WORKER DISPLACEMENT & IDENTITY MANAGEMENT

IDENTITY TRANSITIONS:

WORKER DISPLACEMENT AND IDENTITY MANAGEMENT

By

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ABSTRACT

Studies of plant closure and worker displacement have examined the more quantifiable impacts of these events. Rarely have these studies touched on the subjective impacts of worker displacement. One such impact is on the identity of the worker. People form major parts of their identities around the work which they do. Thus, when they face a change in their work there is also a change in their identities. This study has focused on how workers have managed their identities in light of their displacement due to the closures of a brewery and a distillery in southern Ontario.

It was found that workers maintained their social identities while changing their personal identities. It was also discovered that personal identities could be sub-divided into qualitatively different categories: positional attributes associated with role, and personal qualities associated with one's broader character. These sub-groups were altered in the identity management process but the catalyst for each change was different.

In all, this thesis contributes to the understanding of the subjective elements of plant closure and worker displacement. There are several avenues for further study indicated by the findings of this project.

and thought-provoking, yet never coercive. The outcome is a much stronger project.

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INTRODUCTION

> I never saw too many people who weren't proud of the
> fact that they worked at Labatt's because it
> automatically pegged you as someone who had a good
> job and worked for a big, high profile company and
> made decent money more than anything else. For a
> lot of people, that is a judgmental factor for where
> you sort of sit in the scheme of things (Brewing
> Department Employee - Labatt's).

It has been well argued and accepted that we form a large part

of our identities around the work which we do. It follows from this

statement that when we encounter a change in our work, we will undergo a

subsequent, and perhaps proportional, change in our identity. With the

increasing volatility and pace of change in our economy, the examination

of how people manage the transitions from one work situation to another

has become increasingly important. The plant closure literature to this

point has examined the impact of displacement on workers and

communities, but has stopped short of examining the ways in which

workers manage their lives after being displaced. The difference

between examining impacts and examining management lies in the emphasis

placed on the view of the worker as an actor in the process of

displacement. This study begins with the assumption that displacement

has an impact on workers and that the impact varies by age, gender and

race & ethnicity. It proceeds to examine the less studied question of

how workers' identities change as a result of displacement. While the focus of this study is on workers managing their identities, it is necessarily placed in the context of how they manage their lives in light of the plant closures. This is because identity is formed and communicated through everyday living.

To begin this inquiry, I will detail the methods which were used to gather the data, explain the choice of research subjects, introduce the sample of workers and lay out the methods which were used in this study. In order to conceptualize the problem of worker displacement and identity management, it is necessary to engage several bodies of the scholarly literature. The literature on plant closure and worker displacement provides a background to this thesis. I will indicate how the two closures under investigation compare to the literature. The research on unemployment provides a bridge between the literature on worker displacement and on identity. The final relevant body of literature involves the themes of identity and identity management. The latter provides the conceptual framework for this study. The findings of this report detail how workers changed or maintained their identities or aspects of their identity as they managed the transition from one work setting to another. Finally, I will discuss the implications of identity transition and worker displacement.

METHODS AND SAMPLE

CHOOSING THE METHOD

The problems associated with the examination of things such as
identity, which are essentially manifested internally or non-visibly,
span a great period of time. Some 2000 years ago, James (James 2:18
NIV[1]), a Biblical writer, suggested a solution to just such a problem.
He wrote, "But someone will say, 'You have faith; I have deeds.' Show
me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do".
Similarly and more recently, George Herbert Mead (1936:396) suggested
that we can study the mind by studying the individual's behavioral
responses to internal attitudes. Rick Fantasia (1988:11) holds that
"analyses of class consciousness should be based on actions,
organizational capabilities, institutional arrangements, and the values
that arise within them, rather than on attitudes abstracted from the
context of social action". The point which the above authors are
indicating is that internal manifestations such as faith, mind, and
consciousness influence our actions. Thus by examining actions we can
assess that which is not directly available for study. However, in
spite of the fact that the same solution to this problem has been
proposed again and again, sociologists still use attitudinal survey

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[1] New International Version of the Bible.

research in order to assess identity. Devine's (1992:231) outline of a debate regarding which social identities are most salient indicates that methodology -- attitudinal questionnaire construction -- is one of the key issues on which the debate hinges. Thus, the best approach to studying identity is to avoid research based on attitudes and to examine the *behaviour* of individuals.

What, then, is the best way to examine the behaviour of individuals? Burman (1988) effectively used open-ended, focused interviews in his study of the experiences of the unemployed. Certainly, if we want to know what displaced workers do after a plant shutdown, then we must ask those workers. Allowing them to develop their own ideas around what they did after being displaced will aid the analysis of the data as respondents make their own connections between their actions, their emotions, and their identities.

In order to establish the background to the plant closures and the order of events, I examined newspaper clipping files in the Grace Schmidt Archives of the Kitchener Public Library, an archive dedicated to the history of the Waterloo Region. These files helped establish the order of events and some of the issues surrounding each of the closures. More importantly, from these files I was able to glean some of the names of people who were affected by the closings.

Following Burman's example, I have used an open-ended, focused interview technique in which respondents were allowed to talk at length about their experiences surrounding their displacement. The interviewees were loosely guided by a set of questions (see appendix)

developed from the literature on displacement and on identity. This

guide was refined primarily in the first few interviews, allowing the

displaced workers to participate in the formation of the study itself.

The original question guideline consisted of three pages of questions

based on the themes in the literature and on the preliminary research.

I selected questions from the list and asked the respondents to be open

concerning their reactions to my line of questioning. At times the

respondents indicated that I was asking "kind of a stupid question".

Questions which used terms like "identity" and "consciousness" were

largely unfruitful. Conversely, questions such as: "Do you think you

have changed as a result of the closing?" elicited comments which

focused on identity without using that particular term.

The initial interviewees also familiarized me with the argot

used by employees. This enabled me to both understand subsequent

comments more readily and to communicate as a peer rather than an

outsider. I believe that my personal background in construction and

factory work also helped in this regard. I did present myself as an

academic doing research in the area of displaced workers but I seemed to

be treated as an exception, as the following quote indicates:

> I worked with a bunch of university guys at Labatt's
> through the summers and whatever. They had degrees
> as long as their arm but they had about an eighth of
> an inch of common sense when it came to doing a
> simple job. Nothing against you personally. I know
> a lot of guys with grade eight that got more brains
> than a PhD (Labatt's - Bottling).

One interviewee suggested that I ask what brand of beer people

were drinking now. This proved to be a rewarding question since many

former employees were boycotting the products of Labatt's and Seagram's. I had decided not to examine the impact of the closure on those Labatt's employees who transferred to other Labatt's breweries. However, the respondents from Labatt's indicated that the way in which the transfers were handled by the company was a major source of bitterness for those who were not transferred. Subsequently, a line of questioning regarding the transfers also proved to be useful.

CHOOSING THE RESEARCH SUBJECTS

Having determined an initial method for tackling the research problem, research subjects had to be chosen. I decided to interview workers from two closed plants in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada -- the original distillery of Joseph E. Seagram and Sons and a brewery owned by Labatt Brewing of Canada. 1 interviewed officials of the Distillery, Wine, and Allied Workers union which represented the Seagram's[2] hourly employees and the United Food and Commercial Workers union which represented the majority of Labatt's hourly employees[3]. Further, I interviewed company representatives from Labatt's and Seagram's to gain a balanced perspective of the situation. Along the way, I gathered available physical evidence in the form of newspaper articles,

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[2] The possessive forms of the company names (Seagram's and Labatt's) are used in most references. While this is inconsistent with grammatical rules, it is how the former workers and those in the wider community referred to these establishments.

[3] The seven stationary engineers employed by Labatt's were represented by a separate union, the International Order of Operating Engineers.

newsletters, seniority lists, flyers and notices which were pertinent to the closings.

The closing of the Seagram's distillery was announced in the Fall of 1990 with the closing being completed by the end of 1992. The announcement of the closing of the Labatt's brewery came in the spring of 1992 and the closing was completed by mid-November of that same year. The choice of these two plants was justified for several reasons such as the timing of the shutdowns relative to the interviews, and the similarities and differences between the plants.

The timing of the closures relative to the interviews was important for three reasons. First, it was important to allow enough time for the full impact of the closure to be realized by the affected workers. Perrucci's (1988:149) study of plant closure, which was completed soon after the shutdown of RCA in Monticello, Indiana, noted that the analysis of the impact of the closure was limited because some of the employees had not yet exhausted their unemployment benefits and thus had not experienced the full impact of the closure at the time the research was done. Second, it was essential that not too much time had lapsed between the closures and the interviews. Over time people would forget important elements of their experience. Third, because the focus of this study is on the transition of identities from one work situation to another it was important to leave enough time for people to become established in a new work setting. Two years seemed to be the optimal amount of time to meet the above criteria. In that time everyone had exhausted their unemployment benefits, training courses were completed,

some had experienced what could be classified as long-term unemployment, some had experienced several job transitions, and many had become established in new jobs.

The Labatt's brewery and the Seagram's distillery shared some important features which are relevant to this study. Primarily, they shared the same local economy, thus the workers displaced by the closings faced essentially the same job prospects. The workforces at each of these plants had a similar occupational and ethnic makeup. The majority of workers were highly-paid, unskilled labourers or semi-skilled machine operators. These were supplemented by a group of skilled tradespeople holding certificates of qualification as millwrights, electricians, stationary engineers, etc. Both plants employed, almost exclusively, white, English-speaking Canadians of European descent. The workers enjoyed excellent working conditions, fringe benefits, and what seemed to be secure, life-long employment.

There were also similarities in the closing of the plants. Both companies offered a lengthy period of advanced notice and made provisions for retraining and job search assistance. Most of the buildings which housed the two plants were demolished, thus there was no hope of reopening.

The relevant differences between the two plants include the gender composition of the workforces and the orderliness of the closings. The Labatt's brewery production employees were almost all men, while at Seagram's approximately half of the workers were women, primarily unskilled or semi-skilled labourers employed in the packaging

department. There were no women holding certificates of qualification in a trade. Pertaining to the orderliness of the closures, the Seagram's closing was relatively uneventful, while the Labatt's closing was marked by reports of vandalism and picketing over the severance packages given to the hourly workers and the criteria for the transfer of employees.

The similarities and differences between the two plants provide an excellent opportunity to study the effects of plant closings and in particular the shift in identity which accompanies a shift in one's work context. The differences will allow some comparison between the two closures. The similar characteristics hold constant several factors which otherwise could be considered as intervening variables in the relationship between displacement and identity management. Thus any differences in the responses from the two plants or from groups within the plants would more likely be the result of the closure rather than the local economy, occupational groups, ethnic background, provision of advanced notice, etc. It is possible that these similarities make the sample less representative of plant closures in general. However, in comparing the closures under investigation to the literature on plant closings and worker displacement I have no reason to believe that these closures are much different from closures in general.

CHOOSING THE SAMPLE

The names of initial interviewees were obtained from newspaper articles. I contacted those whose names I could find in the telephone

book. Each interviewee was asked for the names of other former employees to which I could be referred. I was careful to obtain interviews from all of the major departments in each company. In total, 21 interviews (not including union or company representatives) were conducted, ten from Seagram's and eleven from Labatt's. Seven skilled tradespeople were interviewed, all male, and 14 unskilled or semiskilled workers, ten men and four women. The ages of the interviewees ranged from 27 to 55 years at the time of the interview. The years of seniority for these interviewees ranged from four to 26.

In order to get an idea of how other workers displaced by these closings were faring, I asked each interviewee about the situations of others they knew. Some of this information was also published in newspaper articles and company newsletters. For the few respondents who turned down interviews, I took notes on the phone conversations which we had. All of those refusing interviews talked at length about their experience and the reasons for their refusal. In each case the refusal was due to the bitterness which the individual still felt toward the company.

The former employees of Seagram's and Labatt's do not represent typical displaced workers. They more adequately represent the displaced workers who are most fortunate in respect to the amount of advanced notice they were given and the severance packages they received. They are also representative of workers affected by the shift in the economy away from high wage, primary sector, manufacturing jobs. Further, the sample of workers chosen for this study represents those

who, for the most part, have been able to find new employment. I did not seek to interview those who chose to retire, nor those who were transferred to the Toronto or London breweries in the case of the Labatt's closing. It is apparent that there are shifts in identity for both of these latter groups, but in each case there is a separate set of issues with which to deal and thus those groups are best left to a separate, perhaps subsequent study. I did not go into detail concerning the unemployment experiences of this group of workers. A study of unemployment and identity has already been masterfully undertaken by Patrick Burman (1988). In sum, the people chosen for this study are those who could relate their experiences pertaining to the transition from one work situation to another resulting from a plant closing.

PLANT CLOSURE AND WORKER DISPLACEMENT

Plant closings must be viewed in a wider context of shifting economies and globalization. The impact of closures ranges from individual worker displacement to the rending of the social fabric of the community. There are also several issues arising within the process of a plant closure which mediate the impact which a closure may have. The wider context, the impact and the issues surrounding plant closures are the themes examined in this chapter.

ECONOMIC TRANSITIONS - THE MACRO CONTEXT

The economies of our time are undergoing massive alteration. These changes, broadly speaking, are transformations of the *scale* of economic enterprise as well as changes in the *focus* or *product* of enterprises. Increasingly, a smaller number of companies are employing a greater proportion of the work force. Rinehart (1987:71) notes that in Canada, almost 90% of all people in the labour force work for someone else. This state of overwhelming dependence on others for employment is a striking contrast to the situation only a century ago when independent producers were numerically dominant. As large companies engage in processes of globalization and deindustrialization (discussed below) more and more people are at risk of losing their jobs.

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There has also been a shift from an agricultural and
extractive economy to one based on manufacturing and, more recently, the
shift has been to a service economy. The percentage of the labour force
employed in manufacturing has declined slightly during this century,
while the percentage of those engaged in the tertiary sector has
skyrocketed from 28% in 1901 to nearly 70% in 1981 (Rinehart,
1987:74ff).

While the manufacturing sector in Canada has not been
experiencing growth, the same cannot be said for manufacturing globally.
Indeed, the growth of multinational corporations and advances in
transportation and telecommunications has allowed the formation of
intricate global commodity chains which link geographically distant
players in commodity production and distribution (Gereffi &
Korzeniewicz, 1994). In the globalization process, unskilled factory
jobs are often relocated to regions where wages and other overhead costs
are lower. Bluestone and Harrison (1982) use the term
"deindustrialization" to describe the *diversion* of funds from investment
in fixed capital in established industrial regions (ie. North America)
to foreign investment and to corporate reorganization:

> By *deindustrialization* is meant a widespread,
> systematic disinvestment in the nation's basic
> productive capacity. Controversial as it may be,
> the essential problem with the U. S. economy can be
> traced to the way capital--in the forms of financial
> resources and of real plant and equipment--has been
> diverted from productive investment in our basic
> national industries into unproductive speculation,
> mergers and acquisitions, and foreign investment.
> Left behind are shuttered factories, displaced
> workers, and a newly emerging group of ghost towns
> (Bluestone & Harrison, 1982:6).

As Bluestone and Harrison indicate, the economic decisions made by top level executives in a large corporation have an impact on the communities and individuals whose lives are intertwined with the ongoing business focus of the company. The cost of that impact is not borne by the decision-makers but rather by workers who, in many cases, are acknowledged as excellent employees, and a community which is otherwise supportive of the particular firm.

The Waterloo Context

The context of the closings at Seagram's and Labatt's in Waterloo is consistent with the deindustrialization thesis proposed by Bluestone and Harrison (1982). The Seagram's corporation had invested heavily in DuPont, a chemical company. More recently, Seagram's has sold its 20% share in that company to acquire MCA Inc. in the entertainment industry (K-W Record, April 10, 1990:A1,2). As the profitability of the distilling industry in Canada has diminished due to the decline of consumption and the increase in taxation on liquor (Hamara & DeRuyter, 1990), Seagram's sought to shift its focus to other, more profitable industries. DuPont was a net provider of capital for the company for 14 years. The 80% investment in MCA Inc. is expected to be more profitable than DuPont in the long-term but a net user of cash in the short-run, thus requiring the company to tighten its belt in other areas (K-W Record, April 10, 1995:A1,2). The closing of the original plant in Waterloo can be seen in this context. Ten years before the closing, the plant was deemed to be "sacrosanct" by Charles Bronfman, then Chair of the company. "You're dealing with something

that lives and breathes. The important thing in the plant is the quality of the people. They have an old-fashioned work ethic and a hell of a lot of pride in what they're doing" (Ries, 1990). Thus, the closing of the plant in Waterloo was not due to internal production faults, but to external economic conditions.

The Labatt's closing was also due to external economic factors. Prior to announcing the closing, Hugo Powell (President, Labatt Breweries of Canada) stated that the Waterloo workforce was the most efficient of all the Labatt brewing operations. The economic event that precipitated the corporate belt-tightening in this case was an amalgamation of Labatt's two largest Canadian competitors, Molson's and Carling's. Molson bought Carling and thus became Canada's largest brewer, a designation previously held by Labatt's. Molson's closed nine breweries across Canada. Labatt's has closed three breweries and reorganized its management and sales departments, cutting 675 jobs (Feschuk, 1993; Strauss, 1992). Other reasons given for the overhaul of the Canadian beer giants are the removal of trade barriers between the provinces and between Canada and the U.S., and declining beer consumption (DeRuyter & Ries, 1992). Interestingly, John Labatt Limited has also invested in the entertainment industry with shares in the Toronto Blue Jays baseball team (45%), and specialty broadcasting companies such as TSN (The Sports Network - 100%) and its French-language affiliate RDS (Le Réseau de Sports), the Discovery Channel (80%), and Dome Productions (100%) (John Labatt Limited, 1994 Annual Report).

In each case, the Waterloo plants of Labatt's and Seagram's were deemed to represent "excess capacity" in each company's productive capability. In the 1994 Annual Report of John Labatt Limited, the parent company of Labatt Breweries of Canada, Hugo Powell wrote, "Our goal is to be cost-competitive in all Canadian markets. In fiscal 1992 and 1993 we eliminated about $50 million in expenses through actions such as better capacity utilization" (1994:5). In essence, Seagram's and Labatt's have "disinvested in their basic productive capacity" an action which Bluestone and Harrison (1982:6) term "deindustrialization". Meanwhile, back in Waterloo, this disinvestment has had a profound impact on the former employees of Labatt's and Seagram's.

THE IMPACT OF PLANT CLOSURES

Many studies have examined the impact of plant closures on workers and their communities. The immediate and most obvious impact of a plant closure is the loss of jobs to individual workers directly employed by the company. Although the loss of a job may in one sense be a problem that each worker must deal with individually, such "private troubles" (Mills, 1959) are seldom isolated. Workers are parts of families, friendship networks, organizations, and communities. Private troubles, then, affect more than simply the individual. Thus we must keep in mind the "ripple effect" which a closing may have on workers, families, networks, communities, etc. Broadly speaking, we can separate the various impacts of plant closures into two categories. The first deals with the impact of closures on the workers and their families.

The second deals with the impact of closures on the community of which the workers are a part.

The first impact which the worker likely experiences is a loss of income. Re-employment does not necessarily rectify this situation. Depending on the economic situation of the region, workers may only be able to find jobs which pay less than their former employment. It may be a job for which they are overqualified or it may be part-time, seasonal, or temporary work. In any case, there continues to be a loss of income after re-employment and in the latter cases the problem of underemployment arises (Eleen & Bernardine, 1971; Bluestone & Harrison, 1982; Perrucci et al, 1988).

The family's acquired wealth is affected by a loss of income over a prolonged period of time. The severity of the loss also affects family wealth. Minimally, workers and their families may reduce spending and they may not be able to save as much as previously. As economic troubles become more severe, people may begin to deplete their savings in order to make ends meet. Long-term loss of income may result in the forfeiture of family assets, such as cars, homes, etc. Even in the absence of objective measures of economic loss, the subjective perception of economic distress is still a tangible problem for the victims of plant closures (Eleen & Bernardine, 1971; Bluestone & Harrison, 1982).

The impact of plant closures on workers does not end with direct economic effects. Research shows that a job loss due to plant closure may have a definite effect on one's physical and mental health.

Physical problems may include increased propensity to heart disease, ulcers, respiratory problems, diabetes, and gout. Mental and emotional problems associated with closings include depression, anxiety, aggression, and substance abuse. These problems are not limited to the individual worker, as other family members may also be susceptible to any of these maladies. Further, incidents of child and spouse abuse increase in families of displaced workers. Finally, beyond physical and emotional problems, workers are often left with increased feelings of alienation toward the establishment both locally and nationally (Eleen & Bernardine, 1971; Bluestone & Harrison, 1982; Perrucci et al, 1988).

The impact of a plant closure on a community goes beyond the impact on individual workers. A spin-off of the loss of income for workers is that there is less money spent at local businesses. A more direct impact of a plant closing is the loss of contracts to suppliers of the company. If the economic setback to the community is severe enough, there will be more business closures, resulting in even more displaced workers (Eleen & Bernardine, 1971; Bluestone & Harrison, 1982; Perrucci et al, 1988).

Public revenues decline as personal and corporate income taxes decrease. As these revenues disappear the demand for services, in the form of unemployment insurance and welfare benefits, increases. There is also a decline in charitable donations from both individual and corporate sources. Lastly, there is a qualitative change in the community attitude which is similar to that found in the worker. The social fabric of a community is weakened by a plant closure, with the

magnitude of the impact being directly related to the predominance of the plant in the community (Bluestone & Harrison, 1982; Perrucci et al, 1988).

Thus, the impact of a plant closing is not isolated to those losing employment at the plant. There is a broad, and possibly devastating, impact on individuals, their families and communities. A study of the adaptation of workers to a plant closing must, then, acknowledge the broader social context of the impact of plant closings, taking into account the interaction of the individual with significant others, with groups and with the community as a whole.

The Impact of the Waterloo Closings

The production employees of Labatt's and Seagram's in Waterloo were among the most highly paid blue collar workers in the region. Few of these people have been able to find work which pays as well as their former employment. For those who did find work at a comparable wage, most still experienced a loss of wages in the interim period. The exception to this has been those with certificates of qualification as electricians, millwrights, engineers, etc. These people were generally able to find work at a comparable wage in a shorter period of time compared to those who were not skilled tradespeople. However, the working conditions which most of these faced were not on a level with the excellent conditions experienced at Labatt's and Seagram's. The loss of seniority and paid vacation was also a major blow for long-term employees.

> Our parents and stuff like that, they've have had
> jobs for so long. Once you have fourteen years in a

> place - it was almost half my life, kind of thing,
> at that time. [Spouse: Starting all over again at
> the bottom of the totem pole.] Yeah, that's the
> hard part, is losing all your seniority, and even
> where I am now, the benefits aren't near as good
> (Warehouse - Seagram's).

Some, especially among the tradespeople, found that they had to work
harder and longer but could make the same amount of money or perhaps a
little more. Most had to settle for harder work and significantly less
remuneration.

The former employees of both companies were given a severance
package including remuneration commensurate to their seniority.
Seagram's production workers were given 2 weeks pay for every year of
service with a five year minimum payout. Labatt's production workers
received approximately 1 1/2 weeks for each year of service. Under the
rules for unemployment insurance, however, the number of weeks
represented by this severance payment had to elapse before the
unemployed worker could collect unemployment insurance benefits. Thus
the severance package was a boon to those who could find work quickly
and an extension of the advanced notice period for those who were
unemployed for longer periods of time. Some people sought to skirt this
rule by finding a temporary job quickly in order to "protect their
severance." Once they had enough weeks at their new job to qualify for
unemployment on that basis they could collect unemployment insurance
benefits (possibly at a lower rate, however) without penalty.

The impact on accumulated wealth began for some once their
severance was exhausted. At this point they could collect the maximum
unemployment insurance benefits at a rate which was about half of their

former wage. Financial commitments often exceeded the benefit received and thus savings were beginning to be depleted before the unemployment insurance claim was exhausted. An accelerated impact on wealth began for the long-term unemployed after their unemployment benefits had been exhausted. Most employees had been able to invest in retirement savings plans and thus, for those who could not find work for an extensive period of time, they did not qualify for welfare payments until those savings had been almost exhausted.

Even for those who were able to find work quickly and those who successfully sought to protect their severance, anxiety concerning money was a new problem for them, one which they now deal with daily (c.f. Perrucci et al, 1988:75). Other emotional and relational problems encountered by, and attributed to the closings by former Seagram's and Labatt's employees included depression, marital breakdowns, and increased alcohol use and abuse.

> I look at different situations that I know some of
> the guys went through and everything else, and maybe
> I didn't fair that bad. You know, some of them had
> emotional break downs. Other ones lost their
> marriages (Brewing - Labatt's).

> In the bottle shop, girls that never drank before,
> snuck booze. We had this one part of our washroom
> that had a little cabinet, like a vanity with doors
> underneath. It never used to have liquor in it and
> it always did after that point. And then, like
> Christmas or shut down, or any special occasion,
> there'd be a few people that didn't drink normally,
> that would start drinking during the day. But after
> the plant closure announcement, almost everybody was
> loaded. How the lines ever ran and that no one ever
> got hurt is amazing (Bottling - Seagram's).

In addition, many workers still harbour a certain amount of bitterness toward their former employers for what they perceive to be a betrayal -- they had expected life-long employment. Most often this bitterness is manifested in a boycott of the company's products. Some also boycott the products of the other company because of "what they did to the community" or because they knew someone from the other plant. This wider boycott was expressed more by Seagram's employees who felt that the Labatt's workers were not treated as well as they were.

Respondents from both companies reported that their family members were also devastated by the news of the closing. In some cases, family members were more anxious about the job loss than the displaced worker.

> There was initial shock but I really wasn't as bad
> as everybody else in my family. They were worried
> about everything more than I was. I remember my
> youngest daughter came to me and said, "Dad, are we
> going to be poor now?" You know, stuff like that.
> I said, "No, we'll do fine" because I've always felt
> that I can get another job. And a decent one at
> that (Maintenance - Seagram's).

Some families reported that high levels of stress continued to be experienced in the household's everyday activities. This was the case even when the displaced worker had found a relatively good job and had not experienced a long period of unemployment.

The wider impact of the closings on the community is represented in several ways. First, the loss in tax revenue is substantial. Seagram's alone paid about $1 million in municipal taxes each year (Hamara & DeRuyter, 1990). Second, the loss of income to employees meant reduced spending in the community. Seagram's payroll

amounted to $7.5 million annually, which would primarily have been spent

locally as most employees lived in the area (Hamara & DeRuyter, 1990).

Third, Seagram's and the brewery which Labatt's operated[4] had long

histories in Waterloo. With the closings, that tradition all but

ended[5]. Finally, the physical core of downtown Waterloo was profoundly

altered by the closings. For over a century, the brewery and distillery

were located within one block of each other and directly neighbouring

the downtown core. With the closing, most of the buildings were

demolished, except for a few structures designated as historically

significant. The removal of these buildings from the six acre Labatt's

site and the eleven acre Seagram's property has drastically altered the

skyline of Waterloo.

ISSUES SURROUNDING PLANT CLOSURES

There are several issues surrounding plant closures which are

prominent in the literature. The first of these issues pertains to the

technical aspects of plant closure: advance notice, retraining, re-

education, and relocation of displaced workers. The second group of

issues deals with the impact which plant closings have on segments of

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[4] Labatt's was a newcomer to Waterloo having purchased the brewery
in 1977. Prior to that the brewery had been owned by Carling's, which
took over the brewery from the founding Kuntz family.

[5] Some of the tradition lives on in historical legacies. The Kuntz
house is the original brewers home. The Seagram Museum, which is not
officially affiliated with the company whose name it bears, is dedicated
to the history of distilling in Canada. For more details on the history
of the distillery and brewery, see the appendix.

the population. The impact of plant closings vary depending on one's age, gender and race or ethnicity.

Technical Aspects Of Plant Closure

The issues of advanced notice, retraining, re-education, and relocation are generally related to discussions of the length of unemployment, probability of re-employment, and the level of earnings in subsequent jobs for displaced workers.

Advanced Notice

The argument for companies giving employees advanced notice of the plant closing states that this period of time gives displaced workers, along with supporting community groups and government agencies, time to search for new employment, engage in retraining and educational opportunities and to otherwise prepare for the closure (Bluestone & Harrison, 1982:242-3). Nord & Ting (1991:688) found that the earnings losses and length of unemployment were reduced for displaced workers as long as the advanced notification period exceeded 60 days. Howland (1988:138-42) contends that, given advanced notice, workers who quit before the closing reduce their wage losses and duration of unemployment.

Labatt's and Seagram's gave their employees advanced notice in excess of the minimum four months required by the Canada Labour Code (Martin, 1987:242). The Seagram's closing was spread out over a two year period due to the requirements of the distilling process. The first people to leave the plant had approximately six months notice, the

last had over two years. Labatt's gave six months advanced notice, which was not required by the brewing process. They continued full production until the closing, even adding a third shift to increase production in the summer months -- a normal happening in the Waterloo plant. According to the Nord & Ting (1991) study, the length of advanced notice should have reduced the length of unemployment and earnings losses. However, this relationship must be mediated by the extent to which employees chose to prepare for the closing.

Some employees used this period to take courses and to register businesses which they intended to start when the plant closed. Many began sending out resumés. Others began networking in the hopes of accessing a job through a friend or relative. This is how many of them initially got their jobs at Seagram's and Labatt's.

> i think the only thing we started doing is really,
> anybody you'd meet, you'd start kind of putting the
> hint in there that you're going to be needing a job.
> So, "Do you know anybody that..." But we really
> didn't... Like I said, it took so long for it to
> sink in, even when I was done (Bottling -
> Seagram's).

The few who left early did so in order to accept new positions. This is a logical explanation for Howland's (1988) finding that quitting early lowered earnings losses and length of unemployment. A significant group of the soon-to-be-displaced workers also did *nothing* or very little in preparation for the closing:

> I just tried not to think about it until the place
> was closed. Sit back after it was closed and then
> try to figure out what I was going to do, where I
> was going to go. I didn't let it worry me (Bottling
> - Labatt's).

> You couldn't really dedicate 100% to it until you
> were relieved of your duties there because you still
> had a commitment to go there to get paid money to
> survive. I just wanted it to be over with and
> towards the end everybody else did as well (Bottling
> - Labatt's).

There were some who put off doing anything because they felt they had

excellent prospects and thus would have no problem finding work once the

plant closed. Others felt that the plant would somehow remain open --

that there would be a last minute reprieve:

> Actually I used to drive truck before so I thought I
> had the world by the bag. I had all these prospects
> and all that. So I just put them on the back burner
> and thought I'd be alright and then they just didn't
> happen like that. I thought it would be a lot
> easier for me to find employment in what I wanted
> and it just didn't turn out that way (Production -
> Seagram's).

> I think we kept, "Well maybe it won't actually
> happen." You want to just grasp on to anything,
> like God -- a lightning bolt will strike the
> Montreal plant and it will burn down. I don't know.
> I think you just kept thinking that "Maybe" -- and
> nobody really said a lot but -- "Maybe it won't
> happen." It's just like the big lay off list.
> "Maybe it won't really come down to you." So I
> think that might have been part of it too, that you
> knew it was, but you didn't really accept it right
> away (Bottling - Seagram's).

These statements suggest that there is not a direct relationship between

advanced notice and earning losses and length of unemployment. The

benefit of advanced notice for employees was limited to the extent that

people chose to take advantage of that period to prepare. At minimum,

the workers gained six or more months of wages at a rate which many

would not see again.

Weber & Taylor (1987:135-8) report that there are problems associated with advanced notification of plant closures. The disadvantages appear to be for management as opposed to the advantages which are primarily for the workers. The two major problems that companies fear in giving advanced notification are the loss of efficiency in the remaining period of production and the impact on the orderliness of the closing. The fear of a loss of productivity has been shown to be largely unfounded. In some cases productivity has actually increased as employees attempt to convince the company to keep the plant open. Orderliness in closing the plant is a more realistic concern as employees may quit before the closing to find or accept new employment. Insofar as these "early quits" involve key personnel who are not easily replaced temporarily, the problem can become quite acute for plant managers. However a number of factors, such as severance pay eligibility and labour market conditions keep the proportion of early quits low. Howland (1988:142) reports that only nine percent of displaced workers receiving advanced notice quit early. Research into the impact of advanced notice given in the closing of the Kelvinator plant in London, Ontario, indicated that those who are most likely to quit early were office, management and supervisory personnel rather than production workers (Portis & Suys, 1970:27).

The disadvantage of giving advanced notice in the Waterloo closings was consonant with the findings of Weber & Taylor (1987). There was concern regarding the effect on productivity. Many of the displaced workers expressed that they did not really care about their

work anymore but that they still did their jobs well. Others expressed

amazement at how orderly the closings actually were:

> They still worked the way they always did which was
> a miracle. Right up until they were closing our
> plant, they were closing it on Tuesday and on the
> Friday of the week before, they were asking us if we
> could work overtime on the weekend. You know what I
> mean. I mean, any other place would have already
> had riots. You know how things fall apart towards
> the end of a closure. Like, if it was a GM plant or
> a Ford plant, they probably would have had fire
> bombings and that sort of thing. Whereas, here they
> are asking to work overtime and nothing really
> happened (Brewing - Labatt's).

The Labatt's plant did close several days before it was scheduled to due

to low morale and reports of vandalism. Petty theft was reported to be

a problem at both plants. An increase in alcohol consumption was also

reported, both during and after work. Consistent with Howland's (1988)

findings only a few production employees left before the closing to take

new jobs. The problem of supervisors and managers leaving early was

more severe (c.f. Portis & Suys, 1970).

Retraining & Education

As stated earlier, advanced notice gives the employees a

chance to engage in training, education, and job searches prior to

experiencing a loss of income. Regarding education in general, Nord &

Ting (1991:688) found that those with more formal schooling were more

likely to be re-employed at jobs with higher wages and less likely to

experience earnings losses. They cite several authors who argue that

more educated workers can "conduct more effective job searches and are

perceived as being more productive by employers". The type of education

and training which an individual has is also of some importance. Those

with more marketable skills are at an advantage in any given job market. Frequently, post-displacement training takes the form of job search skill training. This should have a direct impact on both the length of unemployment and earnings losses. The actual effect of retraining and re-education is somewhat disappointing. Zippay (1991:560) found that high levels of unemployment and underemployment persisted among displaced workers in Western Pennsylvania, although they were active in attempting to acquire new skills. The financing of education and training is problematic for displaced workers who often have significant financial obligations. Finally, note the problem created for displaced industrial workers: if new jobs are not available, what will they retrain for? (Perrucci et al, 1988:5).

Both Labatt's and Seagram's provided for training and job search assistance during the advanced notice period. However, the way in which this was provided was very different and yielded very different results. Seagram's set up a joint union-management committee to assist employees in finding new jobs. Each employee participated in a paid, week-long training course on job-search strategies, résumé writing and interviewing tips. Courses were also offered in basic computer skills, starting a small business, and first aid. The courses were all well-attended. Employees were given financial assistance if they wanted to attend courses offered at local schools and community colleges. The committee also assisted in job placement by soliciting 1200 companies

for jobs and distributing resumés for the employees. The interviewees indicated that the aid given by Seagram's[6] was helpful.

Labatt's gave similar assistance to its salaried employees. For the hourly (production) employees, however, Labatt's set up a $1 million support fund to be administered by a committee consisting of hourly workers. The fund was intended to be used for retraining and job search assistance, but the decision as to how it would be used was ultimately left to the employees. In the end the money was divided up among the hourly employees adding about $6200 to each severance package. The fund was more divisive than helpful because the workers could not agree on how to best use it. Some employees expressed the opinion that the unregulated fund was *intended* to be divisive in order to keep the employees fighting among themselves and not with the company.

The support fund was not the only point of contention in the Labatt's closing. Hourly employees were also upset over the difference between their severance and that given to the salaried employees, especially given the emphasis on the equality of line workers with management in the empowerment program being implemented at the Waterloo plant in the last few years[7]. Another point of contention involved the

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[6] Note that the assistance was organized by a *joint* union-management committee. Yet the employees referred to the assistance as being provided by the *company*.

[7] The empowerment program entailed allowing the production employees to have more control over the work process. Employees worked in teams with a group leader instead of working under a supervisor. Each team was responsible for production in their own area. Recognition was given to individuals and departments whose efforts reduced costs or increased production.

transfer of employees to other Labatt's plants in London and Toronto. Approximately 40 hourly employees from Waterloo were eventually transferred. The union felt that transfers should be based on seniority. The company insisted on utilizing a selection process to identify the "best" employees to transfer. While some of those chosen were acknowledged to be good employees, it is generally felt by the respondents that transfers were chosen because they were visibly associated with the empowerment program, not because they were good employees.

The conflict over these issues was perhaps the greatest internal reason for the inability of the Labatt's Employee Action Committee (LEAC) to administer the support fund as it was intended. Many workers did not believe in the committee as it was seen as a company-sponsored aid initiative. The union set up a shadow committee in order to do the same thing that LEAC was supposed to do, but with the same lack of results. The inability of either of the Labatt's committees or the Seagram's committee to place workers in great numbers was due to the economic conditions in the region. Many factories had closed or were downsizing at the same time and thus there was a glut of blue-collar workers and a dearth of positions open to them.

Relocation

The possibility of relocating has the advantage of exposing the displaced worker to a larger labour market. Displaced workers who relocate in order to find employment, however, are more likely to experience longer periods of unemployment than their counterparts who do

not move (Nord & Ting, 1991:690). On the other hand, Zippay (1991:563) found that those respondents who moved permanently had higher earnings and employment status than those who did not move. The results are not incompatible. Those who relocate are moving into an unfamiliar labour market and thus need more time to adjust to the conditions of finding work in their new location (Nord & Ting, 1991:690). In Zippay's (1991:563-5) study, those who moved had exhausted their local options first before moving. Also, there were those who looked for work out of town but could not find suitable jobs and then moved back to their original location. Thus, those who moved and remained out of town were successful in finding relatively good jobs.

Relocation has not been a major issue in the Labatt's and Seagram's closings. Many of those who found jobs outside of the region have chosen to commute rather than to relocate. Others feel that they have such strong ties to the area that they have ruled out moving to a new area to find work. Some employees felt that extended family ties and friendship networks were reasons to stay in the region. Some respondents did not want to move because their spouses were still employed in the area and their children were still in school.

> Int: Did you consider [moving to take a job offer]?
> Ans: Yes but only for a very brief moment because
> my wife was employed in the city here. We already
> had a house. Our children were going to school.
> So, I thought it was a little too much of a strain.
> And then, even if I did get a job at the new plant,
> my work hours would definitely be affected by my
> seniority. I might not be working entirely the
> whole year and I could be getting stuck on off
> shifts. Whereas my wife already had a job here.
> It's just a temporary lay off for her. So it was a

> lot easier, a lot less disruptive to the family for
> me to just find another job in the community here.

Others had built or purchased homes which they were not willing to

relinquish.

> This was my husband's parents home. . . We had just
> taken it over and we really didn't consider it
> [moving]. We talked about it but it wasn't a major
> consideration. I didn't even apply to transfer
> (Labatt's - Bottling).

There are several reports of those who have moved in order to take new

jobs and then returned to the region later. With a lack of seniority,

displaced workers as new employees are subject to lay-offs more

frequently than their continuously employed counterparts. Thus, moving

to a new community is a risky venture where one incurs the cost of

moving without the guarantee of continuous employment.

Advanced notification, re-education, re-training, and

relocation have advantages, at least hypothetically, for displaced

workers. The effects of these on the duration of unemployment, re-

employment earnings and status are mediated by several factors. The

benefit of advanced notice may thereby be mixed with disadvantages, or

rendered negligible.

Impact Of Plant Closings On Various Segments Of The Population

Studies which compare the age, gender, and race or ethnicity

of displaced workers have found that the impact varies among groups.

The findings are mixed, but some explanations are provided for

unexpected results.

Age

Comparing displaced workers by age, Nord & Ting found that older workers actually had lower re-employment earnings losses than younger workers. This was in contrast to previous studies which found larger income losses for older workers. Nord & Ting (1991:688) posit that older workers "have longer tenure and thus possess greater skills and more knowledge of the labour market, which in turn may increase their chances of finding a new job with higher pay". Perrucci et al (1988:72) associate age with the date of layoff, and their findings show that older workers were more likely than younger workers to be unemployed 8 or 9 months after the closure. This result was found both overall and for the group of workers who were laid off last in the process of a closure. The Nord & Ting finding is perhaps better explained with reference to tenure than to age. Workers with more tenure, usually older workers, would have a longer advanced notice period than others and thus would have a relatively longer time to look for higher paying jobs before losing income. Also, older workers may have more savings and less financial obligations, if the children are grown and the mortgage is paid (Kramer, 1984:27), thus enabling older workers to hold out longer before accepting employment at a lower-than-expected wage.

In the Waterloo closings, early retirement options left very few workers over the age of fifty still looking for work. Many workers in their 40's and even late 30's expressed their concern over their age especially concerning future job loss. Workers in their late 40's and

early 50's felt that their age was a factor in not getting certain jobs.

Conversely, the opinion was also expressed that some companies are

looking for older workers. The rationale behind this is that older

workers are thought to have more stable lifestyles and greater financial

obligations and thus are less likely than younger workers to leave their

jobs.

> They want somebody that's been working out there and
> don't show 10 or 20 jobs in a period of time. After
> I got in there and [another company] tried to hire
> me, then I found out that I was wrong that they will
> hire guys my age. I don't know what their limits
> are, once you're hitting 50 and up, I don't know if
> they would hire you after that but it seems like in
> the forties is safe for these people yet. That's
> one of my fears now is that if [my employer] keeps
> me for five years and then lays me off, I will
> probably have a real tough time finding work once
> I'm fifty or over, if I have to look for work
> (Bottling - Labatt's).

Workers, often older, who did not have the financial obligations of a

family and a mortgage considered themselves to be better off than those

who had many financial obligations:

> I guess I'm in a bit of a different boat here. We
> don't have kids. We didn't have a huge mortgage
> over our head (Brewing - Labatt's).

The effect of tenure on the length of the advanced notice

period was non-existent for the Labatt's workers because all departments

were closed at the same time. The Seagram employees were laid off over

a period of two years as each department closed. Those with least

seniority were the first to lose their jobs. Several of the most senior

employees wanted to be the last ones to leave the plant. To that end

they declined to take the early retirement which they qualified for and

"bumped" less senior employees out of their positions. This action was disdained by several respondents as being selfish. The younger employees experienced a premature loss of income, while the most senior employees would not have gained or lost any income had they retired before the closing.

Gender

Women tend to experience a longer period of unemployment following displacement than men (Perrucci et al, 1988:70). The idea that women gain economic protection by being married and thus can afford longer periods of job search is probably more attributable to the employment status of one's spouse or partner than it is to gender. Nord & Ting (1991:688-9) found that women were likely to experience a greater loss of income than men. This is especially true in the case of highly paid primary sector production workers. Women are also more likely to be re-employed in secondary sector positions which pay much less than production work (Bluestone & Harrison, 1982:58-61). The possibility exists that the loss of income in dollars could be less for women than for men. However, this is due to the lower wage which women's production jobs often pay in the first place.

Added to the bleak picture of possible re-employment opportunities for women is the likelihood of becoming displaced from a manufacturing job in the first place. In Britain, the number of women's manufacturing jobs declined by 29.1% from 1951 to 1976, while men's manufacturing jobs declined 10.9% over the same period (Pollert,

1981:229). Bluestone & Harrison give an example from the aircraft industry:

> Only one out of fifty men employed in aircraft in
> 1967 was located in a secondary job in 1972. In
> sharp contrast, nearly one in eight women
> experienced such an industrial "demotion." For
> women, getting into a high productivity, high-wage
> manufacturing job is a real victory; being forced
> out involves a real defeat (1982:61).

The literature on plant closures tends to focus on displaced workers as a homogeneous group with male characteristics and work patterns. Eleen & Bernardine's (1971:42) work on the impact of plant closures illustrates this view of displaced workers as men: "When a worker with a family to provide for, loses his job, he experiences a sinking feeling. He has to face his wife and children and his friends". However, as the evidence from Pollert and Bluestone & Harrison illustrates, this view was incorrect even at the time of writing. The problem of displacement, then, is actually a greater probability for women and carries the possibility of a more devastating impact for women than for men.

The Waterloo closings, especially Seagram's, represent the loss of highly paid blue collar employment for women. There are few similar jobs in the region which pay as highly and employ significant numbers of women. Seagram's was reported to be a place where a woman could get a wage on which she could live comfortably without the support of another. Many of the women displaced from Seagram's were re-employed in lower wage, secondary sector factory work. Conversely, many of the

men found jobs in the local automotive industry or with other primary sector employers (DeRuyter, 1994).

Race and Ethnicity

In the same way that the literature on plant closings fails to recognize gender as an important variable, race and ethnicity are also most often overlooked as significant variables. Minorities face the same kind of impact that women do with longer durations of unemployment and greater loss of income than white males (Nord & Ting 1991:688-90). Because the overwhelming majority of workers from Labatt's and Seagram's were white, Canadian-born citizens of European descent, they should have been at an advantage in finding new jobs according to the Nord & Ting study. The homogeneous ethnic make-up of the research subjects does not permit conclusions to be drawn in this regard, however.

While the sample chosen for this study is not representative of all displaced workers, there is nothing unusual about these two particular closings. The literature notes several transitions which workers may go through as a result of displacement: highly paid to lower paid employment, manufacturing to service sector employment, union to non-union employment, etc. However, changes in a worker's identity due to displacement have been overlooked. The literature on unemployment introduces the notion of an identity change accompanying a change in work circumstance.

UNEMPLOYMENT

The literature on plant closure and unemployment overlap to a great degree. In the plant closure literature, one way to measure the impact of a closing has been to examine the likelihood and duration of unemployment for displaced workers. The unemployment literature is concerned with unemployment for all unemployed people including those displaced by plant closures. There are some qualitative issues examined in the unemployment literature which are not dealt with in discussions on plant closure. The ways in which people deal with unemployment are examined in an excellent monograph by Patrick Burman, Killing Time, Losing Ground: Experiences of Unemployment (1988). Burman points out that the individual self is dramatically affected by the experience of being unemployed:

> The exclusion of the unemployed from the social order is, ultimately, an injury to the *self*. It is the self which absorbs the lessons of rejection, which feels the syntax of practices shifting out of its control. Nowhere in the social order is unemployment so reflected upon, so infused with feeling, as within the unemployed self. Particularly in the personal consciousness of unemployment, the informants' accounts must be taken as privileged. They who live with it are the teachers; those of us who do not are the pupils (1988:187).

A classic study on unemployment by E. Wight Bakke is comprised of two volumes, The Unemployed Worker (1940a) and Citizens Without Work

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(1940b). In these books Bakke examines the response of individuals and
their social networks to unemployment. Bakke also brings out the impact
of unemployment on the self, but unlike Burman's (1988) work, Bakke
focusses on the working class unemployed in their attempt to survive:

> Our central problem might be stated thus: to analyze
> the adjustments and reactions of the unemployed in
> the light of the fact that they are normal human
> beings possessing an array of tools for adjustment
> presented to them by normal life in a working-class
> community. We have attempted to see the experience
> of unemployment as an intensification, but
> nevertheless, a continuation of the adjustment to
> life needs, characteristic of workers in general
> with special attention to the problems and
> possibilities they faced when out of work (1940a:x).

To date most of the plant closure literature has not discussed the
problems of those facing displacement as the problems of normal people
who must adjust to their circumstances in any way possible. The
literature on unemployment brings out the impact of job loss and the
response of workers to issues of identity. Bakke discusses the goals of
workers which are forestalled by the loss of employment:

> The following goals, however stood out from our
> materials so prominently and consistently, and they
> are so clearly related to the realistic nature of
> the worker's life, that we feel certain they must
> operate widely as stimulants to effort among those
> whose way of living is not essentially different
> from that of those workers with whom we were
> associated. To play a socially respected and
> admired role, to win a degree of economic security
> customary among ones associates, to gain an
> increasing amount of control over one's affairs, and
> to understand the forces which make their impact
> felt in those affairs and in all of these to
> experience satisfying and predictable relations with
> the members of the groups with which one is most
> intimately associated--these are the goals which our
> informants were most vigorously striving to reach
> (1940a:4-5).

The issues of identity, both personal and social, as related to work are well defined in these goals. Because our identities are so closely linked to the work we do (Hughes, 1971), unemployment leaves us without that essential building block for our self-definitions. Further, the loss of income curtails our identities as consumers. In all of this, the unemployed person loses the social interactions which routinely take place in the workplace and the marketplace. Since identity is social in its essence, the unemployed person experiences an erosion of identity due to a lack of meaningful social interaction (Burman, 1988).

The examination of transitions involved in plant closures do not contemplate the transitions of identity which may accompany a transition of employment. The unemployment literature considers the transitions from working to being unemployed, but does not consider a transition to the re-employment identity. It is possible that such studies assume that identity is static across employment situations, i.e. that, once re-employed, the worker regains the former identity as a worker. This view of identity is not consistent with the literature, an area to which we now turn.

IDENTITY

The study of identity has often been undertaken in work settings. Less often, however, has the work on identity been used to illuminate the study of an aspect of work. In order to do this we must first define what is being referred to by the term *identity* and examine how identities may be formed or transformed.

IDENTITY AND WORK

Since its inception as a discipline, sociology has examined the question of the relationship between the individual and society. Within the works of the early sociological authors much attention is also focused on the relationship of work to society (see for example, Marx's Capital, Durkheim's Division of Labour in Society, and Weber's Economy and Society). Examination of the relationship between the individual and work is a logical extension of these early emphases in sociology. Everett Hughes (1971 [1951]:294) wrote in 1951, "Some of the best work in contemporary sociology is being done in such [work] settings and is giving us new knowledge of reciprocal expectation of role performance, definition of roles, group solidarity, and development and definition of reference groups". Thus we have learned a great deal about identity from studying work situations. The literature on

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unemployment details the significance of the work versus non-work

identity (Bakke, 1940a&b; Burman, 1988), however the relationship

between work and identity is far more complex than that particular

dichotomy would indicate.

Hughes deduces the importance of work to the individual's

identity from the way in which people phrase comments regarding the line

of work they are in.

> These remarks [concerning how people hedge
> statements concerning their work] should be
> sufficient to call it to your attention that a man's
> work is one of the most important parts of his
> social identity, of his self, indeed, of his fate,
> in the one life he has to live (Hughes, 1971
> [1951]:339).

Eleen & Bernardine point out the interwoven nature of workers' jobs and

their non-work relationships and associations:

> A worker's job is more than just an economic
> activity. Around the job he forms most of his
> relationships and his attitudes. His home, his
> status and place in the community, his friends, his
> financial, cultural and political associations, are
> all determined by his job (Eleen & Bernardine,
> 1971:43).

The fact that work is among the most important determinants of

identity has major ramifications for any discussion regarding changes in

work. Where those changes are involuntary, as in the case of plant

closures, the problems of identity transitions may be particularly

acute.

IDENTITY DEFINED

"Identity" is how we define ourselves in relation to others. This defining process includes how we are the *same* as others as well as how we are *different* from others (Lemert, 1972:162-3). McCall & Simmons generically define identification as "placing things in terms of systematically related categories" (1966:64). "Individuality" would designate how we are different from everyone else, or at least from all others relevant to the situation at hand. It is not possible to define oneself without at least an inferred reference to some "other". For example, to define myself as someone with blue-eyes infers that it is possible for someone else to have eyes of a different colour. This may seem trivial. However, this distinction places identity in a strictly social context (Lemert, 1972:162-3). There are no universally unique qualities; what is unique about each individual is the particular combination of characteristics which make up our identity.

Identity can be analytically divided into personal and social identity. Two intriguing ways of defining these two concepts are presented by Burman (1988) and McCall & Simmons (1966). These views highlight different aspects of the process of identity. McCall & Simmons (1966:64-5) view one's social identity as the product of an identification process concerned with broad social categories. Personal identity is the product of a similar process concerned with more individual categories. Social identities are built around personal identities. "Personal identities serve as the pegs upon which social identities and personal biographies can be hung".

While McCall & Simmons focus on the content of personal and social identity, Burman (1988) highlights the wider picture of the identity process. In Burman's identity dichotomy, personal identity is an activity whereby the self incorporates the experiences of the past and the plans for the future into the ongoing experience of the present. Social identity involves the evaluation by others of those roles and accomplishments we claim as our own (1988:10-11). Thus, as we develop our identities as individuals, that development is mediated by society's acceptance or rejection of the claims we make for specific aspects of our identity.

Cooley's (1972:231) "looking-glass self" ties the personal and social identity concepts together by showing how the two interact within the process of the self: "A self-idea of this sort seems to have three principal elements: the imagination of our appearance to the other person; the imagination of his judgment of that appearance; and some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification". Thus, personal identity is not only how people conceive of themselves but also how they believe others perceive them. This latter aspect of identity is, of course, influenced by how others act toward the individual and the subsequent interpretation of the meaning of that action. It is important to emphasize this intersubjective aspect of identity. Since we do not work out our existences in isolation but rather in conjunction with others, it would be misleading to examine individuals isolated from their social contexts.

McCall & Simmons (1966:66-7) distinguish between social role,
interactive role and role-identity. Social role consists of the
expectations facing a person filling a particular position. These
expectations are rather broad and serve as guides to the evaluation of
any given performance as opposed to major constraints on that
performance. The interactive role is comprised of the possible lines of
action open to an individual in a position given the prescribed social
role and the individual's personal qualities. Role-identity is how the
individual imagines himself or herself as fulfilling a particular
position. Lemert (1972), in defining "role" brings out most of the
aspects of the three terms which McCall & Simmons distinguish above.

> Role is a term which summarizes the way or ways in
> which an individual acts in a structured situation.
> A situation is structured to the degree that others
> with whom the individual interacts expect him to
> respond in certain ways and to the extent that he
> anticipates their expectations and incorporates them
> into his behaviour. The role reflects these
> expectations but also reflects the claims of other
> roles and their evaluations by the individual, so
> that it is always a unique combination of common and
> diverse elements (Lemert, 1972:162).

The diversity of elements which this definition of role brings out is
perhaps the reason for overlooking the transition of identity which
takes place from one work situation to another.

IDENTITY TRANSITIONS AND IDENTITY MANAGEMENT

Within the context of this research the idea of identity
change is as important as that of identity. The post-modernist concept
of subjectivity denotes a state of humanity in which we all have many

individual identities and we flow back and forth between these identities depending on the relational situation we are in. Dorinne Kondo (1990) contrasts the individualism of American society with the relational emphasis of Japanese society in this regard. The former tends to view identity as fixed, while the latter views identity as relative to context. Kondo (1990:24) asserts, "Identity is not a fixed 'thing', it is negotiated, open, shifting, ambiguous, the result of culturally available meanings and the open-ended, power-laden enactments of those meanings in everyday situations". However, the *fluidity* of identity could also be culturally mediated. People in societies which emphasize individualism hold onto the idea of fixed identities by which they define themselves, while people in societies which emphasize relationality are comfortable with a more fluid identity which is altered contextually. The difference lies more in the belief about identity that in its relative fluidity. This belief must have an effect (c.f. W.I. Thomas) on the relative fluidity of identity in the various contexts.

The fact remains, though, that identities can and do change. The flowing transitions of identity which we pass through each day are distinguished from those transitions which are not part of our "normal" regimen. Some transitions cause us to take on a new identity or to radically transform our old identities to make sense of a new situation. Kondo's (1990) own account of her personal identity transformation while doing field research in Japan and the ensuing internal conflict is a

prime example. Concerning the fluidity and fixity of identity, Prus

notes:

> While people's identities may vary over time and
> across contexts, these identities provide a certain
> sense of stability in people's lives. They allow
> people to anticipate one another and to make ongoing
> adjustments to the situations at hand. Further,
> insofar as others act toward objects (including
> people) in terms of the meanings they have for them,
> people's particularistic identities can affect their
> subsequent associations, opportunities and
> activities (Prus, 1994:398).

Thus, while identity may be fluid within a set of more stable identities

formed in terms of the many relationships and activities with which we

are involved, it is also possible to have a change of identity in one or

more areas of one's life. In fact, given the interwoven nature of the

spheres of our lives, it may be true that changes to one aspect of

identity *necessarily* affect the other areas of one's identity. Burman

(1988) notes such a phenomena being experienced by the unemployed.

Goffman's (1959) idea of analyzing life as drama points to an

aspect of identity transitions which cannot be overlooked. While the

circumstances in which we base our identities may change without our

input or consent, we are all able in some way to *manage* our identity and

we do so as a matter of daily living. Indeed, when the change in a

basis for our identity, or an aspect thereof, is involuntary, we are

forced to make alterations to our identities. The prominence of any

given identity in the individual's schema will influence how dramatic or

problematic the transition may be. The importance of an identity is in

turn influenced by the context in which the individual is found. Devine

(1992:231) notes that "identities emerge out of interaction which should be located in time and space".

The content of an identity is essentially a meaning which we hold for ourselves given a particular situation (McCall & Simmons, 1966; Lemert, 1972). The analysis of how people *handle* meanings is particularly suited to a symbolic interactionist framework. Symbolic interaction, according Herbert Blumer (1969), is based on three premises. The first of these is that "human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that they have for them" (Blumer, 1969:2). The effect of meaning on behaviour is often overshadowed by "causal factors" in social science research. Symbolic interaction views meaning as the basis on which people act.

The second premise defines the origin of meaning: "the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellow's" (Blumer, 1969:2). Symbolic interaction denies that meaning is inherent in objects or that it is the result of a psychological process. Meaning is constructed through a process of intersubjective negotiation between individuals.

The third premise states: "meanings are handled in, and are modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters" (Blumer, 1969:2). Meaning, once derived, is not simply applied to the next situation without reflection. Rather previously established meaning is used to interpret the present situation and to guide the formulation of action. The meaning itself may also be reformulated in this process of interpretation.

These three premises illuminate the process by which
identities are managed and provide another indication of how to study
identities. If people perform actions based on meaning, then we can
observe their actions to determine their identities, or *self-meanings*.
Since meaning is an intersubjective negotiating process, then we can
look to the individual's associations to determine possible influences
on their identities. Changes in those associations will reflect
changing influences on self-meanings. Also, since meanings influence
the interpretive process and are subsequently influenced by it, then
changed interpretations of a given situation will be indicative of a
change in meanings.

Given the above discussion, we would expect that a change in a
person's work circumstance would involve a corresponding change in their
work identity. Since the work identity is so central in the
individual's life, it is also likely that non-work aspects of identity
will also be affected. While some changes will be the direct result of
displacement, other changes will be identity management strategies
enacted by the individual. I will assess identity as how the individual
distinguishes himself or herself from others and also by which groups or
persons the individual claims to have an association. The specifics of
identity changes in the displacement process are the focus of this study
and are presented in the next chapter.

DISPLACEMENT AND IDENTITY: MAINTENANCE & CHANGE

The management of identity in the case of the workers
displaced in the Waterloo plant closings was more complex than simply an
exchange of one role for another. Some identities were maintained while
some were changed in either substance or form. In some cases identities
were discarded and others were established. While some identities were
not altered as such, they were given more or less prominence, due to
changing contexts.

In seeking to present these findings in some coherent order, I
have chosen to first divide the management of identity into those
aspects which essentially remained the same and those which were
fundamentally changed. There is some overlap as these two are distinct
analytically but interwoven in the experience of the displaced workers.
I have further chosen to distinguish between social and personal
identity as defined by McCall & Simmons (1966). As noted above, social
identity refers to identification in terms of broad social groups and
categories, while personal identity involves more individualizing
characteristics.

In regard to analyzing social identity, a particular use of
the term "reference group" is useful. Shibutani (1972:162) defines a
reference group as "that group whose perspective constitutes the frame

of reference of the actor". One actor may assume multiple frames of reference, or even contradictory frames. Three types of reference groups are presented by Shibutani (1972:165): ones in which the actor directly participates, groups constituting social categories, or imaginary groups. The first of these is the most significant since identity is a product of interaction. Since social identity, according to McCall & Simmons, refers to broad social groups or categories, it seems helpful to present it under these three classifications.

IDENTITY MAINTENANCE

There are, of course, many aspects of a person's identity which may remain unaltered through a major upheaval in one's life. Identities corresponding to familial relationships, for example, are relatively enduring. Those identities which are based, in whole or in part, in an area of life which is changing are most likely to be altered in some way. Since the transition in this case is one involving work, it would be expected that identities based in the sphere of work will be changed significantly. However, there are some identities based centrally in the area of the transition which have been maintained by the displaced workers in this study.

Social Identity

The social identities of the displaced workers showed an amazing resilience to the employment transition. Some major identities were maintained with little alteration. For the most part, social

identities involved groups of direct participation and social
categories. Consideration of an imaginary group provides an interesting
case of identity management.

Groups of Direct Participation

While most of the employees of Seagram's and Labatt's in
Waterloo lost their identity as employees of those companies with the
closing, there was a certain segment that did not. Those who were
transferred to other facilities owned by the companies, may continue to
identify with their respective companies as current employees. Those
workers who were in fact displaced by the closings could also continue
to identify with the company in a slightly modified way, as *former*
employees. For some that identification was positive for others it was
not. There was also some uncertainty regarding the benefit of being a
former employee of Labatt's or Seagram's.

> I always thought, actually, and I still think, that
> it's an advantage having worked for Labatt's. I
> think it opens doors that might not necessarily be
> open to you before because it's a pretty well-
> respected company. It seems that outside companies
> respect Labatt employees more than Labatt's does
> these days. I mean they, you know what I mean, they
> don't realize some of the resources they have.
> They're willing to let them go, and other companies,
> I think, automatically assume that you've been
> relatively well-trained (Brewing - Labatt's).

> A lot of people knew what kind of money we were
> making at Labatt's, which on the average was $20 an
> hour. I think a lot of places would avoid us like
> the plague because they probably thought we weren't
> hard workers maybe. Nobody thinks a brewery worker
> is a hard worker. "You made $20 an hour, why would
> you want to work here for less than that." I was
> never told that to my face. That's just something
> we kind of thought. Showing Labatt's on your résumé

a lot of us thought was not really a plus, sometimes
(Bottling - Labatt's).

We had a good job and everybody liked working there.
Whether or not you were a little wondering about
your ability outside of Seagram's. But I think
mostly everybody that has got a job, has done very
well and the companies have accepted them well too.
In my case, I went to this other plant and when I
quit they seemed very disappointed, and said to me
that if things didn't work out, they would hire me
back. But when I did finally leave they hired
another Seagram's person. That Seagram's person
worked there for maybe a year at this place and he
came to where I work now and they hired another
Seagram's mechanic. So they hired three of us there
even though two of us left (Maintenance -
Seagram's).

Similarly, these displaced workers continue to identify

themselves as formerly associated with Seagram's and Labatt's *Waterloo*

plants in which they had worked. People seemed to have a certain sense

of pride when they spoke about working at Waterloo, specifically. The

Waterloo plants were felt to be different from other factories in

general and different from the other plants within the same company.

Many responded that they would jump at the chance to work in the

Waterloo plant of their former employer again.

Seagram's was a factory but people weren't like
factory people in some ways. They were a little
higher level, I guess, if you can say that. Some of
the people that he works with now, they're just so
rough around the edges. I mean, Seagram's had those
people too but percentage-wise I think it was on a
lower scale (Spouse - Warehouse - Seagram's).

Even people who were in the management trainee
program and passed through Waterloo for six or eight
months or a year at a time to take different
positions, always look back to Waterloo as their
best times, eh. As the times when people worked the
hardest for them and tried to make things work and
pull together (Brewing - Labatt's).

Both establishments were compared to families and small towns
in reference to the closeness of the members of the group. Cooley
(1972:158) notes that families and neighbourhoods, as primary groups,
are also noted for their lasting influence on individuals. While the
Waterloo plants owned by Seagram's and Labatt's may not have been bona
fide primary groups, the comparison to primary groups indicates a
lasting identification.

> Everybody was kind of close, that was a real
> family-oriented plant, probably more so -- oh, much
> more so than Toronto or London. We were like our
> little own family in Waterloo. It was like a small
> town atmosphere. Everybody was really close
> (Bottling - Labatt's).

The identification with the Waterloo plants extends beyond a feeling of
closeness to the people that worked there. Fiona Devine (1992:232)
notes that an identity with a sense of place is stronger than an
identity based on a social category such as class. Some respondents
reported that, long after the closing, they experienced strong feelings
of identification when they were passing the site formerly occupied by
the plant at which they had worked:

> And the nostalgia and the feeling of missing that
> you felt as you walked by those buildings. Many of
> those roofs you'd been on all through the night
> trying to fix things that had broken down. You said
> that to me. In fact we stopped the car one day . .
> . We actually stopped and looked at the old place
> and said, "Gee, you know, that's the place that we
> actually sat in. That's the maintenance shack.
> That's the roof I was on." So we were sort of
> catching up, stuff I'd never really noticed and you
> really felt sad. You said, "Boy I feel sad walking
> by it. It's like I haven't seen an old friend for a
> long time." So then when it burned I remember that
> stuck in my mind, that you had said that before.

And you said, "Well, now she's really gone. It's
done" (Spouse - Maintenance - Seagram's).

Like I still dream about the place. I probably
dream about it once a month, you know what I mean,
in different ways, shapes or forms. I've heard a
lot of guys comment that they can't even drive by
the, what's now just the park area -- it's a gravel
pit now -- without feeling a twinge inside, you
know. It's probably, most people would consider it
the best place they ever worked, no matter what they
go on to do. I would say that (Brewing - Labatt's).

Identity relating to the past association with the company in general

and the Waterloo plant in particular, then, remained relatively

unchanged for many displaced workers, save the fact that there was now

an endpoint to that relationship.

Specific friendship groups for these displaced workers have

endured the closings and continue into the present. One would not

expect friendships based outside of work to be directly affected by the

closing. However, if the friendship is one formed in the workplace,

then a change in that base could alter the relationship. People from

all departments spoke of friendships which remained although the place

where the relationship started had ceased to exist.

I would say, in terms of, when I say friendships,
like, there would be some people that I would still
talk to or have over almost as much as I did at the
brewery. It might only be twice a year but that
would be how much I'd have them over at the brewery
too, you know, so... And I think quite enduring,
you know (Brewing - Labatt's).

I still have about eight or ten guys that I chum
with regularly, that I see at least once, on a
monthly basis kind of thing. Some I play cards
with, some guys will just get together and have a
few beers. Yeah, there's about ten people I still
talk to regularly (Bottling - Seagram's).

I'm still pretty good friends with a lot of the
guys. One of the older gentlemen, he was kind of
like a father to me. He was just right around early
retirement age. We still see them a lot and keep
quite a lot in contact with them (Warehouse -
Seagram's).

Two friendship groups which endured had a specific and similar

base within each company. The skilled trades in each plant seem to have

been particularly close as a department (the Maintenance Department at

Seagram's; Plant Services at Labatt's). The reason most often given for

their closeness was the small size of the departments. However,

identification as fellow employees and fellow tradespeople may have also

contributed to their identification as friends. The tradespeople talked

about having their own Christmas parties, etc. separate from the

company-wide functions. That tradition has continued with annual

reunions of some form.

The continuation of close friendship groups formerly based in

the place of employment is not surprising given the growth of the

relationships. These friendship groups were initially based in the

workplace, but most likely grew out of that base long before the closing

of the plant was announced. The members of these groups still share a

common past. The experience of the closure itself has strengthened some

relationships. In the case of the specific departmental friendship

groups, their identification as skilled tradespeople is still intact as

most have found other employment in their areas of specialization.

For the most part, the displaced workers in this study did not

change their identities in terms of being employees in general. Most

have continued to work for someone else, often in other factories. For

a few, their new work experience is comparable in some way to their

former job experience.

> I enjoy going to work everyday. I'm one of the few
> lucky ones. Most people don't enjoy going to work.
> I do. I enjoyed going to work at Labatt's every
> day. I enjoy going to work at [my new job]
> everyday. I'm one of the lucky ones (Bottling -
> Labatt's).

> I was lucky. I worked for a top notch company and
> I'm working for a top notch company (Maintenance -
> Seagram's).

In the same way that most continued as employees in a generic

sense, some also continued as union members, although in different

unions. The identification as a union member was not prominent even

before the closing. The respondents referred to themselves as Labatt's

or Seagram's employees, not as union members. People spoke of being

"involved" with the union as being on the executive or being a steward.

> Well I wasn't even part of the union then. I was
> just an ordinary union person (Maintenance -
> Seagram's).

The lack of a strong union identity was due to the lack of conflict

between the union and management. Both plants were reported to have

excellent union-management relationships. One individual could remember

only two cases of arbitration in over 25 years. The closeness of the

plant community meant that key management and union personnel were close

as individuals. This facilitated good communication but could also be a

hindrance to either party fulfilling their official duties. In some

cases, the union was reported to have not taken action because of a

personal tie with management. Conversely, management was unable to rid

the workforce of undesirable employees due to the strong position of the union.

> The union was a good institution and certainly did
> the wrong things for a few people. But generally it
> ran pretty well. But there was a certain faction of
> the guys that should have got fired that never got
> fired. I mean, what can you say. That's the way it
> ran. Like it or not. You could voice your opinion,
> but your opinion didn't really do anything because a
> brother's a brother. If you can save his job, you
> do it. That's what you're supposed to do (Plant
> Services - Labatt's).

As in the case of the individual above, some held reservations concerning their union affiliation. A few openly distanced themselves from identification with the union beyond the minimal requirement for employment at a unionized establishment.

> The unions help the weak. The only good the union
> has done for the union shops is that they've got the
> good wages, but as far as being involved with the
> union once you've got a job, most people that rely
> on the union are the people that screw up. The
> people that don't screw up, don't need a union. For
> instance if I had a problem at Labatt's, I would
> never go to the union over it. I'd go to my
> foreman. I'd work it out with my foreman. I don't
> go running to my union steward, that's just going to
> cause trouble all around. If you've got a problem,
> or the foreman's got a problem with you, you can
> work it out with your foreman. He's your boss, the
> union's not your boss (Bottling - Labatt's).

There are, then, major identity continuities which are or have been based in the former work settings of these displaced workers. While not all of the displaced workers have experienced the same sense of continuity, many have been able to maintain these identities with only minor modification.

Social Categories

Identities concerning broad social categories are more difficult to assess than those dealing with direct participation. The bases of these identities (class, ethnicity, gender, age, etc.) are not changed by the closing of a factory. Thus it would be expected that identities which are based in social categories will be maintained regarding their substance. Ethnicity, gender and age changed in terms of prominence for some of the displaced workers. Class-based identification persisted as did familial roles.

As stated above, most of the displaced workers found work as employees of other companies. The majority of those sought and found blue-collar work. Many individuals saw their choices in terms of one blue collar job or another.

> I was looking for just blue collar factory work. I didn't want construction which I had worked on before, I didn't want to venture back into that. I just wanted factory work (Bottling - Labatt's).

> I'm not the type to work in a store or something where you have to work with the general public. I'd rather work in an environment where I can do what is required of me and not have to put on a special face for people. So, a factory worker or something like that (Bottling - Labatt's).

There was a certain element who felt that they were constrained by their experience to continue doing factory work.

> I didn't want to go in a factory. As much as I...every job I applied for was factory work. But it's just because that's all I knew. That's all I knew and I knew that if I had a hope in hell of getting a job and getting some money that's where I had to go, so I applied at all the factories around. I never applied for a job where I'd have to wear anything but a uniform (Bottling - Labatt's).

Willis (1977:2) states that choice of occupation is important to the formation of class identity in the individual. When people actively choose to remain in a certain type of job, for example, that is when class identity is truly established. This assumes, of course, that occupations are ranked according to class by the individual. Note that the choices were made concerning a certain type of work not a certain class.

Within those who sought to continue in blue collar jobs were the group of skilled tradespeople. The choice here was not for just any factory work or blue collar work as above. These people wanted to continue in their trade, and preferably in their specialization within that trade. The identity as a skilled tradesperson was at least as strong as the identification with the company prior to the closing. For example, one tradesperson formerly identified himself as "an electrician at Seagram's" giving the trade and the company equal footing in his presentation of his identity. The unskilled and semiskilled labourers often identified with the company only -- "I work at Labatt's".

Family roles seemed to continue unchanged through the transition. Men continued to see themselves primarily as providers whether or not their spouses worked as well. A few made comments to the effect that one consequence of the closing was to upset the balance of the home in that now both parents were working full time. The indication was that this situation was not "normal" and that the wife would stop working or cut back to part-time work when they could afford it again. One man who was working at multiple jobs was quite proud of

the fact that his wife had never worked since they had been married.
The women who were displaced by the closing continued in dual roles of
provider and care-giver. Those women who had young families brought up
concerns with child care when speaking about their jobs. Men with young
families spoke only in terms of being able to provide for their
families.

For this group of displaced workers, then, identities in terms
of broad social categories did not change per se. Class identity and
family roles are particularly static. As will be discussed below, some
of the social categories received new prominence in the individual's
schema as a result of the closures.

Imagined Groups

Shibutani (1972:165) determined reference groups to be
imaginary if one is taking on the perspective imputed to a past or
future group. For the workers displaced in the Seagram's and Labatt's
closings, their past identity as employees of those companies, came up
in two ways especially which may constitute taking on the perspective of
an imaginary group - that group of people who would still be working for
Seagram's and Labatt's in Waterloo had they not closed. People missed
the wages they were making and the long-term employees especially missed
the amount of paid vacation which they had each year.

> It's difficult because you think back and you think,
> "Oh God, when we first started this house and having
> the mortgage, it would have been almost paid by now"
> you know, things like that. And basically we've
> taken a giant step backwards and had to refinance
> and it's much longer (Bottling - Seagram's).

> I think I'm still trying to adjust to that [loss of
> high wages]. You always think about that, you know.
> I still have a pay slip in my wallet. I just keep
> it there [laughs]. I don't know why, not as a
> reminder because I know what I made there (Bottling
> - Seagram's).

> I had five and a half weeks holidays as it was.
> That was the hardest thing, going to two weeks
> holidays. [Spouse: Yeah, after five and a half,
> especially married to a teacher.] I think it just
> makes it worse to know that you had it and now you
> don't have it but your partner is still off. That's
> really tough (Maintenance - Seagram's).

The imagination of what the present would be like had past conditions

prevailed does not constitute a new identity but rather it is the ghost

of a past identity, as an employee of Labatt's or Seagram's, brought

into the present.

The maintenance of social identities was accomplished by these

displaced workers through minor modifications which allowed them to

retain identities affected by the closure while at the same time   ·

accounting for the changes which were out of their control. The

identities based in social categories seem to stand beyond the scope of

change.

Personal Identity

Personal identity refers to characteristics which are more individualizing than the social categories described above (McCall & Simmons, 1966). The references to personal identity in the interviews for this study most often pointed to a change. One aspect of personal identity seemed to endure in most cases, even when it was denied by others.

People who worked for Seagram's and Labatt's considered themselves to be *good* or *hard workers*. They felt that they were dedicated to their work and that they did their jobs well. When the closing came, they counted on their past record to enable them to find new jobs.

> I know what kind of a worker I am. I only had two
> other jobs before that. That was only my third job,
> being I'm 46. Two of them have been because of
> plant closures. I only quit one job in my life, and
> that was to go to Labatt's. So I thought I could
> get a job easily enough (Bottling - Labatt's).
>
> We're not idiots and we are hard workers, that
> anybody we know should be damn glad to have us as
> employees (Bottling - Seagram's).

While these people held themselves to be hard workers, they also freely admitted that the work at Seagram's and Labatt's was not very hard.

Some respondents felt that the application process was complicated by the fact that everyone seems to think that they are hard workers. If everyone says they are hard workers how will the people doing the hiring know who the "real" hard workers are?

> Everybody says they're a good worker. Everybody
> that goes out to a job interview they say, "Oh, I'm
> the greatest worker you'll ever see." I mean I told

the personnel that in my interview (Bottling - Labatt's).

The former co-workers of the displaced workers from Labatt's and Seagram's did not always share the opinion that everyone was a hard worker. Most people made comments regarding some individual or group who did not pull their own weight. However, as noted above, the work was not really hard so if a worker was a little slack it could pass unnoticed.

> There was a certain faction of the guys that should have got fired that never got fired . . . Certainly those people in that sector are the people today who probably don't have a job because they shouldn't even have been working there. The bad part in reality is, when it closed, the people that were in that situation were people that had a job and now they have no chance of getting a job. And that's the sad part about it. You need a company to have jobs for guys that can't get a job. There was one right there (Plant Services - Labatt's).

Some found the adjustment from easy work at high pay to hard work at low pay to be quite difficult.

> I knew my life was going to change as far as work requirements. I'd had a pretty soft job for like fourteen years, and I knew I was going to have to start pitching in. I know that in my first days of working in some of the jobs I'd had and left, I left because the work was far more demanding than what the reward was. Whereas Seagram's was the exact opposite and I knew that I was going to be going back to the real world. I was actually living on a cloud at Seagram's. I knew what the real world was like. I just wasn't really all that prepared to go out and face it again. But again, I knew I had to so I just prepared myself for it (Bottling - Seagram's).

> Some of the younger guys were having trouble because they were used to the big money and that's what they wanted. They weren't going to be satisfied taking a $10 an hour job. Although some of them did, and

> quit because they had to work for their $10, where
> at Labatt's you didn't have to work for your $20 or
> more. That was a big jump and hard on a lot of them
> (Bottling - Labatt's).

When the transfers were announced at Labatt's some workers re-evaluated themselves in light of who got transferred while they did not. This action highlights the processes of personal and social identity interacting distinguished by Burman (1988). The individual has made a claim as a hard worker and this claim has been rejected by a significant social other, the employer. The displaced worker now must evaluate whether the employer's assessment has any validity.

> It really soured people who considered themselves,
> personally, to be better workers than some of the
> people who made it down there in fairly provable
> ways. You know what I mean, thinking to yourself,
> "The whole time I've worked here, I know my work
> record and my attendance record and everything is
> better than this guy, but how come he's got it?
> What kind of flaw do I have that I'm not picked?"
> (Brewing - Labatt's).

Since the respondents defined themselves as hard workers in general and as better workers than some of those who were transferred, some employees questioned whether their claim to be hard workers was valid.

Personal identity as a good or hard worker was significant for most of the displaced workers. It also stands out as an isolated aspect of personal identity which was maintained. Several significant social identities were also maintained by this group of displaced workers.

IDENTITY CHANGE

To manage something through a transition usually conjures up images of change. As has been indicated however, maintenance is also

part of identity management. When circumstances change, alterations to identities are sometimes necessary in order to maintain the identity as a whole. In other cases identities are changed as an unavoidable result of the transition. The aspects of identity which were changed for the displaced Waterloo workers involved minor or temporary alterations to social identities and major shifts in personal identities.

Social Identity

The group of displaced workers interviewed for this study indicated that the identities based on groups in which they directly participate and based in social categories exhibited minor changes. There were no examples given of identity change with imaginary groups.

Groups of Direct Participation

As mentioned above, the displaced workers who were re-employed by other companies gained new identities relating to those employers. They lost their claim to identities as current Labatt's or Seagram's employees. Changes in familial relationships in the form of marital breakdowns were also attributed to the closings. Although none of the respondents had experienced such a phenomena as a result of the closure, they reported that the stress of the closure resulted in the separation of couples whom they knew.

While many of the friendship groups persisted, these same groups were also altered in at least one significant way. These people used to interact on a daily basis at work. Now their interaction is

confined to what was formerly a portion of the entire relationship --
that interaction which took place outside of the work setting.

> I mean, I seen them every day and we talked every
> day. Now you talk once every month or something,
> and some of the other ones you don't even... you
> know, you maybe see them at a store or something.
> That part is difficult because you always were...
> When you think of it, it's maybe not as different as
> you thought. Because when you were working, you
> talked all the time and maybe you didn't... I would
> go to social functions. But I mean, you're working
> with people so you associate with them and you do
> things outside work too. But if you don't work with
> them it's different (Maintenance - Seagram's).

Another way in which the friendship groups changed is in the
number and type of people encompassed by the group definition. Prior to
the closing, there was a fringe element which was included in group
activities because of their presence in the everyday interaction. Those
people are now left out of the friendship group activities.

> You see someone at work and you say, "What are you
> doing after? Do you want to go out and have a beer?
> Come on over to my place." or "Let's do this." You
> don't have that opportunity because you're not there
> any more. A lot of times there'd be people who
> would get involved in something, that wouldn't
> normally be over at your place but you'd have them
> over because they were there when you asked someone
> else over and that sort of thing (Brewing -
> Labatt's).

For those who returned to school, two identity transitions
were noted. The first transition is similar to the work and non-work
dichotomy of the unemployment literature. Those attending school had to
adjust to being students from being workers. The second identity
transition involved the individual's previous identity as a student.

Respondents noted a difference in themselves as older students returning

to school compared to their prior experiences as students.

> It's weird being a student in the sense that I had
> formed my lifestyle by working at Labatt's, then all
> of a sudden I have to go to school everyday, so now
> I've got to change my lifestyle to suit, to the
> money that I had to work with, and then the people
> around me are from all different walks of life, in
> the same situation that I was in, you know, drop
> outs and people that were laid off and so on and so
> forth, without a job. Initially, I found it rather
> difficult to start back to school, but school itself
> is easy, a lot of work, but over time I got to like
> it (Bottling - Labatt's).

> It was enjoyable. It was different. I was there
> for a different reason this time. I was there to
> learn. I wasn't there to fool around like some of
> the other students in the class were. That's the
> different part of it. I didn't mind going to school
> (Bottling - Seagram's).

Social Categories

For those who are employed in relatively stable jobs, social

categories become more prominent once the individual enters the labour

market. It is at this juncture that individuals begin to assess where

they stand in the judgments of others, and especially of those making

hiring decisions.

Age as it relates to employment was not an issue for the

employees of Seagram's and Labatt's in Waterloo before the closure was

announced. The work was not difficult and as one gained seniority more

desirable positions could be obtained as they came available. As one

individual stated, "You were an hourly employee and as long as you had a

pulse you were getting paid" (Bottling - Seagram's). With the closure,

people tried to determine whether they would be considered "too old" for

some jobs. While they all felt that they were hard workers (above) regardless of their age, some felt that others may put them in the category of the "older worker." The age at which one became an older worker was ambiguous. People in their late thirties and forties did not feel like older workers but thought that they may be approaching that point.

> The only thing that scared me was my age. It's not so bad yet but from now on... Once you get well into your forties there's no real advantage for an employer to hire you, you know. I don't know, I think the older you get the worse it is, that's for sure. That's what scared me. I was competing against a younger work force . . . I mean, better it happen then than maybe three or four years after. If it happened when I was fifty it might have been a little bit tougher (Age[a] 46).

> I was thinking, "Geez I'm getting a little older." But I think the people that were closer to fifty had more worry about that. But when I did get a job, maybe they felt I had more experience because of my age too. I'm not sure (Age 45).

Some felt that age was definitely a negative factor in their job search or that of other, older workers. Others were concerned about their age before finding a new job, but, as in the above quote, when they were hired they reassessed their age as having been a possible benefit as an indicator of experience.

> I thought I could get a job easily enough. And as time went on, I got a rude awakening. I realized I wasn't in that position at all and I thought my age was against me, but I was wrong. In the automotive industries like A.G. Simpson and Lear Seating and even Budd, they have at least lately anyways, I know, they have tended to get away from young

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[a] Ages are at the time of the interview not that of the closing.

people. They want to hire people that, for
instance, when I was hired at [my new job], there
was 22 of us that got hired in the same day. We all
had families. We all had mortgages. I don't have a
mortgage but I got a family, I have child-support
payments, I got obligations with my kids and
everybody else did too. They all had families. And
I wasn't even the oldest one. I commented after I
was hired to Personnel, I said, "You know how old I
am?" and she said, "You're in your forties." I
said, "I'm 46. How do you feel about that?" She
says, "You're the type of guy we want. We want
people that have been out in the workforce and that
know how to work" (Age 46).

Another way in which people expressed concern about getting

older was to look at the years which had gone by. The most productive

years had passed or were passing and the less productive years were

ahead. Seniority and work-community reputation which had been

cultivated over the years spent at Seagram's and Labatt's were nullified

with the closing. Even the Labatt's employees who were transferred lost

their seniority as part of the transfer agreement. The "young years"

were lost and, due to the nature of time, there were continuously fewer

years remaining, all of which were "older years".

As identities, gender and race & ethnicity were not often

raised as issues by the respondents. With regard to gender it was felt

by some that it was advantageous to be female and a disadvantage to be

male. However, it is interesting to note that neither the women nor the

men who mentioned this attempted to enter occupations where any form of

affirmative action hiring was being implemented at that time. Thus any

advantage or disadvantage claimed in that regard was voided by their own

actions.

> I think being a white female, I had all the
> advantages at the time. Like, I know being a white
> male is not the best thing to be nowadays. And it
> is hard, it's you know, a little more difficult.
> But I think if... I mean, I was willing to do
> anything. I would have waitressed. I mean, I can
> do those kinds of jobs too (Bottling - Seagram's).

Perhaps the most significant finding in regard to gender is the apparent similarity of the identity management process between the female and male respondents. Similar themes were repeated in most of the interviews. One would expect that since the impact of displacement is different for women and men (Bluestone & Harrison, 1982; Perrucci et al, 1988; Nord & Ting, 1991) that the process of identity management in response to displacement would also differ. Some of the difference in the impact is at the aggregate level and is not applicable to an individual case. For example, women are more likely to be displaced from primary sector jobs than men (Bluestone & Harrison, 1982). However, the likelihood of displacement is a moot issue when one is already displaced. The similarity in identity management between men and women found in this study may be due to the small sample size, but this finding still warrants further investigation before it is deemed spurious.

One individual raised concerns about preferential hiring of minorities. The context of the statement makes it clear that the reference is to recent immigrants, not minorities. The equating of the two terms is indicative of the individual's identity as a Canadian -- minorities are immigrants and immigrants are not Canadian.

> It seem like being white Canadian male is not all
> that good. I think if I was a minority some place

> off a boat, I would have found getting a job a lot
> easier. These places are hiring an awful lot of
> people that haven't been in this country for six
> months. I know of people who have been in this
> country for a couple hundred years or whatever and
> they're finding it tough to find work (Bottling -
> Labatt's).

The change in identity from employed to unemployed has been

undertaken in depth by Bakke (1940a & b) and Burman (1988) among others.

While there is nothing unusual regarding this transition for the

respondents of this study, they did note a distinction between being *de*

facto unemployed and officially unemployed. Prior to collecting

unemployment, displaced workers in Canada must wait for a period equal

to the number of weeks represented by any severance pay which they

receive. After exhausting their unemployment benefits they are

ineligible for welfare until they have depleted their savings to almost

nothing. Unemployment statistics are often given as the number of

people collecting unemployment insurance benefits. This left some

people feeling as if they were "invisibly unemployed".

> Those statistics that you hear about the
> unemployment only being, what are they saying, it's
> down to 8 or 9 percent, that's a crock of bull. The
> same with the welfare. Gee, I wasn't even on a
> statistic and I was cashing my RRSP's in. I wasn't
> in a category. They didn't say I was unemployed.
> There's a lot people that run out of UIC that can't
> collect welfare. I don't know how they work it but
> I know several guys that had to sell their home
> pretty fast and take a loss on them, just to get
> down into a semi [semi-detached house] or just an
> apartment (Bottling - Labatt's).

Personal Identity

The personal identity characteristics which have surfaced in this study can be divided into *positional attributes* and *personal qualities* or *virtues*. Positional attributes are the individualizing characteristics which are associated with a particular position or role. Changes in these attributes reflect structural changes in the individual's environment. Personal qualities are associated more closely with the individual regardless of role. These qualities will be more resilient to change and alteration will reflect personal choice or a more gradual development.

Positional Attributes

There were several positional attributes which were closely associated with the jobs held by the former employees of Labatt's and Seagram's in Waterloo. Displaced workers in this study expressed a sense of loss for identities as senior workers, highly paid workers and consumers. Seniority was lost for all workers including those who transferred. Since many privileges in union shops are determined based on seniority, those with more seniority felt the loss in a particularly acute way.

> Having to start over, being the big shot there with
> all the seniority and being able to pick jobs and go
> from department to department. He had all that
> freedom where he doesn't have that now (Spouse –
> Warehouse – Seagram's).

Paid vacation was lost along with seniority, both being connected to tenure. Less paid vacation meant a change in lifestyle. That change was more dramatic for senior workers.

> The holidays is a big thing. To go from, myself, to
> almost six weeks back down to two. That was one of
> the toughest things I think (21 years seniority).

> I had five and a half weeks holidays as it was.
> That was the hardest thing, going to two weeks
> holidays (21 years seniority).

> It changed my lifestyle. I went from almost two
> months holidays every year to nothing you know, that
> kind of stuff. I sure don't spend money like I used
> to (13 years seniority).

Another loss of identity which was particularly difficult for these displaced workers was identification as highly paid workers. People knew that employees of Labatt's and Seagram's made good money and there was a certain amount of prestige that went with that reputation. That the loss of paid vacation and high wages were indicated as the most difficult aspects of dealing with the closures points to the primarily instrumental valuation of these jobs for the workers.

The change in identity as consumers is linked to the change in wages which the employees experienced. This change bears out the idea that the jobs held were instrumentally valuable. The respondents spoke of cutting out of their budgets the luxury items such as cottages, vacations in Florida, and new vehicles. Others indicated that the uncertainty regarding the future would cause them to be more careful in their spending. The most dramatic change was in everyday expenditures. The displaced, highly-paid workers changed from carefree consumers to price-conscious shoppers.

> When I worked there, I never did without anything
> but that has changed. Like I always had a new
> vehicle and, I don't know, bought whatever I wanted
> but things... now it's different. Financially it's
> different (Production - Seagram's).

> I won't be spending as freely as I did when I was at
> Labatt's, not that I spent that much but I will tend
> to watch my money a little bit more, because I don't
> know what's down the road (Bottling - Labatt's).

> I never even had an idea how much bread or milk
> cost. I had no idea. I'd just go grocery shopping,
> fill the cart up and not even pay attention to what
> things cost. And I mean, it sounds ridiculous
> because it was a factory job but it was such a good
> factory job that we really did live a really good
> life as far as being... We didn't spend frivolously
> but we just had not a care in the world as far as
> finances went. Not a care in the world (Bottling -
> Seagram's).

One positional attribute which was not missed was the feeling

of being "stuck" in a job or factory. Being stuck was a reference to

being able to accomplish more significant things than one was doing in

the factory and yet being held back in some way.

> It was kind of a good thing for myself. I felt like
> I was kind of wasting away in my position there. I
> was getting lazy and I wasn't what I should have
> been, unfortunately. In a big plant, big
> organization, you don't get to do what you think you
> should have done. (Plant Services - Labatt's).

Some felt that a lack of experience in anything else but factory work

kept them from getting other kinds of work and thus accomplishing

something more significant. However, there were reports of people

having significant credentials for another line of work and still

working at Seagram's or Labatt's. The largest single reason given for

being stuck was the high wages which one could earn in either plant.

> I don't think I'd ever let myself get, maybe in as
> much a rut as Seagram's where, that's what happened
> to so many people. There's a lot of really
> intelligent people there that even started college
> or university but they got in the rut of making the
> big dollars and couldn't get out. And you couldn't.
> Like I said, no matter how brutal of a day you had,

> you didn't even think about quitting because you
> knew that there wasn't anything else paying that
> kind of money (Bottling - Seagram's).

The result of the plant closures in this case was seen to be "a blessing in disguise" in that it forced people out of the "rut" so that they could freely choose to do something which was deemed to be loftier than factory work.

> I think a lot of people, that's what they needed
> because like I said, I'd still be there and I didn't
> use my brain in there. So, I needed that. I needed
> to be kicked out. There was people in there with
> their Master's [degrees]; people, like teachers and,
> I don't know what other occupations, but everybody
> got stuck in there because of the money. You know,
> "I can't make this much money doing what I went to
> university for four years for" (Bottling -
> Seagram's).

While some positional attributes were lost in the transition, others were gained. Being identified as unemployed could be considered an aspect of social identity (above), however Burman (1988) notes that there is a very individualizing impact of unemployment. It is in this regard that being unemployed can be considered to be a part of personal identity. In addition to being denied a significant social identity by those who are employed (Burman, 1988), job searches and the unaffordability of the usual forms of recreational association were noted as separating former co-workers.

> Everybody just kind of ventured out and scrambled
> for work. I still see a few of them but not like I
> did before. I see a couple of them regularly. The
> others I just see passing. It's just like everybody
> went into their little own world after the closure.
> Like we used to go out to the hotel or something,
> have a couple beers maybe after work and that didn't
> last very long because we couldn't afford to have a
> couple of beers anymore (Bottling - Labatt's).

There was also a personal identity aspect to those taking on identities as students. The student identity distinguished the displaced worker from those who were still in the labour force, but the identity as an older, returning student also designated the individual as different from the other students.

> It was tough in so far as that everybody in the classroom, besides the teacher, was younger than me. That was the toughest part. It was enjoyable. It was different. I was there for a different reason this time. I was there to learn. I wasn't there to fool around like some of the other students in the class were (Bottling - Seagram's).

Positional attributes of being a student and being unemployed are aspects of identity which are temporary and not particularly unique to displaced workers. A permanent and unique aspect of the displaced worker's personal identity is the positional attribute of being a plant closure veteran. Many of the displaced workers were very bitter toward their former employers. They felt betrayed after having served so faithfully.

> A lot of people manifested that in being pissed off at the company, being mad at the company. A lot of people, I think, felt sort of personally betrayed. Like, "I've been a loyal employee for twenty years and then you pull the carpet out from underneath my feet" (Brewing - Labatt's).

Others experienced feelings of guilt, thinking that perhaps the closing was somehow their fault, individually or collectively. People wondered if being a closure veteran reflected badly on them in applying for other work.

> If there's anything I thought was a disadvantage, is you're into these interviews saying what a good job you did and how you were in charge of this and in

> charge of that but then the plant closed, you know.
> I always have that in the back of mind too. "O.K.
> well yeah, I did do this and I did do that but the
> end result was the plant closed. I did so well the
> plant closed" (Brewing - Labatt's).

Finally, the displaced workers became wary of trusting another company.

While this is a mark of the closure veteran it is also a vivid contrast

to the dedication these people showed to their employers before the

closing. This change in dedication is a shift in a *personal quality*

exhibited by the displaced workers and as such will be discussed in the

next section.

Personal Qualities

Several personal characteristics by which people defined

themselves changed or came to light as people adjusted to their

displacement. Looking back on how they have fared since the closing,

many of the respondents referred to themselves as "lucky." They were

lucky to have landed a decent job, or one that paid a better wage than

they thought they were going to get. They were lucky in that they

hadn't lost their house or car or other material possessions. Rather

than a belief in a subjective mystical force, these people were

expressing a comparison between themselves and others whom they knew or

of whom they had some knowledge. In each case, people could cite

examples of others who had a particularly bad time adjusting. Some

related stories about others with whom I had spoken, and thus I was able

to compare the evaluations. Those who were reported to have had a rough

time seemed to feel that they had fared rather well. The positive

evaluation of one's own experience and the negative evaluation of the

experience of others has two possible explanations. First, this may be a coping strategy for the displaced workers used to keep up their own morale. Second, this situation may be the result of negativism in the communication between former co-workers. Having experienced a common tragedy, these people could be relating only the experiences of others which can be interpreted as consistent with the negative evaluation of the closing as a whole. These two explanations could work in tandem or the second could have the first as an unintended consequence.

Under the rubric of consumer identity, many displaced workers changed their brand loyalties in the area of alcohol consumption. The boycott of Labatt's and Seagram's products was widespread among the former employees. Those who did not boycott the products acknowledged that their loyalty to the brands they had previously produced were not as strong as they had been. The boycott participants pointed out that the products were of top quality -- for some it was a boycott of their favourite brand. There were no delusions on the part of the displaced workers about being able to hurt the companies in any way. It was a simple and very personal statement of disapproval over the shutdowns.

> I don't know if that's one way of sort of seeking revenge. I guess subconsciously in my mind it is. Not that my purchases amounted a whole lot to Seagram's, but hopefully jointly with other people - - if I convince other people of the same -- that's my way of kind of stinging Seagram's back (Bottling - Seagram's).

> They make a good product. By far they made a good product but I couldn't drink their product any more. That wouldn't be fair to myself (Production - Seagram's).

Many of the displaced workers noted that they had become more independent or discovered that they could be more independent than they had previously thought.

> We had no notion that there would be more of this. It was just kind of like, well you know, are you going hang around and feel really bad or are you going to get on with it, kind of thing. You're a "get on with it" sort of person deep down, which we didn't know either. When you're some place for twenty years you don't get a chance often to know that (Spouse - Maintenance - Seagram's).

Becoming independent suggests that one was *dependent* at one point in time and thus much of this discussion relates back to the idea of being stuck while at Seagram's or Labatt's. Some displaced workers phrased their independence as becoming more aggressive -- not in terms of an emotional problem, but in the sense that they were becoming more active in shaping their own affairs.

> Maybe I'm a little more aggressive now, if that's what you mean. You get a little more of your aggression back. But other than that, no. Yeah you have to be a little more aggressive, getting out of a big scenario like that. It does change you and I don't know if anyone in his right mind could say it doesn't. You fall into this scenario that you can't get out of; if there's ten guys doing this, there's no way that one guy can change those ten guys. There is not a chance in hell, and that's exactly what happened (Plant Services - Labatt's).

> Well, I'm probably more aggressive for business and that. Plus, if another better job comes along, if the money's better I'll go there if there's a future in the place. There's nothing really holding me anywhere right now (Maintenance - Seagram's).

Changing the locus of control of one's life was an important issue for most of the respondents. Previously, the locus of control for many employees lay with the employer. Since they felt betrayed through that

situation, the displaced workers internalized the locus of control such that they felt in charge of their own affairs.

> Before I'd always sit back and wait for things, for people to tell me what they wanted me to do. Where, since leaving Labatt's, I'm calling my own shots. It's what I want to do not what someone else wants me to do. I'm in control, not someone else is in control. Working in a factory, they're in control. I've also learned that I'm responsible for everything that happens to me, good, bad, or whatever doesn't happen to me -- I'm responsible. I look myself in the mirror and say, "I made it happen or I didn't make it happen." I can't blame it on this person or this person or the other guy (Bottling - Labatt's).

Finally, a personal quality which is valued by companies has been altered. The displaced workers of Seagram's and Labatt's in Waterloo were at one point a dedicated, loyal workforce. Both companies had acknowledged the excellence of these groups of workers. However, when the plants closed in spite of the employees' dedication, many vowed never to give their loyalty to another company.

> You hear about the economy and that, and then you've been through a plant closure... I think it really grinds the fact into you, "Yeah, there's something changing the economy and it's never really affected me before, but now I'm a key player in what's happened." It sure bites home and it changes you as a person because, I know myself, I will NEVER have loyalty to any company like that again because I'll never put myself in a position where I feel guilty for anybody. The way I look at it now, if I'm being treated as a number, then that's exactly what I'm going to do. I go to work, punch in, do my job, and I leave. And if the company burns down that night, tough shit. There's other jobs out there. So the loyalty factor, as far as being a loyal employee, is over, and I don't think any company will ever regain that from me. I don't care who it is (Bottling - Seagram's).

> I still do my job and try to do it good at [the auto
> parts plant], but I'm not...it's not to keep them
> going anymore. It's just to keep me busy and earn
> my pay cheque, but it's for me not for the company
> anymore. I'm going to try to keep them open, but I
> don't have the dedication to, I never will have to
> another company again like I did at Labatt's
> (Bottling - Labatt's)

Thus, these workers continue to work for other companies, but there is

something withheld. They have not protested by withdrawing from the

system, but they participate grudgingly, seeking only to satisfy their

personal desires. Many workers displayed a mercenary attitude toward

work: they would work for the highest bidder on their labour. The

loyalty which would keep a person at a company is gone.

SUMMARY

Overall, social identities were maintained by these displaced

workers. Identities associated with groups of direct participation

seemed to be the most relevant, as Shibutani stated they would be

(1972:165). There were no changes noted in the substance of identities

based in social categories. Some of these identities received new

prominence in the individual's schema.

Identification with the Waterloo plants and with the people

there appeared stronger than identification with the company or a social

category. Even those who were very bitter toward the company spoke well

of their former Waterloo co-workers individually as parts of friendship

groups or as a whole plant.

Personal identities associated with work tended to change

greatly. There were some temporary alterations as people took on

transitional roles and the identities which accompanied those positions. The changes to personal identity tend to converge on the last aspect indicated, that of loyalty to companies. At this point, the change is individual. However, this particular transformation converges with the worker's social role as part of the labour force. As such it becomes an aspect of the social identity of the worker or employee. Therefore, this may be the subtle beginning of a change to the workers social identity, which was not noted as social identity was examined directly.

BUT I DIGRESS ...

In addition to the main findings of this study there have been several interesting sidelights that are worthy of note.   First, although the closures were interpreted by the workers as being completely negative events, there were changes in personal identities which were seen as positive. Those who were "stuck" were "set free"; many people realized that they could operate independently of Labatt's or Seagram's. Some entered occupations where they are much more fulfilled than they felt they were before the closings. Having said this, however, one would be hard-pressed to find an individual who is glad that either plant closed.

Second, it appears that the prominence of identities based on social categories is linked to one's position in the labour market. Thus as one's position relative to the labour market changes so does the prominence of identities such as gender, age, race and ethnicity. Before the closing, the employees of Labatt's and Seagram's were involved in an internal labour market which was primarily navigated on the basis of seniority (a positional attribute). Upon termination, these workers entered an external labour market in which social identities are often used as proxies for more personal qualities (Reskin

& Roos, 1990:36). Thus the change in prominence is not due to a choice made by the worker, but due to the change in circumstance.

Third, identities based in social categories such as class, gender, race, and ethnicity were difficult to assess. According to Willis (1977), selection of occupation is an important indicator of the succession of class identity. For the most part the displaced workers from Seagram's and Labatt's sought to continue working in blue collar jobs. Using Willis' criteria, then, this would indicate that this group of workers maintained a working class identity. While gender, race, and ethnicity did not seem to be overtly significant as identities in relation to work, it is possible that there is an external indicator which is couching these identities as well. Choice of occupation seems to be a likely candidate, although the data from this particular study do not permit a complete analysis in this regard.

Fourth, in the discussion regarding advanced notice, retraining & re-education, and relocation, the focus in the literature was found to be on the length of unemployment and the level of wages after re-employment (Nord & Ting, 1991; Howland, 1988; Portis & Suys, 1970). The relationship between these variables has been illuminated (and complicated) by the findings of this study. Personal volition was central to the usefulness of advanced notice, retraining and re-education. Emotional ties to the community kept some from relocating. Conflict between the union and management kept one program from being utilized to its fullest potential. Also, the way in which the programs were offered proved to affect the success of them. Each of these is a

valid intervening variable, which should be used in future research on displaced workers.

Fifth, it is apparent that in the case of plant closures, transitions of personal identity are far greater than transitions of social identity. Personal identities are the individual contents which are ordered by a more stable framework of social identities. The transformation of social identities would require a wider social upheaval. An isolated plant closure does not provide such an impetus. However, the accumulated effect of plant closures over a period of time may erode the framework of social identities slowly.

Thus the question arises: Is the impact of a plant closing restricted to the individuals and the community surrounding the place of employment or is there a broader, long-term effect? Most of the workers at both plants indicated that they would never give their loyalty to another company again. Many people also acknowledged that this was not the first time they were involved in a closure. As more and more people are affected by plant closures, it is probable that corporations will be left with workers who no longer are willing to risk loyalty to the company. This may result in higher rates of turnover with employees seeking higher short-term gain over what they see as an empty promise of long-term stability and security. Businesses operating with their eye on the bottom line, seeking to improve efficiency, may in the long run be collectively working against that goal. Companies have to give more and more to encourage workers to stay, but in the end the workers are becoming increasingly cynical.

CONCLUSION

This research points to several areas for further investigation in the area of identity and worker displacement. Several of the respondents indicated that their spouses and children had a harder time dealing with the closure than they did themselves. The impact of displacement on spouses and children has been mentioned in the literature on displacement, but their response to that impact has again been neglected. How do the *families* of displaced workers manage the transition? How are *their* identities altered?

Also within the context of the family, how are gender roles in the home affected by displacement? Limited evidence from this study indicates that spouses changed their labour market involvement as a direct result of the plant closures. Some changed jobs, while others entered the labour force or increased their participation, but in each case the reason given for the change was to regain lost income. Regarding the division of labour in the home, Fantasia (1988) suggests that changes in this area due to temporary work upheavals are also temporary. Where the changes in work are longer-lasting or permanent, are the changes in the home permanent as well?

This investigation began with the assumption that a transition in the area of one's work would be accompanied by a transition in one's

identity. That assumption was validated by the findings. There was a complicated set of identities which the displaced workers managed in order to make sense of new developments in their lives resulting from the plant closures. While some of the adjustments affected only the workers' identities, the possible cumulative effect of the displaced workers' changing position within the labour force points to a possible future social transformation.

The focus of this investigation has been to determine how workers have managed their identities in light of a plant closure. It has been shown that a complex web of identities has been involved in the transition from one work situation to another and thus there is not a simple exchange of one work role for the next. The distinction of personal and social identity given by McCall & Simmons (1966) has proven to be profitable for the elaboration of this transformation. The overlap of categories and the multiple classification of some aspects of identity has also shown that Burman's (1988) indication of the interplay between social and personal identity holds true. Shibutani's (1972) use of the term "reference group" was successfully integrated in order to further delineate social identity. Finally, it was discovered that personal identity could be divided into those aspects which were positional attributes and those which were personal qualities. Since identity is a product of interaction, determining who the participants in that interaction are has helped to illuminate the process of a particular identity transition.

APPENDICES

The two articles provided in this appendix were originally printed in the Kitchener-Waterloo Record shortly after the announcement of the respective closings. They are reprinted with permission[*] to provide an overview of the history of each plant in the community of Waterloo. The third section of the appendix is the question guideline which was used while interviewing the primary research subjects.

HISTORY OF SEAGRAM'S IN WATERLOO

"WATERLOO AND WHISKY: THEY GREW UP TOGETHER"

HISTORY OF THE LABATT'S PLANT IN WATERLOO

"LABATT'S THIRD PROPRIETOR OF BREWERY"

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR WORKERS

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HISTORY OF SEAGRAM'S IN WATERLOO
"WATERLOO AND WHISKY: THEY GREW UP TOGETHER"
By Barry Ries (Staff - *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*)
Originally published October 20, 1990

The imposing presence of the Seagram distillery has loomed over Waterloo's core for generations, the heady smell of mash forever permeating the air, the clouds of steam puncturing the cold winter sky.

The smell of booze was inextricably linked to the aroma of money and the odour of power, all bound together to help form a small city with fame out of all proportion to its size.

When the last bottle of whisky leaves Seagram's Waterloo distillery some time in 1992, it will be more than an industry that dies.

It will be Waterloo's heart.

When Mayor Brian Turnbull was told Friday that the distillery would close, he was, as usual, wearing a gold and black Waterloo city lapel pin on his suit jacket.

The Waterloo Siskins hockey team wears gold and black. The city's garbage trucks are gold and black.

Gold and black were the racing colours of the old Seagram Stables. They are also the colours on the ribbons on bottles of Seagram's V.O. (Very Own, not Very Old) whisky.

Black and gold, gold and black; whisky and Waterloo grew up together.

The driving force between this harmonious relationship was Joseph Emm Seagram, the son of Octavius Augustus Seagram of England, who purchased an inn and two farms at Fisher's Mills (now between Cambridge and the Waterloo-Guelph regional airport).

Joseph, born in 1841, attended Dr. Tassie's School for Boys (now Galt collegiate), then business school and began a career as a miller in Stratford.

In 1869, he married Stephanie Erb, whose uncle, William Hespeler, owned part of the Granite Mills on Beaver (now Laurel) Creek in Waterloo.

Hespeler's partners were George Randall and William Roos. Granite Mills would charge 10 per cent to mill farmers' grain and the Waterloo millers had discovered by 1857 that a good way to dispose of that grain was to make it into whisky.

Historian Ken McLaughlin reported in his recent history of Waterloo that by 1861, the Granite Mills was producing 12,000 barrels of flour and its subsidiary distillery was producing nearly 3,000 barrels of whisky per year, with the owners having "great difficulty meeting the demands for this whisky."

Randall and Hespeler ran a general store where the Hahn Pharmacy once stood on King Street and bottled the booze in a back alley building once occupied by the Waterloo Glove Co.

In 1870, Seagram bought out Hespeler's interest and the company was then known as Seagram, Randall and Roos. He bought out those partners in 1883, becoming sole owner, and introducing the still-popular Seagram's 83 whisky by way of celebration.

Until his death in 1919, Joseph Emm Seagram dominated social, political and business circles in Waterloo.

He was, in McLaughlin's view, "Waterloo's foremost industrialist and civic leader in the nineteenth century."

While overseeing extensive expansions to the distillery, Seagram was also a founder of the Globe Furniture Co., whose buildings are now owned by the city.

He was also a founder of the Waterloo County Loan and Savings Company.

He was a close personal friend of the former governor general, Lord Grey, and a member of some of Canada's most prestigious social clubs: the Rideau in Ottawa, the National, Albany and York clubs in Toronto, and the somewhat less prestigious Waterloo Club, which still exists on Erb Street.

Horses from the Seagram stable won the Queen's Plate for eight consecutive years, from 1891 to 1898, and Seagram himself was president of the Ontario Jockey Club from 1906 to 1917 and helped found the Canadian Racing Association in 1908.

Queen's Plate and later King's Plate days were important in Waterloo. If a Seagram horse was victorious, the news was wired to Waterloo and a flag was raised on the distillery's flag pole to announce the good news to one and all.

In 1893, Seagram donated 13 acres of land to Berlin and Waterloo for what became the K-W Hospital site (he refused to build his home on the land, called Greenbush, when he learned it was entirely within Berlin).

He also served on Waterloo town council from 1879 to 1886 and was the Conservative MP for Waterloo North from 1896 to 1908.

As a politician, he was a force to be reckoned with. He didn't stand for re-election in 1908 and the seat went to William Lyon Mackenzie King of the Liberals, later Canada's longest-serving prime minister.

"Mackenzie King was paranoid about the possible influence in the riding of Joseph E. Seagram," wrote McLaughlin. "King had once told the Liberal leader, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, that he would like to show him that 'there is something more than money and whisky in Waterloo North, something that neither of these can reach.'"

When King lost the election in 1911, he blamed local whisky money.

"The distiller and his allies had corrupted the people and joined all forces opposing reciprocity," McLaughlin quotes King saying. "Had there been no bribery, had bribery been even less than wholesale, I would have won out."

Joseph Emm Seagram died in 1919, leaving three sons: Edward, Thomas and Norman. Edward, who had been mayor of Waterloo from 1906 to 1907, took control of the family business, including the famous Seagram stable and stud farm.

Band leader C.F. Thiele persuaded the family to donate an elaborate bandshell to the town in Joseph's memory.

The farm and stables were another town marvel. Totalling some 225 acres, they featured a five-eighth-mile indoor track. The land included what is now the Towers plaza site on Bridgeport Road, together with the Waterloo Family Y, Moses Springer Park, the Tien Hoa Inn, a beer store, and homes on Lincoln Road and Mackay Crescent.

In 1926, Edward made the company public, issuing 250,000 shares at $15 each for a total of $3.75 million. Two years later, during the height of American prohibition, Samuel Bronfman's Distillers Corporation Ltd. of Montreal took over Seagram's and subsequently became the world's largest distilling firm: Distillers Corporation-Seagram's Ltd.

Waterloo whisky flowed in torrents to the vast American market. It wasn't illegal to export whisky and stopping imports was the Americans' problem.

Sales not only built brand loyalty, but Mr. Sam, as the senior Bronfman was known, also had the foresight to stock away vast quantities of booze pending the end of prohibition.

When the end came, Seagram's was ready with lakes of aged and well-

blended whisky from Waterloo ready for distribution. Upon the death of Edward Seagram in 1937, much of the estate was sold, including the farm. For the next 20 years, it was used by Schneider's for fattening livestock.

Each fall, 4,000 sheep were brought in and put on the enclosed track. The smell was terrible.

"It used to hang over the city like a cloud, but we got a good price for the manure," Norman Schneider once recalled.

The Seagram home on Willow Street became an orphanage. Twenty years later, to mark the company's centenary, Seagram's donated a $250,000 stadium to Waterloo College - now the University of Waterloo's Seagram Stadium.

The last Seagram to sit on the board of Seagram's was Joseph Edward Froude Seagram, Edward F.'s son.

He also sat on Waterloo's town council (1930-31) and he owned Canbar Products Ltd., an important Bronfman supplier.

Although the distillery may be going, other Seagram interests remain in Waterloo, in one form or another. The Economical Mutual Fire Insurance Co., Dominion Life, K-W Hospital, Westmount Golf and Country Club, gold and black garbage trucks.

In 1981, a year after Joseph Edward Froude Seagram's death, Charles Bronfman arrived at the same Westmount Golf and country Club and announced plans for a $4-million museum.

"Of all our plants, the one in Waterloo is sacrosanct," Bronfman said. "You're dealing with something that lives and breathes.

"The important thing in the plant is the quality of the people. They have an old-fashioned work ethic and a hell of a lot of pride in what they're doing."

One of the people at Bronfman's side that day was Gabor Jellinek, a Seagram executive who worked at the Waterloo plant in the 1960's. It was Jellinek who returned to Waterloo on Friday to announce the plant's closing.

HISTORY OF THE LABATT'S PLANT IN WATERLOO
"LABATT'S THIRD PROPRIETOR OF BREWERY"
by Tom Nunn (Staff - *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*)
Originally published May 14, 1992

Almost 150 years of brewing history will vanish from Waterloo when Labatt Brewing Co. shuts down its beer plant later this year.

The large, six-acre site on King Street in downtown Waterloo has been part of Waterloo's brewing tradition since 1844.

When the creator of television's TSN sports network and part-owner of the Toronto Blue Jays bought the site 15 years ago, it became the third proprietor of a brewery that ranks along the former Seagram's distillery for its past role in the city's industrial history.

Combined with Seagram's closing of its distillery last year, the loss of Labatt's will leave Waterloo with only the small Brick Brewing Co. to carry the city's brewing tradition into the future.

David Kuntz built the original plant at 155 King St. S., in 1844.

Kuntz, a brickmaker, cooper and brewer, made all of the bricks for the first brewery and part of surviving section of the original building today.

Kuntz Old German Lager was first brewed there in 1854, when David Kuntz brewed it during the day and peddled it in a wheelbarrow at night for six cents a quart.

The recipe for the original Kuntz Old German Lager was handed down to Labatt's after generations of brewing by the Kuntz family.

When Labatt's bought the plant, it first had to get designation of the nearby Kuntz residence as a historic property, where the home was fully restored and serves as a local meeting place, a civic reception hall and company marketing department.

The man who built the original brewery at King and William Streets in Waterloo, remained almost invisible in photos and paintings and refused to allow his picture to be taken during his lifetime.

An artist was commissioned to paint his portrait while he was propped up dead in a rocking chair, 100 years ago.

E. P. Taylor of Ottawa bought the Kuntz brewery in 1929 and amalgamated it with the Carling Brewery in London, Ont., which closed in 1925.

Like Labatt's, the Kuntz brewery survived the prohibition era, but family control of the business ended when Taylor picked it up.

The painting of brewery founder David Kuntz took a roundabout route, passing through Taylor's office in Toronto, and then through various hands before it finally reached a public display in 1988.

At that time, his portrait was placed on public exhibition at the Labatt's Kuntz House.

The portrait was loaned for the display by Bert Kuntz, of Kitchener, who is a native of Mildmay, but is unrelated to the Kuntz family of Waterloo brewing fame.

Labatt's had been excluded as an "official" supplier of beer to K-W Oktoberfest that year for marketing reasons and decided to still play a role with its own display.

Herbert Kuntz, a grandson of the founder, rose to be a vice-president of Carling's and persuaded the board of directors at one point to keep the Waterloo brewery open rather than

amalgamate Carling and Kuntz operations in
the London site.

He served on the board of
the corporation until his death in 1945,
although the family name was supplanted by
Carling O'Keefe in 1940.

By the time Labatt's arrived
on the scene, rising demand for Labatt's
brands in Ontario and the United States
led the London-based company to buy the
brewery.

Since then, the plant has
been equipped with updated packaging
equipment and computers to help employers
brew more than 500,000 hectolitres of beer
a year.

A history of the brewery
that appeared in a 1990 book on Waterloo
describes Labatt's as setting it sights
"for the 1990's and beyond on a continuing
role as a responsible employer, community
builder and custodian of an important part
of local history."

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR WORKERS

Guiding question: How did you manage / deal with things in light of the plant closing? What specific things happened and what did you do?

PRELIMINARY TIME SCHEME
Pre-announcement
Post-announcement
Closure
Unemployment (if applicable)
Temporary job(s) (if applicable)
Permanent job (if applicable)

BASE DATA - 3x5 card
Age:
Gender:
Race / Ethnicity:
Other supporting person's in the home?:
Number of dependents:
Occupation before the closure:
tenure:
Present occupation:
tenure:

1. What was it like to work at the plant before the closure was announced?
2. Would you say that you enjoyed the actual work itself?
3. What were your social relationships like at that time?
4. Are you related to anyone else in the plant?
5. How active were you in the union?
6. How did all this change after the closure was announced?
(work, relationships, union activity)
7. (Labatt's) Did you participate in any of the picketing, etc.?
8. Why do you think the plant closed? Could you see it coming?
9. What did you do to prepare for the closure?
10. What kind of work were you looking for?
11. (Labatt's) Did you try for a transfer?
12. (Labatt's) Do you have any comments on how the transfers were done?
13. What were the largest problems that you faced as a result of the closing?
14. Do you still have close friends from the plant?
15. Do you feel that you had any disadvantages in finding another job?
16. Do you think you have changed in any way as a result of the closure?
17. What brand of liquor / beer do you drink?
18. Is there anything we haven't talked about that is important to this topic?

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