that they had inhabited, produced in, and produced.

Workers' initial reactions to retirement or layoff in the late 1990s varied dramatically. Many workers described their initial layoff/retirement, with pension and health care coverage, as a "happy time," a "good time," a "fun time," although "short-lived." Workers who were able to attain their pension had sufficient pension and healthcare benefits to either not work at all, to work part time or do odd-jobs to supplement their income. Manny Vega, who worked until age 52 at the Coke Works, said initially "things in my case went from bad to really good when the Steel closed. The closing was a good thing for me." Some workers in hard, hot, production jobs, or workers in less desirable departments at the works, felt relief at being able to retire early from Bethlehem Steel. Some workers jumped at the opportunity to take early retirement (as Milkman also found with auto workers' buyouts). When Marc Ortiz was offered early retirement from the coke works in 1995, "I stood up so fast. I stayed, not because of the salary, but because of the health benefits." Marc had been investing money in real estate since the 1970s, and with an early retirement pension and health benefits he was eager to devote himself, full-time, to his real estate business.

Other workers transferred to other plants, but still found themselves without a pension (and needing work) or with a reduced pension (after the PBGC takeover) and, therefore, back on the job market in the early 2000s, at a time when they thought they wouldn't be working again. The loss of health care benefits also propelled many workers back into the labor market. The effect of these losses was unevenly distributed, as those workers whose wives had jobs with comprehensive health coverage or who were Medicare eligible were more able to manage the

health care loss. Others, even with sufficient pension payments at layoff, describe themselves as being in their 40s or early 50s when their job at Bethlehem Steel ended and as "too young to quit working." Many steelworkers expressed a strong desire to work, defined themselves as good workers, and prided themselves on having, a strong work ethic.

As steelworkers looked for jobs, they encountered a post industrial Lehigh Valley economy and labor market of the late 90s and early 2000s that was dramatically different from the labor market of the 1970s when they had found their jobs at Bethlehem Steel. The depressed Lehigh Valley economy of the 1980s had recovered, and a diversified economy generated new jobs, but many of the manufacturing jobs that had fueled the Lehigh Valley economy in the 1970s had left the Valley. Although by the 1990s, when the steelworkers I interviewed were losing their jobs, the economy in the Lehigh Valley had grown again the kinds of jobs that were available for ex-steelworkers are limited in pay, benefits, and promotional opportunities. Workers entered this revivified economy in the mid to late 1990s and in the early 2000s as they returned from transfer jobs at other plants.

Retraining Programs

Many workers, as they experienced layoff, took advantage of a variety of government programs oriented towards retraining workers, providing further education or skills training, and reorienting workers for job search in a post industrial labor market. Uchitelle (2007) points out that the federal government put a significant amount of resources into retraining workers "dislocated" through deindustrialization. While retraining monies provided benefits for workers, including education and extended unemployment benefits, federal programs put monies into retraining rather than into supports enabling manufacturing industries in the U.S. to remain competitive (Uchitelle 2007). In lieu of support for manufacturing, the Clinton administration provided "more subsidies for education and training and…'portability' for health insurance and pension benefits" (Uchitelle 2007:158). Government programs and policies, instead of supporting Fordist job security, approached layoffs and downsizing as an inevitable characteristic of globalization and a necessary component of economic development in a post-Fordist economy. Thus, federal programs were designed to "reskill" what were defined as obsolete, industrial,

"dislocated" workers. Under the Bush administration, however, even these job training programs and unemployment benefits were cut significantly, resulting in even greater difficulties for laid off workers (Sirota 2008; Piven 2006). Instead of supporting manufacturing, federal policies supported deindustrialization in the Northeast and Midwest, through encouraging industrial development in the Sunbelt (Davis 1986) and, later, overseas. The effect of these policies on the steel industry is also well-documented (Stein 1998).

As many social scientists have demonstrated, social service programs such as job training or workfare, in addition to teaching concrete skills, also disseminate ideologies of personal responsibility, the necessity of retraining and updating of skills, personal flexibility, and a positive attitude. Retraining programs construct a discourse about the importance of personal growth through "flexibility and constant change" in the contemporary economy, reinforcing an "instrumental, individuated, competitive understanding of job loss and economic adjustment" (Dunk 2000:879). Much of retraining focused on individual attributes—individual skills, resumes, personality, and job-seeking strategies--rather than collective processes.

In addition to failing to develop federal policies to support manufacturing in the Northeast (Stein 1998), slashes were made in the social wage with the evisceration of the "welfare" state. Social programs such as welfare function to enforce "low-wage work in a changing and deteriorating labor market" (Piven 2006:113). Cuts in the social wage (reduced unemployment insurance, food stamps, housing, Social Security) propel workers into the labor market. Piven shows how neoliberal social policy has developed in conjunction with this shift in jobs, contributing to declining wages, insecure jobs, unsafe workplaces, and a lack of benefits. We need to link these state policies to other processes that "increase worker vulnerability" (Collins 2009). This intensifies labor discipline and is complemented by corporate strategies such as the long-term fight against unions, the use of threats of mobility and downsizing to generate concessionary contracts, the availability of cheap immigrant labor, and the decline in high-paying, secure jobs.

Retraining and re-education directed at downsized professional middle class workers differs, however, from the retraining opportunities available for blue collar workers. First, until

Obama recently expanded the Trade Adjustment Act, this job training act did not recognize white collar workers as displaced by foreign imports. Therefore, unemployed white collar workers are immersed in a privatized, for-profit marketplace of job coaching, networking seminars, and attitudinal workshops. Middle class workers are bombarded with guides that describe job loss as an "opportunity for self-transformation," are embedded in "networking" strategies to mobilize social capital, and are sold "career coaching" services (Ehrenreich 2009:115). Ehrenreich cites the title of a 2004 business self-help book by Harvey McKay, *We Got Fired!...And It's the Best Thing that Ever Happened to Us* as exemplifying the middle-class "attitudes" taught through white collar retraining and networking sessions. Although blue-collar retraining does include motivational and attitudinal workshops, monies made available through TAA and union contracts ensure that community college, vo-tech, and proprietary college courses geared towards attaining new marketable skills are a key component of blue collar retraining programs (unlike white collar programs). In addition, as government monies were put into retraining programs for blue collar workers, workers could access concrete monetary supports including extended unemployment benefits and tuition payments through participation in the program.

As the hot end of the Bethlehem works closed in 1995, a union-run dislocated workers program for Bethlehem Steel workers (and USW workers from two other local plant closings) opened near the steel plant. This program offered worker retraining through a variety of federal funding sources, and a number of steelworkers took advantage of it (from November, 1995 to September, 1998 1,416 steelworkers went through the program). Workers participated in workshops, signed up for courses and programs, received job search assistance, and accessed extended unemployment benefits through the program. 65% of these found new jobs. The average starting wage, however, was $11/hour, less than half the average wage of workers at Bethlehem Steel (*Morning Call*, 1998).

In addition, the uneven provision of benefits through a patchwork of state and federal programs split and divided unemployed steel workers in seemingly arbitrary ways. Extended unemployment benefits and tuition funding varied substantially by department and job within Bethlehem Steel. Some jobs, those deemed lost due to foreign imports, were eligible for federal

Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) funding. At Bethlehem Steel, production jobs were more likely to qualify for TAA monies than maintenance jobs, and certain divisions qualified while others did not. This eligibility was, in part, determined by Bethlehem Steel, who reported to the government on the percentage of production displaced by foreign imports. But Norm Mitchell, who worked with many displaced workers in the retraining program, found that this reporting was arbitrary, varying from shop to shop, affecting workers unevenly and occurring irrationally, "it depended what department shut down at the time that you got laid off, whether you were deemed TRA or not." For workers, this eligibility for extended unemployment benefits, significant retraining monies, a stipend, and a health care tax rebate appeared to be arbitrary, the luck of the draw.

The dislocated workers program offered practical courses such as resume design and interview preparation, but also included counseling-oriented workshops such as "the seven stages of grief after losing a job." The *Morning Call* (1998) described dislocated worker program staff saying the program taught workers "to shed the sense that all jobs should be like the ones they had: high-paying jobs for life." In these workshops, retraining prepares workers to accept the new post-Fordist segmented labor market as natural and inevitable, teaches workers to generate individual strategies for employment (often in what comes to be accepted as devalued work), attempts to convince workers of the inevitability of downward mobility, and naturalizes the loss of value of what are defined as "manual" skills.

For some workers, attending classes or retraining was not easy. Many workers had not taken a class since high school, and found it challenging to be in a classroom setting. Mark Castor transferred to Sparrows Point, commuting back and forth from the Lehigh Valley in order to attain his pension. When Bethlehem Steel declared bankruptcy, he returned to the Lehigh Valley and looked for a job, but found that "when we got out, finding another job wasn't easy. My age was against me. I had only a high school education, no college education." He took HVAC classes at a proprietary business school through the dislocated workers program. He found the classes difficult

> I only had a high school education. They tried to have you do your math on the computer. I didn't know the first thing about a computer. You had to know

> algebra and different geometry. I was lost. I had a hard time with that there…The learning of the furnace, oil burner, air conditioning, doing that was okay. But, come the book time, I wasn't good at that. There were 24 of us in the HVAC course, and only half of us made it.

He quit the course and found a job in maintenance at a nursing home, accepting that this lower wage job was all that he was educated for. Going through the retraining process (i.e. to school) reinforced for him the value of schooling, and his devaluing as a skilled and experienced worker who deserved a certain wage level. Mark ended up accepting this as a new reality, "I'm only getting half of what I got pay wise," but "with a high school education and my age, 60, where am I going to find a job?"

In addition, retraining programs covered only career training or an A.A. degree. The skills that workers were expected to "retrain" into were skills that could be acquired in a two year period. Workers acquired commercial drivers licenses, HVAC certification, computer training, forklift licenses, and massage therapist licenses. Those workers who wanted a B.A. had to pay for college themselves, or begin college earlier (while still working in the steel works) through a college reimbursement program that became available in the 1990s as a result of a USW contract. William Brown, for example, attended computer classes, but says "I would have liked to work in safety and health, but the training for that would be too long." The retraining program covers training seen as suitable for blue collar workers, offered through proprietary schools and community colleges.

For those workers who did attain a B.A., even a college education did not ensure high-paying jobs or job security in the flexible neoliberal labor market. As Hacker points out, "high levels of education may be a prerequisite for success…but they are no means a guarantor of middle class security" (Hacker 2006:74). Older steelworkers, even with college degrees, confronted obstacles of age, union background, and lack of white collar experience that worked against them. Some steelworkers had difficulty moving into white collar positions, even with a college degree.

Some workers found white collar positions, but not at the salary or the hours that they would have liked. Louis Moran, a maintenance worker in the machine shop, had always felt conflicted about his career at the Bethlehem plant, as his parents and uncle (who worked at the

mill) “would’ve rather seen me go to college. [My uncle] discouraged both of his sons not to work there…my parents were—well, they wanted me to go to college.” Louis’ girlfriend got pregnant, he got married at 19, and he found himself working at Bethlehem Steel. Louis had no confidence in his academic abilities, and didn’t find until much later, when he attended college while at Bethlehem Steel, that he was quite talented academically. He enjoyed college tremendously,

> I really learned to like, I like reading, I was always told…’cause I know self perceptions. I realized when I went to college that if I would have had the one teacher I had in my senior year [of high school], if he would have been my first teacher, Id’ve never graduated from college. ‘Cause he would have reaffirmed everything I was told my whole life…--You’re stupid.

Louis planned ahead for his retirement as he took college classes “I just knew that I wanted to get out with a 30-year pension. I had always planned that.” Because Louis worked steady night shifts, he was able to take advantage of the tuition reimbursement program and complete his B.A. while working at the mill. He wanted to become a math teacher, but the money he was making at Bethlehem Steel by then was far superior to an entry level teaching salary, so he stayed at the plant until his department was closed down. But, after losing his health care and some of his pension, he has been working for less money ever since leaving Bethlehem Steel, and “looking for another job…it doesn’t pay very well there. And there is something about, and this is my stuff, there is something about having a college education and using it and getting paid less than [half my Bethlehem salary]…considerably less. So that’s a part of it.” Louis, while proud of his college degree, was discouraged with the current salary, the management style, and the lack of opportunity for promotion at his white collar job.

Retraining did not ensure a new job for all workers. Often the skills that workers were trained in were not highly marketable, or were not marketable at comparable wages to Bethlehem Steel jobs. For example, many workers were interested in and encouraged to use the dislocated workers program to attain training for commercial drivers licenses. Workers were interested in trucking jobs, and eagerly pursued training. However, ultimately, not one of the workers I interviewed was happy with the trucking jobs that became available to them. Even as workers pursued commercial drivers’ licenses, the trucking industry in the U.S. was undergoing dramatic restructuring along neoliberal lines. The trucking industry was deregulated in the early 1980s,

and, as a result, more than 300 trucking companies closed, and many new small trucking companies entered the market. Stanley Aronowitz argues that the deregulation of banking and transportation under Carter was "the most anti working class measure of the post WW II era" as it created an enormous non-union sector in the trucking industry" (Aronowitz 2003:103). In this industry-wide restructuring the unionized trucking jobs declined by about a third, and concessionary contracts meant that even Teamster affiliates at new small trucking companies accepted wage cuts of between 10 and 15 percent (Moody 2007). While unions retained a foothold in long distance trucking, short haul trucking became predominately nonunion, and "costs and risks were increasingly transferred to workers in the deregulated environment as small firms contracting work out to owner-operators began to replace the larger, unionized trucking companies" (Milkman 2006:98). Winnie Edwards, a woman who had worked for 30 years as a machinist at Bethlehem Steel, attained her CDL license through the Dislocated Worker Program. She soon discovered, however, that this restructured trucking industry did not provide satisfactory jobs. She accepted a job driving cross country,

> But it is a bad, bad life…They never put runs near your home. The dispatchers run you when you should not be driving, you're too tired…everybody's log books lied…our companies weren't unionized…you're all over the place, you get vacation but can't go anywhere cause they can call you anytime and be ready to get on the truck….You can't go anyplace in case they call you…And you never get enough sleep.

She became a "flexible" worker with little rights and protections, underpaid, working in unsafe conditions, whose personal time (including her commitments to kin) was eroded by the need to be constantly on call to her employer. Milkman describes how this "deregulated industry depends largely on the exploitation of truckers themselves, who are forced to absorb the costs of inefficiency in the form of unpaid hours spent waiting for jobs" (Milkman 2006:100). Winnie hated the job, "it's not a good life," and quit.

Retraining programs are developed under the ideology that either workers lack skills, or certain skills have become obsolete, and that acquiring new skills will ensure success in the post-Fordist labor market. But, if neoliberal jobs themselves are increasingly insecure, generating a growing "precariat" of workers that share an experience of instability, then retraining is itself no guarantee of job stability (Ross 2009). Ex-steelworkers moved into many insecure jobs. Bob

Allen graduated from HVAC training with an associate's degree in 2005 and got a job at a company that installed clean rooms for pharmaceutical manufacturers. His job had a low salary ($11 an hour), but many of the jobs he was sent on were protected by "prevailing wage" regulations mandating payment of a wage set by the Department of Labor and Industry on publicly-funded jobs. On those jobs, about half the jobs he worked on, he made about $50 an hour. Bob "loved the job," and felt that he was learning on the job, gaining skills and competence. But, at the end of his first year of work, just prior to eligibility for vacation time, he was laid off when his entire department was eliminated. Bob claims "they decided we were making too much money with prevailing wage."

Job insecurity was also generated through employer cuts to benefits. Barry Kirk, for example, found a job he loved working for a small business, a hobby store where he managed the model train division (a passion of his). The job used many of his skills, "it was my hobby. I knew a lot about it in all aspects, the history of the railroad, the railroad today, the technology of the hobby. It related to my Bethlehem Steel job." He was able to use his electrician skills developed at Bethlehem Steel and his knowledge of railroading to excel at a job he was interested in. But when the small business owner dropped health care coverage for his employees, Barry, whose wife did not have a health care plan, had to leave the job. A number of workers I spoke with were pushed back into the labor market by reductions in employee health care coverage. Job insecurity in manufacturing jobs was experienced by many workers as being bounced out of one manufacturing job after another.

Workers, of course, do not always accept the discourses of personal responsibility, of education and retraining, and the re-orienting to what is seen as inevitable "devalued" work in the neoliberal labor market. Many steelworkers, as well as ex-union officers who worked as counselors in the dislocated workers' program, make pragmatic use of these programs to extend unemployment benefits under TAA and TRA funding. As long as workers are enrolled in a college or skills training program, they are eligible for extended unemployment benefits. Some workers use this strategy to give themselves more time to search for the right kind of job. Unlike "welfare," these benefits are seen as earned benefits, benefits that have been earned through a

lifetime of hard work and are available to workers because of unjust foreign competition. But, this perspective does encourage workers to understand deindustrialization as a result of foreign competition. The TRA "required workers to blame their troubles on foreign competition" rather than on domestic restructuring and a corporate offensive against labor (Hathaway 1993:150).

Many workers confronted an initial shock of the de-valuing of their skills and experience, as represented at the Bethlehem mill through the principle of seniority. As described in Chapter Two, seniority at the Bethlehem plant incorporated values of skill, organized access to jobs, and structured social relations at the plant. As workers looked for jobs outside the plant, seniority was devalued, read as "old-age" not experience, and assessed as a liability not an asset. Many workers found that the criteria by which they were valued at the Bethlehem mill were viewed as detriments in the neoliberal labor market. An emphasis on retraining defined steelworkers' deficits as lack of skills, rather than lack of jobs, and defined the solution as retraining. And the post-Fordist labor market, that valued youth and flexibility, de-valued the seniority that coded for skill, expertise, and prestige in the Bethlehem plant. Many ex-steelworkers entering the Lehigh Valley labor market in their late 40s and 50s, found that their age put them at a disadvantage. Danny Moreno, a Puerto Rican worker, describes going to many places looking for work in 2002, after he left the Sparrows Point plant. "People do not want to hire a person in the grey zone. You're too high risk when you start hitting your 50s, upper 50s, they tell you sorry, we can't use you. When you get social security you're not going to stay. You're older, you'll break down quicker." Eddie Havela describes an interview where the interviewer clearly was not interested in him, looking right past him to two young guys.

> They weren't even dressed nicely, they were wearing old raggedy T-shirts. I was dressed pretty neatly. He wasn't interested in an old guy. At the time I was 52, but he wasn't interested in me. That was a good lesson for me about job discrimination, although some deny it. All my experience didn't matter. They just wanted some young blood.

Barry Kirk says "once you're past 50, it's hard getting a job…they don't care about past accomplishments." Andy Vanek found "that nobody wants to hire a 53 year old ex-steelworker. If they had six applying, all those others just having graduated [college], they'd never hire me. They couldn't bullshit me like they'd bullshit the other five. I felt it was age discrimination."

Within the mill, the capital accumulated in seniority insured that older workers could move into less physically stressful jobs inside the steel works. Outside the mill, the wear and tear of years of manual labor aged workers' bodies prematurely, making them even less suitable for neoliberal manufacturing work. In blue collar occupations requiring manual labor, injuries and illnesses acquired over a lifetime of steel work limited the jobs workers could apply for. Barry Kirk, an electrician, injured his ankle in a fall at Bethlehem Steel's Coatesville plant. The injury affected the feeling in his foot, his balance, and thus limited his ability to climb on electrical jobs. "That made my job search harder." Andy Vanek, who looked for a job in business logistics, found that "by that time my knees were shot and I couldn't work in logistics." At a robust Bethlehem mill, these workers would have been part of a seniority system that enabled them to move into less physically stressful steel jobs as they aged, but without their Bethlehem seniority their age, union experience, and physical condition worked against them in the labor market, pushing them towards low-wage jobs in the downgraded sector of manufacturing even as the devaluing of the skills and knowledge acquired in a career at Bethlehem Steel de-valued their labor in the marketplace.

Workers also confronted a labor market saturated with ex-steelworkers (particularly in the shrinking manufacturing sector). Many workers sent out hundreds of applications, and received many rejections, often settling finally for underemployment (part time employment), temporary work (for agencies such as Man Power), a long period of unemployment, or accepting jobs at much reduced wages. This unemployment is not cyclical but has a long term or permanent effect on laid off steelworkers. The economic cycles in the post-Fordist era become permanent, as manual labor is devalued and made flexible. As Danny Moreno, a now unemployed steelworker from the coke works put it, "For me, it's been a recession ever since I left Steel." People like Danny are the "shadow unemployed" the discouraged workers who have given up looking for jobs (Hacker 2006:72).

Steelworkers also found that macho "attitudes" that were effective on the shop floor, particularly in production work, constituted barriers to employment in service sector or office work jobs that require an attitude of "enthusiasm, initiative, and flexibility" (Bourgois 1995). Some of

the most confrontational, macho attitudes on the mill floor were in the production jobs where time is money, and where workers had confidence in their power to halt production. These assertive masculine attitudes produced results on the shop floor. Worker assertions were often backed by collectively bargained rules and adjudicated (if necessary) by the grievance system. In the non-union, flexible, post-Fordist workplace, these "attitudes" were highly problematic, and could result in being fired. Andy Vanek and Al Trakas both describe getting fired from jobs because of their "big mouths." Al says that he lost a job in manufacturing "because of my big mouth…it's just that I had that union instinct in me, what the difference between right and wrong was, and I used to point out specifically what was wrong." Al describes a job in a company reclaiming mercury from light bulbs, where workers' health and safety was endangered every day. When he tried to make changes, he was fired. But, Al, like Andy, does blame himself, in part, for having an "attitude" that does not work well in the wider society, it's the "story of my life, even at the Steel, I could have been the boss down there. I'm smart enough to realize that's part of the problem. It's happened to me my whole life." Andy is also conflicted in discussing what led to being fired from his job at a college, when he pointed out problems with his boss' policies, challenging his boss' authority in staff meetings. Andy sees his firing as unjust, but also recognizes it as the reality of the neoliberal workplace. He blames himself, that it's his "big mouth," that "it is my fault." He is aware that the neoliberal workplace does not have the kinds of protections that allow workers to speak frankly. It is "employment at will," and without the backing and protection of a union, speaking out puts one's job at risk. Steelworkers relate this to the lack of a union. Winnie Edwards, an ex machinist, is highly critical of her son's job at the non-union warehouse of a major pharmaceutical retailer, "You can't do anything. You can't say anything. They have to sign a paper that they agree they can be terminated at any time." But, workers also accept this as being the reality of the neoliberal workplace, that if they want a job, they have to adhere to the standards of this new, unjust reality. Bill Markus describes his initial interview at the very same college Andy was fired from. Bill says

> [the college] had no union. They didn't want to hear that. They were reluctant to hire people from the steel company. I was the first one hired at [the college] from a union, on the outside like that. They took a chance with me. I had a credit check. They put me on probation. My boss said "I hear one thing about a

union!" "You're not going to hear that. I'm done with that. It's a whole new life I'm starting."

Workers understood, and were made to understand, the parameters of this new work environment, and, therefore, did blame themselves when their 'union attitude,' and their concern with "right and wrong," resulted in their firing. Gus Guerrera talks about being disciplined for his "attitude." When Gus tried to respond to his boss' critiques of his work (which he attributes to a systematic lack of training), his boss told him "you're showing attitude. I can see how you look at me. You have a bad attitude." At first, Gus blamed himself as well, "I was shocked. Well, I deserved it because I shot my big mouth off." But, in talking to a co-worker, Gus began to analyze his situation structurally, understanding that the state liquor store he works for is trying to downsize its full time staff and replace them with contingent, part time labor. Workers shift back and forth from self-blame to a structural critique of non-union workplaces.

These Bethlehem production workers used their confrontational, assertive attitude at the Steel to attain results. They threatened to slow production, file grievances, and undermine the authority of foremen unless management made concessions to demands. With the backing of the union these strategies produced results, although, as Al Trakas points out, it would certainly not lead to promotion into management. But, in the new neoliberal workplace, this assertive, confrontational approach is interpreted as belligerent and defensive, and is subjected to discipline. Without a union to support them, workers lose their jobs, and without a broader ideology to make sense out of these interactions workers partially blame themselves. They understand the injustice of these work relations, but they also accept this injustice as a part of the new neoliberal reality. This sets them up for failure. Either they will fail by exercising their "big mouth" in a world where they know that is not accepted, or they will "exit" a situation that requires that they do this, either voluntarily or involuntarily. Barbara Gogol voluntarily left her job as a welder at a small, family owned plastics plant after being fired. She enjoyed welding there, but found that the owner "used to hire and fire people at will. Whatever, something he didn't like, he'd fire the whole crew, and then the next day they'd be called back." When Barbara's crew made a gun box for his pickup truck, and it didn't fit correctly, she said the whole crew was fired. When they were all called back the next day, Barbara said "I'm not coming back…I'm not going to be

treated like that" and went to work at McDonalds for the next two years. Barbara was able to do that because she had no children, no debt, and was collecting a pension from Bethlehem Steel. What I did not find evidence of was steelworkers organizing collectively at their work sites to change the new work realities in which they found themselves. The disciplining processes of transfers, job loss(es), retraining, an often long and difficult job search, as well as the real power contemporary corporations have to squelch union organization, impresses on workers the new reality of post-Fordist work.

Workers also had to be able to adopt a demeanor and style that did not "come naturally" in order to fit into mainstream white collar work culture in service sector jobs. They had to learn how to "act" like a white collar worker. This might make workers uncomfortable in their jobs, when mainstream culture demanded polite, enthusiastic, and servile "attitudes" that could be construed, by blue collar workers, as hypocritical. Bill Markus describes the different work environments of a college vs. the steel, "at the steel company we had our own language, shop talk that we were allowed to get away with. At the [college], you had to watch what you say." The language of the shop floor, with its vulgar jokes, crude language, and assertive attitude, was not that of office and service work. Gus Guerrera, who worked in retail work, said "you had to watch yourself. You had to be polite, clean, and you had to produce totally differently." This meant either "code switching" to act properly in a different context, or transforming oneself to fit the ideals and mores of mainstream middle class culture. But code-switching could be perceived as a betrayal of one's true self, of those characteristics of personality that were valued in the mill. Pierre Bourdieu describes this for the French working class, where politeness and posturing are seen as

> A substitute for substance, i.e., for sincerity, for feeling, for what is felt and proved in actions; it is the free-speech and language of the heart which makes the true 'nice guy', blunt, straight-forward, unbending, honest, genuine, "straight down the line" and 'straight as a die" [Bourdieu 1984:199]

Your character is established through actions, and acting like a service sector worker may not be as easy as "code switching" for the context, it might undermine one's valued character, be interpreted as duplicitous and insincere, and be read by oneself and others as immoral action.

Service sector jobs were often seen as feminine, or not sufficiently masculine, requiring subservient or conciliatory attitudes, and perhaps emphasizing intimate or care work that demands middle class norms of etiquette. A few workers did, however, decide to use retraining monies to enter the expanding and more lucrative service sector field of health care. Bob Hale, an intensely energetic machinist who put himself through college while working at the mill, decided to go into nursing to take advantage of the glass escalator for men when his fellow students told him "for a man it's great." But, he took a lot of abuse from co-workers for pursuing what was defined as women's work. In the hyper-masculine culture of the mill, Bob reported "they called me a queer. You're going to do enemas, you're going to do enemas." But, Bob knew how to take their razzing and give it back to them through the confrontational, masculine joking common in the mill. He described his response to one particularly persistent co-worker: "I said how long an enema takes, it depends how big the asshole is. Depends. In your case, it would probably take about eight hours." For Bob, nursing is a "profession" requiring training, "if caring is all it took anyone could be a nurse. It's more than that." But he also finds it fulfilling, "the most gratifying is helping someone that really needs the help." Brian Stephens, a coke worker who became an X-ray technician (a more "masculine" health care job) when his HVAC program was cut found that he loved working in health care. At the coke works "I felt I was hurting the environment, environmental issues, every smell, in the press was the coke ovens…so you almost felt like a criminal working there. In medicine you felt you were helping people." As a more "masculine" health care worker, he felt that he had greater prestige amongst middle class neighbors in his work in health care. For these men, health care jobs with benefits and promotional tracks provided fulfilling opportunities to help others in an expanding service sector industry. But, most masculine steelworkers eschewed this "feminine" work.

Ruth Milkman found, in her study of GM workers taking buyouts, that many workers were successful moving out of the plant after a buyout. But the self-selected group she studies is a group eager to move, with "attitudes," orientations, and skills that may be more suitable for work in the post-Fordist workplace. These workers are more successful than those who chose to stay behind. In the case of Bethlehem Steel, those workers who had craft skills, who had less

confrontational masculine attitudes (more commonly found with production workers), and who had more formal education and standardized testing, were more likely to successfully move into post industrial jobs in the Lehigh valley. Craftspeople were more likely to have developed an "attitude" that enabled them to accommodate to the world of white collar, service work. Many craft workers at the steel had formal training and coursework within the mill, took standardized tests, and worked in "servicing" the machinery that production workers used to produce steel. Depending on the shop, this could result in a less confrontational, more conciliatory attitude and approach towards solving problems, that transfers more effectively to post industrial work.

In addition, in service sector jobs where flexibility was valued, steelworkers were often at a disadvantage. Ed Zalenka lost his job at a funeral home when he refused to come in to work on the very next day. It was not the weekend work that bothered Ed, steelworkers were well-accustomed to working weekends, it was the expectation for flexibility, without the pay that made flexibility at the steel mill a "choice" of the worker. Overtime at the steel mill paid additional monies, and "hungry" production workers volunteered for overtime at every opportunity. Don Booth liked the incentive pay at Bethlehem Steel, because "you could actually control your own destiny," the worker had some power and control over his salary. Flexibility in the service sector removed the agency of the worker, eliminating the choice (even if the perception of choice for steelworkers actually manufactured consent) embodied in the collectively bargained exchange of additional monies for overtime work.

Workers also related this flexibility, the need to be constantly "on call" to employers' needs that arise in the workplace, as undermining their autonomy, the control they had over the pace of work and the allocation of time in steelwork. Steve Jaros, for example, objected to the expectation that his time was flexible, that he was continually "on call" to resolve maintenance problems in the nursing home he worked in. He contrasted that with steel work, "at Bethlehem Steel they're not going to call me off the crane to say 'This don't work. Come down here and fix this.' I'm already doing my job." The autonomy at work at the mill did not generate the individualistic autonomy of the contemporary flexible, neoliberal worker as in crew work self-

direction and autonomy take place within a context of doing work well in collaboration with co-workers, the expertise of one worker complements the effectiveness of others on the crew.

And workers also objected to the need to cater to service sector demands that they found unreasonable, irrational, and simply lacking in "common sense.' Workers, while recognizing formal educational credentials, are also highly critical when education does not generate "common sense" understandings. Some workers are baffled that the educated college students encountered working at a college lacked common sense, or by the lack of common sense and mechanical awareness that nurses in the nursing home manifest. Steve Jaros, a nursing home maintenance worker, says:

> You can't be an idiot to go to nursing school. You've got to have somewhat of a brain. But you think now, how did they make it through nursing school if they're doing something like that? They have lifts that lift patients off the beds, they've been working with these lifts how long? And in nursing school they teach them how to work these lifts. But if you don't click the battery it's not going to work. They call maintenance.

The "general public" is also described as lacking common sense. Matt Nemeth describes his job as a driving instructor, working with teenagers and their parents, "the general public has no common sense…they're stupid." At Bethlehem Steel, workers understood how their coworkers would act, but Jack Hardy, a Lanta bus driver, found the public unpredictable, "it changes from day to day." Even though the steel mill was dangerous, Jack finds driving bus much more dangerous, more stressful, because "In the public world, people driving their cars, everybody is out for themselves." Common sense, the sensible ability to work with others, to think about the safety of yourself and others, to have mechanical knowledge that leads to "smart" work is different, and more highly valued, than book knowledge.

Workers' experience working with the union, including knowledge of workers' rights, safety regulations, and union contracts was often seen as a negative in the Lehigh Valley labor market. Many companies were reluctant to hire assertive Bethlehem Steel workers with strong union awareness and considerable union experience. Eddie Smith describes a new refrigeration plant that opened on the former Bethlehem Steel site, "they would not hire anybody because they didn't want an organized union down there. They were afraid that if guys like me went down there [they'd organize]…So they took your application but there wasn't a chance you'd get hired."

Tom Oster's sister knew of a job in a plastics factory, but was reluctant to tell him about it, assuming he would not work where there was no union. But he had to work, he had children in college. When he interviewed for the job, his interviewer asked him about his union involvement, "his questions were geared at, he had a fear that I would try to organize this plant to become union. At the time, I just thought, I've got to work ten years, I have two kids in college, I've got to do something." Tom answered a barrage of questions from two interviewers before they hired him, reassuring them that although he was a strong union supporter, his union organizing days were behind him.

Many of the new jobs had no unions at all. Ex Bethlehem steelworkers were critical of the effect this had on employees, relating it to the dampening of employee voice, autonomy, and the erosion of solidarity. Tom Oster says at his shop "I was old enough, collecting a pension. I could be a little bolder. I always spoke my mind. We only had one shouting match. Others would not exchange their thoughts. They would say, I can't believe you talk like that to the boss." It worked for Tom, but for others this assertive "attitude" could result in being fired in the neoliberal workplace.

Workers also missed the solidarities with coworkers of the Bethlehem plant. Hal Rouse describes going to a craft workers' reunion and hearing that

> someone was saying that they were working at a place and there was such a jealousy among the workers that they were at each other's throats. He said, "we would never have been like that at the steel." His coworkers were always looking to hang you. He said, now I'm working with guys that are not acting the way we would act with each other at all. He found that eye opening.

Winnie Edwards says that with a union, workers "watched each other's backs." This doesn't happen in a non-union workplace like the warehouse her son works at. Tom Oster commented on the lack of camaraderie at the plastics factory he worked at for ten years after leaving the steel, "at Bethlehem Steel within a short time of your being hired, you acquired a nickname. If you screwed up, it might not be the nickname you would have liked. But ten years at [the plastics factory] I was Tom when I walked in and Tom the day I left." Ron Keschl (Behum 2010:305) attributes this lack of camaraderie to heightened surveillance, a despotic management regime, "you get on the outside, and I'm talking about on the outside of Bethlehem Steel…and that's

exactly what you get. You got people that don't even talk to each other. You could work alongside somebody and they won't even talk to you. They're afraid somebody's watching you and they're going to jump on you or whatever the hell it is." Ed Zelenka describes work in the public sector, where his co-workers were "like chickens in a pen with a handful of feed, each person for themselves."

Steelworkers also describe sales and commission work in the service sector that results in a cut throat competitive attitude amongst co workers, "it's the same thing when it comes to sales and commission, it's dog eat dog." Gus Guerrera found that they were "funny people" working in computer sales at a large retail store, "they weren't telling me the right stuff to explain to people," misleading him and withholding information so that they could out-compete him on sales. Unlike Bethlehem Steel, at his new jobs he says "I don't trust anybody." Bill Markus describes an environment at the college he worked where "just cause they worked at [the college] they'd squeal on you." It's difficult for workers to even think of building strong relationships of solidarity in such an environment.

Downgraded Manufacturing

While the decline in manufacturing jobs and increase in service sector jobs in the Northeast U.S. have been well-documented, less examined is the ways that U.S. manufacturing jobs have changed. While manufacturing has declined significantly in the Lehigh Valley, it still remains an important sector of the economy, generating $7 billion in annual output and providing 86,000 jobs in 2003 (*Morning Call*, 7/24/04). The good jobs in the manufacturing sector of the economy—in the Lehigh Valley jobs at Bethlehem Steel, Mack Truck, Western Electric—are being lost and replaced with lower wage, more insecure, more unsafe jobs with limited benefits in a downgraded manufacturing sector. As we saw in Chapter One, different factory regimes are often related to different labor markets (Lee 1998; 2007) and technologies of mass production (Milkman 1997). These differing regimes in manufacturing (see Edwards 1979; Burawoy 1979) can be characterized as the "low road" of structuring manufacturing—an intensifying control over labor through the use of piece rate, surveillance, and a "primitive Taylorism"—as opposed to a high road of manufacturing that emphasizes team work with trained, multi-skilled workers that are

given seniority and benefits to maintain a skilled work force (Collins 2003:156-157). The growth of a "low road" in which "manufacturing by stress" is the management regime (Moody 1997) generated a number of jobs in the downgraded manufacturing sector. When these laid off steelworkers, now in their late 40s or in their 50s, went into the labor market in search of manufacturing jobs, they found that these core jobs were no longer available. Instead, most of the available manufacturing jobs were in a now downgraded sector of manufacturing.

One local employer, exemplifying the "low road" of downgraded manufacturing gained international renown as an unsafe and seedy manufacturer. A number of Bethlehem Steel workers went to Atlantic States Cast Iron Pipe Company and Tyler Pipe, two pipe foundries in the Lehigh Valley, owned by McWane Inc. McWane, a large family-owned corporation headquartered in Birmingham, Alabama, was the subject of a major, award-winning *New York Times* investigative series and *Frontline* documentary on workplace safety. McWane, was exposed for gross violations of safety (resulting in numerous employee injuries and deaths) and environmental regulations at its many plants in the U.S. and Canada. From 1995-2003 at least 4,600 injuries, including numerous amputations and 9 deaths (from a total of 5000 employees), were reported in McWane's foundries, and McWane was cited for more than 400 health and safety violations (Barstow and Bergman 2003). And these statistics under-estimate accidents, as low-road manufacturers use a number of tactics to keep official accident statistics low, ranging from not reporting injuries, to rushing workers back on the line after injury to avoid reporting a "missed day." Two employee deaths occurred in the Lehigh Valley, at McWane's New Jersey facility where worker turnover was extremely high (greater than 100%) (Barstow and Bergman 2003). The *New York Times* expose shows the difficulty that under-funded regulatory agencies with inadequate tools of regulation (paltry fines) and facing enormous obstacles to criminal prosecution have in enforcing safety standards.

In companies like McWane in this downgraded manufacturing sector, "what emerged was closer to nineteenth-century traditions of sweated labor than to the post-industrial model that was so widely touted in this period as a humane alternative to the old manufacturing-centered order, itself predicated on extensive unionization and government regulation" (Milkman 2006:80). State-

supported policies generating new investment patterns globally (often instituted through supranational political organizations like the IMF, World Bank, and WTO) supported the growth of manufacturing in less developed and newly industrializing countries contributing to the loss of manufacturing jobs in the U.S. and the rise of global competition in manufacturing. A "steady decline in workplace regulation" in the U.S. under neoliberal policies contributed to increasingly unsafe working conditions (Greenhouse 2008:11). During the 1980s, workplace injury rates in the U.S doubled as a result of speedup, a decline in safety standards, and a reduction in OSHA oversight (Smith 2006:239).

As the Lehigh Valley experienced the loss of manufacturing jobs, the closing of big factories like Mack Trucks and Bethlehem Steel, and the willingness of manufacturers to pick up and leave the Northeast for the Sunbelt or less developed countries, these very visible processes undermined the power of labor. Workers in the Lehigh Valley followed cases in the *Morning Call* detailing the closing of Durkee, Victaulic, and other manufacturers who used techniques such as whipsawing U.S. locations against each other or the threat of moving jobs outside the U.S. to wring concessions from unions and tax breaks from city governments. The greater spatial mobility of capital, layoffs, aggressive anti-union campaigns, and a reduction in state regulatory agencies empower capital. And immigration policies that contribute to increased availability of new, cheap immigrant labor provide a ready supply of labor to this sector.

Some of the steelworkers I spoke with had worked at the McWane pipe foundries. Manny Vega, a second generation Bethlehem Puerto Rican steelworker who worked in the coke works until he retired said he "tried to work" after leaving Bethlehem Steel. He applied for what he thought was a similar job at McWane, but he quit after a short time, describing it as

> worse than Bethlehem Steel. It was very dangerous. They didn't care what happened to workers. They've got a lot of major lawsuits against them. They had a union, but it was a union with no clout. The union was very different. It made me realize how good a union we had when I worked there [at Bethlehem Steel]. The pay was comparable, but the work environment was not very good.

He left work there after a short time, and now stays home taking care of his aging mother. Unlike some other workers, he was able to walk away from this job because he had attained his

Bethlehem pension and his wife had a job as a medical insurance underwriter with a decent salary and very good health insurance.

Matt Hacker, a former manager in the Bethlehem plant, describes the difficulty finding a job after his shop closed. As I asked him about work, he pulled an index card with notations on it out of his wallet, saying that since that closure, "I've held so many jobs I keep a timeline." At one point he went to another local McWane foundry, Tyler Pipe in Macungie, PA (just southwest of Bethlehem), and worked there until a 2006 "unexplained" fire burned down the plant. McWane didn't rebuild, so he moved to the Phillipsburg Atlantic Pipes plant, which he describes as "much improved" since the 2003 *New York Times* series exposing safety violations. Matt does admit though, that, although the company is unionized "these guys are cupcakes. The union has no teeth. They're afraid, and rightly so. McWane is a private company, so if they say goodbye, the party's over." As a manager in need of work, rather than being critical of this situation, Matt concludes that there are new rules for manufacturing today. "There was a place for the unions in the world at one time. They were beating the guys, management. Not anymore. It's survival now. You've got to work smart." In addition, within the context of the mergers and acquisitions of the contemporary economy, various plants of the same company are often organized by different unions, making collective action more difficult. McWane's Lehigh Valley foundries, for example, are organized by two entirely different unions.

Will Wagner found a job at Tyler Pipe in Macungie after being laid off from Bethlehem Steel. Rather than accepting a transfer or entering retraining, Will found this job through a neighbor,

> I had a neighbor that worked at Tyler Pipe in the office, and I got a job there. But I worked there for a year and didn't like it and quit. Everybody said the steel company was dirty, but that was even dirtier. Dirtier and a little more dangerous. That was affiliated with Atlantic States, one of those McWane corporation things, and he was #5 for the worst jobs.

McWane's management philosophy was what the *New York Times* describes as one of "disciplined management practices" in which production targets took priority over safety, discipline was used to "suppress union unrest and discourage injury claims," and aggressive cost cutting measures meant rampant safety violations (for example, machinery was not protected with safety

guards) (Barstow and Bergman 2003). Even as "core" industries like General Motor and General Electric introduced "team management" strategies in new and restructured factories (Kasmir 2001; Milkman 1997), management in the downgraded manufacturing sector became increasingly authoritarian and punitive. This despotic regime of labor control coexists with hegemonic factory regimes in contemporary U.S. manufacturing. The *New York Times* documents McWane's management tactics such as disciplinary actions and firing for workers reporting injuries. Will was very critical of management,

> I didn't like the boss I had on night shift, that's why I quit. He was, how would you say, he had his nose up somebody's butt trying to make a name for himself and the job that I had when I went there the first time was created so it would make his job easier, and he eventually became a foreman. When I went back I went back on day shift, I didn't have him as a boss.

The high levels of production and cost cutting, at the expense of safety, demanded by the night shift boss ran counter to Will's ideas of how a workplace should be run, and he quit.

After quitting at Tyler, Will found a job at a door manufacturing factory, running the forklift and order picking. He "loved that job," but the job was short-lived, as layoffs threw Will into the job market again, with few choices. He reluctantly returned to Tyler Pipe because "Although I didn't want to return to Tyler Pipes, There weren't too many jobs out there. The only thing I was really good at was working in some kind of foundry or something." In this stint, he started as a laborer and worked his way up to lead man where "I actually was in charge of [he counts them to himself] of eight guys." The return to day shift meant a reduction in pay (from $14 to $10 an hour), but he worked his way up to $13.58 an hour, not through raises, "you never really got a pay raise, you'd get a quarter over three or four years," but through promotion.

Structural insecurity in this sector is high, and without strong union protection, layoffs and closings at these secondary sector plants are frequent and abrupt, often with little intimation of trouble. Closings are rife with disrespectful treatment of workers. When Tyler Pipe closed, even though Will was a lower level manager, he relates,

> we went in one day and the boss said, I don't want to give the exact language. He said 'What the 'f' are you doing here?' I says, 'What do you mean, I'm coming to work.' We still had to go in [after the fire] to clean up. He said 'You have a meeting at Macungie Park at 10.' 'Well nobody told me.' My day shift boss said nobody told him either. We hung out until quarter to ten, then we went to Macungie, and by 5 after 10 the boss there told us they were closing.

Workers in this sector found themselves serially "downsized" and thrown back into a job market in which "people think you bounce from job to job." Workers like Will, who continue working in this sector, are increasingly vulnerable and anxious, "I worry, am I going to have a job tomorrow?...Every day I worry about layoffs." Losing one of their most valuable assets, the skills and experience encoded into Bethlehem Steel seniority, rendered these workers vulnerable to downsizings and layoffs as the new "last hired" workers.

Other steelworkers ended up at similar downgraded manufacturing jobs. Ex-steelworkers were not happy working in jobs that are dangerous and low paying, and were also disconcerted to find themselves working with new immigrants, the very "other" that they sometimes denigrate and even blame for the loss of high paying, unionized jobs. Al Trakas, for example, looked for a job after being laid off from the steel works in 1996, at a bad time when "every steelworker was looking for a job." He took a job in a factory recycling hazardous materials. The job was unsafe, non-union, low-paying and "half the people couldn't talk English." Al said he was aware of the enormous safety issues, and that the factory was "really a dangerous place." Don Booth also correlates a heavily immigrant workplace with unsafe working conditions. At Atlantic Pipes, he says, "ambulances were coming in daily. There were a lot of Puerto Ricans in the furnace. When one got injured, just drag one away. Throw another in his spot. It was horrible." Walt Steckel went from Sparrows Point to a non-union fabricating shop, and describes his current job, where he works as a crane operator as "a real sweatshop." Walt says "they have so many illegals working in here, it's unbelievable. They're a union company in their Ohio plant, but not here." He says, in this work environment "they have no respect for anyone. People who have worked in shipyards for 25 years, boilermakers, steel, they have no respect. It's like do this, you're lucky you got a job. That shit don't work on a 55 year old person." Walt attributes this despotic regime, in part, to the availability of low wage, immigrant labor, "the company likes it because the company doesn't have to pay them benefits…those guys are in and out like a revolving door every week."

Illegal immigrants are used by employers to "break worker solidarity, undermine wages, and heighten profits" (Gusterson and Besteman 2010:13). Immigrant labor and the aggressive

eviscerating of unions keep labor costs low in the downgraded manufacturing sector. As Kwong points out, "the undocumented have given their employers the leverage to force workers to accept many obviously illegal labor practices" such as highly unsafe workplaces (Kwong 2010:261). Immigrant workers are less likely to demand workers' compensation for injuries and to threaten to report safety violations. Ex-steelworkers are aware of these issues and blame undocumented immigrants for undermining unions, and lowering wages. Walt Steckel says at his job,

> they do the same jobs as everyone else. There's no such thing as seniority. They do the same as everybody else. That baloney that they're only supposed to get the undesirable jobs Americans don't want. They're in the trades now, plumbing, electrical, roofing, drywall, mason work, that used to be good paying jobs. I hear, don't bitch about what you're getting paid because I can get a Mexican tomorrow for the same work at the same price.

Ernie Lang argues that "these illegals coming over here…I can understand, I don't blame them for wanting to come. But hey, it's not right. My dad went through all this hardship [Ernie describes going with his dad to the union hall in the 1959 strike]. For what? To let these guys come over and regress the whole process to 1955?" In Ernie's eyes, undocumented immigrants, willing to work for low wages, constitute a real threat to well-paying, unionized jobs. The availability of this low wage labor undermines the concept of economic citizenship..

Contemporary talk amongst white steel working families about the undeserving poor elides into discussion of illegal immigration. Therefore, to find oneself in a job, working side by side with illegal immigrants, is to accept a reality of downward mobility that is a shock to white working class identity, and to white working class citizenship. While white steelworkers represent themselves as having worked in an ethnic "melting pot" at Bethlehem Steel, in reality there were no "new immigrants" working at Bethlehem Steel, as the last major hires were in 1979. Working side-by-side with the same new immigrants that white suburban steelworkers often represent as the undeserving and problematic poor in "inner city" neighborhoods in Bethlehem and Allentown threatened workers' identities as skilled workers and middle-class Americans. These ideologies contributed to divisions in the workplace, fragmenting the workforce. White workers often attempted to use their greater social capital, more developed networks, and better access to job training, to "exit" these jobs.

In addition, exclusions built into, and used to construct, Fordist working class solidarity and citizenship rights, excluded those workers that were considered the “undeserving poor.” Farm workers, domestics, and the unwaged labor of wives was racially, ethnically, or gendered as other and excluded from the public-private welfare rights and benefits attached to economic citizenship. Waged workers who did not access these benefits were often characterized, by the white working class, as disreputable and undeserving of the same rights of citizenship. The Fordist compromise created a schism between the industrial working class and what came to be defined as an “underclass” – defined as a group radically different than workers (Kasmir and Carbonella 2008). As Ida Susser so aptly points out, this “underclass” is a more insecure working class, less protected by unions and less supported by the public-private welfare state that provided security to unionized workers (Susser 1996). But white workers define this racialized, ethnicized poor as an undeserving, immoral other.

It is, then, particularly disconcerting to the dispossessed, displaced, and devalued members of the industrial working class to see the increased insecurities in their life as similar to the lives of the undeserving poor. Criticisms of the undeserving poor as lacking a work ethic, taking advantage of the public welfare system, and leading unstable and insecure family lives suddenly do not seem so distant, these boundaries become threatened. The stability of working class home ownership, planning a future, setting aside money for college, having health insurance that ensures health crises don’t bankrupt your family, and being able to plan a retirement can be threatened or decimated through processes of deindustrialization. The ability to delay gratification, to think of one’s life as a planned and orderly linear narrative in which values of thrift and sacrifice, hard work and commitment, and work experience and skill honed over time construct the values, goals and hopes through which one hopes to live a good life are undermined. The dislocations of deindustrialization replace these with insecurity and precariousness, throwing some workers and their families into the “disreputable” practices of the undeserving poor. But, while ex-steelworkers do not condemn their co-workers for this, they still fail to see the connections between displacement and “disreputable” practices, often constructing

an "illegal" disreputable other than can be blamed for undermining wages, degrading jobs, and de-valuing neighborhoods.

Public Sector Jobs

Many workers looked for jobs in the public sector as these were often the few remaining unionized, stable jobs providing health care coverage available to workers without a college education in the Lehigh Valley.

Some workers took advantage of their ties to place and local social networks to mobilize support from political representatives to attain public sector jobs. Frank Gaskill describes having "100 applications out" in 2002 when he returned to the Lehigh Valley after his transfer to the Bethlehem Steel plant at Lackawanna. He was looking for jobs in trucking operations (looking for local routes) or jobs that would use his skill as a carpenter, but couldn't find jobs. "They wanted to pay me $7.00 an hour for carpentry jobs, and it wasn't worth it to me." Frank says he figured "the future of manufacturing and getting a good job with good pay and good benefits aren't going to happen here in the Valley." So, Frank went to see his state representative, saying "hey, I'm a steel guy running out of medical. Any state jobs you can help me with?" Using this strategy he attained a job at a state hospital doing maintenance work. The job was a long commute, and was low wage, but it had benefits, and Frank thought that he could advance on the job. Joe Karp ran into other ex-steelworkers working for Lanta (the public buses) who encouraged him to come in to apply for a job driving bus. Joe says

> they told my road supervisor there that when I worked in Bethlehem [Steel] I had one of the dirtiest, dangerest jobs and I always made it to work. I never took off, never complained. I was a good worker, no drugs, no drink….They asked why do you want to be a bus driver? 'I don't, you want the truth. I needed benefits. I'm 55, I need the benefits. I'm not dead. I still have ten years to work. I want to work. All I'm asking is a fair share. I'll give you the best I can give.

Joe got the job, a job with much-needed benefits (although "just now I'm making what I used to make in 1998 when the coke ovens shut down. I lost all that 10 years to catch up to what I was making." Other workers found public sector transportation jobs--driving buses, working on the highways, jobs at state owned liquor stores, state hospitals, the post office, the community college, or working in job training programs.

But attaining these public sector jobs was difficult, as neoliberal processes of privatization have reduced the numbers of secure, public sector jobs. Ron Lambert's wife got a job with the post office after 15 years of working in the Lehigh Valley garment industry, because the "job security and pay were good at the post office." When Ron was laid off from the coke works (and awaiting his transfer options) he took advantage of his wife's knowledge of post office hiring to go to work for the post office as a rural carrier. But this job was a contracted temporary position, not a civil service job, was highly insecure, and paid only $9 an hour. When Ron returned from his transfer to Bethlehem Steel's Sparrows Point plant, he again wanted to get a job with the post office, but couldn't. He did find a job driving truck with a company whose services are subcontracted by the post office. The subcontracted job is not unionized, but it is regulated by government contract (prevailing wage) rules, leading to a good wage, of $22/hour. But the job does not have benefits, there is no overtime, there is no healthcare and there is "no advancement there." Although Ron likes his current job, and likes the working conditions he says "I prefer having a union backing me up. I was in union for longer than 30 years. If I can't deal with management, I'd rather straighten it out you and I first, but I prefer to have a union to help me out." The current job also lacks the security of a civil service position.

Workers recognize that public sector jobs have become increasingly threatened and insecure. Chris Szarko, a worker who was laid off of Bethlehem Steel in the 1980s, only to work at a series of large manufacturers that moved their factories or closed down, now holds a public sector job.

> We all know just by watching the newspaper, state jobs are disappearing. Right now I think the public sector jobs are in more trouble than the private sector jobs are. Hopefully, that changes. I would like to stay where I am, I would like to stay in the public sector, and I often think of state related jobs as secure, but they're not. I work very close with the City of Easton and the municipalities are all hurting very badly. The states are close behind. Those jobs are disappearing" (*Steelworkers' Archives*).

While workers wanted the job security and benefits of the public sector, many bridled at the customer service orientation in public sector jobs. Frank Gaskell, who worked directing traffic at a construction site for the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, disliked interaction with customers, the "public," required on the job. I found "you're not doing a job, you're getting in their

[the drivers'] way. I've been called names by women that I've been called by guys." Frank contrasted that to a Department of Transportation job that he enjoyed, snow plowing. "Give me a rig and let me go. That's the only time people are glad to see you." Joe Karp, also, finds the service orientation difficult:

> the people I pick up, 90% of them don't even think…You can have across the whole front [of the bus] Downtown Allentown. You get sick of it. People ask "Are you going to Allentown?" Why are you asking me? You get fed up with this crap…You don't know what the person, passenger's next feelings are going to be. It changes from day to day.

Workers were also very critical of the public sector unions that they found in these jobs. Even as public sector unions have increasingly come under Republican attack for being too powerful, ex steelworkers found many of these unions to be very weak compared to the United Steelworkers. Andy Vanek said that workers in a public agency were "afraid to fart even in the men's room." It was, he said, "each person for themselves." He describes this as "too big a transition for me…I have a hard time…" Al Trakas says "Penndot has a union, but it's a weak union…They're all company unions, no teeth to them, compared to what I knew at the steelworkers' union." Frank Gaskell agreed that the union at Penndot was terrible, "the ACFSME union exists for the sole purpose of collecting dues. The pay scale stinks. The benefits stink…" and "the union had nothing to say about promotion and retirement." Just before Frank got his job, Penndot introduced a tiered system in which new hires had lower salary and benefits, "the union is useless. The Bethlehem union would have been right on that. That was the difference between a union representing people who are producing something versus a service-oriented union."

In addition, workers were disappointed with the promotional opportunities they found in the public sector. They were accustomed to the very structured ways that seniority rules governed access to job opportunities at Bethlehem Steel. Workers expressed concern about favoritism in promotions and about affirmative action policies that they viewed as favoring racial and ethnic minorities. William Brown likes his current, white collar job as a career counselor in the public sector, but says "there is no room for advancement." Frank Gaskell also said that he thought he could advance in the public sector "I thought I can move up and advance, but you

don't advance if you have a brain, if you have ambition, if you have common sense. You only advance if you grease some politician's reelection campaign. I applied to advance at least twenty times. Couldn't do it." Gus Guerrera found that favoritism trumped seniority in promotions at his public sector job "seniority means nothing there." Dave Campbell also found that "working for the state is political…it's very political."

White workers also bridle at affirmative action guidelines that structure access to promotions. Frank Gaskell related that in his application for promotion, although he had the skills and test scores, and was offered the job, a black applicant disputed his promotion, saying "they didn't get a fair shake." Frank says they convened a second panel of people, and promoted the African American applicant. Frank is angry about this perceived injustice "If he's more qualified I have no problem, but if there's some other agenda, like you don't have enough black folk, that's not going to fly. The job goes to the best qualified individual. I know my qualifications are better than his." Frank says "I want that damn job" since the pay is significantly greater. For Frank, the principles of seniority and ability, in one of the few jobs still protected by unions, trump remedies for racial injustices.

Small Businesses

Another much-respected course of action, for steelworkers, was to run their own small businesses.   Being a small entrepreneur was respected by steelworkers, and it was something that many workers aspired to, incorporating dominant society valuing of entrepreneurialism and the goal of material success. In addition, many workers were well-prepared for this, as many had run their own businesses during many of their years at the steel mill. Because of the experience of layoffs, many workers started a small business during a layoff, and continued it as insurance against future layoffs. While they were working at the mill, steelworkers and their families ran lawn care businesses; worked as farriers; did construction work (either as freelance workers, for other businesses, or on their own real estate investments); ran retail operations; operated gambling rings; ran commercial laundries; and bought and operated convenience stores, pizza places, and restaurants. Some of these businesses even operated at the steel mill itself, fueling the thriving informal economy within the works. There were retail operations inside the mill, with

workers selling wristwatches, tires, and other items. There were bookies in the mill, as many steelworkers liked to gamble. There was an active fundraising culture – selling fundraising tickets for community organizations, pension party tickets for retiring workers—rooted in reciprocal exchanges. The cyclical layoffs in steel work encouraged many workers to maintain second jobs, "I never depended on Bethlehem Steel….I had something going on the side so I didn't worry about it so much." Of course, the small business needed to be tailored to fit the demands of a steelworking schedule, which could vary tremendously depending on what shop the worker was in, and what job he had within the plant. In addition, the availability of family labor was an important variable in successful small businesses. Male steelworkers could rely on wives and children to help run restaurants, stores, or real estate ventures. "Hungry" production workers, working swing shift, with heavy overtime schedules, while having capital to invest in a small business would most need family labor supports to effectively run the business. Wives were less able to contribute to the extra jobs skilled craftsmen found outside the steel mill, as they lacked those skills.

Ruth Milkman, in her study of GM autoworkers, found that a significant percentage of bought-out autoworkers left the factory to start (or continue) their own businesses (1997). As with Bethlehem Steel workers, she found that most of these small businesses had been started while working at GM, often during periods of layoff, and that workers had a strong desire to start small businesses (as documented in the 1950s by Eli Chinoy (1955). But, valuing entrepreneurial hard work and autonomy did not mean accepting an ideology legitimizing exploitation. These small business owners continued to hold a strong ethic about just and fair treatment of both workers and customers. Their customers, and their employees, were often also working men, and might be former steelworkers. Tony Valeri worked for H&R Block doing taxes after retiring from Bethlehem Steel, as he always enjoyed doing taxes for his extended family. He had to leave, to set up his own business, however, as he became discouraged with the outrageous fees that H&R Block charged their customers, "the money I had to charge was too much. That's the end of that. They wouldn't let us give discounts anymore." Tony had a strong moral code about what fair and just business practices. Ernie Lang, who started up a landscaping business during layoff feels

strongly about the way employers should treat employees, “if I owned a body shop and made $10 million profit…I would give [the workers] one hell of a bonus for making that kind of money, a $50,000 check, or better benefits, or up their salary.” And Gus Guerrera expressed shock when the real estate clientele he was trying to help treated him unethically, “I wanted to help people, lower paying people that could just about afford a home,” but he found that his customers would switch realtors, demonstrating no loyalty to him. Although small business ownership was highly respected, the need to find health care coverage after the Bethlehem Steel bankruptcy prevented many steelworkers from pursuing this strategy. Workers like Ernie Lang, who was on his steelworking wife’s health care plan, could start a small lawn care business, but when Joe Karp started the same business he had to go without health care coverage for a few years, and finally shut down his business, moving into a public sector job that provided health care.

Fulfilling Post-Fordist Work

As Ruth Milkman found in *Farewell to the Factory,* not all workers regretted leaving steel work (1997). Many workers found work they enjoyed greatly after Bethlehem Steel, although the pay and benefits were seldom comparable. And many workers considered themselves “successful” in transitioning from steel work to other work in the Lehigh Valley’s “new economy.” Some workers aspire to jobs with greater flexibility; more perceived opportunity for mobility; in cleaner, healthier, and safer environments; and or with less demanding physical work.

Some workers prepared themselves to move into a post Fordist labor market by consciously pursuing their education, even while working at the Steel, taking advantage of tuition reimbursement programs. However, one’s ability to exercise this strategy depended on the shifts one worked. “Hungry” production workers, working swing shift and picking up overtime hours, had difficulty continuing their education. Instead, their strategy of preparing for a shut down was one of building up their salary prior to early retirement. And this strategy might be highly effective. Although workers are often faulted in dominant society discourses for not pursuing higher education and positioning themselves for a post industrial labor market, it is not always clear that this is a more effective strategy than working long hours in the hopes that one can roll into a heftier pension. The latter strategy was effective precisely because of the value of the

union-negotiated rules for overtime pay and pension benefit calculations. Workers are highly aware of dominant society critiques, and justify their decisions to hold onto steelwork through reference to their salaries. William Brown, who loved steel work, describes the money he was making when transferred to Sparrows Point, "my son-in-law has all these degrees, but I was making more money than he does." And, had he been able to roll into his pension, that salary would have determined his pension payments.

Workers also often pursued union positions, and thereby acquired skills that could be valuable in a post industrial service economy, including advanced training, skills in mediation and negotiation, and knowledge of human resources skills such as safety. But, this also was not a clear cut "superior" strategy for post steel "success." Serving as a union official detracted from one's total earning capacity, thereby reducing the "best five" of the last ten years determining one's pension. Many workers wonder, in hindsight, if they made a mistake by continuing in their union positions, as it eroded their final pensions. "I didn't realize how close to the end it was," Will Brown reflected. These decisions could lead to significant pension differences "my pension would have been double or more" if he had transferred back to a full time production job. This strategy for earning the most money in the mill, while running counter to values of mainstream society where "mental" labor and continuing education are considered the route to success, might prove a superior strategy for workers' security in retirement.

In addition, the neoliberal strategy of pursuing a higher education while working in the steel mill could run counter to a moral economy that valued solidarity in crew work. Some workers began their college degrees while laid off, but found themselves facing difficulties in continuing after being called back to work, as swing shift work made attending college courses nearly impossible. Some workers, like Louis Moran, who worked day shift in the maintenance department, were able to finish college while working. But other workers, committed to continuing their educations, had to manipulate the rules of work in order to go to school. Hal Rouse "had to leave early sometimes," he would leave the plant, go to school, and return "clandestinely." "To get out and get back in was sometimes pretty difficult. I flew under the radar for a couple of months, had people cover for me, and people who were behind what I was doing. You got to get

an education. A lot of people knew that the place was going to go down soon." But what many might see as individual initiative, foresight, and educational preparation for the demise of the steel, co-workers saw as pushing the boundaries of the expectations of collaborative work. Members on Hal's crew resented covering for him, picking up his work while he pursued an individual avenue of social mobility. They expected a member of the crew to pull his own weight, allowing the entire crew to make their incentive, and to do so safely. And many of them who were working hard to extend the life of the Bethlehem mill, thereby preserving steel jobs for everyone, might see this route of individual mobility as a betrayal of all the Bethlehem mill steelworkers.

But craft skills, higher education, and union positions and experience could translate into post industrial opportunities for workers as well. Fred Bauer, an electronics craft worker, showed me a file folder stuffed with training certificates when I visited him at his house, and credited the training he got at Bethlehem Steel, as well as his experience as a shop steward for preparing him to work in banking after he left the mill. These mechanical skills could translate into opportunities in highly skilled industrial work (and many steelworkers went on to use these skills in the remaining steel industry on the plant, Lehigh Heavy Forge), or into electrical or electronics work in construction or in the service sector. Some workers moved into jobs where they could use, and enjoyed using the craft skills they learned in the steel mill. Barry Kirk, for example, worked at a hobby store managing the train department, and did electrical work for a manufacturer in the Lehigh Valley. He enjoyed both jobs, taking satisfaction in his craft knowledge, and in "wiring and the accomplishment of turning it on and watching it work…no report back is like getting to see it work."

Other workers relished the cleaner, healthier environment of work in the service sector. Tim Fuchs, who now works maintenance at a college in the area, says his current job is "a whole different world. I don't live in the dirt. It's cleaner, healthier, out in the public. I can go to lunch. Before, you were behind locked gates and everything…there's more flexibility on the job, schedule flexibility." David Goldstein now works as a manager for a state run liquor store, says "I have a better position now...I have a cleaner position now than I ever had down there" (Behum 2010, 294) Harry Dudek, who used his vacation time to take training to become a welding

inspector, enjoys his job now "I like it much better than working at Bethlehem Steel, you don't breathe in the fumes. This is much easier, just looking at [the welds]. "It's not the same level of pay, but it's enough." Pat Daly finds his job in a large warehouse "easier than Bethlehem Steel, a cleaner job, a cooler job, everything about it is way better. Except the salary is worse than I was making 10 years ago." Mark Caster likes his job driving a van doing medical deliveries, although he's only making half the money he was making in steel. "I love the job, they're all friendly to you, you get to know everybody. I love delivering, I'm relaxed, I have a regular run." For some, a cleaner, easier, healthier job is welcome after the hard, dirty, dangerous work at the steel mill.

Differing attitudes about work, and identities forged inside and outside the site of production, also contributed to differing trajectories as workers struggled to redefine themselves, move into other kinds of work, and restructure their lives after the demise of the Bethlehem plant. Some workers maintain their steel worker identity in a post steel world—moving into other blue collar jobs that allow them to support their families. But other workers, particularly some of those who had not primarily defined themselves as steelworkers, struggled to define themselves as "professional middle class" in the "new" post-Fordist economy. This however, requires a qualitative shift in the way one thinks about oneself and the world. In addition, it oft-times required a changed morality, the acceptance of the prioritization of self-advancement over the collective responsibilities in the mill.

These workers accepted the reality of the new economy, "you don't have a choice" about these changes, "you can't change it." Many workers defined anger as an ineffective response "do I want to be a whiner or make the best of this situation and navigate to where I can make more money or do more satisfying things? Your life is a journey. Where does it take me now?" Bob Hale defines a new reality, "the reality is time marches on. History, the nation is replete with places that shut down, life goes on." He contrasts himself to steelworkers who hold onto their working class identities, "Some of these guys, it's the balance of their life is talking about the steel, trying to convey what it's like," instead saying "I'm too progressive, forward thinking." These workers prided themselves on preparing themselves for the new economy, pursuing higher education while working at the mill, and changing themselves to adapt to this new reality. Hal

Rouse describes wanting to avoid the feeling many workers had when they left steel work "oh no, what will I do? I don't know. I don't have a clue." Dan Torres highlights the importance of self-transformation, "If you don't like the way things are in front of you, you have to change something within you. I really came to understand that perspective and adopt it." He says "I wanted something better out of life."

But, even while positioning themselves for "success" in the new economy, to adopt a new neoliberal persona, these workers continue to express conflicted and contradictory moralities, often seesawing back and forth between the moral economy of the mill and a post-industrial, middle class morality. Dan Torres, for example, says that on the one hand, working in the steel made workers numb, and "it's not possible to plan for the future when all you can do every day is just be numb and avoid thinking about what kind of environment you work in," but "we agreed to give up our rational thinking, put our safety aside, for that security." But, in the next breath, he contradicts himself, lauding the security of the steel jobs, "there is a lot of value in job security…there is just an incredible amount of rational thinking that it allows you to have when you don't have to worry about where your next paycheck's coming from…that's when you can really become a productive citizen." Hal Rouse, who went to college and redefined himself as an artist, post Bethlehem Steel, also seesaws back and forth between discourses. He shifts back and forth in conversation, from defining himself as "the working man" to constructing a new professional middle class identity. Hal defines his new flexible role, working freelance, as empowering, "I get to pick and choose" jobs. And he sees himself as having individual prestige, related to accomplishments, in a way that he didn't at Bethlehem Steel, "Bethlehem Steel never acknowledged us as anything more than a number. Even if we had stock. We were never allowed to go in the office buildings." But, in his relationship with the Sands Casino, he is a proud owner of stock, checking his portfolio on the computer, and recommending that I buy some, "I'm an owner in the Sands…Sands stock is up, I'm happy." However, he simultaneously recognizes that, even though he is an "owner," he lacks control over the casino (even as he did over Bethlehem Steel), "someone else has control, we don't." Hal seesaws back and forth between commitment to and critique of the union; support for stability in employment and a lauding of

flexibility and choice; support of a production based economy and admiration for speculation and financialization. He is caught betwixt and between discourses and identities.

Skilled Steel Jobs

Some Bethlehem Steel workers moved into the remaining steel jobs carved out of the former Bethlehem Steel plant. In 1992-93, Bethlehem Steel, amidst much negotiation, carved out two sections of the south Bethlehem works, BethForge and Centec, as separate subdivisions within the plant (Bartholomew and Young 2010). In 1991 Bethlehem Steel entered a partnership with Chavanne-Ketin, a French steel company, to introduce spin caster technology into Centec, one-half of this subsidiary, to produce steel rolls used in steel manufacturing. The partnership was not successful, so Bethlehem Steel bought out its French partner and in 1997 sold BethForge and Centec to West Homestead Engineering and Machinery Company (WHEMCO), a family-owned business. WHEMCO created Lehigh Heavy Forge and kept Centec. While Centec closed in 2000, Lehigh Heavy Forge continues today as a forger of nuclear power plant and military components. Lehigh Heavy Forge receives hot ingots shipped by train from Arcelor Mittal's Steelton plant for forging and finishing of very large nuclear components. Lehigh Heavy Forge employs almost 200 workers today, more than 75% of whom are hourly, far less than the 800 workers that worked at Bethlehem Steel's BethForge Division (Assad et al. 2010). Like the contracts negotiated with the USW by the International Steel Group after purchasing Bethlehem's mills, the new contracts negotiated with WHEMCO under the cloud of a botched sale and threatened plant closure resulted in broad concessions. These included a decrease in wages and benefits (amounting to an average reduction of $12 an hour), reduced job classifications, and streamlined work rules. Later, profit-sharing was added to the contract, "the company said we'll give you profit sharing in lieu of a raise." This restructuring of work generated a highly skilled work force. At Lehigh Heavy Forge today, there are no unskilled workers as with multiskilling, skilled workers also run the forklifts, hook the steel, and operate the cranes.

When workers were laid off from the Beth Forge Division, with the 1997 sale, they were then eligible for retirement, external transfers, and retraining. Some workers were called in for an interview by Centec or Lehigh Heavy Forge. While Henry Hirsch, a union official, says that

according to union negotiations, "they were supposed to bring us back in according to seniority," in reality "it didn't exactly happen that way, because some people needed certain skills. Those people may not have had seniority, so we modified it a little." The result of this was that WHEMCO was able to be highly selective in its hiring, hiring only the most-skilled Bethlehem Steel workers who also came highly-recommended by managers. Eddie Havela, a machinist, said "they talked to the bosses at the Steel and found out who they wanted. The more skilled workers, the better workers, they picked the cream of the crop." Mitch Roberts agrees, "they wanted to pick their best people…We're a bunch of prima donnas in the machine shop."

While steelworkers were happy to have jobs, the new contract was hard for workers. Eddie says "I took a tremendous pay cut. On direct incentive, our hourly wage [at Bethlehem Steel] was around the mid 20s [per hour]…From that amount I went down to $14 an hour. The benefits weren't as good, we lost a week's vacation…the benefits in health care weren't as good." But, he took the job. "I knew the situation with the steel closing, LTV, Bethlehem Steel. I was happy to be working. A lot of the guys I formerly worked with at Bethlehem Steel would have loved to have taken a pay cut to be with WHEMCO. I was grateful. That was the hardest thing to adjust to, the pay cut." Many of the skilled workers coming to work at WHEMCO were older workers, many of whom had already qualified for their Bethlehem Steel pensions. Walt Martelli says "the money wasn't as good, [but] being as they were older guys, they weren't concerned about the money. They were looking at benefits." WHEMCO benefited from the Bethlehem Steel (and later PBGC) pensions that these workers received to supplement initially low salaries.

However, Lehigh Heavy Forge workers today are very satisfied with their salaries. As a result of profit-sharing, for the past few years Lehigh Heavy Forge workers have been making good salaries, although that often entails working a lot of overtime. Bob Cook says that "people are scared" and will work overtime without question now. John Baxter says "We work way too much, it's a booming business, and that's a good thing. They ask for overtime all the time. I get maybe three days a month off." But this does result in good salaries for these highly skilled workers. Mitch Roberts says after putting in a number of years at Lehigh Heavy Forge, finally "we started making profit sharing money, profit sharing money like we've never seen before. We're

getting $20,000, $30,000 a year profit sharing now, and it's wonderful. I'm making more now than I did at anytime in my Bethlehem Steel career." But, George Dent does caution workers about profit sharing, "it's been very lucrative for us, but it's not guaranteed. We've been lucky, very lucky. We make very good money [but]…Profit sharing can go away like that, it can go away." And, while workers are enthusiastic about the money, they are also aware that at Lehigh Heavy Forge, there are "a lot more grey areas in the contract, not in our favor…the grey areas were never in our favor."

Workers at Lehigh Heavy Forge are motivated to work flexibly to keep the steel industry going, to continue in steel work, and to make profit sharing monies. Mitch Roberts says "when we started in 1973 there were 15,000 of us. There's 200 of us left now, but boy are we efficient. We're a lean, mean crew of guys. That's why our profit sharing is the way it is." The new management regime emphasizes self-reliance and personal responsibility, what anthropologist Sharryn Kasmir calls "self-regulating" workers, and workers are given more autonomy to direct their own work, eliminating layers of management (2001). Workers for the most part like this, feeling that their skills and knowledge are valued. Don Booth says "I love what I do right now…Here, you're your own boss. I now what I have to do, and I do it." And workers were happy to be able to continue doing steel work, "I'm very thankful to be here," it is "the last stronghold of steelworkers," I'm very happy. Things have worked out." They know that they are doing well in comparison with many of their Bethlehem Steel cohort, they are valued for the skills that they invested so much of their life in learning, and they take pride in the work they do. Mitch Roberts, who could talk for hours about the steel industry, loves the giant press forge, "it's tremendous, and I'm sort of proud of that. I don't know why I should still be a steelworker. It just doesn't make sense with 15,000 of us in 1973, and I'm still there, and I actually like my job."

But those highly skilled workers who continue to produce steel in the Lehigh Valley are a more male work force than at Bethlehem Steel. While I did hear of one Latino worker at Lehigh Heavy Forge, it does not seem that any women work there. In selecting former Bethlehem Steel workers to hire at Lehigh Heavy Forge, or at Brandenburg, in well-paid and skilled jobs, these companies ended up with a highly-skilled, well-paid, whiter, and strictly male, work force.

CONCLUSION

In examining this long period of transformation at Bethlehem Steel, the reshaping of class relations in the shift from a Fordist to a post-Fordist political economy, this project asks how an analysis of transformations in the industrial working class can help us to better understand contemporary processes of class formation in the U.S. I explore how class relations experienced by displaced industrial workers have been transformed in the restructuring of the steel industry and the reshaping of Bethlehem along parameters of a post-Fordist political economy. Through a focus on one cohort of ex-Bethlehem Steel workers, this project examines the ways post-Fordist transformations in people's lives and work have contributed to changed understandings, values, and discourses related to class identity and shaping class relations.

In the past few years, with the bursting of the "new economy" bubble, followed by the shock of the credit collapse and the Great Recession, social scientists are showing a renewed interest in class analysis. For much of the contemporary period, it was argued that class analysis, in the U.S., was increasingly irrelevant. Working people were often understood as either coopted into an affluent and quiescent Fordist middle class, or the working class was defined as so undermined by post-Fordist processes as to have completely disappeared as a political force in the U.S. The first approach misrecognizes working class power and possibilities of the 1960s and 1970s, and by so-doing fails to recognize solidarities, dispositions and potentials for contemporary working class critique and resistance. Recent studies have begun to refute approaches that downplay or ignore the importance of class, increasingly using class-based analysis to analyze and understand the dramatically growing inequalities within the U.S. Recent analyses refute arguments that posit the end of class by documenting a very large, although changing, U.S. working class (Zweig 2000; Perucci and Wysong 2001; Yates 2003). Social scientists have examined the recent resurgence in organized working class actions (Moody 1997; Silver 2003), they have analyzed changing working class participation in the political party system (Frank 1999; Teixeira and Rogers 2000), and they are studying new sectors of a re-forming U.S. working class, particularly women and new immigrant workers (Lamphere 1994; Zavella 2001; Kwong 2010, Collins 2003).

While there has been much recent discussion of the skyrocketing class-based inequalities within the U.S, most of this attention has focused on stratification and the growth of inequality as measured through income and wealth. This study moves beyond these static, stratification-based theories of class which attempt to enumerate and describe characteristics through which classes can be defined and identified, to examine class as a more fluid and dynamic social relation through which power is practiced and struggle enacted. I analyze class relations as formed and exercised in social struggles in the factory, at the point of production, but also embedded within broader cultural and political meanings and interactions, both on the shop floor and outside of it. These class relations generate shared ways of life, dispositions, and moral economies that can, at times, produce collective action (Katznelson and Zolberg 1986). Through examining a cohort of steelworkers, over a long process of deindustrialization, this study explores contemporary changes in the U.S. working class, examining ongoing processes of class formation, dissolution, and re-formation related to the way in which flexible accumulation unevenly absorbs and expels this fraction of the industrial working class – Bethlehem steelworkers.

In this analysis I understand class using Harvey's (2000) definition of class as "situatedness or positionality in relation to processes of capital circulation and accumulation" to understand that class politics and power are not restricted to the workplace, but may be related to "distributions of appropriated surplus labor as well as the form and extent of the appropriation" (Gibson-Graham et al. 2001). Although my study focuses on work, and people's understandings and experiences of life in and after the mill, it is important to understand that work is only one site for the formation and dissolution of class relations. Class relations are never static; they are constructed and deconstructed, reproduced and contested in the interactions of workplace, home, and community, and new relations are superimposed on and developed out of previous social and cultural formations (Thompson 1963; Hobsbawm 1984; Wolf 1982). Steelworker class identity, solidarities, and ways of life change as work relations change inside the Bethlehem mill, in the context of transfers to other mills, and as steelworkers move out of the mills into post-Fordist flexible milieux of contingent labor, despotic management regimes, and insecure work.

But steelworkers do not simply abandon prior social and cultural formations, habits and dispositions. Instead, these are incorporated into and challenged by new formations, generating critiques as well as fueling contradictions in workers' understanding and experience of the post-Fordist social order.

Class relations themselves include multiple individual and intrahousehold positions, both inside and outside the steel mill. For example, while white, male steelworkers held strong working class identities at work, at home in suburban, middle class neighborhoods, home ownership and mixed class neighborhoods led to definitions, for a short period, as "middle class." We need to examine how these identities are changing as processes of displacement and dispossession erode middle class positions. And how do these socioeconomic transformations affect the class categories we have inherited from the Fordist past--of an affluent industrial working class in contradistinction to a poor or underclass (Kasmir and Carbonella 2008)? We have seen that assumptions of a coopted, affluent industrial working class are not entirely accurate—neither in the Fordist period nor, certainly, today. This study locates the industrial working class within a long-term historical process in order to understand how steelworkers have experienced and understood deindustrialization and the transition to a post-Fordist order over the past thirty years. I have analyzed how contradictory positions are generated both within and outside the mill, as well as how solidarities and identities are built, in part, through exclusions that then become obstacles to collective action. It is through understanding the contradictions and continuities, the solidarities and exclusions which are a part of class shaping and reshaping, that we gain insight into both possibilities for and barriers to progressive collective action and identities.

It is evident that the institutional arrangements--inside the mill, within the company, and in the larger legal and institutional structures of citizenship rights and a public-private welfare state--shored up working-class consciousness and power in the 1960s, even as it channeled that power into the "appropriate" channels of union-mediated grievances, contract bargaining, and formal two party politics. The processes of deindustrialization, part and parcel of transformations in the regime of capital accumulation, undermined institutional supports, and ate away at cultural

expectations and understandings of a more egalitarian capitalism. This reshaped the industrial working class, dispossessing some, creating new pockets of poverty, moving others into de-valued jobs in low road manufacturing or the service sector of the economy, and maintaining a few in "high road," but restructured, post-Fordist, skilled manufacturing jobs made more insecure by the threat of factory closure, capital mobility, and the surfeit of available workers. These processes produce contradictory identities, as they play themselves out unevenly, and seemingly arbitrarily, across the industrial working class. Workers make use of moral economies forged in the Fordist workplace to evaluate, critique, and judge post-Fordist milieux, even as they come to understand post-Fordist practices as a new social and economic reality. Also, in apparently contradictory ways, processes of accumulation by dispossession heighten worker critique of corporate and governmental power, while simultaneously directing anger inwards and creating new fractures and hierarchies within the working class.

Although the terms Fordist and post-Fordist are prevalent in the literature, for the most part, the steelworkers that I spoke with did not know or use these terms. Instead, they described a more egalitarian period, when they began work at the Steel, contrasting it sharply with the contemporary political economy. Steelworkers contrast the era when they could "choose" amongst secure jobs at a variety of large local industries--Mack Truck, Western Electric, Bethlehem Steel--where they could anticipate a lifelong career with this industry, experience internal mobility, support a family (although most steelworkers' wives worked for wages at various points in their life cycle), live a middle class standard of living, and expect to be cushioned from the vicissitudes of layoffs, illness, and injuries. This choice, of secure jobs amongst a few core industries, may have been mostly restricted to men, but it did provide a real choice of stable, good-paying options. In addition, many of this generation could have considered college, as their working class parents began to realize the gains of the Fordist compromise. Some of the workers I spoke with had started college, and then dropped out due to marriage (often related to pregnancy), guilt over the cost for their parents, or simply not finding college to be fulfilling combined with limited family expectations that they would complete college. For other workers, college would not have been a viable option – for those whose families were more impoverished,

by a spouse's death, divorce, or illness, and for families, like the sons of first generation Puerto Rican immigrants, whose less-lucrative jobs, combined with the Bethlehem School District's ethnically-related tracking, led to greater barriers to higher education. The possibility of fulfilling work, and financial security, in industrial jobs offered a viable career path.

The choices this generation of workers in a Fordist Bethlehem describe can be contrasted to the neoliberal notion of individual choice as freedom -- the flexible individual building a resume, freely moving from employer to employer, pursuing lifelong education and training, and best-positioning him or herself in the contemporary job market. Steelworkers are cognizant that for themselves, and for their children, this new landscape of work constitutes an illusion of choice. They are aware that the contemporary jobs male workers, without college educations, can "choose" between are lower-paying, less secure, and have less benefits than the Fordist industrial jobs. Steelworkers identify a gender dimension to these insecurities, worrying especially about job opportunities for young men, as many public sector and service sector jobs are perceived as feminine. They are concerned that although women may now have more opportunities for wage work, women's waged work is no longer a "choice," but a necessary support for working and middle class families. The real options, today, for steelworkers and their children are limited and diminished when compared to the choices they had as young men in the 1960s and 1970s. Steelworkers contrast contemporary options with their options as young men. Beam yard worker, Frank Havlicek, says "my dad worked to give us the choice—to go to college or not. Now, you can't pay for college, unless you go into the service." Steelworkers are concerned, today, about intergenerational downward mobility, "for most people the outlook of their kids is less. It's diminished. Unless they go to school." And they worry that the more insecure status of their children will affect their grandchildren's opportunities, "I don't see much of a future that they can even help their kids. What about college?" For steelworkers whose children did not finish college, they are concerned that contemporary jobs will not provide the kinds of wages and benefits that will enable their children to realize a "good life."

For many steelworkers in this cohort, while some of the real benefits of this period continued to be realized long into their work lives (the health care, wages, and the expectation of

a pension), the imaginary that these were societally-recognized entitlements, that their position in U.S. society was secure, that their gains in the workplace were solid, and that this more egalitarian social order was realized and institutionalized in the U.S., those began to be eroded and re-shaped very early on. Workers' expectations of a secure lifelong career in steel came under attack within ten to fifteen years, at the most, of being hired. And the benefits and working conditions they had earned began to be whittled down as concessionary contracts, work restructurings, and department and plant closings ate away at worker power, de-valued and depleted worker assets, constricted worker rights, transformed an understanding of worker position in society, and eroded workers' sense of possibilities. Within 15 years after being hired, those workers hired in 1964 were already confronting a corporate offensive directed at transforming the steel industry and re-shaping class relations in the U.S.

Even those steelworkers (and there are numerous steelworkers of this generation for whom this was crucially important) whose children completed college voice concerns about the changed post-Fordist workplace and labor market. Beam yard worker Bill Markus' oldest son went to college, and works at AT&T "making big dollars." But AT&T has cut back, there's no overtime, and Bill is worried about his son's job security. Joe Privsek's college-educated eldest son "moved from company to company," an individualized and "flexible" approach to career that worried Joe who asked him to consider more than simply wages, but also the stability of pensions and benefits in his career trajectory. Paul Davis is proud of his daughter "luckily my daughter is educated" and has a "very, very good position." But he still worries about her job, "she is fighting for less hours, better pay, better benefits. It's a constant struggle for everybody…What do you do when you're faced with this transient-type lifestyle? You go where the jobs are. You can't just find a company and expect to stay with that company. You have to be mobile and adaptable." And Frank Havlicek compares his trajectory at Bethlehem Steel to that of his college-educated brother, whose computer-oriented job is now being threatened as "now they're bringing people from India…Now he's fighting for his job." A college education and a professional middle class job is no longer any guarantee of job stability, of assured benefits, and of a secure old age.

Those “rights” have been undermined for white collar, as well as for blue collar workers, and are now being attacked and eroded in the public sector as well.

In addition, steelworkers are highly critical of a new U.S. social order that fails to support and value manufacturing. Steelworkers espouse a strong productivist ideology – they condemn the shift in the U.S. economy from a manufacturing to service-oriented economy, they are highly critical of the U.S. government for not more actively preventing the decline of the steel industry, and they connect strong production of goods with a strong U.S. economy. Steelworkers link this ideology to “economic nationalism” in anti free-trade sentiments and a buy American orientation. Dana Frank points to some of the weaknesses in the “buy American” ideology – the ease in which it elided into anti-immigrant sentiment, the “near-total silence about labor’s role” leading to a situation in which “nationalism trumped class analysis altogether,” and the alliance constructed between unions and corporations to fight imports (1999:243). But the strong commitment to manufacturing, the critique of an economy too heavily dependent on services and on the growth of speculative financial activity, and the correlation of a decline in manufacturing with an undermining of U.S. economic strength, are also salient criticisms of the contemporary post-Fordist U.S. Steelworkers do not believe a service economy can support U.S. economic hegemony. Workers argue that “you need to be able to make a product. We can’t all be service people. We were making good steel,” “Instead of a manufacturing society, we’re turning into a service industry. And there’s only so far that can go before even that collapses,” and “it will be tough for the next generation. There’s a domino effect. We’re cutting our own throat with manufacturing going down the drain.” This producerist ideology can extend to a serious critique of post-Fordist class relations, questioning the economic and moral value of CEOs and upper level managers who do not actually labor to produce goods. This is a radical critique, “the idea that labor, not capital, creates real worth” (Durrenberger and Doukas 2008:216). Frank Havlicek, an ex-craneman, articulates this clearly in his critique of Donald Trautlein, the first Bethlehem Steel CEO who was a financial, rather than a steel, man.

> If you took Trautlein and someone kidnapped him for the day, nobody would have to replace him. Everything would continue. But if you took Frank Havlicek out of the crane for the day, they would have to replace me. Nothing would get done. Who was the most important? Take the CEO from anywhere, does the

> production go down? But if you take a craneman away, the production is going to go down.

In steelworkers' producerist ideology, industrial working class jobs are crucially important in creating the country's economic strength and wealth. But good jobs and strong industrial production are not simply created by an unfettered free market. Job creation and job retention are struggled over, and many steelworkers are aware of the role of unions and of government in this. George Dent, for example, discusses the important role unions played in redistributing work, negotiating longer vacations, for example, as a way to "create jobs, give young guys the opportunity to come in…to make money. You don't have that in this country anymore." Union-negotiated policies such as overtime caps, reduction of work time, and leave of absences help to redistribute work, to create more jobs (Gindin, Albo, and Panitch 2011). Steelworkers are highly critical of government bailout packages, in response to the Great Recession, that bail out financial entities without creating jobs. They were also critical of the auto bailout package as, although many were glad to see manufacturing receive governmental support, they felt government monies lacked sufficient controls designed to prevent plant closings and auto worker layoffs.

Steelworkers are also skeptical of the value of many of the new industries in the Valley, such as warehousing and the casino. They feel they do not create enough new jobs, stating that they simply do not replace the quantity of jobs of a large industrial corporation. Tim Fuchs reflects that "I don't think building a casino is the panacea for our future. Yeah, it's a nice facility. Yeah, they used union labor. But is that going to replace an organization like Bethlehem Steel who employed 15,000 hourly workers?" And steelworkers ask what kind of fulfillment, what kind of pride, can be realized in casino jobs? Joe Karp contrasts steelworker pride in producing the steel that built a strong U.S. with casino jobs, arguing that

> the casino will ruin more lives than make lives better. We should have used this property for economic development for the community, for the people, the schools, and some industry. Making shoes or something. Where people can work. Not where people can go down there [to the casino] and become happy for an hour. That's what's going to happen. People go down with $50 thinking they'll come home with $1,200. They're going to lose a lot. Instead of finding a nice place to work and build their lives, they're going to give up their lives and lose it.

For Joe, meaningful work is more than wages and benefits. Steel work was work with dignity, providing a "good life," satisfaction on the job, and the meaning that came from producing goods that were important in building a "good society." As with essayist Cheri Register's working-class parents, work should provide security, but it also "had to have purpose and had to be of some benefit to others, not in any grand metaphysical sense, but useful at its most basic" (Register 2001:228). While many steelworkers enjoy gambling, they are critical of the paucity of jobs produced and the poor wages and benefits in the casino, but they also decry the lack of dignity, satisfaction, and fulfillment in a job that does not contribute to what they define as a more just American society.

Most Bethlehem steelworkers do not shy away from an explicit discussion of class. Where Joshua Freeman found a "diminishing sense of class" in 2000 in his study of New York City's working class (2000:333), steelworkers in Bethlehem are very aware of class. Steelworkers, for the most part, continue to define themselves as middle class, although as their financial security is undermined some contrast their current position as lower middle class, working class, or working poor to the solid middle class position they occupied as steelworkers. As steelworkers, they defined themselves as solidly middle class, as Andy Vanek says, "it was the good life…we were the cream of the crop of the middle class." They were not an "affluent" middle class, but "we were definitely just middle class. That's just a normal life." But, as Halle demonstrated in his study of chemical workers in New Jersey and as we see in this research, while most workers at the steel mill defined themselves as middle class, they also thought of steelworkers as "working men" (1984), describing in rich detail the working-class identities, practices, and dispositions of their work lives at the steel mill.

Today, however, although many steelworkers still define themselves as middle class, they define this middle class position as a highly insecure and threatened position in a contemporary political economy in which the middle class is, as they perceive it, under attack. "I consider myself middle class, but the middle class is going down fast. There's only going to be two classes anymore: rich and poor. It's been happening. The working man takes the brunt of everything, always," "they're eliminating the middle class…I'm for anybody for the middle class

people. I'm middle class America." In addition, there are a significant number of workers, especially those more battered by the processes of deindustrialization, that now identify as being working class or lower middle class Jerry Schneider, who took a big financial hit with the closing of the steel plant and the loss of health care and now depends partly on his children's support, describes himself as "lower middle class," and is highly critical of what he defines as class struggle, an attack on the middle class, "the wealthy are trying to wipe out the middle class." Danny Moreno also says "I'm more like in the lower part of middle. That's what I think. Like the song says 'you're stuck in the middle where money gets tight, but I guess we're doing alright'….It seems like the middle class carries everything on their backs." Rob Cuny, who works driving medical deliveries and whose wife is a nurse, describes himself as "working class. You have to keep working so that you can make a living." Norman Brist elaborates on this idea, "I don't believe there is a middle class. There is no more middle class the way I look at it. You're either poor or working poor. Or you're the greed class." Henry Hirsch agrees, and links the evisceration of the middle class to the decline of unions, "I see us as going more and more towards a two class system. Without a union, there's not going to be a middle class. And the middle class fuels the economic engine of this country." And Frank Havlicek articulates a radical ideology, "we need a revolution. We're eliminating the middle class."

For many steelworkers this struggle, enacted through and resulting in a massive redistribution of resources from the middle class to corporate elites, is linked with values that are destructive to society, that undermine America's basic values of justice, democracy, and respect. Steelworkers point to new values taking their place – values of greed and a self-centered focus -- that decimate society and destroy moral social relations. Norman Brist explains, "the poor and working poor try to work with each other and better each other's lives. But, for the rich, it's the me society." Steelworkers worry that the undermining of the middle class eliminates a spirit of community volunteerism in the Lehigh Valley, it destabilizes neighborhoods, it eats away at the time that families can spend together, it de-values production, and it undermines real and robust economic growth. Without the consumer demand of a strong and healthy middle class, steelworkers foresee enormous problems for the U.S. economy, "Well hell, what can the poor

buy? You can't buy a new car." Workers link a robust manufacturing sector and strong unions with a strong middle class, "there never was a middle class until industry started opening up." And they clearly link processes of deindustrialization and economic restructuring to the elimination of the middle class.

These are powerful critiques of the post-Fordist order, with the promises of building strong working class identity. However, there are also broad schisms within what can be defined as a broadly-constituted contemporary U.S. working class (Zweig 2000) that are obstacles to collective action. Business unions that fought for private welfare for core workers (excluding non-core workers from these benefits) ensured that as jobs and benefits for non-union workers declined, and as the number of "core" union workers shrunk, broader working class support for collectively bargained benefits was eroded. Workers in the Lehigh Valley, and in the U.S., resented the better benefits of unionized steelworkers. They cited the high pay, long vacations, and "gold-plated" healthcare benefits of the steelworkers as driving up the cost of living throughout the Lehigh Valley. Steelworkers report of their neighbors complaining, with new union contracts, that the cost of dental, health services, and other consumables would rise in the Lehigh Valley, that they, as consumers, would be harmed by the collectively bargained steel benefits. These schisms, mobilized and exacerbated by reports in a local press greatly influenced by the Bethlehem Steel corporation, of recalcitrant unions, lazy workers, and over-the-top benefits fomented resentment towards steelworkers. Without strong working class institutions building broader working class solidarities, fractures and schisms mobilized along identities as consumers or as taxpayers fragment solidarities--even within the white working class. And exclusions along lines of gender and race/ethnicity complicate this. New Latino immigrants to the Lehigh Valley, for example, have come to be labeled as the new "undeserving poor," with antimonies for "illegal" immigrants eliding with prior anti-welfare discourses. The attack on labor, the movement of manufacturing capital out of the Lehigh Valley, and the disciplining of post-Fordist labor, all work to "individualize" workers, undermining solidarities, heightening antagonisms, and destroying and weakening those institutions, like unions, that support these solidarities and empower workers.

Even within a specific industry, like steel, the decentralization of unions, written into the U.S. legal infrastructure created by the Wagner Act, led to unions that often supported corporate manipulation of strong identity with workers' home plant, defined as in competition with other plants, even within the same company (Carbonella 2005:94). This intensified with processes of deindustrialization, as local unions and workers fought to save their home plant, rather than developing broader corporation-wide, industry-wide, or class-wide solidarities. In the Bethlehem plant, even as plant solidarity increased with deindustrialization in the 1990s (the three locals at the Bethlehem plant, for example, were merged into one in 1995), the competitive environment of downsizing, manipulated by corporate power, pitted one plant against another. One Bethlehem union official describes, for example, how the Burns Harbor, Indiana plant manager threatened to "burn our [Bethlehem's] plant in his furnaces," and how the local Burns Harbor union prioritized the success and survival of the Indiana plant and the Indiana workers, at the expense of Bethlehem workers. These competitions ensured that broader working class solidarities – between transferees and natives and amongst steelworkers throughout the company – were undermined.

These schisms undermine possibilities for collective action. It is ironic, for example, that steelworkers, who recognize the effect of corporate offensives against unions, of accumulation by dispossession leading to a massive shift in wealth from what they define as middle class Americans to corporate and political elites, are not more actively supporting the public sector workers whose jobs, pensions, health care, and rights to collective bargaining are currently under attack in Pennsylvania and around the country. Public school teachers and steelworkers in the Lehigh Valley often come from the same background – growing up in the same neighborhoods, and living, together, as neighbors today. In the 1960s and 1970s, when many steelworkers applied for jobs at the mill, rather than going on to college, it was not evident that college would lead to a better career than a high school diploma and industrial work. Steelworkers in the 1970s were paid more than teachers in the Lehigh Valley (without the student loan debt that their college-attending neighbors had) and had secure work and solid benefits. But in the transition from the Fordist compact to a post-Fordist "knowledge" economy, a college education and a

white-collar, professional career came to be considered more valuable, a route to upward social mobility. In addition, teachers' organization into unions in the 1960s contributed to gradually improving salaries and benefits for teachers. But, as Dudley shows in her discussion of Kenosha, Wisconsin, many teachers, although unionized, had little sympathy for blue collar workers' troubles with industrial restructuring, feeling that their "bad" choice to forego an education got them into this situation. A professional middle class morality that values credentialed knowledge, while de-valuing blue collar work and experience, judged steelworkers as over-paid for their blue collar labor. Steelworkers also feel that teachers over-emphasize the value of their education, and do not sufficiently credit labor unions, for the status, wages, and benefits of their careers. Steelworker Henry Hirsch argues that "there should be a labor history course taught in school. The teachers are union. Why don't you educate the kids?"

Even as powerful corporate and political elites turn on teachers, attacking teachers' unions and undermining the promise of social mobility and middle class stability for educated workers in a "knowledge" economy, these long-standing schisms between career paths involving attaining a college education and the resulting "professional" or "white collar" job and industrial manual work fracture potential solidarities in Pennsylvania. Rather than shared outrage about the same tactics being used to eviscerate the teachers' unions, steelworkers perceive an inevitability to this attack. Mitch Roberts, who has a quite radical perspective on many issues, "I think a little bit of socialism is good for all of us," thinks this is a challenge "that's one of the biggest challenges we have is paying teachers' pensions. Oh, is that going to be a headache. And they're going to go through the same thing that all us Bethlehem Steelworkers did when we lost our benefits and pension plan gone to the government…..There's no way around it." Instead of solidarity, Mitch perceives hierarchy and competitiveness, "right now they're at the top of the food chain. For a long time us Bethlehem Steel workers were at the top of the food chain as far as local jobs and everything." And he accepts the decline of unions in this struggle as a new reality "unions are dying anyway…the only strong union anymore is the teacher's union, and even their power is starting to go away." While teachers cite the credentials of their education and the social value of public education as justification for the pay and benefits that provide a middle class

status, steelworkers have never accepted this as a morally superior route into the middle class. As a result intra-class antagonisms can be mobilized, and steelworkers' interests as homeowning property tax payers appealed to, in the attack on teachers' unions.

And, even as steelworker discourse critiques the contemporary post-Fordist political economy, steelworkers also accept this as a new economic reality. Mark Nowak points to the decimation of the defined benefit pension system, for example, as a challenge for the next generation of workers.. "They're not going to see a thirty years pension. That's like the steel company. That's a dinosaur.' The reality is harsh, it is difficult, but it does not seem transformable – there are no rules, no state support, no political party, for demanding a more just, egalitarian society. Tony Russo, a former union official, seems fatalistic about this new reality. Unions, he says "are becoming a thing of the past….blue collar workers are becoming part of history." And Paul Davis describes a new reality, a new political economy, "this is where we are now. You don't have a choice. You can't change it." When asked what the next generation can do to confront these challenges, Mark replies "I've got two words: 'God bless' or 'hit the lottery." Luck or divine intervention seem to be the only hope in transforming what is defined as a new reality. But what appears to be a fatalistic acceptance may be "the fatalism of acting within the given 'structural options'—rather than imagining, believing in, and organizing to expand the possible options" (Gindin 2011). The new reality is harsh, especially for working class Americans, but it does not seem transformable – workers do not see recourse in a legal system biased towards corporate power, there are not strong organizations (the Democratic party, the unions) to articulate and represent their interests, and there is no accessible vision for a more just and egalitarian society, for an alternative reality.

Without strong institutions – unions, political parties, educational institutions—that support political action and elaborate a vision or idea of social and economic alternatives, action becomes difficult. This idea or vision, these "transformations in the discursive environment," are vitally important for the power of labor (Silver 2003). The belief that there is no alternative to the contemporary political, economic and social reality, a result of the squelching of the idea of the power of labor and of the imaginary of Fordist entitlement and empowerment with which this

cohort of steelworkers entered the steel mill, was an enormously important effect of the long assault against labor. When these workers began their steel careers, “the hopes of working people for a better life were fueled by the idea that they themselves could develop power in economic and political relationships” (Piven and Cloward 2000:413). Workers felt powerful as workers in the steel mill—through their internal citizenship, solidarity, and union-recognized rights—and as voting citizens, with a whole bundle of rights, outside the mill. And workers had a vision, a belief in a more egalitarian capitalism. This imaginary had to be beaten down, destroyed, coopted, and made to seem illegitimate for corporate power to break the back of labor. An enormous component of class struggle and of the corporate offensive of the post-Fordist period, has been “the construction of a vast bureaucratic apparatus for the creation and maintenance of hopelessness” (Graeber 2011:382). Workers had to be convinced through brutal processes of displacement, dispossession, and disempowerment supported by state institutions and policies to accept a new, harsh and diminished reality.

But even as a vision of a more egalitarian capitalism gave workers real power, it also, simultaneously, generated obstacles to political action. Steelworkers imagined the Fordist compact as a stable “reality,’ seemingly having a permanence and solidity belying the conditional, fragile, and ephemeral reality of this armed truce. In what seems a contradictory way, this belief in the reality of the Fordist compact, even while giving workers confidence, power, and hope, also blinded the industrial working class to the scale of the offensive against labor, the force through which corporate power undermined the compact inside and outside the mill, and the willingness of corporate power to initiate a massive restructuring of the entire U.S. steel industry, economy, and social order.

In addition, while steelworkers articulate much common sense that is counter hegemonic, highly critical of the post-Fordist order, it is difficult for them to articulate this into a consistent good sense. A cohesive critique is undermined by anti-immigrant sentiments that characterize illegal immigrants as the undeserving poor, and blame them for falling wages and degraded working conditions. It is sidelined by patriotic and nationalist sentiments (although every steelworker I spoke with was opposed to the War in Iraq) supporting U.S. industry at the expense

of industrial workers in other countries. And it can be obfuscated by failing to connect these critiques within a broader analysis of the class struggle, implemented through the specific institutions, practices, and discourses that have generated neoliberalism. For example, while steelworkers condemn the greed and speculation that contemporary neoliberalism constructs and supports, and they decry the emphasis on finance and services instead of production, they do not clearly link political support for the financial sector to the undermining of American manufacturing, or the offensive against unions to the wholesale restructuring of the global steel industry. The post-Fordist political and economic regime of flexible accumulation is not just an economic project to restore corporate profitability, it is a neoliberal political project to restore class power (Harvey 2005; Piven 2006). David Harvey argues that while neoliberalism has not been successful in restoring U.S. economic growth to high levels (and we see this very clearly in the Great Recession), it has very effectively restored capitalist class power, it is a "political project to re-establish the conditions for capital accumulation and to restore the power of economic elites" (Harvey 2005:19). But, this political project required that the state support and powerful unions that institutionalized steelworkers' power in the early 1970s and the Fordist discourses that fostered a sense of possibility and an attitude of empowerment be contained, disciplined, undermined, and eradicated. It is this political project, enacted through the governance of the state, played out in processes of deindustrialization, permeating and destabilizing every corner of steelworkers' lives, that must be defined, so as to connect what, for both social science analyses and steelworkers, often appear to be disparate processes.

Steelworkers themselves raise the crucially important question: can this class project be successful without destroying the strength of U.S. society and the productive capacities of the U.S. economy? Can the evisceration of working-class power--the redistribution of working-class assets; the re-shaping of working-class life, with its accompanying increase in financialization, predatory lending, and working-class debt; and the decline of a manufacturing sector that we have relied on to produce goods and jobs—eradicate a robust working class while maintaining economic strength? Can these processes that have successfully restored capitalist class power, creating levels of U.S. inequality presaging a new "gilded age," do so without, as Karl Polanyi

threatened, destroying the very health, creativity, and productive fabric of U.S. society and the U.S. economy? As the U.S. struggles with economic crises at home and imperial wars abroad, this seems a highly relevant question.

Nonetheless, I do not want to leave the reader with a sense of a powerless working class, decimated and incapable of political action. There is a large, growing working class in the U.S. (and globally) today, although it is a re-shaped, re-forming working class, different than the working class of the 1970s (see Zweig 2000). Recent studies point to the resurgence of union and other forms of worker activism in the U.S., as unions begin to emphasize "organizing" as opposed to "service" models, encourage democratic participation in the workplace, and broaden union politics to include a wider working class and community, as well as family-based concerns (Moody 1997; Durrenberger 2007; Cobble 2007). It is important to consider what role the industrial working class and former industrial workers may have in this activism. Bethlehem steelworkers articulate strong critiques of the contemporary political economy; they continue to value solidarity, seniority, and citizenship; they espouse and practice (in their local unions and community groups, in calling and writing local politicians) participatory democracy. These stances presage real possibilities for social change, and opportunities for building broader alliances with this fraction of the working class – the industrial working class and former industrial workers. But there are also, as always, obstacles, barriers, and difficulties that must be confronted in doing this.

Given these strong strands of counter hegemonic culture embedded in steelworkers' understandings of the contemporary political economy, it is surprising that these ideas are not more frequently mobilized in the Lehigh Valley to support collective political action. Frequently, for steelworkers, political action is expressed through advocacy for official Democratic party candidates. The United Steelworkers, and steelworking families in the Lehigh Valley, have long histories of strong Democratic support. However, while most steelworkers of this age cohort identify as Democrats, they are less likely than their parents to consistently vote Democratic, instead stating that they evaluated each individual candidate, rather than voting a party ticket. Many steelworkers I spoke with had voted for Republican candidates in the past, including

George Herbert Bush.   Steelworkers are often frustrated with the declining influence of unions on the Democratic party, “we’re totally against free trade. Everybody who ever had a decent job is against that. But, every one of your presidents, whether Democrat or -- Republican, are for free trade.” However, steelworkers express enormous frustration with George W. Bush (especially around the two wars he initiated given his lack of military experience as well as his stances on health care and social security) and overwhelmingly voted for Obama in 2008. But a business unionism that relied on its alliance with the Democratic Party, and encouraged rank and file members to express themselves politically through voting for Democratic candidates, now finds itself hard-pressed to deliver alternative forms of political action as labor issues are increasingly ignored by Democratic officials.

While it is not likely, as Silver (2003) argues, that the center of labor movements in the 21st century will be in the auto and steel industry, these industrial workers are an important fraction of the U.S. working class. Silver asks what industries might be a locus for class struggle -- the semiconductor industry, producer services, the education industry, personal services?   And we might ask where, geographically, this class struggle might arise. Where are the possibilities for strong alliances between these industry sectors and ex and current industrial workers? What kinds of organizations can facilitate and mobilize those connections? How can strong institutions and connections be built through community or social movement unionism that works to construct alliances between unions and other grassroots struggles for economic and social justice (Moody 1997; Collins 2007; Lopez 2004). What are the possibilities for building connections between workers’ struggles in the U.S. and abroad? These alliances have the potential to link industrial worker critiques and struggles with the struggles of new fractions of the working class, building on the strong union sentiments, the critique of a contemporary economy that prioritizes services and the financial sector over manufacturing, the frustration over processes of accumulation by dispossession, and the anger over what is defined as an attack on the middle class of the former industrial working classes.

In addition, in the Lehigh Valley, steelworkers continue to exercise a moral claim over the space of the mill, a claim rooted in the lives they spent at the mill, the lives that were lost in steel

work, and the intimate knowledge and control over the space of this city that they exercised. Workers' rights of citizenship to the space of the mill – rights built up through increased worker power within the mill—can be mobilized to lend moral authority to social movements. Steelworker members of the Steelworkers' Archives, a non-profit organization founded by ex-steelworkers to preserve the history of the steel mill and steelworkers, have mobilized around two recent conflicts over the re-development of the site of the mill – tearing down a building (the Number 8 hammer shop) and re-naming a street to advertise a new entertainment venue on the site. While not successful with the building, when ex-steelworkers showed up at a City Council meeting, wearing plastic hardhats and summoning their experience as steelworkers, to talk about the significance of the steel site in the history of the community, the nation, and the lives of Lehigh Valley families; to evoke the "hallowed" status of a site in which many workers' lives were lost; and to argue that the street name reflect the important history of steel work their statements had weight. Steelworkers were able to mobilize the symbolic power of their difficult and dangerous work producing steel to build America in support of their protest. Press coverage of the protest pressured city council members to pay attention and to overturn the street renaming. When workers' moral authority over the space of the mill, mobilized through their strong sense of a right to that space, is evoked it remains very powerful in the Valley.

But, this power of inhabitance, like much of Fordist working-class power, is also contradictory. On the one hand, workers feel ownership over the spaces of the mill, empowered by their inhabitance, generating citizenship rights to the spaces of the mill. But, on the other, the "gated city" of the steel mill also ensured that political action often played itself out within the confines of the space of that internal, private city. Formal political action was directed at the wage relation – the conditions of work, the wages of work, the benefits of work--as recognized by and codified through the union. Union-directed concern over issues concerning the family and community was narrowed to the wages and benefits that would support a "family wage," what was defined as a desirable middle class life outside of work. This made it very difficult for women steelworkers, for example, to mobilize union support for combining work with childcare and other kin responsibilities. The acceptance of those parameters of working class identity--the exclusion

of alliances outside the gates of the internal city; and the mystery and "privateness" of steel making that excluded broader working-class participation and eroded broader support--built a working-class identity increasingly confined inside the shrinking internal city of the mill. The business unionism of this period did not prioritize wider community issues or work to build broader class alliances, and the steelworkers within the city often did not connect the issues of the steel mill city with broader social issues in the public city of Bethlehem. Even today, a steelworker group such as the Steelworkers' Archives, becomes active in political issues involving the site of the steel mill (and can mobilize moral authority to address these issues), but is rarely, as a unified group, active in broader urban issues.

These alliances will have to work to overcome the obstacles and difficulties to collective mobilization that processes of deindustrialization and post-Fordist restructuring have wrought. These include divisions within the working class; individualized and private strategies for survival; and feelings of powerlessness accompanying the acceptance of a new social and economic reality. Organizations will need to build on worker critiques to further educate workers, build alliances, and construct possibilities for democratic action and for a vision of a more egalitarian capitalism. They will need to overcome divisions and antimonies within the working class, such as those between new immigrants and native-born workers, those between public sector "professional" workers and steelworkers, and those between workers abroad and workers at home. Strategies of working class inclusiveness, rather than of exclusion, need to be consciously applied and implemented by unions in alliances with other social movements, institutional connections must be forged through which inclusive solidarities can be built, and ideas, visions and imaginations of alternative social, cultural and economic realities must be nurtured. But there are possibilities to do this, as the common sense of the contemporary industrial and ex-industrial working class includes a powerful critique of the contemporary neoliberal order.

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