

The Household Survival Strategies of Manufacturing Workers Displaced in Henry  
County and New River Valley, 1990-2010

Michelline J. Stokes

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Giselle Datz, Co-Chair  
Dale Wimberley, Co-Chair  
Timothy Luke  
Sophia Anong

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Blacksburg, VA

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, I use interview data to answer three questions concerning the deindustrialization of southwest and southside Virginia. First, how have Radford City, Montgomery County, Pulaski County, the City of Martinsville and Henry County been affected by plant closures and mass layoffs at the community level? Second, how have displaced workers and their households been affected by this loss of manufacturing jobs? And third, what survival strategies have displaced workers and their households employed as a result of being displaced? In carrying out this research, I engage with four theoretical discussions: (1) deindustrialization of the US South, (2) the impact of deindustrialization on local communities and economies, (3) the impacts of deindustrialization on workers, and (4) workers' strategies for coping with job loss. I argue that the strategies employed are influenced, shaped, and/or constrained by regional resources, family structure, and previous experience(s) with job loss due to plant closures and layoffs. The findings from this research suggest that household survival strategies are based on four influential or motivating factors: (1) the presence of a spouse and/or children in the home, (2) having prior experience with being displaced, (3) use of personal networks, and (4) utilization of spouses' knowledge, skills, and abilities. At the community level, there are two major findings. First, there is a level of resilience in the worst affected communities that keeps them moving forward, if at a slower pace than desired. Second, deindustrialization does not affect all manufacturing communities the same way. Local economic profiles, local resources, and past ties to manufacturing

matter both in the severity of impacts and the options for rebounding and/ or creating new economic identities. For these reasons and others, it is suggested that future research continue to focus on individual communities and localities which are working to identify good long term solutions to address changes due to large scale economic disruption.

## Dedication

First and foremost, this dissertation is dedicated to my husband Corey and our children Nalah and Nolan. I could not have completed this project without their patience and years of sacrifice. I also dedicate this study to my grandmother who worked tirelessly to ensure that I would have the opportunity to do more and be more than even she could imagine.

Similar to the workers and households featured in this study, I have my own network of mentors, friends, and loved ones who supported me through this journey and helped to get me to the point where I could tackle a project such as this. To my mother and father, I thank you for always allowing me the freedom to follow my dreams. To Ms. Vernetta Johnson, I could not have made it this far without all of your years of support and encouragement. La'Vonne Singletary and Jennifer Gibbons, your friendship and encouragement carried me through many periods of doubt and frustration. I thank Dr. Wilma Dunaway for her key role in developing the questions I used in the interviews conducted in this study. In closing, I would like to thank the men and women of the New River Valley, Martinsville City, and Henry County who entrusted me with their stories and experiences. I am extremely grateful for each and every one of you.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction and Research Questions**

### *Introduction*

A search of newspapers reporting on Southwest Virginia with publication dates between 1990 and 2010 has no shortage of headlines chronicling the region's experience with plant closings, mass layoffs, and increases in regional unemployment rates. For instance, on February 25, 1990, the Radford News Journal (James, 1990, p. 34) published two separate articles, on the same page, with headlines which read, "NRV sees heavy numbers enter unemployed" and "NRV area is hit by plant closings and layoffs to begin new decade." Almost ten years later the Southwest Times (Breux, 1999, p. 3), ran the headline "Tultex lays off over 2,600, files for bankruptcy." Another eight years later, the Roanoke Times printed, "End of an era: Furniture making was Pulaski's heart, and it's about to stop beating" (Manese-Lee, 2007). When taken together, these headlines illustrate employment challenges associated with a region directly impacted by industrial decline; a process which researchers have linked to various social and economic problems.

Even though deindustrialization began in Virginia later than in the rest of the US South, plant closings have steadily increased throughout the 1990s and the early 21st century (Brown & Siegel, 2005). Data show that between 1990-2010, close to 100,000 manufacturing jobs were lost in Virginia due to plant closings and reductions in the workforce (Virginia Economic Development Partnership, 2014b). Researchers have linked this type of job losses to deindustrialization, a process defined as "a systematic decline in the industrial base" (Bluestone, 1987, p. 8). This study focuses on the socioeconomic effects of deindustrialization on two specific regions of Virginia: (A) The New River Valley and (B) Martinsville City and Henry County. These regions were

selected for this study because their rates of deindustrialization exceed the averages for the country as a whole and for the state of Virginia. In fact, combined, these regions lost more than 20,000 manufacturing jobs due to layoffs, reductions in force, and 20 plant closings during the period between 1990 and 2010 (Virginia Economic Development Partnership, 2014a). Of focus here is how individuals and communities survived such dramatic shifts in employment.

Although concerns about US deindustrialization have been part of scholarly arguments since the 1980s (Bluestone & Harrison, 1982; Hill & Negrey, 1987), this study focuses on the US South, particularly on areas previously dependent on manufacturing as a major part of its economic profile. In carrying out this research, I engage with four theoretical discussions: (1) deindustrialization of the US South, (2) the impact of deindustrialization on local communities and economies, (3) the impacts of deindustrialization on workers, and (4) workers' strategies for coping with job loss.

While I do not think that Virginia's experience with deindustrialization is necessarily unique, I do argue that as a part of the larger discussion on deindustrialization in the US South and Appalachian Region, the state's experience and outcomes offers us the opportunity to better understand how and why, in the face of dramatic shifts in their local economies, different deindustrializing regions and communities, as well as different laid-off workers, may experience and respond to deindustrialization and its aftermath differently. So while Virginia's experience with deindustrialization is similar to other regions of the US, there are some aspects of state's experience which are unique. These differences include: (1) As part of the US South and Appalachian Region, deindustrialization began later than other regions of the US. The reason for late start is that the region had benefitted from capital mobility that moved industry out of other parts of the US to find cheaper labor costs in the South/Appalachian

region. Whereas other US workers saw their jobs move across the country, Virginia's workers saw their jobs move to other countries. (2) Deindustrialization does not affect all states or regions in the same ways. Some communities were heavily dependent on a single industry while others were not. With the loss of manufacturing jobs across the state reflecting this differential dependence on manufacturing, Virginia is a great case study for investigating how different the outcomes can be. Furthermore, this narrow focus allows for the opportunity to study the different ways community leaders interpret and respond to the resulting changes to their economies. (3) Finally, while many of the survival strategies utilized by the workers and households represented in this study are not new, strategies such as such as falling back on lessons learned from previous experiences with job loss due to plant closure and/ or layoff, reminds us that there are material and non-material ways of coping with the trauma of job loss.

The analysis of the collected data brings forward a number of substantive and policy or local development implications. First, there is a significant variation in the ways communities experience deindustrialization. By comparing communities with similar historical ties to furniture and textile manufacturing as well as neighboring counties, I show that their efforts to rebound from the changes to their economic landscapes due to global shifts in manufacturing and textile industries are often hindered by legal and/or financial barriers.

Second, when it comes to studying the effects of job loss on individuals and groups, I found that one household member's job loss has implications for other members of the household. Therefore, it may be helpful for employment service providers, such as the Virginia Employment Commission, to produce and distribute materials and/ or resources which speak specifically to the needs and concerns of the spouses and children

of displaced workers. While budgetary constraints may limit how much time and money can be spent on providing services to household members, it is clear from my data that spouses, in particular, play a significant role in the workers' ability to cope with his or her job loss. In addition to assisting with and contributing to the workers' job search efforts, spouses also use their knowledge, skills, and abilities to help workers with job applications, college entrance forms, as well as well as providing financial, health, and emotional support to displaced workers.

Third, where ever plant closures occur and workers are encouraged to take advantage of the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Program, city/county officials need to pay closer attention to the number of displaced workers who are finding that their retraining efforts are not helping in terms of finding new employment opportunities in their own communities. This is a development problem that needs to be addressed and the dialogue needs to be between the workers, their families, and the community leaders who are responsible for making "active attempts" at making the community economically viable now and in the future.

Substantively, my analysis and discussion of the household survival strategies of Virginians affected by industrial highlight reflects the resources utilized, with recognizable success to workers and spouses, and those which were largely unused. For example, acceptance and use of government aid such as unemployment benefits and disability insurance were common sources of household income while programs such as food stamps, renamed to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA), a government health care insurance program for unemployed workers, were either out of reach due to income

levels or simply not applied for. My analysis also illustrates some of the arguments put forward by workers and spouses indicating their justification to work side or temporary jobs, seek additional training, or permanently leave the labor force. Finally, my analysis also illustrates some of the more unsuspected resources used for individual and household members to aid in survival as well as the most useful survival strategy. For example, the practice of falling back on lessons learned from past experiences with layoffs and plant closures was a survival strategy used by workers and spouse alike while networking allowed workers and spouses to find employment opportunities and other resources to make their financial ends meet.

By providing comparisons and analysis within and across regional areas of Virginia which have experienced significantly challenging outcomes due to deindustrialization, the results of this research should help to expand the theoretical discussion on the consequences of industrial decline in regions where we find uneven economic development, significant differences in job loss, and uneven employment opportunities in neighboring communities/ localities/ and counties. With its focus specifically on the household survival strategies employed by those directly and indirectly affected by job loss due to plant closings and mass layoffs, the findings of this research expands the existing literature by illustrating that the outcomes of job loss goes beyond the worker. As was found in this study, in the years following job loss due to wide spread economic shifts in the local, national, and international economy, there are numerous implications for other members of households, even if the family did not exist at the time of job loss. It is clear to me that the theoretical discussions need to address the implications of job loss trauma on the individual worker and on the members of his or her

household. The evidence presented in this dissertation aims to move this discussion forward.

### *Research Questions and Purpose of Study*

Three questions concerning the deindustrialization of Virginia guide this study. First, how have Radford City, Montgomery County, Pulaski County, the City of Martinsville and Henry County been affected by plant closures and mass layoffs at the community level? Second, how have displaced workers and their households been affected by this loss of manufacturing jobs? And third, what survival strategies have displaced workers and their households employed as a result of being displaced?

My reason for pursuing this line of questioning is not simply to argue that Virginia has experienced deindustrialization or economic restructuring. Instead, by studying the survival strategies of Virginians who have suffered wide spread job loss due to national financial crisis, such as the Great Recession, the financial crisis which lasted from 2007 to 2009 and resulted in the loss of more than 8 million jobs (Brenner, 2013), and global forces which are changing the dynamics of manufacturing labor. The empirical data and analysis presented in this study aim to fill the gap in studies of deindustrialization of the US South as well as Southwest and Southside, Virginia. Above all, with some of the localities being investigated still dealing with the presence of extraordinarily large empty (or seemingly empty) buildings and large vacant parking lots which no longer add value to the local economy, I aim to answer the layman's question: How do job seekers and families of these communities survive when there seem to be no good jobs around? Moreover, what, if anything, motivates their choices in survival strategies? Answers to these questions help us better understand how global forces such as deindustrialization and economic restructuring affect individual lives and households.

### *Key Concepts used in Study*

There are several key terms and concepts used in this study. The definitions provided here and through this document are extracted from the literature or provided by state and/ or federal government organizations. Displaced workers, for example, are “persons 20 years of age and older who lost or left jobs because their plant or company closed or moved, there was insufficient work for them to do, or their position or shift was abolished” (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). According to the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (2014b), data provided under the label “closings and reductions” is:

based on planned reductions and/ or closings in Virginia by basic companies (manufacturers and non-manufacturers with a substantial customer base outside the state) ... Closings/ reductions reflect internal decisions of business and may not reflect economic conditions or the quality of the work being performed there.

The term “survival strategies” reflects the specific efforts made by individuals to address financial, emotional, psychological, and employment challenges associated with job loss. In other words, specific efforts made to “insure daily survival” (M. K. Nelson & Smith, 1998, p. 80). As it is used throughout this study, the term “household survival strategies” refers to the specific efforts made by members of the household to insure their survival beyond the period of job loss. As defined by Leana and Feldman (1992), the term “coping”... “means active attempts by individuals to establish routines after they have experienced a stressful event.” Finally, “coping behaviors” are “attempts to gain reemployment and/ or regain some semblance of psychological well-being” (p. 80).

## **Methodology**

### *Data Collection Methods*

Semi-structured interviews were the primary data source for this study. They were conducted so that participants had the freedom to elaborate on their experiences with deindustrialization (Marvasti, 2004, p. 21). Secondary data came from federal, state and local employment databases such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Virginia Economic Development Partnership. Within the Appalachian Region of Virginia, I have selected the areas of Henry County, The City of Martinsville, Montgomery County, Radford City and Pulaski County. These areas were selected for interviewing because their rates of deindustrialization exceed the averages for the country as a whole and for the state of Virginia. Writing for the Appalachian Regional Commission, the Jack Faucett Associates and Economic Development Research Group (2004) noted that a number of Appalachian states were deindustrializing faster than national averages. Between 1998 and 2008, these target areas lost nearly two-fifths of their industrial jobs and 14 percent of their industries (US Census Bureau, "Annual Reports of State/County Business Patterns"). One of the target areas (Henry County/The City of Martinsville) has the highest unemployment rate in the state and one of the highest jobless rates in the entire Appalachian Region.

Fifteen workers and 8 spouses were interviewed for this study (See Appendix A for questions asked during interviews and whose answers were considered in my analysis). Any worker laid off from an industry within one of the selected areas between 1990 and 2010 was eligible to be interviewed. The second group of interviewees consisted of public officials and professionals at key public offices and quasi-public agencies in these target areas. I hoped to interview 10 representatives

from the local government offices. By using the snowball method to locate research participants, I was able to interview 19 individuals. Most interviews were conducted with just one participant; however, up to three individuals were included in one interview. The use of interviews and the snowball method to locate research participants was utilized in similar studies on deindustrialization (M. K. Nelson & Smith, 1998; Oberhauser, 1995; Perrucci, 1988; Schulman & Anderson, 1999; Shope, 2007). All interviews were conducted between May 2011 and May 2013.

Participants were recruited through six strategies. When recruiting individuals verbally, I relied upon wording from the consent forms (see Appendix B) to provide information and to explain procedures. Leaflets were also posted at businesses, local libraries, and local churches. Informational brochures were provided to organizations that work with displaced workers, with a request that the workers pass them along to their clients. A call for participants was placed in two local newspapers. A classified advertisement was placed in *The Martinsville Bulletin* ("Have you or your spouse lost a job due to a plant closing in this area between 1990-2010? ," 2011). As opposed to simply running an advertisement, local reporter, Melinda Williams (2011) used the material in the brochure to write a short report and provide potential research participants with details of my research. After interviewing each participant located through these initial efforts, I asked her/him to recommend other displaced workers who might be willing to participate. Each interviewee was asked: (a) to provide contact information and (b) to pass along informational brochures to identified persons.

No more than minimal risks were involved in this project for any participant. Except for public officials, the confidentiality of interviewees was insured. In the event interviewees experience sadness or anger when recalling their layoffs, I was prepared to allow the interviewee to recover before continuing with questions. Fortunately, this was not necessary. While it was obvious that some workers were still very angry over the loss of their jobs, no one expressed a need to stop the interview for reasons beyond needing to take a phone call. I asked public officials and professionals who work in public roles at agencies that plan and make decisions about economic development for the state of Virginia to speak in their official capacities “on the record,” without the “cloak of anonymity.” I did not ask them to assume any degree of risk beyond what they normally do when they participate in a newspaper or television interview.

All interviews were conducted in circumstances that insured the privacy of the interviewees. The location of each interview varied depending on who was being interviewed. Most interviews with workers and spouses were conducted separately at local public libraries. Spouses were interviewed separately so as that they were able to speak freely without the presence of anyone else. Prior to conducting interviews, I contacted the local library to inquire whether a room with a closed door was available for use. This strategy worked well because at each of the four local libraries used, conference rooms were made available to me at no cost. The six interviews not conducted at local libraries were conducted in the participants’ homes and/ or their place of employment. Each of these locations were determined at the request of the participants. Having worked in human services for almost ten years and working in Radford City, Pulaski County, and Montgomery Counties for three and a half of those

years, I was very familiar and comfortable in my surroundings. Participants were permitted to withdraw from the study at any point, thereby allowing them to make their own personal assessments of risk. Through the use pseudonyms, confidentiality was maintained in coding of audio recordings and interview notes.

Interviews with public officials and organizational professionals were conducted in the same manner as the workers and spouses except for the fact that I limited my queries to the range of their public responsibilities with respect to economic development and deindustrialization. All interviews conducted with these individuals were completed in their places of employment. In the consent process, I allowed these individuals the opportunity to choose to speak anonymously (see attached Consent Form).

### *Methods of Analysis*

All interviews were recorded using Audacity ("Audacity ", 2011), a free audio recording and editing software downloaded from the internet. The audio data obtained from each interview was transcribed using the student version of the f4 transcription software (Dresing, 2012), also downloaded from the internet. The text obtained from transcribed interviews were analyzed using a two stage approach – initial and focused coding – outlined by Carol A. Bailey (2007) and recommended by Marvasti (2004). I purchased and utilized the student version of the MAXQDA11 (VERBI, 2012) software, to analyze this data and to assign codes. I discovered this useful program when purchasing f4. At less than \$120 combined, all three software programs were very affordable and easy to use once I moved past the initial learning period.

In the initial coding phase of my analysis, I assigned codes and memos to descriptive themes anticipated prior to analysis, i.e., represented in interview questions

that I planned prior to doing interviews (see Appendix A). As I read through each transcript, I also coded additional descriptive themes that emerged. In some instances sub-codes were created as well. For example, the code “Background Questions” had the sub-codes such as: age and # of years worked in manufacturing. As I continued the coding process, I realized that I needed to add the sub-codes: multiple experiences with plant closure/ mass layoff and has spouse who work(ed) in manufacturing. By adding these two sub-codes, I was able to see later on that these two themes played significant roles in the choices of workers and other members of their households.

In some cases, using tables in Microsoft Word were more useful than MAXQDA as an analytical tool. One example was coding the demographics of displaced workers and spouses. Another example was in coding the name, year and location of the plants where those interviewed have experienced plant closure(s) or layoff(s). Given my sample size, Microsoft Word was more efficient for this level of analysis.

To analyze how the areas identified for this study have been affected by plant closures and mass layoffs, I investigate Virginia’s experience with deindustrialization by positioning it within two units of analyses. First, Virginia’s experience is part of the deindustrialization of the US South and counties within the Appalachian Region. Second, the level of industrial decline found in the regional areas identified for this study are similar to that which is found in studies on rural poverty, also associated with industrial decline. In analyzing the household survival strategies, two levels of analyses were necessary. The first level of analysis was the workers followed by the spouses and other members of the household.

In order to examine how the theoretical themes intersected with the broader descriptive categories, Minchin's (2009) study of Kannapolis, North Carolina was used as a model. Similar to this study, I used collected interview data to aid in my analysis. Whereas Minchin exclusively uses a narrative approach to his analysis, I incorporate the illustrative method in my analysis. For Minchin the narrative approach was an effective way to describing what happened and to whom without specifying which theoretical framework. For my study, I directly put a theoretical framework around the data and events which significantly changed the lives of the people interviewed and the deindustrialized communities. Using the narrative approach and the illustrative method in my analysis allowed me to do both (Neuman, 2003, pp. 447-452).

## **Chapter 2: Theoretical Approaches to Study of Deindustrialization**

### *Contextualizing Deindustrialization*

Before we can understand the coping or survival strategies of displaced workers and their families, we must understand the areas in which these individuals live and have worked. We also need to understand their communities' relationship with manufacturing. In general, scholars who have studied deindustrialization explain this phenomenon using theories of globalization, economic restructuring, the implementation of trade liberalization policies, and/ or international competition (Andrew B. Bernard & J. Bradford Jensen, 2005; Gaventa & Wiley, 1988a; Herzenberg, Price, & Wial, 2004). Central to these perspectives is the idea that there has been a structural change in employment opportunities in which traditional manufacturing has been shifted to locations outside the US in favor of cheaper imports. Put another way, there has been a shift in manufacturing industries away from industrialized countries such as the United States to countries in the developing world where the labor pool is cheaper and allows for greater profits. Along with this shift there was an increase in US non-manufacturing jobs which typically pay much lower wages (Henderson & Castells, 1987; Rosenfeld, Bergman, Rubin, & Southern Growth Policies, 1985; Ross, 2004; Ross & Trachte, 1990).

While each of these perspectives provides a useful framework in which to analyze industrial decline on a broad level, they are limited in advancing our understanding of the effects of deindustrialization on individuals and communities which bear the brunt of these socioeconomic changes. Furthermore, the coping strategies of those affected by deindustrialization remain outside the scope of these perspectives. As an alternative, research focused specifically on the deindustrialization of the US South and rural poverty associated with deindustrialization provides a narrower context in which to apply the

above mentioned theories. This body of literature provides relevant theoretical arguments and data which inform the current study and provide an overview of the social and economic conditions of other deindustrialized communities.

### *Deindustrialization of the US South*

Studies concerned with deindustrialization of the United States often make the argument that rural communities, the US South, and the Appalachian Region faced greater hardship with the loss of jobs and economic opportunities following plant closures (Collins & Quark, 2006; Eckes, 2005; Hossfeld, Legerton, & Keuster, 2004; J. I. Nelson & Lorence, 1985). Researchers have found several ways to support this argument, three of which will be highlighted here. In making the rural-urban comparison, studies of deindustrialization during the 1980s pointed to the economic makeup of the South as a critical element in drawing manufacturing to the region. J. I. Nelson and Lorence (1985) were among the scholars who called the South and rural areas magnets for manufacturers seeking to relocate as a means of reducing production and labor costs. These writers found that while the movement of manufacturing plants brought meaningful economic gains to the communities in which they landed, the income paid to Southern and rural workers was far lower than the income paid to the urban workers displaced by plant closings.

Also comparing deindustrialization of the South and other regions of the US, Glickman and Glasmeier (1989) argued that the South is characterized by low wage workers, uneven job growth, and an uneven distribution of jobs within the region. While manufacturing jobs tended to provide the majority of its workers a middle-class income (Zippay, 1991), in general, rural areas continue to have higher rates of poverty and lower income rates than urban areas (Albrecht & Albrecht, 2007). Offering one explanation for

these disparities, Glickman and Glasmeier wrote, “The South dominates in employment-creating investments while the other regions are more heavily concentrated in acquisitions” (p. 75). With such emphasis on regional expansion and job creation in industries easily moved from one place to another, one can imagine that once those investments stopped and were directed elsewhere, these communities, which already had challenging economic circumstances, also dominated in job losses.

The second area of support for the argument that rural communities, the US South, and the Appalachian Region faced greater hardship is really a continuation of the last point and that is the quality of job opportunities which replaced the jobs lost. On the one hand, there is the increase in service sector employment opportunities. While both urban and rural areas saw an increase in the level of service sector employment following decreases in their manufacturing sectors, rural areas were particularly disadvantaged in attracting high wage jobs professional, technical, or scientific jobs. In the years which followed, these jobs were more likely to go to urban areas (Albrecht & Albrecht, 2007) and were inaccessible to rural workers due to distance or lack of appropriate training (Norris, 1992a).

Another significant contributor to the areas’ disadvantage is the increased use of part-time or contingent labor. Lachelle Norris (1992a) wrote that with the increased prevalence of plant shutdowns, there was also an increase in economic insecurity and a climate of concessions among workers. While these outcomes have been found among displaced manufacturing workers in regions throughout the country (Zippay, 1991), Norris noted that these practices were especially prevalent in the Appalachian Region where workers became desperate for work. In as much as manufacturing plants rapidly

migrated to the South, urban areas still retained the majority share of manufacturing jobs (Woods, 2004). As part of the contingent workforce these workers typically earn part-time wages, work temporary assignments facilitated through a job placement agency where they earn far less than their full-time counterparts.

The third area of support for the argument that rural and Southern workers suffer greater hardships has to do with how connected manufacturing corporations and mills were to Southern, Appalachian, and rural communities. In their investigation into the restructuring of Kannapolis, North Carolina, Schulman and Anderson (1999, p. 354), argued that there was a high level of “embeddedness of workplace and community in Southern textile mill towns.” In fact, this tight connection worked to strengthen the amount of power and control plants can have over workers and entire communities. This type of relationship also worked to strengthen the worker and community dependency on plants and mills.

With two plants in Kannapolis and others in the local area, Cannon Mills had control over the local labor supply. The employment of multiple members of the family was one way in which this control was reinforced and maintained. With this type of practice, when plants thrived, multiple members or generations of individual families benefited. On the other hand, when the plants closed, multiple members or generations of families lost their jobs. This is a great example of what researchers mean by rural areas suffer greater impacts than urban areas. Unlike urban communities which suffer the trauma of large scale job loss, the impact on rural communities and small towns is far more severe due to the size of the population and the proportion of residents implicated by such activities (Woods, 2004).

As this research shows, rural communities, the US South, and the Appalachian Region had benefited by attracting jobs away from other regions of the US during the 1970s and early 1980s, but in the 1990s and early 2000s they came to be on the job-losing end of capital mobility when manufacturers began to take advantage of cheaper labor forces abroad as a means to increase profits (Anderson, 2000; Andrew B. Bernard & J. Bradford Jensen, 2005; Collins & Quark, 2006; Dennis, 2007, 2010; Gaventa & Wiley, 1988b; Gettleman, 2002a; Glickman & Glasmeier, 1989; J. I. Nelson & Lorence, 1985; Norris, 2003; Rosenfeld et al., 1985; Woods, 2004). Reporting for the Los Angeles Times, Gettleman (2002b) wrote that:

... the last decade has been especially harsh in the textile industry, which includes both cloth manufacturing and garment making, with 441,000 jobs disappearing, a loss of 44%. Last year, 110 mills shut down (most of them in the South), 68,000 workers were laid off and several of the largest companies filed for bankruptcy.

Another part of the argument speaks to Southern and Appalachian regions' dependence on a single industry (e.g. shoes, textile, furniture, apparel, timber, food processing, and paper) for its economic activity. As a consequence of this dependence, these regions were distinctively vulnerable to global changes and competition in that once a given locality's industry declined, there was little to replace the jobs and other economic activity that industry had generated. So by the time we got to the 1990s and 2000s, we see that whereas these communities once benefited from the trend of capital mobility, this very trend became the undoing of many Southern economies.

Despite the generalizations mentioned above, researchers continue to present

reasons why we still need to turn our attention to the effects of deindustrialization on individual states and locales. From the existing literature we can draw from evidence and perspectives found in studies of deindustrialization in Southern states such as Tennessee (Gaventa & Wiley, 1988a), Kentucky (Portz, 1990), and North Carolina (Hossfeld et al., 2004; Minchin, 2009). The deindustrialization and restructuring of Virginia has also been part of the conversation, however, the scope of published scholarly literature remains narrow. For example, Michael Dennis (2007), discussed labor organizing efforts in Virginia and changes to the quality of employment in the era of globalization and economic restructuring. While relevant to localities outside of Hampton Roads, the focus of this particular study, his comments on plant closures in Martinsville were limited to anti-unionism practices by the officials at the Tultex plant (pp. 413-414).

In his book *The New Economy and the Modern South*, Dennis (2010) does address the economy of the City of Radford and Montgomery County. However, the depth of analysis in these areas is also limited. He identified Radford as being among Virginia's cities "lucky enough to land a [military] base" (p. 22). However, the military base he refers to, the Radford Army Ammunition Plant (RAAP), is by no means comparable in size to military facilities in Norfolk or Hampton Roads, the other cities he refers to. Furthermore, while an important institution and employer in the New River Valley since World War II, the RAAP does not provide job opportunities comparable to larger military bases in Norfolk and Hampton Roads. Moreover, this facility has been shedding jobs since the late 1980s. According to an article published on the Appalachian Regional Commission website, between 1989 and 1995, 3,200 workers were laid off from RAAP. Furthermore, since 1992, the US Army has pursued cost reductions options and have

leased parts of the 4,000 acre facility to civilian manufacturers (Baldwin, n.d. ). Data on plant closings available from the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (2013) indicate that closings and reductions in the workforce at RAAP continued into the 2000s.

For in-depth data and documentation specific to the New River Valley and the Martinsville and Henry County areas, we are limited to newspaper publications and other media coverage which tends to primarily focus on the number of jobs lost. For example, we know that between 1998 and 2008, the number of Virginians employed in industries declined by nearly one-third. Additionally, in 2008, the number of workers employed in industry shrunk from 13.6 percent to less than 9 percent (Staff, 2006). So while this data help in tracking the number of jobs lost, again, we do not have a clear understanding of how these workers and their households coped with the resulting negative changes in employment opportunities.

### *Contextualizing the Deindustrialization of Virginia*

When examining the social and economic issues associated with deindustrialization and/ or economic restructuring, it is easy to assume that resulting outcomes are relatively the same everywhere. While it is true that many conditions we find in one deindustrialized community can be found in others, such as the outcomes mentioned above, no two communities are truly alike. Therefore, we can expect that outcomes of powerful global forces do not all affect states, countries, or people the same way. Furthermore, resources available to displaced workers and their households (e.g. social groups, civic groups, outreach organizations, institutions, and personal networks) are unequal and vary across counties, states, genders, racial and socioeconomic groups (Cormier & Craypo, 2000; Pappas, 1989; Schulman & Anderson, 1999). So while Virginia's experience with industrial decline can be positioned within that of the South,

doing so is likely to result in what Glickman and Glasmeier (1989) referred as the “blurring of places and experiences;” a practice which “obscures the heterogeneity of the region and the precarious economic condition of many of its states” (p. 60).

In many ways Virginia’s experience with industrial decline differs from that of other states. For instance, Virginia was among five states with consistent high employment growth when other Southern states were shedding jobs (Glickman & Glasmeier, 1989). Also, in 2002, Virginia was considered to be among the top twenty-five states with the “most attractive business climates” (Eckes, 2005, pp. 51-52). According to Dennis (2010), Virginia was attractive because of the way it was marketed to the business community. He argued that the commonwealth was marketed as a location that was “pro-business, anti-labor and a high-tech wonderland” for corporations seeking to relocate (p. 58). Despite the marketing efforts, Virginia still suffered serious losses to its manufacturing base with some areas suffering more than others. Without looking at specific states during times of significant industrial decline, much of the experiences with globalization, deindustrialization, and economic restructuring would continue to be overlooked. Furthermore, our understanding of the experiences and choices of those caught in the path of these global forces would also be limited.

Fortunately, we do have studies of individual states to draw from. In their investigation into the deindustrialization of Tennessee, Gaventa and Wiley (1988a) referred to reports suggesting the creation of “Two Souths.” By this, they were referring to “growing metropolitan areas like Atlanta, Nashville and Charlotte which continue to give the South its prosperous Sunbelt image” (p. 5) despite the economic decline of other Southern areas. If we consider their argument and analyze Virginia’s experience

with deindustrialization across micro/ metropolitan statistical areas (MSA), we find a similar phenomenon in which some locales prospered while others continue to struggle in their efforts to overcome resulting social and economic challenges. For example, with 11,369 manufacturing jobs lost between 1990 and 2010 and an unemployment rate peaking at 21.9 percent, the local press described the unemployment rate of Martinsville as “chronic” (Bulletin Staff Reporters, 2012). Whereas Martinsville and Pulaski County suffered population declines, the Richmond MSA, an area which lost 16,800 manufacturing jobs, saw a 15.7 percent increase in its population during the same period (see Tables 1 and 2 for additional figures on number of jobs lost) (Virginia Economic Development Partnership, n.d.-b; West Piedmont Planning District, 2014). Such differences in outcomes following significant declines in manufacturing are often attributed to differences in population size and the ability of non-rural areas to attract high wage professional, scientific and technical employment opportunities (Albrecht & Albrecht, 2007; Woods, 2004).

### *The Impact of Deindustrialization on Local Communities and Economies*

In their attempts to understand the effects of deindustrialization on communities, researchers have argued that the outcomes are not specific to particular individual communities, plants, or workers. Instead, there is a ripple effect which runs through the affected community and spreads to adjacent communities or counties and their economies (Anderson, 2000; Bluestone & Harrison, 1982, pp. 67-81; Hossfeld et al., 2004). A major contributor to this outcome is that employers, especially large ones, do not just attract employees from the host community. More commonly, employees are drawn from near and far, depending on individual circumstances and a willingness and ability to commute for work. As such, when a plant closes or lays off workers in one community, other

communities feel the ill effects as well to varying degrees.

The EIR Economic Staff (2006) wrote that some communities have suffered to the point of economic collapse as a result of plant closures. Referring specifically to areas of Virginia, O'Kane (2010) wrote that rural and mixed-rural areas are lagging behind other regions of the commonwealth in areas of income and job creation. Furthermore, these regions have an increased reliance on government payments such as social security and unemployment payments, a trend found in studies in rural poverty and inequality (Duncan & Coles, 1999; Slack, 2007). In areas where thousands of workers were displaced and community leaders are left responsible for addressing the related issues, concerns for employment opportunities are not just tied to the closed plant. Often, other local businesses dissolve even though it seems as though their operation is far removed from the activities associated with manufacturing.

This string of unfortunate events leads to an even larger number of unemployed workers and even fewer places for displaced workers to try to seek re-employment. With the closing of restaurants, gas stations, banks, supermarkets, and other local businesses, communities suffer compound economic losses. While not directly tied to manufacturing, these businesses tend to dissolve because they were either located close to a plant or had a significant portion of its workforce as customers. The problem here is that these other businesses close as a result of a large proportion of the community's adult population no longer having the financial resources to purchase their products and services (Davidson, 1996; Hossfeld et al., 2004; Wilson, 1996). So while on their own, closings of smaller businesses have a less severe impact on the community and displace fewer workers, they are consequential especially in struggling communities (Collins & Quark, 2006).

As previously mentioned, an increase in commuting outside of one's county is a pattern associated with significant industrial decline in rural communities. At a rate of 65 percent compared to 28 percent, Tigges and Fugguitt (2003, p. 166) argued that residents of rural America are more likely to commute outside of their home county to find work; an argument echoed by Norris (2003). For displaced workers, commuting outside one's home county does not always yield the desired result with regard to employment opportunities and/ or better salaries. In reality, commuting patterns often bring with them additional costs to the displaced worker and their family, costs that are often difficult to bear. For those who must commute, it is fairly common that these individuals end up weighing the benefit of employment and income earned against the amount of time and money spent on the commute (Wagner, 1991; Wilson, 1996, p. 40).

### *Impacts of Deindustrialization on Workers*

Typically, when we consider the implications of someone facing unemployment, thoughts of re-employment come to mind. However, in rural communities where entire industries disappeared (Woods, 2004), displaced workers and their households also face social and psychological disruptions. For instance, some researchers have shown that there are gendered impacts of deindustrialization (Browne, 2000; Floro, 1995; Kongar, 2008), while others point to outcomes specific to women in rural communities (Ames, Brosi, & Damiano-Teixeira, 2006), and those in female headed households (Browne, 2000). Furthermore, there are those who cite the intersection of racial and gendered impacts (Davis, 2004). In other words, the challenges and burdens that displaced workers face can reach far beyond simply replacing a lost job.

A significant part of the problem faced by workers and households is that the jobs lost were considered to be "good jobs" jobs with "good wages" (Andrew B. Bernard & J.

Bradford Jensen, 2005; Pappas, 1989), the likes of which are unlikely to be found in the restructured economy for this demographic of workers (Eckes, 2005; McLaughlin, Gurdner, & Lichler, 1999, p. 396). Unfortunately, lower paying service sector jobs typically replace manufacturing jobs. These positions are often temporary, part-time labor, and offer no health insurance or retirement benefits. Considering these losses and changes to the local economy, many of those impacted suffer a decline in their quality of life or struggle to maintain the lifestyle they once had. Some even fall into poverty or bankruptcy (Hossfeld et al., 2004; Kassab, Luloff, & Schmidt, 1995; Norris, 2003; Wagner, 1991; Zippay, 1991).

The income decline remains a source of other personal challenges because in some communities, entire industries have disappeared (Woods, 2004) and those responsible for economic development have not had great success in replacing those industries. According to Zippay (1991), the displaced steel workers that she studied in Pennsylvania experienced “heightened insecurity and diminished self-esteem, anger, marital and interpersonal conflict, and depression” (p. 55). Other scholars concerned with the association between mental health and unemployment argue that mental or psychological distress is an expected outcome economic decline as they are associated with occurrences of negative life events such as layoff and unemployment; events which lead to the stretching of one’s financial resources. Among those who experience these events, symptoms of anxiety and depression are especially prevalent (Brand, Levy, & Gallo, 2008; Hamilton, Broman, Hoffman, & Renner, 1990). Unfortunately, finding new employment does not necessarily mean that the “burden[s] of deindustrialization” will disappear (Cormier & Craypo, 2000, p. 703). Instead, many of the problems these

individuals encounter remain hidden from the view of others, including most social workers (Norris, 1992b; Wagner, 1991).

### *Coping with Job Loss*

After displacement we know that workers face a range of financial, health, and emotional challenges, yet we know very little about how these individuals and their households meet these challenges. Scholars who analyze how individuals, households, and communities respond to job loss due to deindustrialization refer to these responses as survival strategies (Mingione, 1987; M. K. Nelson & Smith, 1998), livelihood strategies (Slack, 2007), or coping behaviors (Leana & Feldman, 1992). Each of these terms have grounded meanings. Leana and Feldman (1992) define coping as “active attempts by individuals to establish routines after they have experienced a stressful event.” These authors defined coping behaviors as “attempts to gain reemployment and/ or regain some semblance of psychological well-being” (p. 80). Similarly, M. K. Nelson and Smith (1998) defined survival strategies as “a specific set of economic activities developed to insure daily survival” (p. 80). Drawing from previous research, Slack (2007) wrote that livelihood strategies goes “beyond formal employment and ... [includes] a broader range of activities that people combine to make ends meet” . He argues that households utilize a “combination of formal employment, participation in assistance programs, and informal work” in order to meet their individual household needs (Slack, 2007, pp. 26-27).

Because of the relative similarity in each of the three terms mentioned above, I will use the term “survival strategies”, but I accept that, combined, these concepts provide a useful framework in which to analyze the activities displaced workers and their households took part in as means of addressing their financial, emotional, psychological, and employment challenges resulting from job loss.

As previously discussed, some of the challenges that displaced workers face are related to reductions in standards of living, loss of health coverage, declines in household income, and a worsening of physical and mental health. Three arguments drawn from the existing body of work are corroborated by my research. First, displaced workers do not simply give up when faced with the stress and challenges associated with unemployment. Instead, most displaced workers realize that they must take initiative if they are to eliminate the discomforts brought on by job loss (Leana & Feldman, 1992). Second, household survival strategies are not universal. Instead, they are shaped or constrained by regional resources, social capital, and local employment opportunities (Gaventa, Smith, & Willingham, 1990; Mingione, 1987; M. K. Nelson & Smith, 1998; Schulman & Anderson, 1999). Third, workers and households do not simply rely on employment opportunities available in the formal labor market. To survive, individuals and household members take advantage of informal opportunities and resources provided by the state (Slack, 2007). Mingione (1987) provides us with two ways of contextualizing the resources utilized for survival. These resources are either internal, meaning that they originate from within the home, or external, originating outside the home. Examples of external resources include assistance from “the state, community, friends, churches and extended family network” (p. 298).

To review, the three questions guiding this analysis are: (1) How have Radford City, Montgomery County, Pulaski County, The City of Martinsville and Henry County been affected by plant closures and mass layoffs at the community level (2) How have displaced workers and their households been affected by this loss of manufacturing jobs? (3) What survival strategies have displaced workers and their households employed as a

result of being displaced? Although Virginia's experience with industrial decline is indeed part of the deindustrialization of the US South - similar to arguments made by Mingione (1987) and M. K. Nelson and Smith (1998) - I argue that the survival strategies employed by the communities, workers, and households inflicted by deindustrialization and economic restructuring in Virginia are influenced, shaped, or constrained by regional resources, family structure, and previous experience(s) with job loss due to plant closures and layoffs. These strategies are not new to studies of deindustrialization or job loss, as a whole, however, for the thousands of Virginians who continue to struggle to come back from these experiences, their efforts and stories are part of the greater narrative on global changes in employment in manufacturing industries.

## **Chapter 3: The Effects of Plant Closures and Mass Layoffs at the Community Level**

With much of the early research on deindustrialization focusing on the northern US cities and states, scholars such as Timothy Minchin (2009) point out the need to widen our scholarly focus to include the effects of deindustrialization on workers residing in the US South. In his study on displaced textile workers in Kannapolis, North Carolina, Minchin (p. 288) wrote, “Only recently have a few scholars begun to explore how deindustrialization also affected Southern workers ...” Like many Southern states, Virginia has faced its own set of challenges with the broader national decline in the manufacturing and textile industries. What follows are my findings based on personal interviews and other empirical data focused on answering the questions: How have Radford City, Montgomery County, Pulaski County, The City of Martinsville (Martinsville) and Henry County been affected by plant closures and mass layoffs at the community level?

Because results for multiple geographical areas are being discussed and compared, I have organized the findings into five major sections: (1) The New River Valley (NRV) and the four localities under investigation (2) Martinsville and Henry County (3) Implications for local government and local businesses for all areas (4) Martinsville and Pulaski County’s efforts regarding repurposing old manufacturing facilities (5) The Changing employment trends in Pulaski County and Martinsville.

### **The New River Valley**

#### *Contrasting Economic Infrastructure*

According to information provided by the New River Valley Planning District Commission (2014) the NRV’s economic landscape is quite diverse. For example, in

addition to manufacturing, there are also four general hospitals and three institutions of higher education: New River Valley Community College (NRCC), Radford University and Virginia Tech. The NRV also has a variety of tourist attractions and leisure activities that one would come to expect from a rural or mountainous area. As valuable as these economic resources are to the region as a whole, their benefits do not reach all of the localities equally. Part of the reason for the differences can be explained by what Lendel (2010, p. 213) calls “differences in social and business infrastructure.”

Although each locality had and continues to be the home of some manufacturing industries, interview data collected from public officials and community leaders throughout the NRV and existing empirical data shows that Montgomery County has suffered the least from declines in manufacturing. The data suggests that the presence of institutions of higher education has played a significant role both in how severely each community has been impacted by deindustrialization and how deeply the communities’ leaders understand the economic impact. In addition, empirical data shows that as manufacturing declined in the localities which were heavily influenced by industry, the role of the state as an employer increased.

### *Declines in Manufacturing in Areas near Institutions of Higher Education*

Indeed, one major finding of this research was that as manufacturing jobs decreased, state employment increased. The NRV is home to two large state run universities: Virginia Tech, located in Blacksburg (Montgomery County) and Radford University, located in Radford. Both universities have been substantially beneficial to their host communities in many ways but none more important than in their roles as employers. In both localities each university holds the position of the area’s largest employer. Because of this fact, Montgomery County and Radford stand in stark contrast

to Pulaski County, Martinsville and Henry County. Although Pulaski County and Martinsville are homes to community colleges, the benefits of these institutions played a lesser role as manufacturing has historically played a more significant role in providing employment opportunities.

*Limited Benefits of 4-Year Universities - Montgomery Co. & the City of Radford*

Research by Ali (2000) and Goldstein and Drucker (2006) shows that local economies benefit both directly and indirectly from being host to colleges and universities. Benefits to local economies include, but are not limited to: the salary and wages paid to university faculty and staff which then flow throughout the community, the research conducted by faculty and students which is then utilized by local businesses, and products and services purchased by the university and students. There are also the tourism related benefits associated with visits to these communities by college sports fans, parents and relatives of students, and those traveling to the universities for business as noted by Basil Edwards, the economic development and information technology director of Radford. In the case of Montgomery County and Radford, the presence and importance of Virginia Tech and Radford University cannot be missed any more than the presence of and decline in manufacturing to Pulaski, Martinsville and Henry Counties. The economic impact of these institutions of higher education falls in line with the findings of Ali (2000) whose research showed that the benefits of having a university in your community is influenced by such factors as “the size of the geographic area, the diversification of local industry and the proximity to larger manufacturing areas”(p. 57).

According to a report by the Commonwealth of Virginia’s Department of Housing and Community Development (2009), Montgomery County’s economy is

“relatively diversified” and Virginia Tech is a large part of that diversification. In fact, the university has consistently been the source of thirty percent of the county’s employment opportunities since 1970. Data pulled by the county from the 2010 Census shows that the government is the largest source of employment to the Montgomery County workforce. Of the 12,742 jobs occupied by government employees, the state of Virginia provides more than twice that of the local government. State employment accounts for 8,435 jobs (Virginia Employment Commission, 2012, p. 21).

Historically, Radford University did not have the same impact on employment for the city as Virginia Tech has for Montgomery County. However, between 1990 and 2010, the university transitioned to being the city’s top employer (Virginia Employment Commission, 2014b). Kevin Byrd, the executive director of the New River Valley Planning District Commission, and Basil Edwards made similar assessments related to both universities being economic drivers in the community. According to Byrd, “Without Virginia Tech, [Montgomery County] ...might look a lot more like South Side ...” Similarly, Edwards stated:

... the university I think, and I don’t mean this as a slap to Pulaski Town, but I can use them as an example. Without Radford University, Radford could easily be a Pulaski Town because without all of the coming and going there ..., you know, Radford would be just a sleepy small town (Radford 5/31/2011).

In sum, it appears as though part of the answer to my question lies in the diversity of the local economic structure. Another part of the answer is tied to the presence of four-year universities and their geographical closeness to

deindustrialized communities. The closer the ties between the community and the universities, the more favorable the economic outcomes are for the community in question.

### **Economic Impact of Deindustrialization in the New River Valley *Montgomery County***

Despite the presence and benefits of these large universities, it is important to note that a locality not having a lot of manufacturing jobs does not prevent its residents from being impacted by declines in manufacturing. In fact, between 1995 and 2010, Montgomery County had two plants closed and experienced a number of layoffs and reductions which resulted in 668 jobs being lost ("Virginia Closings Database," 2013). The number of jobs lost in Montgomery County was considerably lower than those lost in neighboring localities (see Figure 1), but no less important to the workers who were displaced as a result.

In order to get an idea of how each locality was impacted by the declines in manufacturing, I asked organizational professionals and public officials, "How badly have plant closings and mass layoffs impacted this community economically?" To this question, responses from those working in and representing the NRV came in two forms depending on what was understood to be "this community." Responses were either a comparison between different regions of Virginia or comparison between the localities of the New River Valley. For example, Kevin Byrd, whose work to address the loss of industry includes being part of the "front end of economic development" and is responsible for "visioning work" for entire the NRV, responded by comparing the area and a neighboring region. According to Byrd, "It was definitely significant in the early to mid-2000s. And then the recession came and it was significant but not as bad as our

neighbors in other regions.” When I asked, “Which regions?” he clarified by adding, “Southside was more impacted.” Southside is a portion of Virginia which includes 23 localities of which the City of Martinsville and Henry County are included (See Figure 1 for map of Southside and Southwest Virginia) (The Virginia Tobacco Idemnification and Community Revitalization Commission, 2007).

The Montgomery County administrator also made a comparison but, the comparison was between localities of the NRV. Meadows stated,

Montgomery County hasn't been impacted as severely as some of the other, some of our neighboring communities. We didn't have a lot of manufacturing jobs in Montgomery County. Most of our jobs in the county are related to higher education with Virginia Tech and Radford being close by. That being said, um, companies that were in the textile industry, furniture manufacturing; and I think I told you over the phone I've only been here about two years, so, a lot of these companies disappeared way before I got here. So we really don't have textile or furniture manufacturing to speak of in Montgomery County any more but some of our neighbors, such as Pulaski, was dramatically impacted by the closings.

Another Montgomery County administrator described the county as being “very fortunate.” To explain the economic impact of mass layoffs and plant closures on the county, he shared,

What we have seen is not necessarily plant closings but, in order for our companies to be competitive, they've had to invest in more automation.

So, like our automotive manufacturing sector has dropped employees (less manual labor) but they have added automation which has made the plant more competitive and more efficient. So we haven't necessarily had any plant closings; we've been very fortunate that some of the plants, you know, are still opened and our goal is to work with them/ partner with them to keep them open. Now, keeping a plant open in Virginia might mean a Michigan plant is closed. And generally because Michigan has a - the labor market is not as good from a union point of view and then also it's more expensive. So our plants run more effectively. But at the same time, they have shed jobs (Montgomery County, 7/13/2011).

### *The City of Radford*

Despite being a college town, Radford is also very much a manufacturing town with plants and mills having long histories in the city. According to *The Southwest Times*, “Foundries have operated for decades on West Main Street beside the New River in Radford, offering a source of hundreds of jobs for local workers” (Ballas & Sylmar, 2009). New River Industries, for example, operated in the city from 1937 to 2000 and employed about 500 (Staff Reporters, 1990a). The description of New River Industries by the local press suggests how connected these facilities were to the City of Radford. At the time of the plant closing’s announcement, the Radford News Journal (2000), described the New River Industries as an “icon.” It is difficult to determine how many jobs were lost in Radford, or any of the other areas specific to this study, prior to 1995 as the program which made that data available from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (MLS) was cut due to budget cuts (Shell, 2014). However, in the period between 1995 and 2010, in addition to reductions in force, Radford experienced six plant closures and lost

1,492 manufacturing jobs. The number of jobs lost represents more than twice the number of manufacturing jobs lost in the neighboring town, Blacksburg, home to Virginia Tech. The comparison in the number of plant closures and layoffs is important because geographically Radford is considerably smaller than Montgomery County. Radford measures less than 10 square miles compared ("Welcome to Radford, Virginia," 2010) compared to Montgomery County which is almost 400 square miles ("About Montgomery County, VA," 2014). The difference in size suggests a greater economic impact to plant closure, especially medium to large plants.

While informing me of the minimal fiscal impact on Montgomery County due to the declines in manufacturing, F. Craig Meadows remarked, "If the City of Radford was part of Montgomery County, then these answers would be different because they have been impacted with the plant closings at the Foundry." By the time the Internet Corporation New River Foundry shut down only 76 workers were displaced. However, this facility once employed as many as 259 workers. Eddie Lowery, sub district director for the United Steelworkers International for Virginia, was quoted in the Southwest Times (Ballas & Sylmar, 2009) predicting that: "The loss of these manufacturing jobs is tragic. It's going to cause personal hardships and even foreclosures; it is not a good Christmas present for workers in Radford."

Interview data from economic director for the City of Radford suggests somewhat of a different and more positive economic outcome. In answering to my question, "how badly have plant closings and mass layoffs impacted this community economically?" Basil Edwards responded by offering the following:

We've been fortunate here. The Foundry was shut down but it was only

closed for about 8-10 months and a new operator came in and bought the foundry... It used to be Internet Foundry and now it's Virginia Castings. Okay, and they've hired back, um, a lot of the workers that were displaced when Internet filed bankruptcy and shut down. So we've been fortunate from that standpoint. Um, and, we've got, our largest employer is the university – Radford University. .... We did lose Goodyear Rubber Company. They were about fifty, forty to fifty people working there and they shut the plant down here. They had four or five divisions and they just shut this division down so again, we've been very fortunate.

If we were to sum up all of the manufacturing jobs lost in the NRV, by way of comparison, the City of Radford was indeed fortunate as far as total jobs lost due to plant closures, reductions and layoffs. According to data provided by the Virginia Economic Development Partnership ("Virginia Closings Database," 2013), between the three localities, a total of 9,053 manufacturing jobs were lost. Montgomery County lost 668 jobs, the City of Radford lost 1,492 jobs and Pulaski County lost 6,893 jobs. What remains unclear from these figures or Meadows' response is the number of residents from Montgomery County and the City of Radford who were counted in the almost 6,000 manufacturing jobs lost in Pulaski County.

A look at the commuting patterns of the three localities shows not only how connected these localities are but also how they changed at the same time manufacturing opportunities in Pulaski County declined. Changes in the commuting patterns also suggests that there were some less "fortunate" Montgomery County and Radford residents due to the fact that many of these workers also lost their jobs when layoffs and

plant shut downs occurred in Pulaski County. For example, 2000 Census data shows Montgomery County as the top destination for Radford commuters and Pulaski County as the top destination for Montgomery County Commuters (Virginia Economic Development Partnership, n.d.-a; Virginia Employment Commission, 2012). However, employment statistics for 2011 show that workers went “elsewhere for employment” as stated by Jeffrey S. Worrell, Mayor of the Town of Pulaski. Roanoke City became the top destination for Montgomery County commuters (Virginia Employment Commission, 2014a, pp. 10-11). A closer examination of how Pulaski County was impacted by deindustrialization helps to explain these changes more clearly.

### *Pulaski County*

Among those interviewed in the NRV, the consensus is that Pulaski County has experienced the worst of the economic impacts brought on by deindustrialization. This result is not unexpected as the county had strong and historic ties to manufacturing. The concentration of manufacturing has been a major part of the county’s economy dating back to the 1800s. In fact, the county seat, otherwise known as the location of the county’s administrative buildings, the Town of Pulaski was “developed into a manufacturing center” during this same period. Woodworking plants, furniture factories and cotton and textile mills were added to the county beginning in the 1900s. By 1905 Pulaski was home to four heavy industries (Pulaski County Administration, 2007).

The most specific and detailed explanations of how the local economy has been affected came from those working in, for or representing either the Town or County of Pulaski. Similar to others interviewed, these respondents tended to frame their responses or comments around references to specific plant closings and layoff events. Peggy White, the head of the Pulaski County Chamber of Commerce, described the region’s economic

impact by saying:

It was severe. It was severe. ... the furniture that you see down there [referring to Pulaski County Chamber of Commerce and County Visitor's Center] came from different furniture manufacturers. You had Ethan Allen that was producing here, you had Pulaski Furniture; this was their hub, you had Reed Creek Furniture. So you had three furniture manufacturers. ... Ridgeway Clocks – the big grandfather clocks came from Pulaski Furniture. So it has impacted. In the past ten years, you've seen this significant turn around and most of it is because of the import and the exports. It's cheaper to import it than to pay for it here (Pulaski County, 5/26/11).

Several important facts about Pulaski's experience with deindustrialization came from my interview with Peter Herbert (PH), the Pulaski County Administrator, and Shawn Utt (SU), a Pulaski County Community Developer. First, Utt pointed to the county's historical ties to various heavy industries:

Pulaski County was built around industry. I mean, what's developed in the county. I guess we've gone through the third - the mining and then they left and left a big hole. And then textiles and furniture filled that a few years later. And now we're trying to figure out what else is gonna fill the hole.

Second, they explained when plant closures begun in the county, how many plants have closed and how many workers were affected:

PH: ... [In the] '80s you had some major plants closing ... There's been

several plants over the past 25 years.

SU: You figure Renfro had, at one time, a couple thousand employees.

Pulaski Furniture had a couple thousand. AT&T had 1500. Textile wise, we've lost several thousand...

PH: Burlington Industries had three or four hundred.

Third, both men explained the pace in which the plant closings occurred (immediate shutdowns vs. gradual declines) and how deeply the loss of industry affected the county's workforce. They also mentioned the sudden closure of AT&T, which, according to Utt, told their employees "at 2:00 that at 2:30 they're locking the doors." Indicating how this news was met by the workers, Utt recalled, "We've toured the building and they had, you know, the Pepsi can and a half eaten sandwich still on the desk a month after they closed." AT&T's closure in particular caused the administrators to take a closer look at the future of the county's economy:

SU: AT&T caused the board of supervisors at that time to really take a look at the economy.

PH: And that's probably because in each closing - because there was about a thousand people ... when they shut down where as other places (Pulaski Furniture, Renfro) they all kind of gradually phased out as opposed to suddenly (Pulaski County, 5/29/13).

John White, the economic development director of the Town of Pulaski, explained the wide reach of deindustrialization throughout Pulaski County. He declared that plant closings and mass layoffs affected the area "terribly. Especially the town of Pulaski." To explain the broad reach of the economic impact of these events, White

stated,

Its affected its tax base. Its affect all of its institutions. Its affected its, what they call capacity. And capacity means talent. The talent pool because now more and more we graduate some very talented people but we don't have jobs for them, so they leave. Its affected churches, its affected civic groups, its affected, I can't imagine any aspect of life that's not been affected. It has affected the work that you do (Pulaski County, 5/5/11).

The mayor of the Town of Pulaski, Jeffrey S. Worrell, shared similar accounts of the negative impacts to the community as whole. Providing a more historical overview, Mayor Worrell stated that the declines in manufacturing

had a tremendous impact over the last ten or fifteen or even fifteen – twenty years, we've lost thousands of jobs here in downtown. So we've not only have that many people that have lost their jobs or had to go elsewhere for employment, we've lost all the businesses downtown that suffered as a result of the loss of people downtown: the restaurants and the stores (Pulaski County, 5/18/11).

Data on plant closings (see Figures 2 and 3), layoffs and reductions in labor provided by the Virginia Economic Development ("Virginia Closings Database," 2013), confirms that Pulaski County has indeed experienced the most serious impacts from these events. The county has experienced the most number of plant closings, the most layoffs and the highest number of reductions in labor compared to its regional neighbors. Although much of this devastation was concentrated in Pulaski, the damage spilled over

to neighboring communities. So, despite reports that Montgomery County and Radford have been “fortunate” when looking simply at the total number of plants closed and the number of layoffs within their boundaries, there is evidence that residents of these two localities are among those who were victims of shutdowns, slowdowns, and layoffs in Pulaski.

A report by Johnson and Kambhampathy (1990, p. 1) on the closings of the Fairlawn AT&T plant shows that after Pulaski County, Montgomery County had the largest number of residents directly affected by this closure. Of the 951 jobs lost, 450 Pulaski County residents were directly affected and 305 Montgomery County residents were also affected. It can be argued that the timing and closeness of these events also added to the amount of damage incurred by the local economy and workers. For example, the AT&T closure, which affected 1,000 employees, of which 195 were Radford residents, was announced just after 70 workers were laid off from the Radford Army Ammunition Plant (RAAP), a manufacturing facility also located in Fairlawn (Staff Reporters, 1990b; Tefft, 1990). This was a lot of negative economic activity for a tiny town which only measures 3.5 square miles (Wikipedia, 2013). Although Fairlawn is technically a part of Pulaski County, it is close enough to Radford that it can be difficult to discern where Fairlawn ends and Radford begins (See Table 1).

*Table 1 Reductions, Closings, and Layoffs by Locality, 1990-2010*

<b>Locality</b>	<b>Total Jobs Lost 1990-2010</b>	<b># of Plant Closures</b>	<b># of Reductions in Force</b>	<b># of Layoffs</b>
Montgomery County	588	2	6	3
Radford City	1,492	6	7	0

Pulaski County	6,893	11	20	5
Henry County	7,668	19	13	1
Martinsville City	3,701	7	9	0
Richmond (MSA)	16,800	68	41	2

**Martinsville and Henry County**

*Greatest Declines in Manufacturing*

Similar to Pulaski County, the City of Martinsville and Henry County were heavily dependent on manufacturing industries; wood furniture and textile manufacturing in particular. Compared to the other areas in this study, the Martinsville-Henry County area has suffered the greatest overall impact due to declines in its primary industries. The amount of knitted apparel being produced in Martinsville was so high that in 1987, the city was labeled “the sweatshirt capital of the world” (Dennis, 2010; Robertson, 2014). L. Dudley Walker, retired president and chairman of Bassett-Walker Inc, was quoted saying: “We [Pannill Knitting Co. and Bassett-Walker, Inc.] made 80 to 85 percent of the sweatshirts made in the world. It was a time when the product was very popular.” During the period Walker was referring to, there was only a total of four American companies competing in the sweatshirt and sweat pants industry (Robertson, 2014). Pannill Knitting Co. was started in Martinsville in 1925 while Bassett-Walker, Inc., previously named Bassett Knitting Corporation, had its start in 1936 in Bassett, Virginia, a town within Henry County (Bassett Historical Center & Fentress, n.d.; Wikipedia, 2014). Martinsville no longer holds this title as the companies which previously provided these jobs moved towards imports.

There was agreement among community members interviewed that the region has endured repeated plant closures and layoffs. Responses from one member of the Piedmont Community Services Board and Barbara Jackman, Executive Director of the Martinsville Henry County Coalition for Health and Wellness, illustrates the visible signs of the areas' closings and progression:

There was a concentration in the early '90's but there was a large DuPont plant here that closed somewhere in the early, mid '80s. That was sort of the beginnings of this. But since then a bunch of closings over a two year period of so. There was probably a gradual reduction ever since ...

Further into the interview she added:

... the textiles industry in Martinsville vanished about a decade ago. And that went first. Furniture was still going along. So you had some number of people who lost their job in textiles and switched to furniture manufacturing, for example, or some form of quasi thing of that... Now in the last five years – three to five years, the furniture industry has pretty much disappeared. So all of those people are sort of the second wave coming through (Martinsville, 6/22/11).

Pointing to perhaps the most damaging closure in the Martinsville-Henry County area, Wayne D. P. Knox, Director of the Martinsville Community Development, stated “it started back with Tultex and has continued (sigh) unfortunately over time” (Martinsville, 6/22/11). Between 1995 and 2010, the Martinsville-Henry County area lost 11,534 manufacturing related jobs ("Closings Database," 2013). Missing from this figure

is the 1994 closing of Sara Lee, previously operated as The Pannill Knitting Company which employed over 5,000 people (Martinsville Virginia Tourism Office, n.d. ).

Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (*Local Area Unemployment Statistics Map*, 2014) confirm that the unemployment rate in the area was not only high but fluctuated in a wave-like fashion, a concern voiced by Barbara Jackman, Executive Director of the Martinsville Henry County Coalition for Health and Wellness. This data also show that Martinsville's unemployment rate jumped from about 5 percent in 1997 to 19.9 percent by 2009. Although lower than Martinsville's rate, the unemployment rate in Henry County followed the same patterns and trajectory. The unemployment rate of Pulaski County also followed a similar trajectory as Martinsville, although its rates were much lower. This finding was not surprising since all three economies were heavily based on manufacturing. In some cases, the same company operated plants in Pulaski and Martinsville. Pulaski Furniture, for example, which employed 2, 250 people between its Pulaski, Martinsville and Ridgeway (only 9 miles away from Martinsville) facilities, shut down its plants in Pulaski and Martinsville (Carter, 2000; Mike Williams, 2006; Melinda Williams, 2009).

### **Fiscal Implications of Deindustrialization**

#### *Adjustments and Readjustments Needed*

In addition to figuring out what to do with the empty buildings and attracting new industries, localities are challenged with having to readjust to the fiscal changes brought on by deindustrialization. In some cases, long after the plant(s) closed their doors, many of these challenges remain. According Johnson and Kambhampathy (1990, pp. 4-5), the fiscal impact of the AT&T closure included:

(1) Change in total employment for each locality in which workers traveled from and of the valley as a whole. (2) Change in the assessed value of personal property. This includes the machines and tools used and owned by the plant and later removed to sale or relocated elsewhere. (3) Change in per capita income by those employed by the plant.

Providing a more recent breakdown of the fiscal implications, Kevin Byrd informed me that “there definitely is a direct relationship between a plant that closes and then the tax base that's impacted and the ability to provide services.” The machines and tools tax is one revenue stream that is significant to the budget of localities. Byrd explained the tax's significance this way:

... a lot of the significant employers are paying taxes on machinery and tools that are within that plant and those machinery and tools taxes offset the real estate tax that the residents pay. So when a business cave[s] in, the proportion of the tax base - if you have a large employer close, then the residents are going to pick up more of the debt. And then it could be like the Montgomery County situation, where we're trying to build new schools at the same time... There in Montgomery, they didn't have a significant decrease of the employment base but that's the major concern of somebody that's in a public official role. They're looking at budgeting and say, okay, how stable is our economy gonna be next year in terms of machinery and tools tax and everything else, and is that going to maintain itself or are we going to have to pay through real estate taxes? Most governments don't have many options for collecting revenues for fiscal services. In Virginia, we're very restricted. So you have real estate tax and

personal property tax. Then you have machinery and tools then ... lodging taxes. We don't have a lot of different ways to collecting revenue (Radford, 5/28/13).

When the Renfro Corporation closed in 2003, the local paper reported that the Pulaski town manager, John Hawley, was concerned with the amount of revenue lost due to the plant's closing. The mayor at the time, Charles Stewart, calculated that the revenue the town earned from Renfro represented five percent of the town's \$6 million budget. It was calculated that Renfro "paid the town \$81,000 a year in machinery and equipment tax, \$150,000 a year in sewer costs, and \$50,000 a year in water revenue" (Dunovant, 2003).

For Martinsville, it wasn't the loss of the machine and tools tax that hurt the most. Instead, it was the lost revenue generated from water, electric and sewer use. When I asked "Have these mass layoffs directly impacted the fiscal capacity of your local government to meet public needs?", Knox replied by saying:

How can we say yesssss! One thing with Tultex - Tultex was our largest user of water. And since of course they're gone, I mean, it impacted us heavily in that regard. We've had to - even though we have the cheapest water going, we've had to increase our sewer rate recently. Uh, we've had to um, look for other sources, which is a little tougher when you in a, ah, 11 square mile, uh, enclave that's known as Martinsville. You can't expand. And we weren't having growth as far as new construction; either commercial nor residential. So yeah, it has impacted us. Yeah. And of course, the needs impact of social services. I mean, their numbers have

just jumped and they've been jumping ever since. Makes it a little tougher to balance the city's budget.

Making matters worse, “a double whammy” according to Knox, is the fact that the city, which previously owned and operated its landfill, closed the facility and subsequently lost the revenue previously collected. Although the city still owns the facility, it is now privately operated. According to Knox, “now we pay ... we're just a customer at our own landfill and paying \$54 a ton for tipping fees ... which,... we could have done ourselves.” As for the old Tultex building, the city has obtained and now maintains the administrative building. Instead of collecting revenue from the largest consumer of water, electric and sewer user, the city is now responsible for at least part of that bill itself.

#### *(In)Ability to Meet Public Needs*

The degree to which the loss of industry has directly impacted the fiscal capacity of local governments to meet public needs varies by locality and the other non-manufacturing industries present. Not surprisingly, Montgomery County did not report any challenges in this area. F. Craig Meadows, the Montgomery County Administrator, declared that Montgomery County “might be one of your exceptions” (Montgomery County, 6/23/11). Although Radford has had its own difficulties with declines in manufacturing, Basil Edwards, economic development and information technology director for the City of Radford said that the city’s fiscal impact has “not significantly” impacted the fiscal capacity of the local government to meet public needs. In his view, the city was able to mitigate the negative impacts of deindustrialization with taxes collected in association with Radford University and meals and area tourism. On this point he said

Our meals tax and hotel lodging and tourism has increased and so it has kind of made up some of the shortfall that we were seeing from the loss of utility use. When a manufacturer goes out it's typically real estate issues. They continue to pay their real estate taxes because they still own the property. Machinery and tools that are used in the manufacturing process, a lot of the times those are sold off and so, really, the two that hurt us are machinery and tools tax, okay, and then utility usage. The city owns its own electric system and its own water system, so the loss of the sale of those two utilities hurts us financially. But because we – there's cost of operation there but there is a profit margin in our utilities. And then, um, of course the loss of machinery tools tax (Radford, 5/31/11).

On the other hand, Jeffrey Worrell, the mayor of the Town of Pulaski spoke of the many areas in which public needs and services have been “severely impacted”:

We've had flatter declining revenues, I guess for the last ten years, at least so we haven't been able to offer any additional services. We've really been stretched to try to cover the ones that we do provide. We've probably reduced the town workforce in that period fifteen (15%) to twenty (20%) also (5/18/11).

The mayor added that the greatest changes have been in the area of “... public works. A lot of your public works ... street, water and sewer department.” Also referring to the county's decreased ability to “provide personnel for basic services: streets, roads, engineering, economic development,” John White said:

And I don't see any let-up in sight. I don't mean to be real negative ...I don't see a place for a quick turnaround. It think it's gonna be slow, it's gonna be gradual, it's gonna take a number of arrows in the quiver to do it" (Town of Pulaski, 5/5/11).

Not all respondents had a negative view Pulaski County's ability to meet the needs of the public in the face of the declines in industry. As seen in my conversation with Peggy White:

PW: I have to give credit due where it is. I think because they have been so conservative and that they've been able to –

MS: They being local government?

PW: The government, yep. Specifically the county. They've been able to meet the challenges (Pulaski County, 5/26/11).

As it seems, there is a mixed bag of fiscal outcomes for these communities. On the one hand, some communities are really struggling make up for the financial loses to the community and are having to cut government services. On the other hand, other localities are seeing no significant changes or are making due with revenue coming in from other sources such as meals tax and other industries such as hotel lodging and tourism.

### **Plant Closures' Effects on Local Businesses**

Since the localities under investigation are homes to other businesses besides manufacturing plants and textile mills, I expected that some nonmanufacturing businesses

would be affected (directly and indirectly) more than others. Interview data in Martinsville and Pulaski primarily point to the losses incurred by retail businesses and local residents shopping in other areas. In Martinsville, Knox said, “Liberty Fair [the regional shopping mall] is only a mere shadow of what it was” (Martinsville, 6/22/11). Similarly, the Mayor Worrell spoke of the decline of the once vibrant Main Street in the Town of Pulaski:

You just don’t have the business downtown that you once had. ... the people downtown aren’t eating lunch, aren’t shopping on their way to work and home from work. So you don’t have near the activity in town that you once had. You don’t have the traffic, you don’t have the pedestrians, so it’s all the businesses are hurting that were downtown ... our Main Street, like most Main Streets in this country now is pretty dead (Town of Pulaski, 5/18/11).

In addition to the declines in manufacturing, Mayor Worrell offered another explanation for the changing face of Downtown Pulaski. According to the mayor, “A dead Main Street is not a problem that is unique to the town of Pulaski, it’s pretty common everywhere. It’s because of the shopping centers.” When I asked, “So where do you think that the people in Pulaski are shopping?” He responded by saying “Christiansburg.”

There are several large malls and lots of restaurants so that’s where everybody goes ... Yeah, I think they are. A lot of them are. A lot of people are not shopping here anymore. They’re going to Christiansburg

where all the big stores and the big malls are. And they're going over there to eat too, so.

In essence, these responses from Knox and Worrell imply that plant closures have the potential to change the look and feel of communities and their downtown district. Of course, the degree of change which occurs will vary from community to community.

## **Dealing with the Remaining Signs of Deindustrialization: Pulaski and Martinsville**

### *Pulaski County*

As time moves forward and localities create ways to reinvent or redefine themselves, it may become more and more difficult to see the signs of deindustrialization in towns such as Radford, which has other economic activities moving the local economy forward. It will be a lot more challenging for other areas such as the Town of Pulaski which was primarily based on manufacturing. As of the writing of this dissertation, many signs and symbols of a strong manufacturing past are prominently displayed downtown. There is no image more prominent than “Big Blue” (see Figures 5 and 6). Big Blue is a large five story complex which is the former home of Pulaski Furniture (Mike Williams, 2006). Figuring out what to do with these enormous facilities presents a major challenge to local government officials and administrators as the localities lack the legal and/ or financial resources to dismantle them. Retrofitting or repurposing the facilities for some other industry or function is slowed by a variety of challenges, as explained by economic development director, John White:

We try to recruit something else. We try to take our workforce either as it is or as it can be trained and to attempt to replace the industry that we've lost. That's a big challenge, as we talked last time. Number one, because the facilities that exists, were originally built for making socks or clothes or furniture and they're ill suited for retrofit. In the last week or so I have shown the Hill Plant, which is part of Jefferson Yarns, a company that still exists, but they've moved out of one of their buildings and that's the Hill Plant. It's empty, vacant. I have desperately tried to market that building for everything you can think of: warehousing, etcetera. The building is segmented, it doesn't have clear span space, it has no neat ceiling height, and the longer it sits; it's like an old house, it doesn't take long for a vacant house to go down. I don't know what it is, it's just the darkness, the dampness, all that. I've tried, a couple weeks ago to get some food warehousing in there that would be temporary warehousing for Phoenix Packaging, it's built a new facility in the county, brought them in, took one look, said 'No way! It's too dirty. Too many vermin. Not enough light. Although they wanted interior light, not outside light. They did not want ambient light. So it's very difficult to get these old buildings that were built for something else to meet, for example, USDA standards for making food or storing food, or that kind of thing. So that's a big challenge (Pulaski, 5/5/11).

As highlighted by White's response, those responsible for community development must continue to seek new opportunities to show potential investors

what their communities have to offer. It may take a lot of showings and rejections; however, these efforts, and others, must continue in order for the community to move forward.

### *Martinsville*

Despite their similar experiences with deindustrialization, there are visible differences between Martinsville-Henry County and Pulaski. Whereas evidence of the loss of industry is still very evident in the Town of Pulaski, it is not so in Martinsville. In fact, it was not until my final visit to Martinsville in December 2013 to gather more research data that I found the old plants. During my previous trips to conduct interviews I noticed that I did not see the large vacant buildings as expected. Indeed, according to one representative of the local Virginia Employment Center (VEC), Martinsville has been going through a lot of revamping and revitalization and as a result, many of the old plants have either been demolished or repurposed. The Tultex building is an example of this revitalization. The massive property, similar in size to Pulaski's Big Blue in that it too measures over 1 million square feet of space, was purchased by local developer, George Lester, and transformed into The Clocktower at the Commonwealth Center. The old manufacturing center now offers four floors of "small professional offices" for rent (Lester Properties, 2014). According to Wayne D. P. Knox, once the Clocktower was put in front of the building, the property became "an instant landmark."

Even with the initiative to remove blight, the economic impact of the closures and layoffs has remained. Working directly in community development, Knox reports that plant closings and mass layoffs have,

“... depressed income and salaries. And one way it has done that is the fact that a lot of people have had to leave here in order to get work. Ah, we have a lot of outbound commuters every day. They go to Danville, Eden, NC, Roanoke to work. Um, and what they've also done, because they do a lot of commuting, that's where they spend the money... They buy their groceries, which surprise a lot of people how much they spend for groceries outside of Martinsville and the county. They spend it Dansville. They spend in Eden. They spend it in Greensboro. Why? Because they have more of a choice. Greenville [North Carolina] is only an hour away (Martinsville, 6/22/11).

It is not just those who work in economic development who are feeling and seeing the lingering effects of deindustrialization. Barbara Jackman, explained that the economic impact has been “devastating” for those who work in healthcare. One specific challenge is the community’s ability to attract and to keep the “upper educated people” such as primary physicians. She further explained that,

For a new primary care physician to come to the community they have to be able to make a living. Which means you have to be able to see people who are going to pay you; either through insurance or through their own pocket. So as that gets harder and harder to find enough patients you find yourself working harder and harder for less and less. And with a shortage of primary care physicians, why would I work here when I can work someplace else ... So you lose the people like that. Anybody that sort of

depends upon the middle class, if you will, for their business (Martinsville, 6/22/11).

So while a locality may be able to change its physical landscape and remove the signs of deindustrialization, in essence cleaning up the look of the community, other less obvious indicators remain. It becomes more difficult for outsiders to recognize that this is still a locality dealing with depressed income, wages, and salaries. Or that this is a community struggling with attracting and keeping service providers such as medical professionals.

### *Shifting Trends in Area Employment*

In my conversations with people in Martinsville one of topics frequently mentioned was the ease with which people could find jobs in one of the area plants in the past. In fact, I was told numerous times, “If you didn’t like how your boss(man) was treating you at this plant, you’d just walk across the street to the next plant.” Admittedly, I was unsure how literally I should take such statements. It was not until my last visit to Martinsville, mentioned earlier, that I understood what the respondents meant. As I sat in the parking lot of the Morris Novelty Company, currently Southern Finishing (*National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*, 2010) I looked directly at the Hooker Furniture plant. Conveniently, both plants were located within walking distance from the local high school. The only thing which separated these two plants is the railroad track and the road which I traveled. With this type of employment culture still alive in the minds of locals and the knowledge that thousands of jobs were lost in the manufacturing industries of these areas, one wonders where the (manufacturing/ production) workers of the community will find employment as they move forward.

Existing research indicates that the US economy has shifted from being “goods-producing to service-providing” (Cormier & Craypo, 2000). Along with recognizing that this shift is occurring in areas like those being investigated here, I found that hospitals and government agencies, education in particular are rising in significance as job providers. Administrators from Pulaski County and Martinsville listed the local hospitals as major employers. According to Wayne Knox, residents of Martinsville commute to Eden, North Carolina and Roanoke, Virginia to work in their hospitals as well.

### *Summary*

The goal of this chapter has been to analyze and understand the community level impact of plant closures and mass layoffs in the New River Valley and Henry County Virginia. As communities previously heavily dependent on manufacturing and textiles work to create new identities and attract new industries, they face a variety of challenges. These challenges include, but are not limited to, fiscal and regional planning concerns. Based on the reported experiences of the Town of Pulaski and Martinsville, localities with similar ties to manufacturing, a top priority of local administrators is coming up with workable solutions to the issue of blight. An added concern attached to this issue is figuring out who will cover the associated cost of demolishing or retrofitting old buildings as well as determining what role local government will play before, during and after blight clean-up. While these are serious challenges for government administrators, these challenges have real life implications for the people who once worked in those large vacant buildings and for the members of their households.

## **Chapter 4: How Workers and Households were Affected by Deindustrialization**

### *Demographics of Displaced Workers and Spouses*

In this chapter I turn my attention to the displaced workers and their households. My intention here is to answer my second research question: How have displaced workers and their households been affected by the loss of manufacturing jobs? A total of 22 interviews were conducted between workers and spouses (See Appendix A). Workers ranged in age from 39 to 77 years old and spouses ranged in age from 34 to 73. Among this group of respondents, there were 7 white males, 10 white females, 2 black males and 3 black females. There were no Latino participants. Since all interview participants were granted anonymity, they were labeled using their race, gender and age. For example, a 35 year old white male was labeled as WM35. This system of identification will be used throughout this dissertation. When two or more participants share the same gender, race and age, letters a, b, or c will be attached to the end (ex. WM35, WM35a). The use of real names is limited to previously published newspaper articles or other news sources reporting on closings and layoffs which occurred in the areas under investigation.

### *Multiple Layoffs/ Plant Closings*

Since interview participants lived and/ or worked in areas which experienced multiple plant shutdown and mass layoffs, many of them had been displaced several times. Among those who reported experiencing multiple layoffs (not all workers reported having this experience as this question was not part of the formal interview schedule), they experienced between two and four separate layoff events lasting various lengths of time.

### *Surviving Multiple Layoffs or Plant Closings*

As a result of their experiences, responses from workers and spouses who experienced multiple layoffs/ closings indicate that they accepted some basic facts regarding working in manufacturing. First, there was the idea that “nothing is guaranteed” as stated by WF38, a spouse whose husband has experienced several layoffs at different plants. Second, some workers operate with an acceptance that layoffs are to be expected when working in manufacturing and that disposition starts with the acceptance of the job offer, as the following words of WM40 make clear:

When they interview you, they say, 'We can promise you a job for 30 days. You want it, yes or no?' And at the time, yeah, I'll take it. But they give you that warning right off the bat. And I've been there for, off and, you know, probably 12 years. Kinda like, giving you heads up. You might be here 30 days and you might be here for, you know, retirement. It's just a trick question. A chance you gotta take. You gotta go out on the end of the limb to get the fruit. You know that. You got to take that chance. The limb break, you gotta start all over.

Third, workers develop a sense for when layoffs are on the horizon, as suggested by my conversation with BF47:

BF47: ... you get in there and you work maybe two years and after you work there a couple years, you kinda know and you feel it when the order starts to go down, you kinda know that there's gonna be a layoff.

MS: Really?

BF47: Within my twelve years being there, I worked a good three years and then got laid off. Maybe two years, then go back and work another three years and then you get laid off again.

MS: So they have this cycle.

BF47: Basically yeah. It depends on the orders and you know, the economy

### *Multiple Closings but Staying in Place*

While shutdowns and layoffs meant permanent displacement for thousands of area workers, for others, a change in the manufacturers' name (ex. Bassett-Walker to VF Imagewear) meant returning to work under new management but in the same job as before the shutdown and/ or layoff. WF68 was one such worker. After being laid off from Bassett-Walker which shut down production, she went right back to work for VF Imagewear "for the same boss man, the same supervisor, [in] the same area." WF68 was able to make this transition because she was one of the workers retained after VF continued production following its acquisition of Bassett-Walker in 1988. Ultimately, VF closed permanently in the summer of 2001 putting 2,300 workers out of work (Martinsville Bulletin, 2001).

As it seems, having experienced multiple layoffs, even temporary layoffs, provided workers and spouses with a perspective that informed or limited their expectations. Also, with new ownership, being displaced did not necessarily mean long term unemployment, the need to learn new or unfamiliar skills, or becoming familiar with new work places.

## **Multiple Layoffs, Employment Choices, and Marital/ Familial Status**

### *The Single and Childless Workers*

For workers whose plants remained open during layoffs, the situation presented a number of choices regarding what to do during the layoff. Among those interviewed, their choices were primarily influenced by the workers' marital status and the presence/

age of children. Interview data from BF47 and two New River Energenetics/ ATK workers, one former and one present, revealed how the presence of a family or lack thereof, can influence a worker's choices. For BF47, childless and unmarried at the time of her first layoff, needing "something to do" during the layoff led her to accept Volvo's offer to go work elsewhere until the workers were recalled:

The very first time we got laid off from Volvo, we had a choice to go to a army base in South Carolina; Charles, South Carolina, to work on the big truck ... They paid for you to get there and they paid you your meals, your mileage but you couldn't come home because you worked seven days a week. It was good money but it was costly. You go in at 7:00 and you get off at 7:00 at night. You didn't have time to come back to Radford and this area.

Her first layoff experience was in direct contrast to her last. At the time of her last layoff she was married, still childless, and no longer saw leaving the area as an option. Regarding finding a new job I asked, "Were you convinced that you were gonna find that other thing here in this area or did you ever consider leaving to find it?" In response she stated, "I did consider it but we got married. I was planning on going to Richmond after it all happened."

Another worker, WM38, also single and childless during the time he worked in manufacturing, explained how his marital status motivated some of his actions when layoffs were announced at his plant. To my surprise WM38 reported that he "volunteered" to be laid off twice when the managers came around announcing short layoffs. Explaining this decision, WM38 stated:

They would come around and ask. And a lot of the guys - if you didn't ask, they chopped straight by seniority and I have high seniority and when they would come around, I knew a lot of the guys below me ...had kids and their wives didn't work. A lot of times I would volunteer. Well, twice I volunteered to keep one of my buddies to work - twice. Because he'd rather not be laid off. And I said well, that's fine. You know, I could make it on my unemployment and so I'd volunteer and then he would work. But that was one of the times where it was only two or three weeks each time. So it wasn't really that bad.

For this worker, the layoffs did not put him in a “dire” situation because of his marital status and because he was sure that he was going back after a few weeks. Further explaining his reasoning behind sacrificing himself and his income, WM38 stated:

For me it wasn't too bad. My situation wasn't too bad. I mean, I had a place to stay, the money that I was getting from unemployment kept me afloat. Like I said, as long as ... I was gonna be called back, my situation wasn't too dire. Not as much as other people, you know. At that time I didn't have, um, my family yet so - it was just me ... I didn't have a lot of concerns that I would see my other co-workers that had, you know, that did have families and, you know, were worried about how they were gonna make it. Because we make pretty good money there and a lot of those guys, you know, their wives didn't work.

### *Married in a Single Income Earning Household*

While unmarried workers faced one set of choices as they relate to layoffs/closures, married workers faced others. The data show that the choices afforded to married workers were often influenced by whether the worker belonged to a single or dual income earning household. Looking first at the single income earning households; it comes as no surprise that multiple layoffs and closings were especially difficult for these families to handle. WM40, for example, was the primary income earner and most often, the only income earner in his household. For this worker, even short layoffs were difficult. Having been laid off twice for four to six months he stated, “I know when 9/11 hit, I was off for a long time. I'm gon[na] say six or four, or something like that. That ain't long but when you're the only one that works, it's long” (Radford, 2/13/12).

During separate interviews WM40 and his wife, WF38, informed me that he was awaiting notification of yet another layoff because the company was coming under new management. For WF38, being a stay-at-home mom and having gone through previous layoffs, the uncertainty of what may come is more difficult to handle than the actual layoff and the changes to their household finances. Both the weight of the burden of the unknown and her belief that “nothing’s guaranteed,” came across during one of our conversations:

WF38: You know, nothing's guaranteed. You have to hang on to your faith and be like, you know, the Lord has gotten us through before, He'll get us through now. But in the mean time you try really hard not to think about it too much, you know... But yeah, supposedly, there's just gonna be a huge change as of June 30th. BAE is gonna decide what they're doing. I wouldn't imagine that they'd want to hire all new people that don't know the jobs. That's wouldn't be possible -

MS: That uncertainty is -

WF38: Is almost bigger than a layoff, isn't it? 'Cause at least you would possibly be going back. You don't really know what - So it's been affecting us for a good while now. I didn't realize how much it has been affecting me but I'm getting through by the grace of God. It's gon' be okay, you know.

MS: Which brings me to the next question.

WF38: You keep asking me about my finances - honestly, they're okay at this point but it's the BAE thing that is weighing over your head a little bit (Radford, 4/10/12).

### *Married in Dual Income Earning Household*

It is understandable why the single income earning household would face financial difficulties; however, the displaced workers who were part of a dual-income earning household did not necessarily have it any easier. I found this to be true in two circumstances: (1) when dependent children were in the home and (2) when both income earners worked in manufacturing. The statements below are representative of both types of households with the response from WM66 illustrating the first circumstance and my conversation with BF46 illustrating the second. Reflecting on his experience, WM66 said:

Well, it was kinda hard because whenever you're trying to raise children - during that time I had one girl that was in school, and then trying to keep food on the table and keep their clothes going and everything. It kinda got a little rough but the only thing that we had to rely on was the unemployment we had for the next year.

Reflecting on her husband's many layoffs and trying to balance the wants and needs of their children, BF46, a state employee, and I had the following conversation:

MS: How many layoffs have your husband gone through?

BF46: He's had at least three. At least three and they were all plant closures. All three of 'em.

MS: Really?

BF46: The worst one, I think the worse one he had, was when he got laid off from DNS back in, I think, it was like '99 or 2000. Because, see, the kids, they were at that state where, you know, they were into activities. They were used to going, they gotta have what everybody else has in school. And you know, you have that mindset, as quick as you get it, you spend it. You know, you didn't think about, you know, something happening or saving. So we had really tough times back then. And then you learn a little bit from back there 'cause you're really struggling from week to week. You know, it's like, do you still got lunch money, you still got this or that or groceries and things like that (Pulaski, 5/13/11).

It was surprising how many of the workers interviewed were also married to other manufacturing workers. In fact, five of the workers interviewed reported having spouses who also worked in manufacturing. Although my nonrandom sample does not permit a solid inference about the frequency of this [phenomenon], the fact that I encountered five implies that it is not uncommon. Four of those five workers stated that their spouse also experienced at least one plant shutdown or mass layoff. Again, WM40 was waiting for news on whether or not he was going to be laid off again from his current/ her former plant.

With the scale of deindustrialization in these parts of Virginia, I should have

suspected that I would find households where both spouses would be displaced from the same plant(s). In the households where both workers worked at the same plant and where layoffs or closings happened in phases, not all workers made it to the end of the closing. Similarly, some workers who experienced callbacks, generally based on seniority, were not successful in their assigned post and/ or area of assembly because they were unable to adjust to the often new and unfamiliar tasks. Consequently, some workers vacated their positions early or were fired shortly after returning. The following responses reflect these experiences:

WF48c: Well, he went before me ... when they started the lean [manufacturing] and they were moving him around a lot, he quit. That's what caused him to quit, was them moving him. 'Cause he was a machine operator and they kept putting him on the cabinet line assembling cabinets, entertainment centers - it was hurting his back too much.

BF47: It was a bad thing for me with them. 'Cause actually, when I got called back from being laid off, you get placed in different jobs anywhere all over the plant ... wherever you fall in; your seniority is where you go. And my incident is when I wasn't familiar with where they put me; and there's some things that you just can't do. And after twelve years working on a cab line and then they're gonna put you on a frame line which is entirely different work; it's still line work but it's different. It's harder manually (Pulaski, 3/01/11).

Illustrating another outcome for households where both partners were employed by manufacturing was WF46, displaced from TMD Friction, Inc. and her husband

WM53, retired from his plant after 31 years. For this family, the husband's career was typical of manufacturing careers before large scale deindustrialization occurred; typical in the sense that workers entered the factory with the expectation that they would work until the age of retirement. WF46 explained that she was laid off after ten years due to the plant closing and sending "the majority of it ...to Mexico" (Pulaski, 04/03/11)

In separate interviews, both WF46 and WM53 made comments suggesting that they expected her to have a similarly long career in manufacturing. Specifically, they explained that they used her employment status as the basis for deciding when he should retire. WM53 stated, "Went out on my retirement but when I went out I didn't know she was going to lose her job (laughing). I didn't know that she's going to be laid off when I was retiring." WF46 stated, "We decided to do that because I still had a good job."

WM53 retired one year prior to WF46's layoff from TMD Friction, Inc.

### *Learning From Previous Layoffs/ Closures*

"I really learned where I'm not going through this again" is what BF46 said regarding lessons learned from the layoffs that her husband went through. For some workers previous layoffs and/ or closures can lead some them to be more aware of what's happening even when co-workers are in a state of disbelief. For WF48(c), who was displaced from Vanity Fair (VF) after 22 years and Stanley Furniture after 6 years, these experiences allowed her to read the signs of an impending closure when her co-workers thought otherwise:

"I went to Stanley and then - I worked there probably two and a half - three years and then they laid off two hundred and fifty people. And I had already been through a layoff and I knew once they start, they don't stop till it's totally gone. And see, 'cause we had started taking that lean

manufacturing - we'd done the lean manufacturing at VF. And when they started that we had 18 plants and we went down from 18 plants to nothin in seven years. They told us with the lean manufacturing, that all that would kinda consolidate operations and it would help us more, be more productive. But really all that did was bunch more on one person and get rid of people. And so, we'd done that there and then when they started it at Stanley, ... they told us ...in a meeting and the head guy over it asked me one day when we was eating lunch what I thought about lean manufacturing and I told him, I said, well, I'm gonna tell you what it'd done to VF. And I said, 'we had 18 plants and we went down to nothin in seven years. And I said now you're starting it at Stanley.' I said, 'my question is how many years is it gonna be before it's not here either?' ... And he said, um, he said 'No, lean manufacturing is here to stay.' And I said, 'it's a bunch of bull 'cause ... all ya'll doing is consolidating it so you can get it overseas and have less people doing it for less money there...I've already seen it...they can go from 18 plants to nothin ... we ain't got three, maybe five plants at Stanley in the US ..., I bet ya'll don't make it two years.' And we didn't (Martinsville, 7/6/11).

In short, the results from this data indicate having prior experience with being displaced in conjunction with the presence of a spouse and children were influential factors in the choices pursued by the displaced worker. Choices which were influenced included, but were not limited to, deciding if, when, and where to seek new employment opportunities. These factors also helped the workers

determine how severe their situation was and helped to inform their choices and actions following job loss.

### **Advance Warning – It's Not Always Consistent**

#### *Early Warning Recipients*

There was little consistency among workers' responses regarding the amount of official warning they received prior to being laid off or the plant closing. Those receiving advance notice reported being informed somewhere between 30 days to more than six months. WM39, a workers who received six months notice recalled, "they announced it and then they started phasing out some of the production, moving it, so it was quite a bit of time for some of us" (Pulaski, 6/1/11).

Reponses from workers who received lengthy advance warnings of plant closure indicate that this strategy, as opposed to immediate shutdown, benefited some workers as well as the company. Noting one benefit to the company, WF68 said, "we closed the last of March but I stayed on two weeks and helped clean up afterwards." Similarly, WM77 said:

When they sold the plant they had to, well, they had all the equipment there, didn't have anything to do with it, didn't know what to do with it so they had an auction to sell the equipment and they hired me to stay, work half days or whatever just to keep an eye on the equipment, the building. Make sure that the building was locked. More or less like a night watchman or something (Pulaski, 3/26/11).

Indicating the benefit to the workers, WM77 added, "But I needed it. Well, you know, it gave me maybe three or four months work where I wouldn't have had. Explaining which workers were able to "hang out longer" WF46 noted that in her plant, these workers

were:

typically the key people, like some of the engineers and maintenance people and basically the good operators, are the ones that got to hang out longer because we were trying to make the transition of moving it from Dublin, Virginia to Mexico (Pulaski, 04/03/11).

### *Lack of Clarity about Requirements of the WARN Act*

Responses to my question, “How much warning did the plant give before you were laid off?” revealed that some workers were “notified properly” as noted by WF62, while other workers were uncertain of the amount of notification they were entitled to by law. Other statements also revealed that only some workers were knowledgeable of their rights provided by the Worker Adjustment and Retraining (WARN) Act and that not all plants were operating in compliance of it as indicated below:

BF47: They have to let you know 30 days in advance.

WM77: I think by law they have to give you ninety days - three months. Now the insurances, they came back and sold us a bill of goods but I think that federal regulations is that if you're going to close a plant completely you have got to give the employees, I think it's three months.

WF62: The law required, I think it was 60 days, the WARN Act or something like that, and we were notified properly.

WF48: Yes, we received the WARN letter. Some of our plants within the company didn't and they had to pay them.

### *Receiving Little or No Advance Warning*

Whereas WM77 said, “They didn't just come in one day and lock the doors and walked. They gave us ample notice ...,” there were numerous reports of workers

receiving little or no advance warning of their plant's shutdown or layoff. For instance, WF48a said, "Thursday evening at 4:30 I was told that Friday was my last day."

According to a 2006 Southwest Times article (p. 1), 200 ATAC workers in Pulaski County were "caught totally by surprise ... when a lunchtime meeting turned [into their] final minutes on the job." Among the 200 workers was Gene Hurst, a plant manager.

We have long known that workers at all levels of manufacturing are impacted by plant closings and layoff, including those working in management (Harrison & Bluestone, 1988), however, it may be less well known that workers at different levels get notified differently – should notification be given at all. Speaking specifically on the experience of those in management at his former plant, BM48 told me that,

in management, they don't have to give you no time...They won't tell you when they gon' lay you off ... They can come in and just tell you - I can be talking to you today and you can be at our desk working and they come and tap you on the shoulder and tell you, 'we're letting you go.' No warning (Radford, 3/23/12).

Sharing his experience and offering his theory on why his company did not give warning, WM38 said:

Sometimes no warning. Usually it was no warning. They didn't, like, I guess they didn't want us to catch a whiff that we were gonna get laid off, I guess, I don't know. But usually it was no warning. We would come in - the times that we were laid off, we would come in ready for work for that shift, or we would get a phone call. Sometimes I got called. Because I would be working second or third shift and day shift would go in that

morning and found out, hey, we're laid off. So then I get a phone call, 'Hey, you're laid off. Your paperwork is being sent to the unemployment office. You need to go by and take care of it. We'll call you when we're ready for you to come back. Okay.' So, a lot of time it was just a phone call that 'hey, don't come in, you're laid off.'

Often the major difference between workers such as WM38, BM49 and other displaced workers receiving improper notification was the understanding that they would or should be returning to their positions at the end of the layoff. Most workers interviewed were permanently laid off.

For many of the displaced workers, receiving a WARN letter, an indication of some compliance with the WARN Act, did not necessarily translate into receiving more than a day's notice. Evidence of this type of behavior by manufacturers was found in the 2010 sudden and permanent shutdown of American of Martinsville. With this shutdown 225 full-time workers were provided with a WARN letter informing them that "effective immediately" they were all permanently laid off. Reporting on the plant's closure, Debbie Hall (2010) interviewed some of the affected workers. Mary Foley, a 14 year veteran of the company, said:

I was told to come in Friday (April 16) to do some samples for product development ... , but when she arrived that morning, she was met in the parking lot by and told 'the plant was shut down till further notice'.

To gather some understanding regarding the lack of consistency regarding advanced notification to manufacturing workers, I turn to the work of Weissman (1992, p. 1). Weissman wrote that the WARN Act

... requires that businesses employing more than 100 workers give employees 60 days notice of layoffs, if they lay off more than 50 workers at a given site. It exempts companies from the notification requirement if a plant closure is due to a sudden business downturn or if notification would adversely affect a company's ability to procure credit needed to maintain operations.

Based on Weissman's explanation, it is possible that the inconsistency in how workers were notified was due to the number of workers employed at the plant at the time of the layoff/ closing. Another explanation comes directly from representatives of Radford Army Ammunition Plant (RAAP). In 1992 the RAAP abruptly laid off twelve full-time salary employees without giving them the 25 day notice required by law. Acknowledging the plant's decision to pay the workers instead of giving them proper notice was intentional, the plant's Public Affairs Officer told the Radford News Journal (M. Gordon, 1992) that "the company felt that it was better than keeping them around for 25 days before the reduction." Regardless of the explanations, the Department of Labor (US Department of Labor, 2009), writes that companies violating WARN Act are liable to each employee for an amount equal to back pay and benefits for the period of the violation, up to 60 days ... An employer who fails to provide the required notice to the unit of local government is subject to a civil penalty not to exceed \$500 for each day of violation. The employer may avoid this penalty by satisfying the liability to each employee within three weeks after the closing or layoff.

It is difficult to dispute that these manufacturing workers, and possibly current

manufacturing workers, were indeed left vulnerable by the loopholes existing in the WARN Act. The decision to accept the sanction instead of giving the workers the appropriate advance notice illustrates Weissman's (p. 1) criticism of the law in which he wrote:

What has become apparent, however, is how little protection the WARN Act actually affords workers. Plant closings in the United States have continued unabated, and companies have used loopholes in the Act to avoid compliance.

### **Suspicious of Layoffs or Closings before Officially Announced**

Since the workers interviewed worked in manufacturing for many years or decades, between 5 and 45 years, most reported being able to "read the writing on the wall" and recognize the signs of the closure or layoff long before the formal announcement. Only one worker answered with a "No" to the question, "Did workers suspect that the plant was going to close before it was announced officially?" For those who had suspicions, this is what they had to say:

WF48a: ...like I said, the writing was on the wall. He had laid off and laid off, and laid off, until there was just a little small core group left in the plant. And of course, the small core group in the office. I mean, you knew it was coming, you just didn't know when.

WM65: We knew something was going on that nobody really put a finger on it. They tried to keep us moving, tried to keep us working, but when we found out that all the furniture was being stored we knew something was going on ... We had warehouses from the east coast to the west coast filled with furniture that had not been sold but we had made.

WM38: Well we always suspected that we were gonna get - there was rumors that we all were gonna be laid off ... there were more rumors than actual times of being laid off.

WF48: Just, um, just the nature of the industry and this country. And, um, the knowledge that they were building plants elsewhere.

### *Dealing with Frequent Rumors*

Because of the constant workings of the rumor mill (closing/ not closing, layoffs, new buyers coming in), workers reported that concerns about layoffs were a frequent occurrence. One worker reported that the rumors produced in his plant often contained greater detail than what most workers on the production line would have access to:

WM38: Like we may hear through the grapevine in a year's time, we might hear 20 different times, 'oh we are getting laid off, we're getting laid off, this is gonna be for good this time. Somebody messed this up, somebody did something wrong. We're out the door. They're gonna can everybody here and start over. They're moving the facility.' We heard so many times they're moving the facility to Alabama, they're gonna close this facility, it's non-profitable. Um, we heard everything. I heard everything under the sun. Where those rumors came from, I don't know. But I do know it wasn't my co-workers coming up with it. You know, because some of 'em were pretty in depth rumors. Like the whole moving to Alabama thing.

Having to deal with constant rumors also meant that workers often found it difficult to separate fact from fiction while still employed and delayed job searches and other forms of preparation:

WF48c: They kinda heard rumors but a lot of 'em didn't believe it. They was in denial. And even after they announced it, they were in denial. They was like, 'no'. 'Cause they kept hearing that somebody else was gonna buy it and reopen it and all this stuff. Even 'till the day we were laid off, they still kept saying - I said, 'no, they won't. Once they formally announce it, you're gone.' But they would not believe it.

WF68: I figured they would downsize but I didn't figure they'd ever close. I figured they would keep - at least keep, uh, part of it open.

(Nelson Redd, a 20-year veteran employee of Bassett): We didn't think it (closing) was gonna be this soon ... I'm gonna wait until the last two weeks of work before looking for another job (Debbie Hall, 2007).

## **Assessments of Overall Situations After Layoffs or Closings**

### *Immediately Following Job Loss*

As expected, when asked to assess their overall situation immediately after the closing or layoff, all of the workers reported facing some degree of financial difficulty. What made their situations so difficult? The obvious answer is the loss of income. However, their responses indicate that there were other challenges. Specifically, for those with children still at home, the time out of work was especially difficult because their financial obligations to the household/ family remained and while unemployment payments helped, it was only a percentage of the regular household income. (See section labeled "Stresses to the Household: the Spouses' Perspectives" for additional finding related households with dependent children)

For BM49, the 12 month period he was laid off was "devastating." For him, this was the first time he had been out work. As his response shows, in addition to dealing

with being out of work, he was also struggling emotionally with not being able to meet his expectations as a father regarding his daughters and two major social events: one daughter's high school graduation and the expenses associated with that event and his other daughter's wedding. BM49 reported being deeply hurt by not being able to fulfilling his role as a father:

To me it was devastating. Ah, I've never not worked in my life as far as when I was of age to work. I've never not worked. I had my daughter, my youngest daughter, she was in high school going on her last year, I couldn't do the things that wanted to do for her as I did for the oldest one. So that was heartbreaking also. My other daughter's getting married and I couldn't help with the finances - doing my part. That hurt. I mean as far as finances are concerned, we - just by the grace of God, we had managed our finances pretty well that, ah, on the outside looking in, you could never think that I was hurting financially.

Following their job loss, many workers came to the realization and/ or acceptance that the income previously earned will not be available to them in the future. When you consider this realization, their age (many were over age 45), and the state of the local economies; the chances of these workers significantly improving their immediate situation were not very high. For all workers the immediate task was applying for their unemployment benefits, severance packages if available, and health insurance coverage. For the oldest workers, a primary concern was how they would make it until retirement age at which point they could apply for Social Security benefits. Some of these concerns are highlighted below:

WF62: Alright, I was age 55 and I felt like, with other manufacturing facilities around the country being closed, it wasn't a chance getting a job somewhere else in manufacturing and personnel. So I'd just have to do something else for a living to get on up to retirement.

WM65: Actually, I had a question: What do I do now? Because they had just dumped a lot of people on the unemployment line and if I remember right, there were other places around that had closed. And so unemployment was kinda high at that point.

WF68: Well, the biggest thing was - I mean we got a severance package on the amount of years that you had been there. We got unemployment. We got extra, I think we got some extra time on that because of the severity of it in this area. My biggest thing is having to keep insurance. I mean, I've made it fine and I didn't have no doubt that I would make it fine but, it's, when you've done something for so long and then you don't do that anymore, it's just, it just take something away from you. Especially at 55-60 years old, it's hard to go out here and get a job making anything. And, I mean, you'd never find a job in Martinsville paying what we had when we shut down. 'Cause I was making \$11.89 a hour when we closed. My job I quit from the other day, I was making \$8.69 (laughing). But, it's just, it's just devastating. And I've got faith where a lot of people don't have. I know the good Lord's going to provide for me.

WM77, a 34 year veteran of the textile industry, was the only worker who intentionally exited the labor force when his plant closed. His choice to retire was

primarily based on health problems that he had prior to the closing. WM77 said, “We didn’t look for another job. This was right after I’d have my operation and I really wasn’t capable of working and we just decided to retire.”

### *Securing Unemployment Benefits*

For most of the workers interviewed, applying for unemployment benefits at the local “unemployment office”, formally known as the Virginia Employment Commission (V.E.C) was crucial in immediately addressing their situation after job loss and beyond.

The words of these three workers are representative of this recurring theme:

BF57: I drew unemployment for three years and thank God for the government, yeah. Because, well, what they did, each year they gave us like a tier. They would give us a different tier to draw. Like you have three different tiers. If your money run out then there was something else put in place to continue that. So I was able to do that, to draw from that for three years. Almost three years. And then after that there was nothing.

WM65: I applied for unemployment compensation and I started putting in applications. I was laid off in April and I got a job in the last week in June working for another manufacturing plant here but it wasn't furniture, it was Magnox Corporation ... it was something totally different from what I had been used to and I lasted there from late June to probably mid October when they told me I was no longer needed there. Actually they fired me. 'Cause I made a couple mistakes on mixing up the batches of this chemical stuff.

WF48c: I immediately went into PH (Patrick Henry Community College) ...I went there immediately, like two days after the layoff 'cause I didn't

want my unemployment to run out. And I kept my money all the way until the day I graduated.

Being able to draw unemployment and other benefits specifically available to displaced workers was of great importance. Following job loss and applying for unemployment benefits, workers typically went in one of three directions: (1) collected their cash benefit while waiting to return to work, (2) used the job search assistance available at the VEC to find new employment because their plant was permanently closed, or (3) collected their cash benefit while they returned to school to earn a degree. Two of the three workers who reported going back to school did so at the local community colleges. The third worker was working on finishing a Bachelors degree. It should be noted that option three was used the least among the workers interviewed.

### *Beyond the Help of the Unemployment Office*

While most workers were sure that they would never earn the kind of income previously earned because of the declines in manufacturing and textile industries, others were sure that the place of their previous employment stood in the way of them securing new employment. For the latter group, all the help available at the V.E.C may not be enough to help them find new employment regardless of industry. Interview data from displaced workers and non-workers revealed that this is a real issue for some displaced workers. Describing her situation immediately after losing her job at Volvo, BF47 said:

Very hard 'cause, you know, you go to the V.E.C. and you have to go through that process and it's hard to get hired because of the name. Because of their turnover and they know that ...They know that you're gonna go so nine times out of ten they're not going to hire you.

I came across this issue again during my interview with Kevin Byrd, director of the New River Valley Competitiveness Center. Confirming that BF47's experience is not unique, Byrd informed me that he too has come across employers voicing their reluctance to hire laid off Volvo workers. Explaining, Byrd said:

When Volvo lays off, a lot of those employees would go to the Corporate Research Center to go work in a labor environment...Spoke with a company there that is assembling a [inaudible] reduction piece/component. So one of their very good tactile workers is being called back by Volvo and this employer said 'I probably will not hire Volvo people again when they get laid off because they have X number of days to consider their rehire at Volvo or else they get put back to a very low tier employee.'

### **Losses - More than Just Income**

#### *Workers' Losses*

Keeping in mind that paid employment provides workers with more than just a paycheck, each worker was asked what they have lost other than income. Results show that workers' losses could be categorized in the following ways: loss of dignity, self-worth or self-respect; social bonds, job satisfaction, personal possessions, and employment benefits. As indicated by the workers' own words, it is highly possible that workers experienced a combination of these non-income earning losses.

Men and women, workers and spouses reported having experienced the loss of dignity and/ or self-worth on some level. What comes across from the responses is not just the loss of dignity or self-worth but that male and female workers experienced this

loss differently. From the quotes below, you see that the workers make a clear distinction between their incomes allowing them to be a provider for the family versus being a contributor.

Looking first at responses from or about male workers, you see responses such as no longer feeling “whole” when he lost his ability to function as the family’s provider.

BM49: Mine was mostly, um, it was the mental/ psychological effect it had on me as far as being a provider in my home and not being able to do the things I want to. But I've worked so long for my children, and ah, it was - that was the heart breaking part. Not the money, per se, but the fact that, ah, what it took out of me. What it tried to take out of me. Just not being that - you don't feel whole. You don't feel like the man you should be for your family. It's just that you're not, as for me, I like being the one they can depend on. I go to God, I'll do what I gotta do to make sure that everybody's good. But when that was taken away, you know, I just - you fall into like a depression and, um, you find ways to pick yourself up but you just - it's all a shock to you. If you are the type of person that worked hard all his life, I didn't grow up with no silver spoon in my mouth. Mine was plastic so I had to do what I had to do. I've always worked hard.

WF61: Just what my husband lost at first. His respect – self-respect. He’s always worked, he’s always provided and there was a period before he started college when he was just so depressed and it just wasn’t him, you know?

Contrary to the men, BF57 felt a loss of dignity and self-worth when she was no longer able to financially “contribute” to the household. It should be noted that BF57’s spouse was unemployed and received a small disability payment each month due to an injury incurred while working at a manufacturing facility. Describing what she lost, BF57 said:

Dignity. I mean you don’t feel your self-worth, you can’t contribute. Like someone for instance would say ‘let’s go out to eat’. Well, I don’t have the money to go out to eat and they’ll ‘I’ll do it this time’ but you don’t, I’m not one to take advantage of nobody and so it’s sometimes awkward when you can do those things so, you know, there’s the lack of funds for that. I can’t ... you know, go to the doctor to get a check-up or things like that cause I don’t have the co-pay, you know? Or the, what is it that they give you, the office visit? Things like that even. My grandkids come down, I’d love to take them sometimes just to get ‘em ice-cream. I can’t do those things. Not all the time. Every now and then, but not, you know? And those are some of the things we’ve been used to doing.

BF57 also spoke of losing her independence. From our conversation you can see that this was a major loss for her and one that she was somewhat reluctant to disclose:

BF57: I guess the only other thing I would add is that I feel that after the layoff it took a lot of my independence away because I’m used to going and get what I want, when I want, okay. That sounds selfish, but -

MS: No, that’s okay.

BF57: Without having to depend on my family or depend on even my

husband, you know, I could get what I want and I know that I worked for it, you know what I'm saying? So, the biggest thing is that I lost a lot of my independence because I have to depend on someone else.

MS: That's major.

BF57: [Yes], it is. I mean, it is to me.

MS: I think it would be major to anyone else.

BF57: And in one sense, I feel like that, just to be honest with you, that sometimes can be a power play on the spouse's side because unless that money is given, there are things that I can't do and so that bothers me more than anything. He'll get me anything I ask him for but again, he's in control of what I do and I don't like it.

For many respondents, losing the structure that a work schedule provides was problematic and had a meaningful impact to their lives separate from the loss of their incomes. One worker, WM77, spoke of losing "The busy life." He spoke of experiencing some difficulty finding ways to occupy himself now that he no longer had employment outside the home. He said, "You wake up [and] you say 'now what?' I can go mow the yard. Well, you can only mow the yard so many times. You can't mow it every day." Also referring to the loss of a "routine schedule, which "means a lot ...[m]ore than you can imagine," WF48b said that she lost a "sense of security" and when she lost her "routine." This loss, according to her, impacts life in every way."

One way that the lives of the workers were impacted by loss of a routine related to having paid employment outside the home was an increase in stress on the part of the worker and on the workers' relationships inside the home. The response from BF52, the

spouse of a displaced worker, highlights this point. According to BF52, her husband was “just stressed.” He was stressed because:

everyday he didn't have nowhere to go so that put a strain on our relationship because he wasn't joyful. He didn't want to do things sometimes; not all the time but every once in a while he was down.

The other loss frequently mentioned by respondents was the loss of friendships developed at work. Referring fondly to the people he worked with, WM65 said:

I think the camaraderie with the people. We had some real good people working down there and I formed a lot of friendships. I don't see those guys any more... I still see a few of 'em occasionally but it's just - and we all, every one of us would still be at Pulaski Furniture Company today if they were still open.

While his wife made no mention of the loss of friendships following the closing the plant where she worked, WM53 did while pointing out what he lost as well. He said:

So we haven't lost anything but her friend ... You know how it is. The plant close down and everybody goes different directions and we used to kind of get together and have cook-outs and, of course, parties back when I was drinking but I don't drink no more.

What WM53's comment shows is that sometimes spouses of displaced workers also mourn the non-income losses. As indicated by the comment above, this may be especially true when they too have benefited directly in some way.

Surprisingly, some workers were not sad or bitter about their job loss. In fact, a few felt a sense of relief after the closing or layoff. WM38, who was not married at the

time of his job loss and earning less income in his current full-time non-manufacturing job said:

I haven't lost anything good. I lost a lot of stress. That's gone. Lost that. Lost a lot of the anxiety associated with that work environment. So, I don't know, I'd say everything I lost has been good. You know, if you take out the wage part of it.

Much like WM38, WF48c reported not currently earning the kind of wages she earned prior to job loss but that she “got peace of mind” when Stanley Furniture shut down. WF48c’s feelings towards the Stanley closing was in complete opposition to the closing of Vanity Fair (VF) but was in line with many of the other displaced workers interviewed. When reflecting on her experience at Stanley, she said “I couldn’t stand that rotten job.” On the other hand, reflecting on her experience at VF, she said:

I lost a lot of my friends. You know, just the camaraderie. 'Cause it was fun. It was like a sisterhood. And I do see 'em here and there but a lot of them I haven't seen since. But Stanley, I don't, I'm just thankful I don't have that job no more.

### *Loss of Insurance Benefits – “We’re insurance poor now”*

For workers and their spouses, the loss of health insurance coverage was a major loss that was separate from their paychecks. While some households were able to fall back on some other sources of health coverage, most were not. Among those who still had health coverage, the source was either a spouse who was still employed somewhere where health insurance was provided, reliance on benefits provided through Veteran Affairs (VA) from prior military service, access through a spouses’ retirement plan, or qualification for Social Security benefits. As the responses from these individuals show,

those without these resources indicate that the loss of health benefits was a major concern and an expensive one to rectify:

BF47: I was having a problem with the benefits; couldn't afford it. The benefits cost more than you were making. A few weeks ago I went to Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield in Dublin, three hundred and forty-something dollars for my own insurance a month.

WM39: The health insurance I had lost but I have it back now ... That's about it.

WF73: We're insurance poor now. We have to pay for it all. Our insurance cost around eight hundred dollars (\$800) a month and that's with social security and, you know, supplemental.

Even in households with two adults working full-time, I heard complaints of difficulty affording health insurance. One unlikely source of such comments was WF34, a spouse who was not married to her husband when he was laid off but is familiar with how much "cheaper" health insurance provided by the plant is. While she is happy that her husband no longer works in manufacturing, WF34 said:

Well, if he was still there [at the plant] when we were married and with kids, the insurance most definitely would have been cheaper. I mean, I pay close to \$1,000 a month in insurance for a family plan.

### *Personal Losses: Material and Non-Material*

Respondents often made the clear distinction between their material and non-material losses. Among the non-material losses were things such as the ability to take vacations, go on trips, and purchase extras (ex. Shopping, clothes for children and grandchildren, etc.). For one longtime housewife, WF61, the closing of her husband's

plant meant the loss of her “freedom.” She explained to me what she meant by loss of freedom:

WF61: I lost my freedom (laughing).

MS: Tell me about that.

WF61: Well, I mean, I was used to doing stuff a certain way ... I would get up in the morning at a certain time. You know, I always got up with him but I would do things at a different rate. But with him there, he wanted to do something constantly. So I had to constantly be doing things or just sitting back letting him do it.

MS: Like what?

WF61: Well, the dishes and the laundry and the cleaning and – He always did the cooking, he’s a better cook than I am but just my whole day was built around what[WM65] wanted to do. And keeping him busy and keeping him occupied until he started school. That helped.

In some households I found that the personal losses had the potential of having a multiplier effect. This type of loss was reflected in comments from individuals who sold and/ or pawned personal possessions in order to make ends meet. In these households, some of the items sold or repossessed were either essential to the household’s survival or items which could have been used to make money in the formal or informal markets. Parts of my conversations with WM66 and WM40 highlighted this type of loss. WM66 explained that his household experienced two difficult personal losses:

WM66: During that time we had to end up going bankrupt, losing our vehicles, repossession. Had to start all over. It was, like, just start from the

ground up. Just start a little bit at a time. That's the only thing you can do.

MS: Was that one vehicle or two?

WM66: One vehicle.

MS: That's gotta be hard.

WM66: It's very hard. Very frustrating to lose your vehicles. Let's see, there's something else. I think we had bought a stove and I think they repossessed that too.

MS: A stove?

WM66: [Yes]. We couldn't pay for nothin'. We couldn't pay no payments on it. So we had a wood stove. We cooked on a wood stove. That kept us going. That was one thing. I think it was the electric stove we had to do away with and just cook on the wood stove. So it got rough, times got hard, but we was able to make it.

Among other things, WM40 sold work equipment:

WM40: when I got laid off, I had a bunch of construction equipment. Like some tools and certain, um, pieces of equipment. Like my scaffold so you can get way up in the air. I sold some of that stuff to make money so we can have something to eat. You know, stuff like that. You know, you sell guns or, you know, you sell certain things just to make sure everybody is provided ... Certain tools that I had that were, um, they were still usable ...

As these quotes illustrate, there are varying ways to interpret these losses.

On the one hand, losing one's possessions is often difficult to handle. On the other

hand, while still difficult, pawning or selling household goods can bring temporary relief to struggling households. However, should these households find themselves in the same or similar situations in the future, they will have to turn elsewhere for financial relief.

### **Stresses to the Household: The spouses' perspective**

Spouses reported experiencing stress from many areas. The most commonly reported stressors concerned the loss of health coverage, coming to terms with not being able to afford the regular bills or anything extra, and explaining to children that sacrifices had to be made. For several wives, dealing with their husbands being at home all the time was also a source of stress as their presence either created more work for them or did not take away from their existing workload. As a spouse with a full-time job outside the home, BF52 spoke directly to this last point. She said, "... he didn't take over as house husband or nothing. He was just around the house. I still had to do about everything." WF73 also spoke of her husband's increased presence in relation to house work. While she laughed about it, she was also serious about what the change had meant for her and the workload inside the home, as was revealed during our conversation:

WF73: The worst thing for me is I used to be a good housekeeper. I cannot keep house with him.

MS: You can't keep house with him? How was that for you? Like having to adjust to the fact that you used to be able to keep things neat and tidy and –

WF73: It really, really is irritating. I sometimes just can't hardly stand it. You know, just, I just really don't like it ... I used to be able to keep up with it, you know, and now I can't.

There were mentions of other stressors as well. For instance, WF38 spoke of the stress of dealing with her husband's layoff while eight months pregnant and without health insurance:

I think one of the biggest stresses for me ... were we had decided in September of 2002, my daughter was 15 months old, that I would stay home because I found out I was pregnant with [child's name] and it was just to a place where we didn't have child care, my mother-in-law had kept [child's name] up to that point but she was telling us that it was too much. And I knew I was expecting another one and more and more work was put on me at the bank ... And it was just, you know, everything was compounding. And so we made the neutral decision for me to stay at home and it was going fine until, you know, the stress came and ... he was gonna be laid off. And here I was pregnant, have no insurance, and also questioning whether or not I have done the right thing (WF38).

BF52 spoke of her husband's loss of employment and his subsequent change in attitude negatively affecting their relationship:

He was just stressed; everyday he didn't have nowhere to go so that put a strain on our relationship because he wasn't joyful. He didn't want to do things sometimes; not all the time but every once in a while he was down.

BF46 pointed of the uncertainty her household experienced concerning meeting its financial obligations:

How you gon pay your bills. You know, making sure you can meet your expenses. Having the sacrifices of not being able to do some of things you

want to do.

Like many others, WM53 noted that the loss of employment really affected the children in the home. He also mentioned the difficulty associated with getting them to understand the necessary changes:

Probably be the extras that we used to do. We had to tighten up, you know, and not spend as much money. And the kids, you know, had a rough time. They didn't understand, you know, 'well, why don't we ever go out and eat no more? Why don't we do this and that?' Just had to explain to 'em we don't have the money like we used to.

Finally, WF6's response pointed to that one thing which should alleviate, not add to, her stress level. She reported that the act of accepting help from others; especially when that help came from the church and/ or its members was particularly difficult to handle:

It's when, like we go to church, and our church group... they're professional. A lot of them are professionals. They own their own business, school teachers. They would talk about doing things and then they would include us with 'we'll pay for you'. And that was but we started staying we were busy at that time anyway. You know, 'cause, after a while, it's that loss of respect in yourself. You love 'em for doing it, but at the same time, you want to be able to pay. You want to be part of 'em and it got to where they stopped asking for a while. They would just, they would do things without us which was fine but it was just in the back of my mind. They would talk about contributing money for something and I couldn't do it. And it was just the fact that we couldn't go, or couldn't do,

couldn't help, you know? ... They never would say anything to us, they treated us with respect, with love, if we needed anything, if I had said to 'em, then they would have been right there. But I kept it inside. I didn't want them to know we were needy, you know? ... You want to be part of things, you want to help. Like on Christmas, you want to help people.... You want to do for others. You can't just, the thought of people constantly giving to me drives me crazy (WF61).

### *Summary*

This chapter discusses how those interviewed were affected by deindustrialization. While the data revealed that the experiences of displaced workers and their families are based on many factors, there were some common themes reflected in the responses of workers and their spouses. First, there is the distinction between a temporary and a permanent layoff. Respondents reported preparing for life after the layoff differently based on the length of time the layoff was expected to last. Second, and perhaps one of the most important findings, is the workers' marital and familial status. It was clear from respondents that having a family, or lack thereof, influenced their choices and actions before and after layoffs. Third, respondents found value in having experienced a layoff or closing in the past. Prior experience with layoffs or closings provided them with perspective and a unique set of tools that helped in recognizing what was happening when others could not. Reflecting on past experiences also allowed workers and spouses to make decisions on which survival strategies they would or should employ during periods of unemployment because it worked or did not work in the past.

## **Chapter 5: Survival Strategies Employed by Displaced Workers and their Households**

In this chapter I focus on the efforts and strategies employed by the household (workers, spouses and children) in order to meet their needs during the workers' period of unemployment. I discuss the specific efforts made by household members and indicate what, if anything, about these individuals motivated or influenced these efforts. My intention is to answer my final question: What survival strategies have displaced workers and their households employed as a result of being displaced or laid off? The responses provided aid in understanding how households, as a unit, approached and coped with some challenges (increased stress, finding new employment, training, loss of health insurance and providing for the household's everyday needs) brought on by job loss due to deindustrialization.

In order to interpret this portion of the data, I rely on the definition of survival strategies provided by M. K. Nelson and Smith (1998). According to these scholars, "a survival strategy has an empirical or grounded meaning: it is a specific set of economic activities developed to insure daily survival" (p. 80). In order to analyze the survival strategies reported, I find utility in the work of Leana and Feldman (1992), researchers who examined the coping strategies of individuals and households dealing with job loss due to layoffs. In Leana and Feldman's view, individuals dealing with job loss are "active rather than passive agents who behave in ways that affect how long they are unemployed and how unpleasant that period of unemployment is" (p. 13). These two scholars suggested that the reactions, differences and institutional interventions can best be understood through use of stress as a theoretical framework, as continuous stress connected to job loss is often the cause of deteriorated physical

and mental health as well as negative impacts on one's family.

## **Increased Stress – Sources and Coping Strategies**

### *Variances in Time Out of Work*

One of the first stressors workers and spouses faced was the length of time workers were unemployed. This was true for those who found new employment and those who did not. Among those who found employment, the length of time out of work ranged from 2 weeks to 13 months. While all 15 workers were employed full-time prior to job loss, by the time I met with them, only five had found full-time jobs (all men, ages 38 to 66). Unemployed only two weeks, the engineer (WM39) in my sample experienced the shortest period of unemployment. Although he was unemployed much longer, one year, BM49 found a new management position earning more money than he did prior to job loss. Even though these lengths of time out of work varied considerably, they are consistent with the long standing argument which says that workers displaced from more skilled occupations are more likely be reemployed (Flaim & Sehgal, 1987). As I will point out further along (see Limited Benefits of Retraining), additional skills and training alone were not enough for several of the workers interviewed to find success in their local area, an experience which resulted in increased stress in workers and spouses.

### *Workers' Efforts to Cope with Job Search Related Stress and Frustration*

It is well documented that job loss and unemployment can be harmful to the mental health of workers (Brand et al., 2008; Hamilton et al., 1990; Kubrin, Wadsworth, & DiPietro, 2008; Strully, 2009). Among those interviewed, workers and spouses frequently reported increased stress and frustrations related to job loss and job search. Often, complaints were about negative experiences with the Virginia Employment

Commission (V.E.C.), frequently referred to by respondents as the “unemployment office” or some variation thereof. These responses seem to also reflect the findings of Root and Park (2009), which is that the workers and spouses, in this case, were “out-of-date” with the changes in job search and changes in the type of service provided by the agency (p. 110). The words of BF47 illustrate this point:

The unemployment office is not as available as they used to be. They’re not [as informative] ... A long time ago, you’d go in there and they could tell you everything they had. Now it’s like you have to find out for yourself. You can go in there every week; I remember ... if they had a production job and they needed people and you were qualified, they would send you a letter and let you know this was [available]. Now they don’t do that.

Comments such as the one above suggest that the workers’ negative opinion of the state run agency is related to its own decrease in staff. Despite his short period of unemployment, WM39’s words indicate that he was similarly critical of the service provided by the agency. As an individual who is comfortable with computer use, he recognized how manufacturing workers less familiar with computer use could experience difficulty navigating the changes to job searching – a process now primarily performed with the use of computers:

The VEC is not very much help. The good thing is I knew what needed to be done. I knew how to do job searches but as for some of the people who maybe have worked production all their life out on the floor, weren’t aware of the routes they needed to take to find another job.

Ironically, local news reports by Blackwell (2008) and WSL10 (2007) point to declines in federal funding as the reason for the declines in number of V.E.C employees.

### *Surviving the Bureaucracy of Job Searching*

For those who sought job search assistance from the V.E.C. and experienced frustration with the process, little could be done to avoid working with the agency since it also where they must register in order to receive unemployment benefits. For all job seekers, especially those interested in seeking employment in manufacturing, the V.E.C. is also a hub for resources about local employers and data regarding changes in employment. The agency is used by unemployed workers across professions and skill levels. Regardless of their personal feelings, the workers had to use the agency.

Since the V.E.C is often the only place where remaining manufacturers will post their vacancies and/ or conduct interviews, a strategy I have witnessed, several workers sought help from friends and family as an alternative. BF57 discussed her efforts at navigating the job search process at the V.E.C. Her reports of being “cheated” due to receiving conflicting and confusing information reveal how unpleasant this experience could be.

I went to the employment office regularly and ... even now there’s supposed to be a new plant opening and I went to put in an application for it and the lady says, ‘Well, we’ve got, we’re gonna have applications just blowing out of the wind, they are going to be taking all these applications so come back on Monday.’ No, she said, ‘Don’t come Monday, come any other day.’ she said, ‘Because it’s just going to be overwhelming that day.’ Now she’s the one that knows about the job. This is one of the workers there and I said, ‘Okay.’ So I went back on Tuesday only to find out that

they were no longer taking applications. I coulda went Monday and put in an application and so I just felt like, you know, I got cheated out of that – so needless to say I have not been able to put that application in there. So it's been real frustrating cause, I mean, it's not that I don't wanna work, you know, cause I've been working ever since I was fourteen.

### *Job Search Stress and the Spouse*

Workers employing the help of family members as a way to manage the job search process reveal that the related stress and frustration were not limited to the worker. The response of one spouse who was employed full-time and used computers regularly as part of her job shows how others like her become part of the job search process:

I just prayed and you know, hope something would come through ... we'd argue back and forth sometimes about –I'd get frustrated ... I'd get home in the evenings and he'd have some job applications or some paperwork for me to look over. When I get home, I'm tired. I'd done been on the computer all day. I done fool with paperwork all day, you know, I'm not – you know, I'd say, 'Well, I'm tired ...'

There were times when this spouse's husband needed even more of her assistance because, as she said, there were times when "it seemed he would just give up." To get her husband past these unproductive periods, she took time off of her job. Describing these additional efforts, she said:

I'll take half a day or I'll take Fri[day] – or whatever and we'll go down to the V.E.C. And we did that a couple times. I'd go in with him, 'cause like I said, he was hating 'em.

As these responses suggest, one reason for increased stress among spouses, is that in their own effort to cope with the situation, spouses essentially take on another job. In this case, the new job includes verifying that the displaced worker is taking the necessary steps to find new employment, passing along job leads, and making sure that the worker follows up on those leads. In this case, the efforts of the wife of a worker, an individual who is less skilled with computers use, enables the worker to avoid the V.E.C. Also, by taking advantage of his wife's computer skills, the worker avoids any potentially unpleasant or embarrassing experiences associated with his own limited knowledge and skills with the technology used at the V.E.C. While the spouse's efforts may be helpful in widening the workers' job prospects and even lead to new employment, these efforts also mean that the spouse is essentially doing work and providing services once provided by the state. As a result, the spouse is suffering adverse affects of doing so. The following quote supports this point:

And then we'd argue back and forth sometimes about – I would say something to him about I'd find a [job] – you know, I'd be on the internet during the day or something or hear about a job or something, I'd call him and he'll [say], 'I can't do it today' or ..., he'd got in that mode of, you know, it's twelve o'clock now, you don't need to be there till one. It was always an excuse: 'well, I already started on this' or 'I ain't shaved' or 'I ain't -'

### *Staying Motivated*

As the quotes above indicate, some workers found it difficult to remain motivated while unemployed. In fact, several workers reported wanting to give up. To get a sense of what it took to keep them from exiting the labor force, each worker was asked, "How did

you motivate yourself to keep looking when it was not easy to find a new job?" My results show that for some workers, motivation was intrinsic. Comments such as "Don't like setting [sitting] at home" (WF68) and "I knew what I was worth [based on experience] once I got somewhere. I just kept trying and trying" (BF47) were frequently stated. With a laugh, WF48c said that she is "just stubborn". Two workers, WM39 and WF62, referred to the reality shared by all affected workers, which was that they "still had bills to pay." As pointed out by WM39, even though "the income stopped ...the outgoing [bills were] still there" (WM39).

For other workers, motivation and support were found in sources outside themselves. Often, workers and spouses reported reliance on prayer or faith as well as remaining in the company of encouraging people to get them through. Not surprisingly, there were those who responded by referring to the other reality faced by individuals receiving unemployment payments; a continued job search was required by the government in order to maintain their benefits. Interestingly enough, a few workers, and at least one spouse, still hold on to the hope that some form of manufacturing or call center-type work will come to their area. This sense of hope kept them going back to the V.E.C to see what new opportunities were available, despite their personal feelings about the agency.

Finally, while several workers reported struggling with their job search, WF48a was the only worker who said that she completely "gave up looking" for a job. Actually, what she did was give up "depending on someone else to give" her a job. While this attitude reflects an entrepreneurial spirit, it came after she dealt with increased alcohol use after job loss. While this worker was the only individual who reported any struggles

with alcohol or substance abuse while unemployed, it does not mean that others did not, as a question related to substance abuse was not part of the interview schedule. Speaking about her experience, WF48a told me, “I sat and I drank and drank until about April of '02 ...” Telling what finally got her moving, she described looking in the mirror and thinking to herself, “girl, if you don't quit this, you're gonna die.” She continued with, “And so I knew I'd have to fix” [the situation]. Her solution was to give up on trying to find “a real job.” Instead, she became a real estate agent even though when first receiving the recommendation from a relative to get her license, she responded with “I couldn't sell ice water in hell.”

## **New Employment**

### *Attitudes Toward Finding New Employment*

As the experiences mentioned thus far indicate, manufacturing workers in the areas covered faced various challenges during job search. As a result, some respondents had negative attitudes towards the availability of jobs. In addition to inquiring about their job search experiences, each worker was asked if they thought there were enough local job possibilities. The most common responses were “no” or “I don't Know.” As the response from WF48c of Martinsville suggests, the choices for displaced manufacturing workers looking to do more than low level service related jobs are limited:

It's just nothin here no more. I'm just disgusted with the whole area. All they want is old people here. I'm serious. They're building all these old folks homes like Kings Grant and trying to get everybody doing CNA and it don't pay anything. And it's just hard on your back and your health.

A common concern and a reason for negative attitudes toward local job prospects is the decreased salary potential. Referring to job prospects in the NRV, WM38 said:

As far as manufacturing jobs go, no. Making that kinda money, absolutely not! They're two manufacturing jobs, you know, in this county anyway that pay those kinda wages and that's Volvo and it's called the Radford Arsenal ... But those are the only two places as far as manufacturing in this area that pay those kind of wages.

On the contrary, there were individuals who believed that there were enough local jobs. Several respondents made comments similar to that of WF68 which was, while a job could be found, it “might not be doing what you want ...”

### *Characteristics of New Employment*

Based on the reports from workers and their spouses, it is clear that moving beyond job loss presented many challenges. Fortunately for some, new employment was found. Unfortunately, only BM49 found a new job earning more income than before job loss. Even with the shortest period of unemployment, WM39 reported experiencing a \$20,000 pay cut. Among the workers still in the labor market, the number of jobs found since being displaced ranged between 0 and 7 and these jobs were generally in service related occupations. Descriptions of the new jobs included: real estate, patrolling, security, “sub-bussing” [substitute school bus driver], retail, packing Speedo bathing suits for a packing company, part-time cleaning, and maintenance for a local school.

Besides the real estate agent (WF48a), none of the new positions required any use of a computer. Even though she has some computer skills, WF48c explained her reluctance to use them and why she thought employers “would rather hire the younger,” more “computer savvy” workers:

A lot of us are not – I mean, I can fool with a computer a little bit but I mean, I don't know a lot of that. I can't just sit at one and they say, 'well,

here, cut and paste and do all this.' I'm like, oh my Lord!' I mean, I would give it a go but they'd have to show me 'cause I've done forgot. I don't sit on a computer. I can't stand sitting. It's too much sitting time for me. I can't stand it.

For the average office worker, sitting in front of a computer for long periods of time is just part of the job. However, for workers such as WF48c and WF68, sitting in an office or at a computer is undesirable and something to be avoided. Considering her age, it was surprising to hear WF68 express her disdain for jobs which require sitting.

However, by the end of our conversation, I fully understood her position. She said:

I don't like a desk. I don't like something that I've gotta sit down. I don't like a computer. I hate a computer. I love being outside ... and that's the thing of it about through here in this area. I was raised on a farm and I worked with my hands. Don't put me in a room where I've got to stay in a room all day. It's just not my thing. Like I said, I'd rather be outside digging ditches.

While these workers avoided office related work and occupations themselves, many eventually took part-time jobs cleaning various office buildings, including building occupied by state and local government.

### **Deciding Whether to Seek Re-employment or Credentials**

For many workers, the choices were to retire, seek re-employment or get additional training for a different type of job. Only one of the workers interviewed addressed his unemployment by exiting the labor force through retirement. This individual, disabled due to a medical procedure, based his decision on the status of his health and the fact that he was eligible, based on age, to collect Social Security/

disability benefits. The other workers addressed their employment situation by either trying to find a new job or enroll in a vocational training program, college, or university. Overall, these new credentials were not in manufacturing and those enrolling in college courses primarily pursued Associates degrees.

### *Little Training Needed*

While not all workers who sought new employment were successful, about half of my sample did, if only in part-time positions. Those who went directly into a job search and found employment reported needing little or no training for their new jobs. For instance, WM65 said that his “training lasted about three weeks. It normally should've lasted longer but they were short handed and gave me a speed course.” Similarly, BF47 said, “Yes. They always gave you [training] – at the motel they gave [me] one month. At the Arsenal they gave [me] 90 days”. Shorter or limited training requirements allowed these workers to get back to work quickly even if it was not in a job or position that they enjoyed.

### *In Pursuit of Credentials*

Workers who made the choice to pursue longer training programs also delayed searching for full-time employment. These workers made comments such as “I wasn't really looking for ... a full-time job” or “I really wasn't that interested in getting a job”. Only one worker maintained a part-time job while enrolled in a training program. A common theme among these workers was their marital and familial status. My data show that this group was made up of individuals who were single and childless or had a spouse/ significant other who still earned an income. Another theme among these workers was that they also had access to financial resources, separate from their spouses. These resources included unemployment payments and money accrued in their

401(k) retirement plans.

While these workers still faced the reality of having to cope with less income coming into the household, my assessment is that their decision was made, if only in part, because they either did not have to shoulder all of the household financial responsibilities themselves or they were a household of one and did not have the family concerns of those with spouses and/ or children. The workers, however, provided alternative reasons. In their assessment, their reasons were based on the desire to complete a degree already in progress and taking advantage of financial benefits made available by the government because they were displaced by international competition.

### *Completing Degrees Already in Progress*

With the encouragement of their spouses, two of the workers (one male, one female), decided to take the time following job loss to complete degrees started before their plants closed. Ironically, the male worker, WM65, began his Associate's degree as a means of moving up the ranks in his plant. He said, "The policy was that they only made college graduates department managers. So I said, well, okay I'll go to college and improve myself." While he is happy in his new job, WM65 also said based on "all of the applications" that he sent out after graduation, he is not benefiting from his degree. He added:

I can't prove that age had something to do with it. I did not get a job in what I went to school for as far as management went. The job I did get after I graduated was driving a truck for [company name].

*"Why shouldn't I receive some of the benefits ... that other people receive?"*

A sense of entitlement and anger over the number of plants which closed in Martinsville motivated WF48b to delay searching for new employment. In the following

statement, she spells out the choices that were presented to her. In addition to voicing her anger over the situation, WF48b also explains how the Trade Readjustment Assistance (TRA) program [often referred to by respondents as “Trade Act”] works and how workers in the same or similar situation have access to legitimate means of income should they exhaust all of their unemployment compensation benefits (US Department of Labor, 2011) . Perhaps most important of all, one get the sense that she is not confident in her ability to find a good job locally, even after the completion of her Associates degree. It is notable that even with a lack of confidence in her local economy she was not deterred from pursuing her degree.

... we were offered the Trade Act because our plants did close because of plants being built off shore ... so I knew I had one of two options: it was either based on the fact that there's not that many employers here, there's not that much opportunity ... I could either immediately start looking for a job, probably wind up with a job - and I don't mean to sound so negative, I really don't mean to sound negative because I want to keep a positive attitude. It's hard sometimes to have a positive attitude. But I knew that my options were more than likely to come out, go ahead and try to get a job, make seven or eight dollars an hour minimum wage, um, or take this opportunity to go to school. And during that time you draw unemployment and that type thing and I thought to myself - these were exact thoughts, right or wrong or indifferent, okay: if based off the dismal economy, if I have to, you know, why should I take a job now for seven or eight dollars an hour ... I could have got a decent job paying more but why should I do

that when I could go to school, get an Associate's degree, get paid unemployment during that time? I've worked for 27 years, I've paid in my taxes, I've done my responsible thing as a citizen of this country - why shouldn't I receive some of the benefits of, you know, that other people receive. And then if I have to take a job for seven or eight dollars an hour, at least I'll have the Associates degree. At least I'll have two years that, you know, I got to go to school and have a difference in my life as opposed to working for 27 years. So that's what I chose to do.

Although educational level is not a focus of this research, it is worth mentioning that because the literature broadly documents manufacturing/production workers as a largely less educated group, I was surprised by the number of college educated workers interviewed. Included in my sample were five workers with completed degrees - 1 Bachelors degree and 4 Associate's degrees, 2 with college credits but no degree, and 1 was finishing up her Bachelor's degree.

### **Limited Benefits of Retraining**

#### *Paying the Cost of Training While Unemployed*

David M. D. M. Gordon (1996) argued that in general, retraining has not been beneficial for displaced manufacturing workers. Responses from the workers interviewed who completed training programs and who worked to increase their skills and education falls in line with Gordon's argument. Among those who completed a training program, only WM38 found a new job in the field that he trained for. Furthermore, responses from those who were still in school and at least one spouse did not indicate strong confidence in the workers' ability to find a job in their chosen career field. My conversation with

WF48c reflects a commonly expressed reluctance to get more training, even among those who qualify for TRA benefits:

WF48c: I've already been back to college with VF and I, you know, they didn't find me a job after that. I was 42 and they promised, well, you know, when ya'll get out of college, we'll make sure ya'll get to use y'all's degree, find y'all a job. And it's nothing here in this area.

MS: What did you get your degree in?

WF48c: I got my degree in Administration of Justice. Um, I tried to get in the court system. They told me if I went back got my Bachelors then, that, um, a guy told me he'd hire me but it wasn't [wasn't] definite. And I had a son, I have to take care of him. I needed a job with insurance and money coming in. 'Cause after my Trade Act ran out, you know, the day you graduate, your Trade Act money runs out. That day your unemployment stops. You've gotta have money to survive and pay your bills and you know, I couldn't keep going to college. And so, I just went on to work at Stanley and then now they close.

Considering her experience, finances and age, WF48C was not incentivized to continue her education beyond her Associates degree:

But they told me they could upgrade my degree but by the time they upgraded it, I would be 50. And who's gonna hire a 50 year old woman when you can hire a 20 year old out of Tech? You know, I mean, who wants us, you know, even though we've got the degree and a lot of us are hard working and we'll work ourself into the ground. If I was a company I

would not hire me either. I'd hire that graduate even though I knew they'd didn't really have experience, but you can train them to where you need 'em to be. And plus, they would be more computer savvy. A lot of us are not.

As this worker's words suggest, the lack of confidence in finding a new job or career upon completion of their degree program was based on her failure to find success with degree in hand. Another reason for the lack of confidence is workers' knowledge of other displaced workers who used TRA benefits and, as WF48 put it, are working in jobs which "has nothing to do with what [they] went to school for."

### *Long Term Payments, Frustrations and Few Rewards*

While most workers pursuing retraining used benefits provided by the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Program (US Department of Labor, 2012) to cover the cost of education, others did not. For those who did not, paying out of pocket or taking out expensive student loans were the primary methods used. The words of the three workers who used these methods offer some insights into why they did not use TRA, how much their training cost them and their families, and most importantly, the outcome of their investment:

[My wife] fixed up my FAFSA [Free Application for Federal Student Aid] and said here, go. So I got student loans 'cause I didn't have any of the - they wouldn't pay for me to go 'cause I made too much in my retirement. So anyway, I took student loans and went to college ... (WM65).

Speaking on the outcome of his decision and investment, WM65 said:

Am I benefiting from it? No ... But now at least I understand all the business aspects of why we do what we [his employer] do. So I guess it helped out in that respect.

WF48a also paid out of pocket for her training to be a real estate agent. To cover the cost of the training course she said, "I pawned a diamond ring that this guy gave me a few years ago just to get my real estate license." Breaking down the cost for me, we had the following conversation:

WF48a: The class itself was three-hundred dollars (\$300). Three-hundred and fifty dollars (\$350), maybe. And then taking the test is \$60 and then I had to be finger printed and background checked and that was (\$65). But then I had to buy my signs and that was another \$250 and then I had to pay my dues and that was another \$600. All together it was about \$2500.

MS: ... And you had to come out of pocket for all of that?

WF48a: Hmm hmm.

It was not until the end of our interview when I asked, "Is there anything else you want to tell me about your experience during or after this plant closing?" that she explained why she did not use TRA to cover the cost of her training. Again, the service provided by the V.E.C. was a factor:

WF48a: I don't feel, and to be fair to those people who work at the unemployment office, I know they're bombarded. They're overwhelmed with the amount of people who are losing their jobs, but I don't feel like I got any help them at all. Um, after I got into real estate, I found out that our plant qualified for Trade Act.

MS: And you didn't get -

WF48a: 'Cause I'd already done the real estate thing. I was already employed so, no, I didn't qualify.

What WF48a's words suggest is that, like the amount of warning workers are to receive, there may also be a lack of consistency in informing affected workers about benefits they are available for and what the parameters are when using those benefits.

While the workers above were displaced, WM38 voluntarily left his plant and pursued further training in an area which he was already skilled but lacked the credentials which he was lead to believe that he needed. Despite being having been laid off several times in the past, he too was left to pay for his training without the aid of TRA benefits. Like WM65, WM38 incurred a tremendous amount of training related debt which did not yield the results they anticipated. To make matters worse, the debt incurred has followed his family and household long after completing his program.

WF34, the wife of WM48, and I discussed how her husband paid for his diesel mechanic certificate and the long term impact of his payment method to their family's household finances.

WF34: ... he took out his 401(k) that he has at the [company name] and he used some of that money to get him through while he was there for the whole year and gosh, how much are we still paying? I'm thinking it's something like \$26,000 for that certificate and it's not even a degree. I mean it's not even, you know, it's a technical thing and he worked hard for it and you know, that was his choice and we're paying for his choice,

but it didn't matter to these companies around here that he paid that money.

MS: So what did matter to them? The fact that –

WF34: It didn't really, it wasn't important to them.

MS: The certificate wasn't important to them?

WF34: No. I mean, it was like, if he would of seriously applied for the jobs before he went [another state], they would have paid him the same amount of money as when he got back because the training he had from working on the farm was adequate enough to do the jobs but they said they would hire him at a higher rate if he had that certificate. So that's why him and his dad made the decision for him to go down there and then he got back here and none of the people he contacted before would hire him. I think Caterpillar was going to hire him but he had to do like forklift or some type of production before they'd actually let him work on the vehicles... I see that he worked hard in it and they did him wrong.

MS: That's a lot of money.

WF34: And now we're gonna pay more money for him to go back to school to get his teaching degree.

While WF34 and WM38 were not married at the time he made these training and financial decisions, it is clear that she now has to shoulder the cost of that decision, one which did not yield beneficial long or short term results. Like most of the workers interviewed, WM38 has yet to make an income that is equal to or more than what he was making during his years on the assembly line. Although he did find a job working as a

diesel mechanic, he was unable to keep the job very long due to compound effects of a lengthy commute and the decreased salary. Describing his experience, he said:

I moved back home after school. But there was still nothing local around here. I was driving to Roanoke for that job from here. I was commuting from Pulaski to Roanoke ... I worked there for about 13 months ... I got tired of the long commute and I went back to another manufacturing company. I went to work for Pepsi in Wytheville.

Workers and spouses are not the only ones frustrated with the lackluster results of the training programs that former manufacturing and textile workers have participated in. Speaking of her experience working with former displaced workers who visit the free clinic in Martinsville, Barbara Jackman, Executive Director of the Martinsville Henry County Coalition for Health and Wellness, also shared her dissatisfaction with outcomes she comes across. Although her perspective is industry specific, I suspect that the same “spiral” scenario that she speaks of can be found in other industries as well. According to Jackman,

... we have people who say, ‘Well healthcare is going to be a growth area in the future, let’s be retrained around healthcare jobs.’ You have all these people going to community college and National College [located in Martinsville] and the phenomenon is it’s most of them don’t say, ‘Well gee, I’m going to go back and become a physician.’ They say, ‘I need to get a healthcare career in the shortest amount of time possible.’ So they’ll go for a one year certificate in front office management or something.

Well, if you're training all these people to work in the front office of a medical professional, what do you need?

MS: Who's running the doc, who's running the -?

Barbara Jackman: You need to have doctors to town. Who's gonna hire them? So we have seen, and the free clinic is a good example. We have patients at the free clinic who come, 'I'm going back to school, I'm gonna get into healthcare, I'm gonna work in front office.' They go through that, they come out and can't find a job. So they're still in the free clinic, a year or two later working at Wendy's or something. And because there's no doctors coming to town to hire them - because you can't make a living ...

### **Making Ends Meet**

In my quest to understand the efforts made to cover household expenses in the absence of regular paychecks, the workers and I had three conversations. First, we discussed the need to take on part-time or temporary employment until a full-time position could be found. Second, we discussed paying for health insurance coverage, a benefit lost by most workers. Third, we discussed their access to legitimate sources of additional income which allowed them to meet their household needs.

#### *Part-Time Jobs and the Informal Economy*

In order to address their problem of "inadequate employment" (Slack, 2007, p. 26), some workers strung together several part-time jobs or went from one part-time job to another. WF62 was one worker who engaged in this practice. She said, "I did a bunch of part-time jobs to make up 40 hours ... a week." By the time we met, she could no longer remember how many part-time jobs she has worked since losing her job.

A few workers who pieced together their income earned part of it by working for

or in local schools. For example, WF48c informed me that she is currently working “at Wal-Mart and sub-bus driving ...” When I asked if she had a route of her own, the point at which a part-time driver receives employment benefits, she responded by saying, “still part-time there with nothing.”

Similar to the women above, WF68 worked several cleaning and manufacturing jobs before she landed a position at her local school board office. From our conversation, I discovered that even as a person who does not shy away from labor intensive work, some of the opportunities available to her were just too difficult to handle long term:

WF68: ... I went to Philpott Lake ... That's the lake up here. The big lake.

I worked up there for six weeks cleaning parking areas and this, that and the other. And I couldn't handle that wearing boots and walking up and down hills ... So I quit there...

MS: How old were you went to go clean camping areas (participant laughing)?

WF68: Fifty-five, fifty-six ... I was making over ten dollars (\$10.00) a hour but we didn't have any benefits. I left there and went to [another short-term job]. Worked there for a year doing ceramic tile crawling on my knees. I left there and went to the school board office.

### *Managing the Loss of Health Insurance*

While stringing together part-time and low wage jobs provided a source of income, more often than not, these efforts were not enough to cover the health insurance coverage lost. Here again, I found that some workers were better off than others. While most workers lost their health insurance along with their jobs, several workers managed to maintain coverage. Those who did were able to do so for three reasons. Either they had

a spouse who was still employed somewhere where the employer provided health insurance coverage which the worker could enroll in, or they had access to insurance either through their own retirement from a previous career or that of a spouse, or they relied on their veteran status and used the VA hospital for medical care. Two military veterans were part of my sample.

For those without access to any of the options listed above, the choices reported were: (1) go without insurance (2) take out a personal policy as WF48 and BF47 did at costs ranging between \$348 and \$388, (3) or pay the high cost of insurance offered by the federal government through the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) (US Department of Labor, 2014). WF68 reported paying \$736 for seventeen months even though she “didn’t make enough a month to pay [for the] COBRA insurance.” Describing the cost of COBRA insurance as “outrageous,” WM40 reported that he had no choice in the matter because his wife was due to deliver their child weeks after he was laid off. Explaining this predicament his family was in, he said:

I had to get on COBRA because my wife was pregnant ...I got laid off while she was pregnant. So here I was, no job, nothin’, and she was gon’ have a baby within a couple weeks after I got laid off. And COBRA was, um, I forget what it was a month but it was outrageous. It's extremely outrageous. And I had to have it regardless or I wouldn't have no insurance for the baby. And so there I was trying to do everything I could to - you know.

### *Working Side Businesses*

While reliance on unemployment benefits was the primary method of bringing income into the household, the entrepreneurial efforts of a few workers show that they

also relied upon small businesses that they or a family member owned or operated. Examples of these efforts came from WF46 and her husband who reported owning two small rental properties and from BM49 who said that he still had “a means of some income coming in” from the beauty salon which he initially opened for his daughter and niece before he lost his job. For this worker, income from his business went from being considered “good pocket money” to valuable income.

Fed up making beds and cleaning motels, a job that she found through a local temporary job placement agency, BF47 said, “I quit the motel and did my own thing ...” She reasoned that she was “making more money ...” working this way. In addition to describing what she did, her response shows how she gained access to her clients:

BF47: Cleaned house. Cleaned churches.

MS: Really?

BF47: Cleaned, um, just did a lot of cleaning. Cleaned for banks. Just cleaning.

MS: How’d you come up with those?

BF47: The people in our church. Several people that you know when you grow up, that you’ve dealt with. You tell one and they tell someone else.

MS: Networking.

BF47: ... yeah.

Even though BF47 says that her current job pays a “decent” salary, it was only part-time. In addition to her cleaning jobs, she also cares for two elderly ladies who “are ... 65 and 84” years old. She cooks for one and provides transportation to medical appointments for the other. Wondering how she manages it all, I asked, “When do you have time for all this?” In response, she said:

Well, you know, she might have to eat the same thing two days but it's something to eat. You make enough. Like, I make soup. That's good for two days. Um, take her to the doctor when I have to and just do little things ... So yeah, that's about all. I might clean a church every now and then but not real often.

Also engaging with family, WM40 turned to the construction business owned by a relative among other informal labor activities. What follows is part of our discussion of his efforts and his decision not to report this income to the unemployment office:

WM40: I was doing construction all during the summer and my cousin owns a construction business and he knows how I work and, you know, it's just construction you can always get a job there. It wasn't no money - a lot of money. It was only \$10 an hour, no insurance and you didn't make nothin.

MS: So did you take the construction job?

WM40: Oh yeah, you got to. Now, after three weeks I went to construction. I just know, I had three weeks of pay coming to me so I just took - I took a vacation.

He explained why working "under the table" was necessary:

WM40: And you gotta work under the table to make your bills.

MS: Did you work under the table?

WM40: Yeah, you got to.

MS: What did you do?

WM40: You know, mow a yard or you know, just whatever you can. 'Hey, I'll come over there and help you clean the garage, I'll give you a couple dollars.' Yeah, you know, there's always somethin' you can do.

Few workers reported taking on part-time, temporary, or informal work. As noted above, of primary concern was not to negatively affect unemployment benefits. The other issue raised was the inability to find suitable employment which would justify sacrificing their unemployment payments:

MS: Did you seek short-term or temporary jobs?

WF48a: I didn't. There were none offered to me, so no. I didn't ... Towards the end, yeah. I did until I decide I'd just do real estate full-time. But you are kind of limited with taking the temporary or short-term job because of, ah, (phone interruption). You're limited with what you can do and continue your unemployment. Which do you give up?

MS: Oh, okay.

WM66: Not during that time because we couldn't find nothin'. There wasn't hardly nothin' that you could even do. One thing I found, I think I had to give up the unemployment. I went to Tetra Corporation and worked there for about six months and that was about it.

WF46: That's the thing. With unemployment, you cannot do that; for the most part 'cause it affects the money they will give you.

### *Networking*

Considering their challenges with finding suitable income, one wonders what made the difference, if anything, between those who found employment and those who did not. Conventional wisdom tells us that those who network have greater success in finding employment. Scholars such as Schulman and Anderson (1999) would argue that these individuals took advantage of their horizontal social capital. By having access to and tapping into resources such as insider knowledge of which local employers were hiring, where to get additional financial assistance, and other resources not accessible to everyone, these individuals benefited from the "social ties and reciprocities that bind

together individuals who occupy similar social locations” (p. 353). This was an important finding even though it was not one that I considered during the design of this research.

For at least six workers, networking was an essential part of their finding new employment and getting aid from local charities. Certain that networking was the only way her husband was able to find his current job, BF46 said, “around here, that’s about what you have to go on. ‘Cause there were a lot of places, you know, he applied and applied and if you don’t have that inside track, it’s hard. It really is.” Her husband found his job when,

A real good friend of his ...was able to ... call him and say ‘hey, they’re taking applications. You know, you need to get down to the V.E.C., fill out the application, ... get the application in ... I’ll give you a reference’

Two of the workers, already in their 60s, explained how they came about their positions. While discussing if she has had steady income since being displaced, WF68 stated that she was successful in locating employment because of “knowing people.” Sharing how valuable this method was for her, she added, “That’s where every one of mine’s been. Every last one of them.”

During our discussion on whether or not he has been able to keep a stable job since his plant closed, WM65 shared how he landed his job:

MS: How’d you get that job?

WM65: Saw the ad on the internet. I pulled up a - somebody had told me, I think, that [employer] was hiring. So I called up the [employer] base and it had employment opportunities and I clicked on that and saw a truck driver in Pulaski and applied for it. The guy that was in charge of

warehouse here in Pulaski was a guy I worked at Pulaski Furniture. So, I told him that I was applying for that job, if he could give me a recommendation. And when the person who interviewed me came from the corporate headquarters in Roanoke, he was, I think he was impressed with me. And with (friend's name) recommendation, I got the job.

While a few families found a “tremendous” amount of charitable help from their churches, two workers found their jobs by networking with members of their congregation. BM49 was one of those workers. He told me that it was at a local job fair where he came across a member of his church who then linked him to the individual responsible for hiring at his current place of employment. He described a scenario involving several people who were key to him finding new employment:

MS: How did you learn about the job at ...?

BM49: A blessing. Like I said, ah, [x] ... she's been a friend of mine for years. I went to a job fair, my wife told me to go to this job fair and she just [mimicking wife] - so I went to the job fair and I went to a couple interviews while I was in the job fair ... I just walked around and [church member's name] said 'What are you doing here?' I said 'Looking for a job!' She said, 'What you want to do?' I said, 'Whatever.' She said, 'I told you I've got a job at [company's name]. I said, 'I applied at [company's name] but I didn't get it.' She said, 'Nah, let me call [brother's name].'

MS: Did she work for [company's name] as well?

BM49: No, her brother did. He just got a job no more than about eight months before I did and ... she called, I said, 'you think you can help me?'

She said, 'yeah yeah. Let me call him.' So she called him, I talked to him and he said, 'I'll help you out.' He told our boss - our boss now. He told him and that man said, 'I want him in here now. Where's his resume at? Call him.' I faxed him about 20 resumes! I did and I got in there. It was nothing but the grace of God. It was nothing but the grace of God.

From these examples, we see that in order to meet their health and household needs, accessing resources tied to previous employment was quite useful. We also see that having a spouse who had access to health insurance was beneficial and networking provided access to formal and informal income earning opportunities.

### **Alternative Income Earning Sources and Activities Utilized** *Changes in Household Income*

Before examining the types of alternative income earning sources that workers and their spouses utilized, a brief description of the changes in their household income is necessary. Almost half of the workers had a spouse who worked full-time. Among the other half, the spouses worked part-time, were retired or did not have any form of paid employment. At the time of job loss, three workers were single and childless. Only one worker, a female, reported not having a spouse or ever having children. The most common response from workers and spouses regarding the drop in their household income was "about half." Some spouses offered specifics about the changes their households experienced and the amount of deficit they had to work with:

WF61: Over a thousand dollars a month, approximately.

WF73: Probably at least twenty thousand (\$20,000) [yearly].

WM53: About forty-five thousand (\$45,000) [yearly].

BM59: It dropped at least five-hundred and something a week.

While these drops in income meant significant financial difficulty for some households, for others, the decrease was manageable since they had access to alternative sources of legitimate income. A description of those resources follows.

*Access to Financial Resources: Alternate Sources of Income: Retirement, Sub-pay and Severance Packages*

According to the findings of Flaim and Sehgal (1987), not every household with displaced worker(s) suffer tremendous economic setbacks. The data that collected support this claim. I found that several workers still had access to regular paychecks which continued even after their unemployment payments ended and money from their severance packages ran out. For example, WM77 regularly received \$300 a month in retirement payment from a West Virginia plant he was employed at for 20 years prior to being displaced from his Virginia plant. Similarly, WM65 regularly received payments from his Air Force retirement plan. These reports were perhaps the only ways in which age worked to the benefit of older workers.

Most workers did not have options such as the two men noted above. One reported source of temporary income was sub-pay. While not commonly reported, one worker explained that sub-pay is money paid to workers by the union. However, “after six months . . . , you don’t get that sub pay anymore.” The more common source of temporary income was the severance package. For workers who were provided with a severance package upon job loss, this final income payment was useful in helping the household meet its needs for a while.

While all households received some amount of unemployment payments, interview

data revealed that three workers did not receive any severance compensation. Comments from WM66 illustrate how not receiving any compensation could create a feeling of disappointment among displaced workers. His comment also shows that workers sharing in this experience were left to make up reasons as to why they were denied that final severance check:

That was one thing that we thought we was gonna get but they did not give it to us ... The rumor was the plant manager took it from everybody. He kept all the funds.

Working with the knowledge that workers and families are often left in financial crisis and confusion (Weinbaum, 2004) due to job loss, I anticipated reports of some workers not receiving severance packages. I also expected reports of workers being cheated out of these funds, as was reported by WM66. However, I did not anticipate reports of those funds being heavily taxed. Disheartened by the approximately \$8,000 in taxes withheld from her severance package, WF48b said, "I'm telling you what, when Uncle Sam got through with that, it's pathetic. It was a good amount [withheld]." This unexpected loss of much needed income has the potential to be an added financial burden at a time when income is scarce.

Overall, with the exception of the workers already receiving retirement benefits from past employment, these sources of income were only temporary solutions to a situation which had no anticipated end. Furthermore, they were considerably less than the income received prior to being displaced or laid off. For this reason, additional efforts were made at meeting household needs, even though participants regularly understated their efforts.

### *Alternative Activities for Survival*

As already discussed, income received from unemployment benefits was very valuable to the household. However, this income was not always enough to cover household needs. Consequently, families frequently incorporated alternative means of meeting their needs. Some of these activities brought income into the household while most did not. One of the most common responses from workers and spouses was “just cutting back.” WF46, the wife of a worker who experienced multiple layoffs and shutdowns said, “Skrimp. We’re very skrimping. I’m the skrimper ... I could make a penny last. Somebody in the family’s gotta be like that, I think. You just really budget.”

Similar comments were:

She won’t buy clothes – she won’t have it. You know, unless it’s almost dire straits. UNLESS it’s dire straits (BM49).

My mother will buy items for the kids ... For several months we went to a food bank in Radford and that was not too long after I had gotten laid off ... (WF46).

Well we didn’t have much at Christmas ‘cause we couldn’t afford to go out and buy things for the Christmas for my girl that I had at home. Um, we just didn’t have the food that we needed. A lot of times we just fixed and old bologna sandwiches and eat the best we could when I was laid off ‘cause we couldn’t afford a whole lot. Couldn’t afford the gas (WM66).

As the last quote suggests, families were often in need of additional cash to purchase everyday goods such as gas for vehicles. In order to bring additional income into the household, some respondents reported selling household items at yard sales or to local pawn shops. While these particular efforts did not provide long term financial security, they did provide some needed cash in hand. The most lucrative efforts were those made involving modifications to home mortgages, sale of vehicles and modification to vehicle loans. To reduce his household spending, WF39 said, “The biggest thing was

selling my motorcycle ... That's about \$300 a month" [in insurance payments avoided].

While selling household items and refinancing mortgages and loans helped alleviate some of the financial strain, as BM49 and his wife reported, additional measures were still needed. This was true in cases where household residents tried to maintain a familiar lifestyle. There were also reports of families going into debt and defaulting on loans during the period of unemployment. In addition to all their other efforts, BM49 and his wife reported acquiring a credit card, which they used as their "income" in order to keep their household functioning as it did prior to job loss. BF57 reported having "to go to court twice over two loans" which they defaulted on. Instead of borrowing from conventional lenders, family, or friends, WM65 turned to alternative lending sources for additional income. Reporting on this course of action, WM65 said, "And we also had those cash advance places. We borrowed from them a couple of times too. Actually, we borrowed from them quite a lot." Unfortunately for this worker and his wife, a decision which led to short term financial relief also led to "terrible" long term results. Recalling his experience, he said:

When it came time to pay 'em back, couldn't pay 'em back and then we didn't have any money left, so we'd have to borrow again. And so it just kept going and going.

While it took several years to rectify this situation, they were able to. In order to do so, he involved his wife. WM65 said, "I kind of got out of the money business and gave it all to my wife to take care of and she's good with money. So she managed everything going out."

### **Unexpected Responses**

In general, I did not receive any push back from participants during our

conversations regarding their experiences with job loss or its implications on their lives. In fact, there was a lot of laughter throughout the interviews. However, displaying some annoyance, BM49 expressed that he did not believe the items on the survival strategies checklist represented things that a black man would do. After going through the list and responding with “no” to everything, he stated, “You think I’m a white man.” I explained that my questions were regionally, not racially based and that the options listed are traditionally associated with rural areas. Following his lead and line of thinking, I asked “Is there anything on this list that you think – since you said this is all stuff from a country white man’s perspective – that a black man would do?” Our conversation around this potential oversight in my questions is reflected in the following comments:

BM49: A black man would, ah, like I said when you say, that they would pawn stuff. They will pawn as far as that’s concerned but black people usually, we would usually – we would go to like a McDonald’s or – we’ll go to another place of work. Like a Wal-Mart, do stock, whatever ... But you got in here fishing, hunting, selling fire wood, cutting pigs up, cattle and – I’m like, man, good day.

MS: But these are things that people do.

BM49: I know and they do. I mean, they do and if I had – you know, if I had the, ah, I would cut grass if I had the means to cut grass just like with a small business. I would do something like that. But I didn’t have the equipment to do something like that. But as far as the rest of it, nah, I didn’t.

Ironically, when reviewing the same list with the wife of BM49, she confirmed that they did not engage in any of the items listed, however, she also said, “Probably would have been better to do something up there than get the credit card.”

### *Factors Influencing the Utilization of Particular Survival Strategies*

Prompted by the strong response of BM49, I believe that there is value in featuring some of the other responses which highlight other reasons workers’ households

did not utilize a particular survival strategy. Due to the extensiveness of my list and the scholarly discussion on the use of Public Assistance among the rural poor, displaced manufacturing and textile workers, responses are limited to the application for or use of such programs (See Interview Schedules for complete list) (Slack, 2007; Wagner, 1991). What these responses reveal is the influence of family and the presence or absence of children in the home on making this decision. While several families applied and did not qualify based on income, as the response of WF48a suggests, it is possible that others wanted to avoid the negative stereotypes attached to the use of government assistance which goes beyond unemployment benefits and/ or disability payments:

My dad woulda killed me. My dad was a miner and was out of work a lot, you know, and we never, ever got any assistance. And see, he always wanted to work somewhere doing something (WF73).

Once and got turned down [help from public agency]... it was just the two of us and somebody mentioned it; that we might get a few food stamps. We could have probably with (kids' names), we could have got help but it wasn't there. We're used to doing it, you know? (WF61)

We tried to get help with our house but [husband's name] receives disability and they told us we were over income (BF57).

I did and it was the worst day of my life...the only thing that I qualified for was food stamps and that was at \$42 a month ...Tell me what you can buy for \$42 a month? (WF48a)

### *Summary*

In general, I found that the efforts made by workers and spouses interviewed are in line with the argument of Leana and Feldman (1992). Instead of remaining “inactive” or “lethargic” (p. 79), participants took a variety of steps to shorten their period of unemployment even though they did not always feel positively about their employment prospects. The key to many workers’ success during a difficult, and often frustrating, time was a reliance on family, family connections and other networking possibilities.

This was especially true in cases where aid from the government was limited, confusing, conflicting, or unaffordable.

## **Chapter 6: Discussion**

This study set out to explore the household survival strategies of displaced manufacturing workers living and working in the New River Valley (NRV), the City of Martinsville, and Henry County Virginia. Because I assumed that the communities in which the workers lived and worked played a significant role in their experiences and decisions following job loss, it was necessary to include the effects of deindustrialization on the community in this study.

So how were these localities affected by deindustrialization? Some localities suffered worse socioeconomic outcomes than others. Among the localities selected, those with the worse outcomes were Pulaski County, Martinsville, and Henry County. These were also the localities most dependent on textile and manufacturing industries for local employment opportunities. Radford City and Montgomery County, respectively, experienced the least of the ill effects of manufacturing and textile job losses. While Radford City and Montgomery County lost far fewer jobs, thanks in large part to the employment opportunities available at Virginia Tech and Radford University, residents of these localities who worked in Pulaski County, for example, suffered in similar ways when compared to workers in the worse affected localities. While the outcomes of Radford City and Montgomery County are celebrated by local public officials, these points of celebration ignores the fact that there are workers, and members of their households, seriously struggling to find new employment and survive from one day to the next. While the public officials in Radford City and Montgomery County do not deny that these workers exist, unfortunately, it does not seem like there is much concern about this population of workers.

Another important outcome is the level of resilience of the worst affected communities. Comparatively speaking, the experiences of Martinsville and Pulaski are very similar. Some may say, their story reflects two sides of the same coin. It is no wonder when conducting the interviews with public officials for this study, it was common to hear respondents from the NRV making references to Martinsville, and vice versa. Future research will do well to investigate the ways in which these communities, and others which have suffered similar fates, reinvent themselves. It is clear from the empirical data collected here that numerous efforts have been made, and continue to be made, to redefine these struggling communities. From demolishing and repurposing antiquated factories, to continuously bringing in prospective investors, there is a theme of resilience which runs through the efforts reported by the economic development professionals interviewed. The challenge is figuring out what that something is. Unfortunately, having to work with decreased budgets linked to industrial decline and legal constraints regarding ownership of old factories, adds to the challenges.

In answering the question of survival strategies utilized by displaced workers and their households, four of the most influential or motivating factors in decision making were: (1) the presence of a spouse, and/ or children in the home, (2) having prior experience with being displaced, (3) use of personal networks, and (4) utilization of spouses' knowledge, skills, and abilities. Deindustrialization does not affect all manufacturing communities the same way. The concerns of households with dependent children at home were quite different from those with no children or with older children already living independently. Whereas workers with children mentioned the added stress of having to provide food and medical care for their

children, those unburdened with these concerns frequently saw their childless status as a “blessing.” These were workers and spouses whose children were already adults and on their own or who did not have children at the time of job loss.

As far as survival strategies go, there was an unexpected value in having prior experience with being displaced. Both workers and spouses expressed that they utilized strategies learned from prior job losses due to plant closures and/ or layoffs. If one considers the severity of the situation in Pulaski County, Henry County, and Martinsville, in particular, this outcome makes sense. Research from Bamberger and Davidson (1998), High (2003), and Strange (1977) note the fact that workers were often in a state of disbelief when their plant shut down or were unaware of the changes that were occurring around them. Among the workers these researchers studied, those who were able to read the signs around them and understand that their plants were likely to close, this understanding was in itself a survival strategy. As for the respondents in my study, whether it was recognizing the signs of an impending shutdown or making adjustments in household spending, it is clear that these experiences provided some benefit to some workers and their spouses.

The use and reliance of personal networks, or utilization of horizontal social capital, was perhaps the most valuable survival strategy employed by workers and spouses. Networking helped families in many ways, but none more important than gaining access to new employment opportunities in the formal and informal economies. By connecting with groups and individuals within their social circles (e.g., friends, family, and members of their church), workers and spouses were able gain access to non-state funded financial assistance, odd jobs, and clients to provide

personal care services to. These efforts and activities not only highlights the resilience of the respondents but are also reminiscent of what Leana and Feldman (1992, p. 80) define as “active attempts” among coping strategies. While some of these workers interviewed were angry and frustrated by their job losses, working with the unemployment office, and the quality of jobs in their area, they actively made attempts to either find new jobs or to make the best of an unfortunate situation.

My final point of discussion is the workers’ utilization of the knowledge, skills, and abilities of their spouses to either secure new employment or enrolled in college courses. From the data, attempts at finding new employment or college enrollment often meant additional work for the spouses, usually the wife. The demands on the spouses’ time, energy, and knowhow caused strain on some marriages. These demands even resulted in time away from work for at least one spouse. While this finding may be nothing new, it certainly highlights the fact that spouses, in addition to the displaced workers, are in need of information and support in their efforts at managing the stress of job losses. To the extent possible, when policy makers consider their approach to addressing the needs of displaced workers, it is important that the efforts made by spouses be part of the conversation as well as many of these individuals are taking work previously performed by the state.

As for future research, without taking the time to investigate the efforts made by individual communities which have experienced deindustrialization, it is all too easy to lump all deindustrialized communities together. It is my hope that the results of this study illustrate the benefits of focusing studies on individual states and communities. Based on the evidence presented here, localities devastated by industrial decline are

working hard to rebound, rebrand, and redefine themselves. Whether comparatively or individually, future research needs to investigate these efforts and identify what is or was working, where, and why. Another important issue which needs further investigation and analysis is the ways in which deindustrialization is affecting the career choices of young people who grew up in communities adversely affected by industrial decline. Everyone cannot and will not leave town for better opportunities, so what are the hopes and expectations for the youth of deindustrialized communities? What conversations are displaced workers having with their children regarding their future career goals? Communities facing deindustrialization are changing - some faster than others. Finally, future research needs to be more “culturally sensitive” not just regionally (rural/ urban) appropriate. Use of more open ended questions rather than a checklist would aid in this overcoming this methodological limitation.

This study highlights the efforts being made at the community, household, and individual level in order to cope with wide spread economic changes due to deindustrialization and economic restructuring. Some of these efforts, including those of public officials and community based organizations, are easily to recognize and often celebrated. The efforts of the spouses of displaced workers, on the other hand, remain out of the view and, more often than not, go unsupported. Spouses who still have access to health insurance and can seek counseling or mental health therapy may be the exception to some extent. While efforts of spouses may go a long way in supporting the needs of displaced workers, and may result in workers finding new employment, I found that there is a tremendous amount of increased stress and work on these individuals. Based on the evidence presented in this study, it would be useful to seriously consider these individuals

and the contributions that they make in the larger effort of getting displaced workers back to work. Furthermore, future research on displaced workers, due to deindustrialization or some other phenomena, need to include the efforts of spouses when investigating the survival or coping strategies of those suffering due to job loss.



Figure 2: Number of Jobs Lost in the NRV by County 1995-2009

Note: These results are from data provided by *Closings Database* 2013)

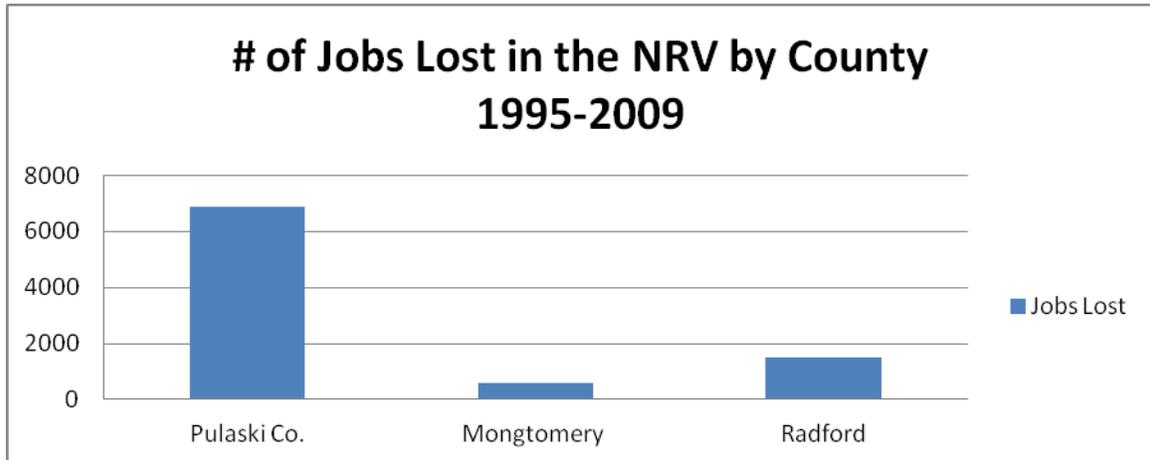
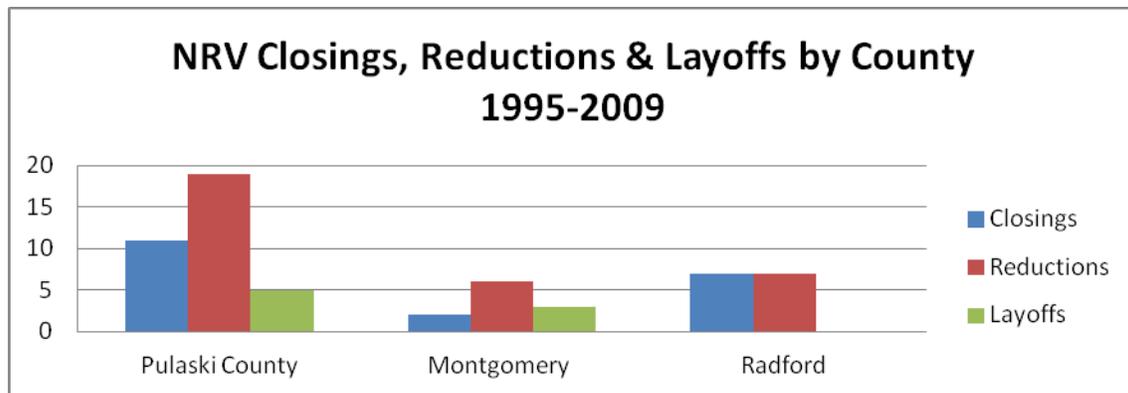
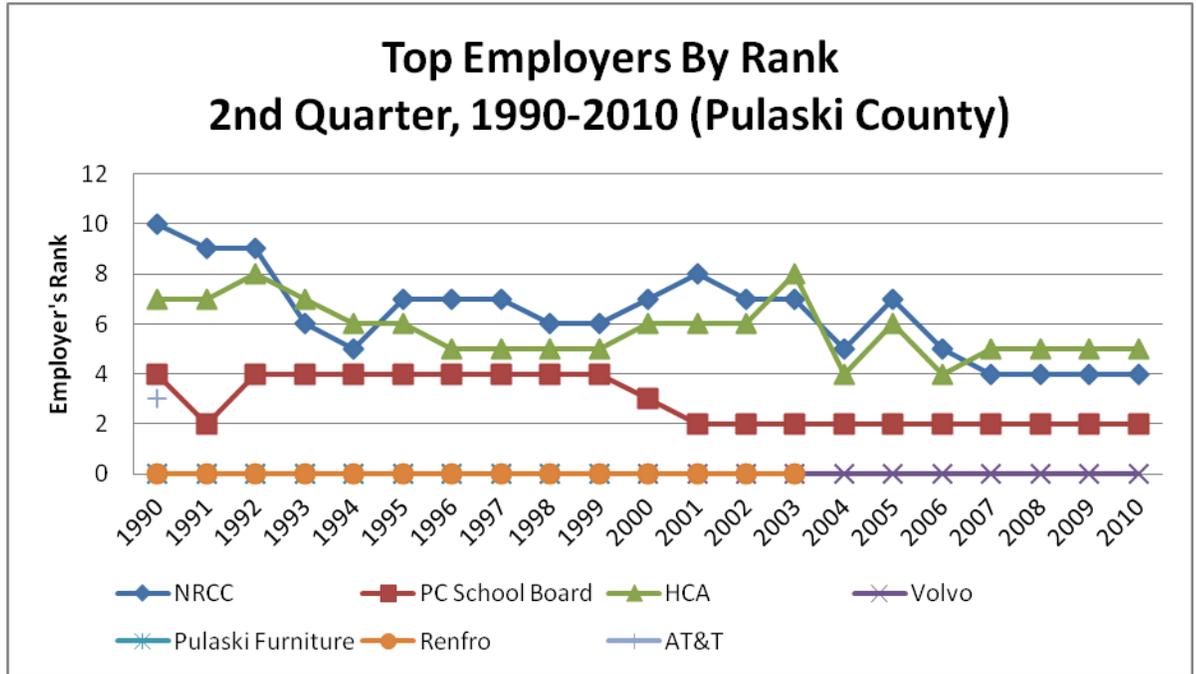


Figure 3: NRV Closings, Reductions & Layoffs by County 1995-2009



Note: These results are from data provided by *Closings Database* 2013)

Figure 4: Top Employers by Rank 2nd Quarter, 1990-2010 (Pulaski County)



*Figure 5: Big Blue*



All photos were taken by the author

*Figure 6 Big Blue visible for miles*



**Tables Representing Total Jobs Lost, Plants Closed, and Reductions in Force**

*Table 2: Metropolitan / Micropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) of Plant Closures and Reductions in Force, 1990-2010*

Source: (Virginia Economic Development Partnership, 2014a)

MSA	Total Jobs Lost
Blacksburg-Christiansburg-Radford	9,414
Bluefield	334
Charlottesville	3,781
Culpepper	443
Danville	7,850
Harrisonburg	3,150
Kingsport-Bristol-Bristol	2,857
Lynchburg	7,461
Martinsville	11,369
Richmond	16,800
Roanoke	9,289
Staunton-Waynesboro	3,553
Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News	15,836
Washington-Arlington-Alexandria	4,948
Winchester	2,579

*Table 3: Mass Layoffs in Virginia, 1995-2010*

Source: Virginia Economic Development Partnership (2011)

Part I: Mass Layoffs & Displaced Workers in Appalachian Virginia, 1995-2010

Locality	No. Reductions in Force	No. Plant Closings	No. Jobs Lost 1995-2010	No. Displaced Workers 2000-2001	No. of Layoffs
Alleghany County & Covington City	5		1098	0	1
Bath County	0		0	0	0
Bland County	0		125	0	0
Botetourt County	3		609	0	0
Buchanan County	0		0	0	0
Carroll County	0		1191	351	0
Craig County	0		117	0	0
Dickenson County	0		146	0	1
Floyd County	0		325	165	0
Giles County	2		442	0	0
Grayson County & Galax County	3	14	3037	631	3
Henry County & The City of Martinsville	22	26	11524	3944	0
Highland County	0	0	0	0	0

Lee County	1	3	312	0	0
Montgomery County & Radford City	13	8	2160	812	3
Patrick County	4	7	1278	137	0
Pulaski County	20	11	6893	1303	5
Roanoke County & Roanoke City & Salem City	22	24	6802	1793	7
Rockbridge County & Lexington City & Buena Vista City	3	6	1067	176	1
Russell County	4	7	1621	430	4
Scott County	0	3	295	0	0
Smyth County	11	20	3736	1265	5
Tazewell County	0	2	334	0	1
Washington County & Bristol City	6	10	2882	324	0
Wise County & Norton City	1	4	420	66	0
Wythe County	3	11	1184	563	0
Totals	123	179	47598	11960	31

*Part II: Mass Layoffs & Displaced Workers in Non-Appalachian Virginia*

Locality	No. Reductions in Force	No. Plant Closings	No. Displaced Workers 1995-2010	No. Displaced Workers 2000-2001	No. Layoffs
Accomack County	0		146	0	0
Albemarle County & Charlottesville City	12		3186	1768	2
Amelia County	1		99	23	1
Amherst County	0		25	0	0
Appomattox County	2		525	95	0
Arlington County & Alexandria City	0		190	105	1
Augusta County & Staunton City & Waynesboro City	19		3613	678	2
Bedford County & Bedford City	2		1146	342	3
Brunswick County	0		170	0	0
Buckingham County	0	1	119	0	0
Campbell County & Lynchburg City	24	14	5948	2707	1
Caroline County	0	1	10	0	0

Charles City County	0	0	0	0	0
Charlotte County	1	1	490	40	0
Chesapeake City	2	6	855	0	1
Chesterfield County & Colonial Heights City	12	15	3512	462	1
Clarke County	3	1	387	0	0
Culpepper County	3	1	443	0	1
Cumberland County	0	0	0	0	0
Dinwiddie County & Petersburg City	6	5	1033	0	0
Essex County	0	2	325	195	0
Fairfax County & Fairfax City & Fall Church City	8	5	1787	1041	0
Fauquier County	0	2	223	0	0
Fluvanna County	0	1	166	0	0
Franklin County	2	9	1761	760	0
Frederick County & Winchester City	9	10	2659	994	1

Gloucester County & Williamsburg City & Newport News City	11	6	2617	713	4
Goochland County	0	0	0	0	0
Greene County	0	1	389	0	0
Greenville County & Emporia City	0	1	578	0	0
Halifax County	9	12	3276	620	3
Hampton City	10	4	2115	202	1
Hanover County	2	4	616	308	0
Henrico County	10	14	6594	2447	0
Isle of Wight County	3	4	1815	0	0
James City County	0	2	372	14	2
King & Queen County	0	0	0	0	0
King George County & Hopewell City	1	2	272	272	0
King William County	2	0	233	0	0
Lancaster County	0	0	0	0	0
Loudoun County	2	1	364	0	1

Louisa County	1	1	209	0	0
Lunenburg County	2	4	307	0	0
Madison County	0	1	238	238	0
Mathews County	0	0	0	0	0
Mecklenberg County	11	9	2799	915	1
Middlesex County	0	0	0	0	0
Nelson County	0	1	40	0	0
New Kent County	0	0	0	0	0
Norfolk City	6	8	6859	400	3
Northampton County	1	0	140	0	0
Northumberland County	0	1	300	0	0
Nottoway County	1	4	401	75	0
Orange County	0	7	701	394	0
Page County	2	5	1542	322	1
Pittsylvania County & Danville City	13	20	7912	1218	4
Portsmouth City	5	3	629	0	0

Powhatan County	0	0	0	0	0
Prince Edward County	1	4	671	0	0
Prince George County	0	0	0	0	0
Prince William County & Manassas City & Manassas Park City	2	2	953	0	0
Rappahannock County	0	0	0	0	0
Richmond County & Richmond City	3	7	4350	1033	0
Rockingham County & Harrisonburg City	8	9	3180	6	2
Shenandoah County	7	6	1495	75	1
Southampton County & Franklin City	8	5	1641	208	0
Spottsylvania County & Fredericksburg City	0	6	805	25	0
Stafford County	1	2	170	0	0
Suffolk City	2	6	594	133	0
Surry County	0	0	0	0	0

Sussex County	0	2	206	0	0
Warren County	0	1	156	0	0
Westmoreland County	0	1	23	0	0
Virginia Beach City	2	0	170	0	0
York County & Poquoson City	0	1	330	0	0
Totals	232	277	84880	18828	37

## **Appendix A**

### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR DISPLACED WORKERS**

#### **Part A. Background Questions**

1. How old are you?
2. How many years have you worked in manufacturing or mining jobs?
3. When were you laid off from work?
4. What was the name of the plant/mine that closed?
5. What type of work did you do at the plant/ mine?
6. Why did the plant close?
7. How much warning did the plant give before you were laid off?
8. Did workers suspect that the plant was going to close before it was announced officially?
9. How long had you worked at this plant/mine?
10. Is there anything else you want to tell me about the plant closing that I overlooked?

#### **Part B. Re-Employment after Plant Closing**

1. Assess your overall situation immediately after the closing.
  - A. Were there enough job possibilities for you locally?
  - B. How long did it take you to find a full-time, stable job after the closing?
  - C. Did you have to take short-term jobs or temporary jobs?
  - D. Did you apply for assistance from any public programs, like Food Stamps?
2. How long were you out of work from that closing before you found a new job?
  - A. What kind of new job did you find?
  - B. Did you have to retrain for that new job? How did you do that?
  - C. Did that new job pay as much as the job you lost?
  - D. Were you able to find a job locally, or did you have to travel?

- E. If you had to travel, how far and where?
- 3. Did your wife/husband have a waged job at the time of the closing?
  - A. If not, did she/he have to find a waged job?
  - B. Did other members of the family take on new waged work to help out?
- 4. Did the closed plant provide you any severance funds? How long did that last?
- 5. Did you lose health insurance when you were laid off?
- 6. Did you lose a retirement pension when you were laid off?

**Part C. Household Survival Strategies**

I would like to explore with you now how your household met its needs when there were not enough wages coming in. In these questions, I am looking for information about the kinds of activities that you and your family did– other than waged jobs– to make up for the loss of wages when the plant closed.

- 1. What did you do other than a waged job to earn additional income?
- 2. What did you do when there were not enough funds to cover household expenses?
  - A. Did you borrow funds from family or neighbors?
  - B. Did you pawn items?
  - C. Did you sell items?
  - D. Did you have to send children to live with relatives for awhile?
  - E. Did you seek help from any public agencies?
  - F. Anything else that I have overlooked?
- 3. What extra efforts did you and the household do that did not involve earning cash? I am going to read to you a list of ways to earn cash or accumulate household needs other than wage earning. Please tell me if you or any family member did any of these activities.
- 4. Does living in a rural area/small town make it harder to find ways to earn cash when a person loses their waged job?

#### **Part D. Assess Your Situation Now**

1. How many jobs have you had since the closing? What kinds of jobs were they?
2. Have you been able to locate a new position that provides you health insurance and retirement benefits?
3. Overall, have you and your family recovered since the closing? Are you worse off or better off?

#### **Part E. Psychological and Health Reactions to the Plant Closing**

In this next part, I hope you will bear with me as I ask you some tough personal questions.

1. Wages are not necessarily the only thing lost when a plant closes. What have you lost other than income from this plant closing?
2. How did you motivate yourself to keep looking when it was not easy to find a new job?
3. How did your wife/husband react to the layoff/ closing?
4. Did you develop any new health problems after the plant closing? How about other members of the family?
5. Did you have problems adjusting to a new job?
6. Have you had enough health insurance to cover your needs and those of your family?

#### **Part D. Closing**

1. Is there anything else you want to tell me about your experience during or after this plant closing?
2. Do you think your wife/husband would be willing to talk to me about how the family survived after the plant closing?
3. Would you be willing to meet with me again if my supervisor tells me I have overlooked something or not covered it well enough?
4. Do you know anyone else who has been laid off who might be willing to be interviewed?

[Will you give me her/his name and contact information. Can you give her/him this brochure?

## **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR SPOUSES OF DISPLACED WORKERS**

### **Part A. Assess your overall situation immediately after the closing.**

1. Did you or anybody else in the household have a full time job when your husband/wife was laid off?
2. How much did your household income drop?
3. Did you apply for assistance from any public programs, like Food Stamps?
4. How long was your husband/wife out of work from that closing before he/she found a new job?
5. Did that new job bring the household back up to the level of income it had before the plant closing?
6. Wages are not necessarily the only thing lost in a plant closing. What did your family lose other than income from this plant closing?
7. How did your husband/wife motivate himself/herself to keep looking when it was not easy to find a new job?
8. How did your wife/husband react to the layoff/ closing?
9. Did he/she develop any new health problems after the plant closing? How about other members of the family?
10. Did he/she have problems adjusting to a new job?
11. Other than loss of income, what were the worst stresses for the family after the layoff?

### **Part B. Household Survival Strategies**

I would like to explore with you now how your household met its needs when there were not enough wages coming in. In these questions, I am looking for information about the kinds of activities that you and your family did– other than waged jobs– to make up for the loss of wages when the plant closed.

1. What did you do when there were not enough funds to cover household expenses?
  - A. Did you borrow funds from family or neighbors?
  - B. Did you pawn items?
  - C. Did you sell items?

- D. Did you have to send children to live with relatives for awhile?
- E. Did you seek help from any public agency?
- F. Anything else that I have overlooked?
- 2. Does living in a rural area/small town make it harder to find ways to earn cash when a person loses their waged job?

**Part C. Assess Your Situation Now**

- 1. Overall, has your family recovered since the closing? Are you worse off or better off?
- 2. What special problems did this plant closing cause you?

**Part D. Closing**

- 1. Is there anything else you want to tell me about your family's experience during or after this plant closing?
- 2. Would you be willing to meet with me again if my supervisor tells me I have overlooked something or not covered it well enough?
- 3. Do you know anyone else who has been laid off who might be willing to be interviewed? [Will you give me her/his name and contact information. Can you give her/him this brochure?

## **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL PROFESSIONALS**

1. What region of Virginia does your organization serve?
2. What work does your organization do to address loss of industry?
3. How badly has loss of industry impacted this region economically?
  - A. Did these closings and reductions in force occur in a single time period, or have these been repeated occurrences?
4. Has loss of industry directly impacted the fiscal capacity of local governments to meet public needs?
5. What are the worst impacts on businesses in this region?
6. Do you expect loss of industry to continue into the future?  
Include their response. Look for the ones that reoccur

### **Closing**

7. Are there other points of information about this region's experience with loss of industry that we have not already covered?

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

1. How badly have plant closings and mass layoffs impacted this community economically?
  - A. How many plant/mine closings have occurred here?
  - B. How many workers have lost jobs?
  - C. Did these closings and reductions in force occur in a single time period, or have these been repeated occurrences?
2. Have these mass layoffs directly impacted the fiscal capacity of your local government to meet public needs?
3. Has your local government had to cut public services after plant closings?
4. In studies of other communities, we have seen evidence that deindustrialization has had a negative impact on schools. Has that been the case here?
5. What are the worst impacts on local businesses?

### **Closing**

6. Are there other points of information about your community's experience with loss of industry that we have not already covered?

## Appendix B

### **Informed Consent for Participants in Research Projects Involving Human Subjects**

Title of Project: DEINDUSTRIALIZATION IN APPALACHIAN VIRGINIA

Investigator(s): Wilma A. Dunaway & Michelline J. Stokes

**I. Purpose of this Research/Project** You are invited to participate in a study about the loss of industry and the impacts of mass layoffs on communities and workers. This study is part of the requirements for completion of a Ph.D. in Planning, Governance and Globalization at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

**II. Procedures** This study will ask you to participate in personal interviews in which you will be asked to respond to questions about the effects of plant closings and/or mass layoffs. Your responses will be tape recorded, and the investigator will make written notes as you speak. You will be permitted to ask questions at any point during the interview process.

**III. Risks** This study will place you at very little risk, as your identity will be kept entirely confidential.

**IV. Benefits** This study will offer you an opportunity to express your concerns about the impacts that plant closings and/or mass layoffs have on Virginia communities and families. Studies like this one can have some future impact upon local and national policy making. No promise or guarantee of benefits is made to encourage your participation.

**V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality** All interview tapes and notes will be strictly confidential. The investigators will not use descriptive details that might reveal your identity, and your name will not be used in final reporting. If you provide sensitive personal information that you do not wish us to reveal, you may inform us, and we will eliminate that information from the written transcript of your tape. It is possible that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) may view this study's collected data for auditing purposes. The IRB is responsible for the oversight of the protection of human subjects involved in research.

**VI. Compensation** You will not receive any monetary or material compensation. However, you may receive a short synopsis of our final report, if you check here \_\_\_ and write your mailing address below your signature at the end.

**VII. Freedom to Withdraw** You are free to withdraw from the study at any time by informing the investigator.

**VIII. Subject's Responsibilities** Your only responsibilities are to respond to questions that are posed to you during interviews and to meet with the investigator during the time periods upon which we mutually agree.

**IX. Subject's Permission** I have read and understand the Informed Consent and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent to participate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Subject signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Witness signature for Subject who must give verbal consent. The witness will print the Subject's name before signing her/his own name.

*Address to request final report summary:*

If I have questions about this research or its conduct or about research subjects' rights, I may contact:

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR Professor Wilma A. Dunaway or CO-INVESTIGATOR Michelline J. Stokes at (540) 231-5177 OR [plantclosings@vt.edu](mailto:plantclosings@vt.edu)

CHAIR, VIRGINIA TECH INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS

Dr. David M. Moore [moored@vt.edu](mailto:moored@vt.edu) Phone (540) 231-4991

This Informed Consent is valid from //dates to be added after IRB project approval.

**[NOTE: Subjects must be given a complete copy (or duplicate original) of the signed Informed Consent.]**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Investigator signature

## **Informed Consent for Participants in Research Projects Involving Human Subjects: Public Officials & Professionals at Organizations**

Title of Project: DEINDUSTRIALIZATION IN APPALACHIAN VIRGINIA

Investigator(s): Wilma A. Dunaway & Michelline J. Stokes

**I. Purpose of this Research/Project** You are invited to participate in a study about the loss of industry and plant closings in Virginia. This study is part of the requirements for completion of a Ph.D. in Planning, Governance and Globalization at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

**II. Procedures** This study will ask you to participate in personal interviews in which you will be asked to respond to questions about the effects of plant closings and/or mass layoffs. Your responses will be tape recorded, and the investigator will make written notes as you speak. You will be permitted to ask questions at any point during the interview process.

**III. Risks** Since you are an individual in a position of public policy-making, we request that you speak in your official capacity “on the record,” without the “cloak of anonymity.” We will not ask you to assume any degree of risk beyond what you do when you participate in a newspaper or television interview. We will not ask you any question outside the scope of your responsibilities related to the impacts of deindustrialization on communities and/or the planning of community recovery strategies.

**IV. Benefits & Compensation** This study will offer you an opportunity to express your concerns about the impacts that deindustrialization is having upon the state of Virginia, upon the region for which your agency plans economic development, and/or upon the community in which you live. Studies like this one can have some future impact upon national, state and local policy making. You will not receive any monetary or material compensation. However, you may receive a short synopsis of my final report, if you check here \_\_\_ and write your mailing address under your signature at the end.

**V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality** We prefer that you speak in your public capacity as an expert who does not require anonymity, but we will allow you to choose to be interviewed anonymously. The tape recordings and interview notes for this study will be kept strictly confidential. If you provide sensitive information that you do not wish us to quote directly in our final reports, you may inform us during the interview, and we will not quote that information. We will turn off the tape recorder at any point that you ask to speak “off the record.” We will also allow you to indicate that you do not wish to have your identify linked to certain information in our final reports of findings.

**VI. Freedom to Withdraw & Subject's Responsibilities** You are free to withdraw from the study at any time by informing the investigator. Your only responsibilities are to respond to questions that are posed to you during interviews and to meet with the investigator during the time periods upon which we mutually agree.

**VII. What degree of anonymity do you prefer?**

\_\_\_ I do not request anonymity, and I am willing to have my name and my official/professional role identified in final reporting. I expect investigators to honor the qualification to anonymity described in Point V.

\_\_\_ I prefer to be interviewed anonymously and identified in final reporting only as “public official” or as “an organizational staff member.”

**VIII. Subject's Permission** I have read and understand the Informed Consent and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Subject signature

*Address to request final report summary:*

If I have questions about this research or its conduct or about research subjects' rights, I may contact:

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR Professor Wilma A. Dunaway or CO-INVESTIGATOR Michelline J. Stokes at

(540) 231-5177 OR [plantclosings@vt.edu](mailto:plantclosings@vt.edu)

CHAIR, VIRGINIA TECH INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS Dr.

David M. Moore [moored@vt.edu](mailto:moored@vt.edu) Phone (540) 231-4991

This Informed Consent is valid from *//dates to be added after IRB project approval.*

**[NOTE: Subjects must be given a complete copy (or duplicate original) of the signed Informed Consent.]**

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Investigator signature

Recruitment Flyer

**Have you or your spouse lost a job due to a plant closing between 1990-2010?**

**Are you willing to participate in a research study that will investigate impacts of such mass layoffs on communities and worker families?**

**Interviews will be confidential.**

For more information, contact:  
W.A. Dunaway or M.J. Stokes  
School of Public & International Affairs  
Virginia Tech  
Phone (540) 231-5177  
[E-mailplantclosings@vt.edu](mailto:E-mailplantclosings@vt.edu)

<p><b>W.A. Dunaway or M.J. Stokes</b> Virginia Tech Phone (540) 231-5177 <a href="mailto:E-mailplantclosings@vt.edu">E-mailplantclosings@vt.edu</a></p>
<p><b>W.A. Dunaway or M.J. Stokes</b> Virginia Tech Phone (540) 231-5177 <a href="mailto:E-mailplantclosings@vt.edu">E-mailplantclosings@vt.edu</a></p>
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